



ROTARY

NEWS RELEASE

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CONTACT: Wayne Hearn (847) 866-3386; wayne.hearn@rotary.org

Rotary clubs worldwide meet \$200 million fundraising challenge for polio eradication

Gates Foundation announces an additional \$50 million to end polio

SAN DIEGO, California (Jan. 17, 2012) — Despite a sagging global economy, Rotary clubs around the world have succeeded in raising more than US\$200 million in new funding for polio eradication.

The fundraising milestone, announced today at Rotary's annual International Assembly in San Diego, was reached in response to a \$355 million challenge grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. All funds have been earmarked to support polio immunization activities in affected countries where this vaccine-preventable disease continues to paralyze children.

"We'll celebrate this milestone, but it doesn't mean that we'll stop raising money or spreading the word about polio eradication," Rotary Foundation Trustee John F. Germ told the annual conference of Rotary leaders. "We can't stop until our entire world is certified as polio free."

"In recognition of Rotary's great work, and to inspire Rotarians in the future, the foundation is committing an additional \$50 million to extend our partnership," said Jeff Raikes, Chief Executive Officer of the Gates Foundation. "Rotary started the global fight against polio, and continues to set the tone for private fundraising, grassroots engagement and maintaining polio at the top of the agenda with key policy makers."

Since 1988, the incidence of polio has plummeted by more than 99 percent, from about 350,000 infections annually to fewer than 650 cases reported so far for 2011. The wild poliovirus now remains endemic – meaning its transmission has never been stopped – in only four countries: Afghanistan, India, Nigeria, and Pakistan. However, India on Jan. 13 marked a full calendar year without a case, paving the way for its imminent removal from the endemic list.

But other countries also remain at risk for polio cases imported from the endemic countries. In Africa in 2011, Chad and the Democratic Republic of Congo had significant outbreaks. Also in 2011, a small cluster of polio cases in China, which had been polio-free for a decade, was attributable to a virus from Pakistan.

Rotary members not only reached into their own pockets to support the Gates challenge, they engaged their communities in a variety of creative fundraising projects, such as a fashion show in California that raised \$52,000; benefit film screenings in New Zealand and Australia that netted \$54,000; and a pledge-supported hike through Kilimanjaro, Tanzania, that brought in \$38,000. Many events were planned around October 24, widely observed as World Polio Day.

To date, Rotary club members worldwide have contributed more than \$1 billion toward the eradication of polio, a cause Rotary took on in 1985. In 1988, the World Health Organization, UNICEF and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention joined Rotary as spearheading partners of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative. More recently, the Gates Foundation has become a major supporter. In November 2007, the Gates Foundation gave Rotary a \$100 million challenge grant for polio eradication, increasing it to \$355 million in 2009. Rotary agreed to raise \$200 million in matching funds by June 30, 2012.

Reaching children with the oral polio vaccine in the disease's remaining strongholds is labor and resource -intensive due to a host of challenges, including poor infrastructure, geographical isolation, armed conflict and cultural misunderstanding about the eradication campaign.

Note to Editors

About Rotary

Rotary is a global humanitarian organization with more than 1.2 million members in 34,000 Rotary clubs in over 200 countries and geographical areas. Rotary members are men and women who are business, professional and community leaders with a shared commitment to make the world a better place through humanitarian service. Rotary's top priority is the global eradication of polio.

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