

TV WATCH

Mr. Rogers Is Replaced At Last – By a Tiger

By STEPHEN M. SILVERMAN 09/01/2012 at 10:00 AM EDT



Fred Rogers (left) and Daniel Tiger
Everett; PBS

Fred Rogers peacefully presided over PBS's *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* for 33 years, until his retirement in 2000 – the beloved [Fred Rogers died in 2003](#), at 74 – and now, finally, someone is getting ready to take his place in the neighborhood.

Meet Daniel Striped Tiger, a brightly animated character described by [The New York Times](#) as "the fictional young offspring of Rogers's original puppet characters."

Cuddly, wide-eyed Daniel, who is seen in some depictions sporting a trademark Rogers cardigan (Mr. Rogers's favorite color, too: red), will start presiding over the old neighborhood as of this Monday. He will be joined, *The Times* reports, by O the Owl (whose uncle was the original X the Owl), and Katerina Kittycat, the progeny of Henrietta Pussycat and a usually absent father.

Aimed at the 2-to-4-year-old set, the new show will run half an hour weekdays (twice a day in many markets) and be called – what else? – *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood*.

Just like Fred Rogers used to dish out, there will be life lessons to be learned and new songs to be delivered. But can a cool little cat really replace the towering figure of the gentle Mr. Rogers?

A Long Search

Fred's widow Joanne Rogers tells *The Times* that her late husband had quietly searched for a successor to take over his show, but that he could never find one – and she figured that if he couldn't, no one else could, either.

Still, she and the focus groups who've seen the new episodes have, even to their own surprise, reportedly been won over by the new format.

"I must say I spent a very nervous time thinking about what Daniel would be like," said Joanne Rogers. "I'm in my 80s now, and I grew up with cartoons, the slapstick kind of things that went on, and I never much cared for it."

Only *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood* is nothing like that. According to Mrs. Rogers, "I like that little Daniel is so dear, but he's also very, very human, and he has his feelings."

More to the point, she says, "The subjects being dealt with are Fred's philosophy."

Let a wonderful new day in the neighborhood begin.