



Look for Helpers Part 1

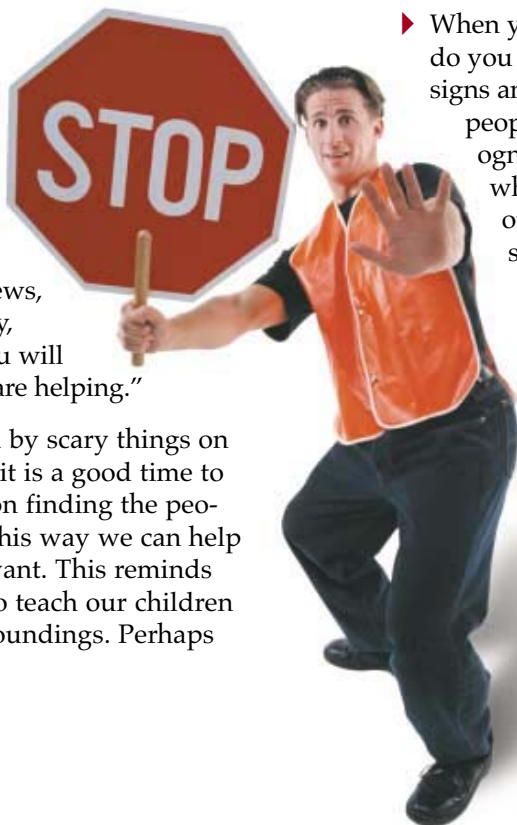
BY SUSAN E. MURRAY

America's children and their parents lost a good friend recently. I imagine most readers have visited his neighborhood, Mr. Roger's Neighborhood, that is.

Beginning with his first PBS broadcast in 1968, Fred Rogers taught grown-ups and children alike many important life lessons. He taught us that it's okay to cry in front of children. He talked about seeing his father grieving when his own father (Fred's grandfather) died, and he shared how that helped him know that it was okay for men to show their feelings. Mr. Rogers helped children know that feelings are natural and normal, and that happy times and sad times are part of everyone's life. Whether we believed it or not, he told us over and over again that he liked us "just the way we are."

He recalled that when he was a child, he would see scary things on the news, and his mother would say, "Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping."

As we are bombarded by scary things on the news today, perhaps it is a good time to help our children focus on finding the people who are helping. In this way we can help our children to be observant. This reminds me how important it is to teach our children to be aware of their surroundings. Perhaps that's the larger lesson!



Here are some ideas for helping children develop an awareness of their surroundings:

- ▶ Teach children to listen to the wind, the leaves rustling in the breeze, the songs of birds, the flow of traffic. Certainly this is also a powerful way to recognize a creative, creator God.
- ▶ Help children be aware of the effects of temperature and the sun. Rather than keeping them inside if it's too hot or too cold, how about helping them understand how their body works to insulate itself, how they can protect themselves in extreme weather.
- ▶ While children learn fire safety at school, are you sure they can transfer that knowledge to a home setting? What should they do if you are at the supermarket or a mall and the fire alarm goes off?
- ▶ While children often learn traffic safety and gun safety at school, are you sure they understand how to react when they are away from school? Young children are concrete in their thinking and do not always get the subtleties of such instruction.
- ▶ When you are on an airplane, do you read the safety instructions printed on the card in front of you as the attendant goes over the information? Do you help your children learn where the exit signs are and model for them how to pay attention to such details?
- ▶ When you are at a restaurant or other public venue, do you help your children locate the lighted exit signs and/or other doors? Recent scary news of people losing their lives because they didn't recognize overcrowded conditions, or know where exits were, indicates we need to teach our children to be absolutely aware of their surroundings.

This idea of looking for the helpers and developing an awareness of our surroundings as it relates to building our children's confidence in God's protection will be more fully explored in the next issue.

In the meantime, if you want to learn more about Mr. Rogers' work on behalf of our children, or listen to him sing those reassuring childhood songs, visit www.pbskids.org/rogers.