

# Polio eradication nearly complete, Mariners GM promotes new team

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By Pete DeLaunay

**President Cathy** opened the meeting by introducing fellow Rotarian and former Texas Rangers player **KC Herren**, for a moving inspirational and very personal innovation about the fine line between baseball and religion, followed by a rousing rendition of 'Take Me Out to The Ballgame' led by **Lou Lundquist** with **Burr Stewart** on the piano.

The day's short program began with Past District 5030 Governor Ezra Teshome's introduction of Dr. Christopher Elias, President for Global Development at Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for an update about Polio eradication efforts advanced in partnership with Rotary International.

"In 1985 more than 300,000 people were maimed or died from polio from 125 countries worldwide," Dr. Elias began, "and in 2016 we are very close to the collapse of the disease with only 37 reported cases worldwide." The work to eradicate the disease continues as funds are being raised to provide treatment resources for small corners of the world where unrest, isolation and ignorance have inhibited prevention efforts. Dr. Elias will join RI president John Germ at the RI Convention in Atlanta where remaining funds will be raised, as Dr. Elias promised to return to Seattle Rotary when the job is done.

In closing, Past District Governor Teshome (who has led 20 international polio eradication missions himself) presented Dr. Elias the original Congressional Gold Medal -- the highest civilian honor bestowed by the United States Congress -- that in 1955 was given to Dr. Jonas Salk, medical researcher and virologist for having developed the first polio vaccine.

For the day's main program, President Cathy invited to the podium former Seattle #4 Rotarian and former president of the Seattle Mariners Chuck Armstrong to introduce current Seattle Mariners GM Jerry Dipoto.

Armstrong said Jerry Dipoto brings experience as a professional baseball player, and various front office positions to the Mariners organization. Dipoto played as a pitcher in the majors for the Cleveland



Indians, New York Mets and Colorado Rockies until an injury forced his retirement in 2000. Dipoto joined the Mariners organization as EVP Baseball Operations in September/2015 and subsequently was named general manager following the 2016 season when the Mariners went from the near cellar to playoff contention.



As the Mariners enter their 40<sup>th</sup> season, the General Manager has high hopes for better defense and use of core players Nelson Cruz, Robinson Cano, Felix Hernandez and Kyle Seager. To him baseball is a romantic sport that binds the fabric of Americana.

From the 225 players on the Mariners 40 man roster and all minor league teams -- only nine players remain under Dipoto's watch. As the architect of 'what we want the team to become' he is driven to winning at the championship level by building a sustainable winning model.

"It takes some time to execute a plan," he says, "but we have a good foundation of core players and it is time for them to win with better defense"

Now in his 29<sup>th</sup> year in baseball, during his short tenure with the Mariners he has assembled an organization that promotes 'positivity to the right' and it shows with seven Mariner minor league teams playing in the post season -- moving the Mariners from 27<sup>th</sup> to first in league standings.

He has made several moves that may appear somewhat puzzling, but calculated by applying smart use of data coupled with instinct and trust. "We balance statistics with what 'your eyes are telling you' with some gray areas," he says, "and sometimes into the deep charcoal."

He promises an exciting 2017 season with a 'quartet' of key players supported by good defense. "We have a fun group that is looking forward to a special year with depth and quality tempered by experience and maturity," he concluded. "We want to focus on positivity because if you believe you can't you won't -- individual players don't really inspire greatness -- teams do."

