



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Dear fellow Rotarians,

Every Thursday morning, I receive an email from the World Health Organization with an update on the status of polio eradication. It contains a wealth of information, country by country: where and how immunization campaigns are being conducted, how many millions of children are being vaccinated, and where environmental surveillance has found evidence of circulating virus. But every week, when that email appears in my inbox, my heart seems to stop for just a moment until I read the first few lines – and learn whether a child was paralyzed by wild poliovirus that week.

That, my friends, is where we are today in the work of polio eradication. The question on my mind as I open that message isn't how many thousands of cases we might see in a year, as we did not too long ago, or even how many hundreds. Instead, when that WHO email arrives every Thursday, the single, binary question it answers is: Was there a new case this week, or wasn't there?

Thirty years ago, 1,000 children were paralyzed by polio every single day. Since then, we've marked our progress, year by year, week by week. We've celebrated as country after country, region after region has been declared polio-free. As we've come closer and closer to our goal, and the number of cases has dropped further and further, the children those numbers reflect have become less and less of an abstraction. When I open that Thursday email, I don't wonder what number I'll see. I wonder, was a child paralyzed this week or not?

We are so close to eradication – but there is so much work left to do.

This month, I ask every Rotary club to help End Polio Now by marking World Polio Day on 24 October. Last year, thousands of Rotary clubs around the world held events to raise awareness and funds for polio eradication. This year, we want to see more World Polio Day events registered than ever. If you have an event planned, be sure to register and promote it at [endpolio.org](http://endpolio.org) so that more people can take part. If you haven't planned one yet, it's not too late – visit [endpolio.org](http://endpolio.org) to find ideas, information on this year's livestream, and resources to help your club organize a successful event.

World Polio Day is a tremendous opportunity for clubs to highlight Rotary, and our historic work to eradicate polio, in their own communities. It is also a great way to take advantage of the challenge from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation: For every dollar that Rotary raises for polio eradication, the Gates Foundation will give two more. Join me, and Rotarians everywhere, on 24 October for World Polio Day – and *Be the Inspiration* for a polio-free world.

**BARRY RASSIN**

*President, Rotary International*