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Rotary Leaders:

Over the past few days, Rotarians have called attention to two recent news articles featuring Bill Gates, co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

The first story, an interview published in the 1 November edition of the Financial Times, mentions Rotary as “the business group that had long led the effort,” in a sentence that went on to quote Mr. Gates describing the “plateau” the Global Polio Eradication Initiative had reached at the time that the Gates Foundation joined the effort. The reference to Rotary was added by the writer, creating the appearance to some readers that Mr. Gates had criticized Rotary.

The second article, from the 10 November Wall Street Journal, is an essay about polio eradication in India adapted from Mr. Gates’ contribution to a publication called “Reimagining India: Unlocking the Potential of Asia’s Next Superpower.” In this personal account, Mr. Gates does not mention any of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative partners by name.

Rotary-Gates Relationship

The fact is that Mr. Gates’ status as a major draw for international news media brings much-needed attention to the cause. Mr. Gates has [praised Rotary](#) for its work in the fight to end polio in the media, in [direct messages to Rotarians](#) and at the [Rotary Convention and other events](#). The Gates Foundation has been a tremendous partner, and our continued collaboration is evident in the “End Polio Now: Make History Today” campaign, through which every US dollar \$1 Rotary spends for polio eradication will be matched with two dollars from the Gates Foundation, up to \$35 million per year, through 2018. Because of our ongoing partnership, General Secretary John Hewko called Dr. Chris Elias, President of the Gates Foundation’s Global Development Program today to discuss the recent concerns expressed by some within Rotary.

Because polio is a distant memory in the minds of many, media attention is critical to our efforts to keep the issue at the forefront of public attention. Each of our partners in the Global Polio Eradication Initiative makes it a point to mention the work of the entire partnership in media interviews. Although each partner brings its own important and unique contributions to global polio eradication efforts, not every partner is mentioned in every news story on polio.

Rotary recognition in the media

It is important to remember that Rotary is indeed receiving **tremendous recognition** as a leader in the fight against polio in top-tier media across the globe.

Most recently, World Polio Day 2013 generated considerable positive media coverage for Rotary worldwide. On and around 24 October, there was a significant spike in media coverage and online conversation about polio eradication, including articles in [Huffington Post Live](#), the [Journal of the American Medical Association](#), [Voice of America](#), [Pakistan Today](#), [Die Welt](#), Wall Street Journal's [India Real Time](#), and numerous other regional and international publications.

You may also have seen a *front-page* [New York Times](#) story that was picked up worldwide earlier this year, heavily focused on Rotary's important work in Pakistan. A short excerpt follows: "The country's new determination has also brought Rotary International back to the front lines. The club, founded in Chicago in 1905, **started the global polio eradication drive in 1988.**" Our team worked with this reporter for months, to make sure that he was aware of Rotary's ongoing work and contributions to the effort.

This year alone, Rotary has enjoyed recognition in the New York Times' [India Ink](#) blog, two [Wall Street Journal](#) articles, a cover story in the international edition of [TIME Magazine](#), and stories in the [Forbes](#) and [Forbes' Entrepreneurs](#) section, [Huffington Post](#), [Discover Magazine](#), [Voice of America](#), [NPR](#) and **COSMOS (Australia)**.

Rotary has also been featured in national and regional stories including those focused on our 'This Close' [celebrity ambassadors](#), and a cover story in **The Independent** (UK). We have been covered in nine of the world's top ten most influential media outlets (as cited in Forbes) so far in 2013.

The Spirit of Partnership

As we know, Rotary laid the groundwork for polio eradication, serving as the catalyst for the greatest global health initiative the world has ever seen. Rotarians have worked diligently to raise funds, advocate, and mobilize communities around the world. But we can't do it alone. We are proud to stand with partners like the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, UNICEF, the World Health Organization, and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, who all have dedicated themselves to the fight against polio.

It is not helpful to direct negative responses to the reporters and partners who help us raise much-needed awareness of the cause we care so deeply about. We may not always like everything said about the initiative, but it is important to maintain perspective, and focus on our shared goal: the eradication of polio.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Ron D. Burton