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Idlewild and SoakZone to replace Mister Rogers' Neighborhood of Make-Believe ride

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The Mister Rogers' Neighborhood of Make-Believe ride at Idlewild and SoakZone will be revamped for 2015 with the new theme of "Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood."

By Rob Owen / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

The Mister Rogers' Neighborhood of Make-Believe ride at Idlewild and SoakZone has ended its run and will be revamped for 2015 with the new theme of "Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood," PBS's successor program to "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood."

The old Neighborhood of Make-Believe ride, which opened in 1989 and featured animatronic versions of King Friday XIII, X the Owl, the Platypus family and Daniel Striped Tiger, concluded its 25-year run at the end of the 2013 season.

For 2014, a costumed version of the Daniel Tiger character will appear at Idlewild daily, noon-7 p.m., in the area of the old ride.

In conjunction with the South Side-based Fred Rogers Company, Idlewild plans a new "Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood"-themed attraction for 2015 in the same location along with a live-action show featuring Daniel and other characters from the PBS Kids series.

Jeff Croushore, Idlewild public relations manager, said the common thread between the late Fred Rogers' show and "Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood" is the trolley. So the new attraction will retain the trolley ride while changing the rest of the existing attraction to represent the new series.

"The Fred Rogers Company has moved forward with the new series and kids really identify with the new series," Mr. Croushore said. "Of course everyone in the region loves 'Mister Rogers'

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Neighborhood' but we wanted to reach out to the kids of today. They know and they love Daniel and we wanted to make an update and move forward with Daniel."

Some consideration was given to keeping the old ride open during the transition year.

"We thought maybe we could include Daniel this year and still have the old ride," Mr. Croushore said, "but it was a mutual decision between the Fred Rogers Company and Idlewild that we didn't want to mix the brands when making the switch. So we ultimately decided to move forward with Daniel."

The move at Idlewild mirrors the fate of "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" on PBS where it was downgraded from daily airings to weekends in 2009 with some stations not carrying the show at all.

Meanwhile, "Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood," an animated series featuring the children of the Neighborhood of Make-Believe characters, has become a popular PBS Kids program that already has spawned books, toys and music albums.

Idlewild and SoakZone opens May 22 for its 137th season.

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 **Randi Cochran-Durmis** NEW Less than a minute ago


I'm sad to see it go and will miss it, but Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood is a show my daughter loves. A wise update I think!

0

 **Jessica Scott** 1 hour ago


Such a loss to a traditional park. My family has had our reunions at the park for 30 plus years, prior to the addition of Mr. Rogers Neighborhood. The attraction has become a "must do" along with the spider, the "roller coaster", the crooked house, paddle boats and jumping jungle. I love an idea of the addition but not forgetting about a childhood legend. What's next...demolition of Story Book Forest!

+1

 **Levi Good** 2 hours ago

When will the revamp be complete? My kids will go bonkers for that.

0

 **Harold Shaver** 5 hours ago

They should make it Mr Roger's Hoodie. Have riders use laser guns and travel thru a mock up of North Braddock. They get points for taking out drug dealers and if they get a shot the leader an over sized politician...they get a free corn dog. It would be like the Buzz Light Year ride at Disney

+1

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