

OCTOBER 24TH - WORLD POLIO DAY

As we begin to reflect on “World Polio Day” it’s important to remember how Rotary undertook the challenge to try to rid the world of this dreaded disease.

Rotary was the first to have the vision of a polio-free world. In 1979 the President of Rotary International administered the first oral polio vaccine to a child in the Philippines. This was the beginning of a multiyear effort to immunize almost six million children against polio. The success of this project led Rotary to make world polio eradication a top priority which continues today. With Rotary’s commitment and its partners (WHO, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, UNICEF, USCDC) more than 3 billion children have received the oral polio vaccine since 1985. The vaccine includes a Vitamin A supplement which has helped to avert over 1.5 million childhood deaths. The PolioPlus vaccine has enabled millions of people to walk who would otherwise have been paralyzed.

More than a million Rotarians have volunteered their time and contributed over \$2.1 billion to polio eradication to protect 3 billion children in 122 countries. Many have had the unique opportunity to be involved in national immunization days when thousands of children receive the life saving drops of oral vaccine.

Even though many people think polio doesn’t exist today it does. Polio is a highly infectious disease that spreads quickly. It primarily affects children and is spread through contaminated water and food.

As of 2022 wild polio is endemic only in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Unfortunately, with the unrest in the Gaza Strip area, polio has come back after 25 years. 187,000 children under the age of 10 were vaccinated just last month during a mass vaccination effort over a three day period.

There is no cure for Polio. It can only be prevented. The world is 99.9% polio free. Rotary is totally committed to fighting for the day when polio no longer exists. We are this close!

You may ask “What is the Rotary Club of West Kelowna doing to mark this special day?” On Thursday, October 24th we will have a special guest speaker who will share with us his personal experiences as a polio survivor. We will also be accepting donations from our members that will go specifically to Polio Plus. To encourage member donations we will be giving each donor a ticket for a chance to win a gift basket. For each \$20.00 donation you will receive one ticket and for a \$50.00 donation you will receive 3 tickets! The draw for the gift basket will be made at this meeting. Let’s be part of the solution to rid the world of polio! Give generously.

*Yours in Rotary Service,
The Foundation Committee
Rotary Club of West Kelowna*