

World Polio Day: Rotary clubs fight to end polio worldwide

Vermillion — The Vermillion Rotary Club joins clubs around the globe in celebration of World Polio Day on Friday, October 24, a day to push for the successful completion of Rotary's 27-year mission to eradicate the crippling childhood disease polio.

Governor Dennis Daugaard has proclaimed October 24, 2014 as World Polio Day in South Dakota, in recognition of Rotary's work with governments and foundations in the effort to eradicate polio from the planet by 2018.

Daugaard's proclamation notes that cases of polio worldwide have decreased 99% since 1988. In fact, as of 2013, there were only 416 confirmed polio cases in the world, down from about 350,000 per year when the initiative launched in 1988. Polio is set to become the second human disease ever to be eliminated from the world (smallpox is the first).

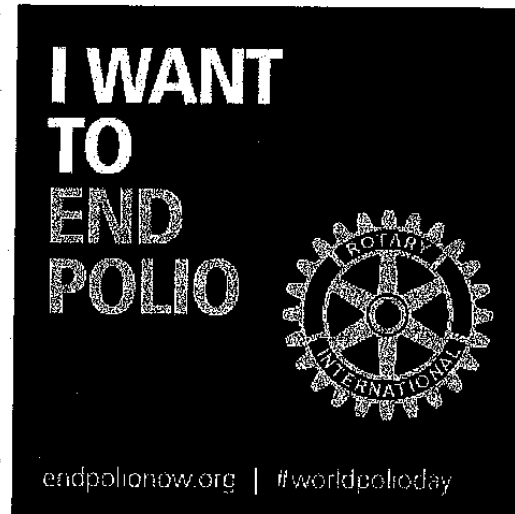
"99% eradication of polio is amazing, but one percent is still too much. The Vermillion Rotary Club, like all Rotary clubs around the world, won't be satisfied until Polio is non-existent," said Art Mabry, Vermillion Rotary Club President.

"We will continue to work to erase the remaining one percent through public awareness and providing funds for the resources needed to reach our goal of totally eradicating Polio worldwide."

Rotary International recently announced an additional \$44.7 million boost in funding to support immunization activities, surveillance and research spearheaded by the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI), which aims to end the disabling viral disease worldwide by 2018.

To date, Rotary has contributed more than \$1.3 billion and countless volunteer hours to the protection of more than two billion children. Rotary has helped 193 countries stop the transmission of polio through the mass immunization of children. The disease remains endemic in only three countries — Afghanistan, Nigeria, and Pakistan — although other countries remain at risk for imported cases.

A highly infectious disease, polio causes paralysis and is sometimes fatal. As there is no cure, the best protection is prevention. For as little as US 60 cents worth of vaccine, a child can be protected against this crippling disease for life. After an international investment



of more than US\$9 billion, and the successful engagement of over 200 countries and 20 million volunteers, polio could be the first human disease of the 21st century to be eradicated.

GPEI is spearheaded by the World Health Organization, Rotary International, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). It includes the support of governments and other private sector donors.

Rotary provides grant funding to polio eradication initiative partners UNICEF and the World Health Organization, which work with the governments and Rotary club members of polio-affected countries to plan and carry out immunization activities. Mass immunizations of children via the oral polio vaccine must continue until global eradication is achieved.

Through 2018, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation will match two-to-one every dollar Rotary commits to polio eradication (up to \$35 million a year).

About Rotary: Rotary brings together a global network of volunteer leaders dedicated to tackling the world's most pressing humanitarian challenges. Rotary connects 1.2 million members of more than 34,000 Rotary clubs in over 200 countries and geographical areas. Their work improves lives at both the local and international levels, from helping families in need in their own communities to working toward a polio-free world. For more information, visit Rotary.org.