**Polio Plus Report from Wayne**

This week I attended a Zoom meeting featuring Mike McGovern, the Chair of the Polio Plus Committee since 2014. With money matches from the Gates Foundation, Rotarians are responsible for contributing over $2 billion towards the eradication of polio. We have had five straight years with fewer than 200 cases per year. Our low was 22, but now we’re up to 66 cases from the wild polio virus. We have lowered the cases of polio from 350 000 per year, to fewer than 1000 in five years, a reduction of over 99.7%!

Because of our efforts, we now have nineteen million more people walking, not crawling, on Earth. Without our work, an estimated 1.5 million people, many children, would have died.

In Afghanistan, the Taliban and ISIS suspended door to door delivery of vaccinations. In Pakistan, the new leader who had been so supportive of the end polio efforts seemed to lose track and hired the wrong people to oversee the program. They have now been replaced with experienced ones who had helped bring us down to 22 in one year, so we are optimistic. Due to COVID we’ve had to put a hold on all door-to-door delivery of the services, so that has had an impact as well.

New oral vaccines are being developed and are in their first trial. McGovern said they hope to have them by the third quarter this year. Their use could put an end to vaccine derived polio cases, many of which developed in children due to their weak immune systems.

Polio infrastructure stopped Ebola from spreading and becoming a pandemic, and these people are now working to slow or stop the spread of COVID. McGovern stressed that we need to get the Pakistani government back on track, as many cases of polio in Afghanistan have come from Pakistan. He asked us to stay the course and continue to financially support this cause.