

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**March 8, 2016**

**Polio Eradication In-Sight and Rotary Has Been Leading the Effort Since 1985**

**(**Boise, Idaho ) (March 8, 2016)

Rotary International, with the support of local rotary clubs in Idaho, across the country and across the world, has invested more than $1.5 billion since 1985 to eradicate Polio from the planet. In his 1985 speech then Rotary International President Carlos Canseco reminded his fellow Rotarians and the world that “Rotary cannot hope to rid the world of polio all on its own, but if we step up our efforts and add them to those of the World Health Organization’s Expanded Program on Immunization, UNICEF, and other agencies of the next two decades, we can be truly effective in accomplishing this mighty task.”

In 1988, Rotary International joined the PanAmerican Health Organization, the World Health Organization, Centers for Disease Control and UNICEF in launching an international campaign to stop the transmission of Polio everywhere in the world. In 2007, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation joined the battle and issued Rotary a $100 million challenge grant to raise funds for polio eradication.

When Rotary announced its plan to eradicate the Polio scourge in 1985 the disease affected more than 350,000 people (mostly children) worldwide. By 2015, there were fewer than 10 cases identified and these were all in just two war-torn countries – Pakistan and Afghanistan. In 2016, there have been only three reported cases (one in Pakistan and two in Afghanistan). The global health community has issued statements saying it is likely Polio will be eradicated by 2019.

Dr. John Sever, vice-chair of Rotary’s International PolioPlus Committee, and one of the first Rotarian leaders to take on Polio back in the 1980s shared in late 2015, “I’m very pleased and hopeful that we’ll move quickly now in the next year or two to complete the eradication effort. It has certainly moved in that direction, and I’m very grateful that there’s been such strong support.”

In District 5400, Rotarians have raised and contributed more than $500,000 to the Polio eradication effort since just 2007. Marianne Barker, District 54000 Rotary Foundation Chair from R/C Blue Lakes-Twin Falls, visited Ethiopia with a volunteer team in 2011 to immunize children in rural areas, seeing the frontline struggle against polio firsthand. Barker says “my biggest take away from my time in Ethiopia was that all moms everywhere love their children and want them to be safe from crippling disease. Rotarians have been saying for years, ‘we’re this close’ to ending polio.” “Well, Rotarians,” Barker admonishes, “‘this close’ is not close enough. Let’s get the job done and END POLIO NOW.”

**About Rotary:**

**The mission of Rotary International is to provide service to others, promote integrity, and advance world understanding, goodwill, and peace through its fellowship of business, professional, and community leaders.**

**Community members who are interested in joining Rotary and being involved with this and similar projects should visit the boiserotary.org website for more information.**

**The 4-Way test**

**Of the things we think, say or do –**

**Is it the TRUTH?**

**Is it FAIR to all concerned?**

**Will it build GOODWILL and BETTER FRIENDSHIPS?**

**Will it be BENEFICIAL to all concerned?**

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