

Applebee's Encourages 'Sweater Day' to Honor Mister Rogers

LENEXA, KS -- IHOP Corporation (NYSE: IHP) -- The World's Favorite Neighbor is calling on its guests and associates to pay homage Thursday, March 20, to the kindly man who made "Won't You Be My Neighbor" a cultural theme to generations of American children.

And the top executive at Applebee's is planning on doing her part.

To celebrate what would have been the 80th birthday of Fred Rogers, better known as TV's "Mister Rogers," friends of Mr. Rogers, including David Newell (a.k.a. Mr. McFeely), have declared this Thursday "Sweater Day." Applebee's is joining in by asking all its guests and associates to wear a cardigan sweater Thursday to work, school or play.

Rogers, who died in 2003 after a brief battle with stomach cancer, was best known for "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood," which first aired 40 years ago on PBS. Each episode began the same way, with Mister Rogers coming home and singing his theme song, "Won't You Be My Neighbor?" and changing into sneakers and a zippered cardigan sweater. The sweaters he wore on the show were hand knit by his mother.

Julia Stewart, chairman and CEO of IHOP Corp., which owns Applebee's and IHOP, checked her closet and found no red-zippered sweaters, but did settle on a nice flowered cardigan for the occasion.

"Thursday would have been Mister Rogers' 80th birthday," Stewart said. "Applebee's mission is to be the world's favorite neighbor. What better way is there to honor the man who reminded us all of what being a great neighbor is really about?"

Stewart said that wearing an item like Rogers' signature sweater may not make a fashion statement, but it can certainly send a strong message about what Americans value most.

"Mister Rogers reminded us that kindness should never become a lost art," Stewart said. "It was the very heart and soul of who he was -- and who we all should be every single day. There was no one more caring or more genuine in his love of family and children.

"So dig through those closets, America, and round up those sweaters. Mister Rogers would be proud."

About Applebee's / IHOP

Applebee's Services, Inc., headquartered in Lenexa, Kan., and its affiliated companies develop, franchise and operate restaurants under the Applebee's Neighborhood Grill & Bar brand, the largest casual dining concept in the world. At the end of fiscal 2007, there were 1,976 Applebee's restaurants operating system-wide in 49 states, 17 international countries and two U.S. territories, of which, 510 were company owned. Additional information on Applebee's can be found at the company's website (www.applebees.com).

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