

Paying Tribute to 50 Years of Sunny Days on Sesame Street

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I'm old enough that I didn't have the privilege of watching Sesame Street as I was growing up, but I relished every opportunity to share it with my children throughout their early years, from playing its catchy tunes on the car radio to expanding our family's collection of stuffed Sesame Street characters. For many parents, Sesame Street was a bright light for our children's entertainment and for their education. It opened our eyes and our minds to the creative possibilities in children's educational television.

On Sunday, November 10, 2019, Sesame Street will celebrate its 50th year of educational programming. The influence of Sesame Street is so unique, and has so permeated our culture, that it seems appropriate to honor its contributions to generations of children and families.

The mission of Sesame Street has always been to help kids [grow smarter, stronger and kinder](#). The programming makes early childhood education accessible for every child, regardless of background or skill level. The show explores concepts beyond numbers and letters, though those are important; it also teaches social-emotional skills in a welcoming environment.

Many English learners, both children and adults, refined their language skills watching Sesame Street. The setting and the characters are perfect examples of a diverse community, where empathy and acceptance find teachable moments in everyday life. The focus on inclusion and open dialogue was groundbreaking in 1969, and still offers an important lesson on tolerance in today's world. For educators, the show's impact has not only been on our students, but on us—on the very way we teach—as we came to understand the importance of creativity and engagement and sought to bring those elements into our classrooms.

Over the years, Sesame Street has created a partnership with families; parents who grew up watching the program saw its value as the show taught important lessons to their children. The show's characters have evolved with time, gradually creating a space for difficult discussions around topics such as death, divorce, disability, race, homelessness, bullying, addiction and trauma—bravely addressing social issues with a lens on a child's mind.

Why, you might ask, am I devoting attention to a program that everybody already knows about? Well, currently there are over 150 international versions of Sesame Street, produced in 70 different languages. Sesame Street works because it reaches out to the parts of our lives where we all intersect. It speaks to our common hopes and fears, our dreams and struggles. It sheds light on issues that we face and gives us the courage to address them with the honesty of a child. On Sesame Street, children's voices and feelings are respected—again, something all of us want for ourselves as well as for our children—and something that we value highly in Andover.

So let's celebrate this important milestone for Sesame Street. Its success stems from how meaningful it has been to so many families and children. It remains relevant and worth watching because it speaks to our commonalities in a way that lifts us all. For five decades, it has been creating positive change around

the world, encouraging us to be lifelong learners regardless of our age and to help our neighbors regardless of our differences.

As Big Bird might say, this message was brought to you by the letters U and I. In honor of Sesame Street's anniversary, let's make a positive difference in someone's life today and let's offer a hearty thanks to all who have contributed to its production.

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