

Beloved Mrs. Rogers Dies at 92

“It’s a beautiful day in the neighborhood” might be heaven’s welcome for Joanne Rogers, the beloved and spirited widow of Fred Rogers. Mrs. Rogers died in Pittsburgh at age 92 on Thursday, Jan. 14, according to the Fred Rogers Center.

(2/2) Joanne was a brilliant and accomplished musician, a wonderful advocate for the arts, and a dear friend to everyone in our organization. We extend our heartfelt condolences to Joanne’s family and the thousands of people who had the privilege of knowing and loving her.

– Fred Rogers Productions (@FredRogersPro) January 14, 2021

The accomplished pianist, originally from Jacksonville, Florida, continued her husband’s legacy following his death in 2003, serving as chair of the board for Fred Rogers Productions, formerly known as The Fred Rogers Company. She was recognized for helping young children learn about media and film.

Bill Isler, who served as CEO of The Fred Rogers Company from 1987 until his retirement in 2016, explains the pride that Mister Rogers found in his mandate to serve children and families through media, which at that time was television.

Fred Rogers, perhaps one of the pioneers in marketplace ministry, said, “If it wasn’t for Joanne, there would be no neighborhood.” He credited the 33 successful years of *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood* to his wife of over 50 years. He explained that she took care of their sons, James and John, while he was writing and producing the popular television show. She also made guest appearances on the show to support her husband.

The couple is known for the difference they have made in so many lives. "One of the most important things we have to accept and know," Mrs. Rogers says in an interview, "is that Fred was first and foremost a minister ... he was ordained as an evangelist to continue his work that he was doing with family and children. And you know, that work was his ministry."

When he moved to New York to pursue television production, Mrs. Rogers worked on her Master of Music from Florida State University when she received a letter that would change her life.

Joanne Rogers received the Loving Kindness Award from the Jewish Community Center of Greater Pittsburgh, and in 2019, Duquesne University honored Mrs. Rogers with an honorary degree.

Watch this video to hear the heartwarming story about how she met Mister Rogers while both were earning Bachelor of Music degrees at Rollins College. "We had a wonderful friendship and a wonderful affection for each other," she says.