



# Rotary Clubs Okanagan Shuswap News Release

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## Why we are raising funds in the Okanagan to end polio

*"As long as a single child remains infected with the poliovirus, children in all countries are at risk of contracting the disease. The poliovirus can easily be imported into a polio-free country and can spread rapidly amongst immunized populations. Between 2003 and 2005, 25 previously polio-free countries were reinfected due to importations." - (World Health Organization)*

**KELOWNA, BC** – The Rotary Clubs of the Central Okanagan are teaming up with Ramesh Ferris, polio-survivor and author, to raise funds for the eradication of polio and to educate Canadians about this dreadful disease which has no cure and causes paralysis and even death.

The educational and motivational presentation on "End Polio Now" takes place at the Rotary Centre for the Arts in Kelowna, 30 October 2010. Ferris will be joined by Kelowna residents Karen Naumann, polio survivor and educator, and the Rotary team from Peaks for Polio, who in 2009, climbed Mt. Aconcagua in Argentina, the highest peak in the Western Hemisphere in a bid to eradicate polio from the planet.

Ferris was born in India and later adopted by Canadian parents. In 2008 he hand-cycled more than 7,100 kilometres across Canada, raising \$318,000 to forward the global eradication of polio, to educate about the continuing need for immunization against polio and to support the rehabilitation of polio survivors in poor countries.

Tickets for the presentation by Ramesh Ferris are available at \$25.00 from any of the Rotary Clubs in Kelowna, West Kelowna and Lake Country. They are also available at The UPS Store-Westbank, Roys Shoes and Boots and The Evans Gallery and Framing. More information can also be obtained from Bruce Falkins at [bruce@falkinsadvertising.com](mailto:bruce@falkinsadvertising.com) or Karen Naumann at [karen@neraktraining.com](mailto:karen@neraktraining.com)

London Drugs is the official supporter of the campaign and will have donation boxes available to the public. Donations can also be made at Valley First Credit Union or online at <http://polio5060.com>. More information is also available on the Rotary International website [www.rotary.org/en/EndPolio](http://www.rotary.org/en/EndPolio)

An Abba Concert to End Polio is also being held in Penticton on the same evening. Tickets are for sale at <http://valleyfirsttix.com>



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**Why do we need to care about the eradication of polio**, if Canada has rarely seen this since the invention of the of polio vaccine by Dr. Jonas Salk in the early 1950s?

April 2010 saw the first persistent outbreak of poliomyelitis in Tajikistan, a previously certified polio-free zone. The virus started with seven infected children. In a very short period over 560 cases were reported.

How did this happen in the World Health Organization (WHO) Euro region, a region certified as polio-free since 2002?

According to an article in the June 2010 newsletter of the Canadian Medical Association (CMA) the spread of poliovirus can be insidious, because more than 95% of infected people are asymptomatic; however, the virus is shed in faeces (excrement) for up to four to eight weeks, which allows it to spread rapidly, widely and initially silently in un-immunized or under-immunized communities. Spread of the virus can only be prevented if more than 90% of people in a community are vaccinated.

The virus found fertile ground in Tajikistan, where the 2008 rate of uptake of oral polio vaccine was reported to be 87%, only slightly below the WHO recommended minimum of 90%.

In Canada, the immunization rate against polio is at 89%; leaving nearly four million Canadians (11%) vulnerable to this viral infection. According to WHO calculations, the rate of immunization is presently low enough to put Canada at risk for at least localized outbreaks.

There is now growing concern about the potential for spread of poliomyelitis elsewhere in the world. Too many regions and communities have ceased to worry about polio. As a consequence, rates of vaccine uptake are all too often well below effective prevention levels. As a second precondition, over half a million people from Tajikistan visited over 250 countries last year, according to the Centre for Disease Control (Division of Global Migration and Quarantine).

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Canadians should be aware that in addition to the threat of new polio infections, more than 10 million polio survivors worldwide are living without access to the rehabilitative support that would enable them to overcome the devastating physical effects of polio.

"That's why it's so important to generate the funding needed to finish the job. To ease up now would be to invite a polio resurgence that would condemn millions of children to lifelong paralysis in the years ahead," says Rotarian Bruce Falkins, organizer of the Kelowna fundraising event.

The bottom line is this: As long as polio threatens even one child anywhere in the world, all children – wherever they live – remain at risk.

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## Media contacts

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## Note for Editors:

- Rotary Canada, part of Rotary International, has 733 clubs.  
<http://www.rotary.org/EN/ABOUTUS/Pages/ridefault.aspx>
- Rotary International was founded in 1905 in Chicago and is now the world's largest international service organisation with 1.2 million professional men and women as members. There are 33,000 clubs in more than 200 countries and geographical areas.
- Members of Rotary clubs, known as Rotarians, provide humanitarian service, encourage high ethical standards in all vocations, and help build goodwill and peace in the world. Clubs are non-political, non-religious, and open to all cultures, races, and creeds. As signified by the motto Service Above Self, Rotary's main objective is service — in the community, in the workplace, and throughout the world.
- Rotary initiates local and global projects to promote world understanding and peace and improve life conditions for people of all ages and cultures.

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