

DEAR FELLOW ROTARIANS,

Some years ago in the Melbourne, Australia, museum where my daughter used to work, an iron lung was on display. For most people my age who remembered the terrifying polio epidemics of the 1950s, that iron lung was a testament to how far vaccination had brought us: to the point where that once-critical piece of medical equipment had literally become a museum piece.

For much of the world, the story of polio is a simple one: After years of fear, a vaccine was developed and a disease was conquered. But for some of the world, the story was different. In so many countries, the vaccine wasn't available, mass vaccination was too expensive, or children simply couldn't be reached. While the rest of the world relegated polio to its museums, in these countries, the disease continued to rage – until Rotary stepped forward and said that all children, no matter where they lived or what their circumstances, deserved to live free of polio.

In the years since PolioPlus was launched, the combined efforts of Rotary, the governments of the world, and the Global Polio Eradication Initiative have brought the number of cases of polio down from an estimated 350,000 per year to just a few so far in 2017. But we must reach zero cases, and stay there, to achieve eradication. To do that, we need everyone's help.

On 24 October, we will mark World Polio Day. It is a day to celebrate how far we have come and an opportunity for all of us to raise awareness and funds to complete the work of eradication. I ask every Rotary club to participate in some way in World Polio Day activities, and I encourage you to visit endpolio.org for ideas and to register your event. Whether you host a silent auction, a virtual reality viewing, a fundraising walk, or a Purple Pinkie Day, your club can make a real difference.

This year, our World Polio Day livestream event will take place at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation headquarters in Seattle; you can watch it on endpolio.org beginning at 2:30 p.m. Pacific time. As many of you know, Rotary has committed to raising \$50 million a year for the next three years. This amount will be matched 2-to-1 by the Gates Foundation – effectively tripling the value of all money Rotary raises on World Polio Day and throughout the year. Let's all make a difference on World Polio Day – and help End Polio Now.



IAN H.S. RISELEY
President, Rotary International



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