

WORLD POLIO DAY EVENT AT UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY



A group of students and professionals that participated in the event.

On October 23, 2019, I participated in the World Polio Day event held at Utah Valley University (UVU) and sponsored by the UVU Rotaract and Orem Rotary Club. Prior to today's event, many students, myself included, believed that polio is a disease of the past. To many it is simply a disease our grandparents may have had to deal with with no modern repercussions. Of course, this way of thinking is simply connected to Jonas Salk's 1950s discovery of a vaccine for polio. Many people I know, as well as individuals that work at Utah Valley University, may have at some point been affected by this debilitating disease. However, the purpose of this event was to explain to us that polio is still a disease that still affects many in third world countries.

Dr. John Hanrahan, the District Governor of the Utah Rotary Club, explained that even though millions of people get vaccinated for the disease every year, there are still many pockets of people throughout the world that through ignorance or lack of opportunity have managed to remain unvaccinated. He explained that the only endemic countries in the world are Pakistan, Afghanistan and Nigeria, but that doesn't mean that the disease cannot be found elsewhere. He says as far as

vaccinating people in these regions is concerned, “It is not a scientific issue, it is a political will issue.” Essentially, if the governments and leaders of the countries and even villages on the local level accept the necessity to vaccinate against polio and other diseases, cooperating with volunteer doctors such as those associated with the Rotary Club, the last living strand of polio can be completely eradicated. He raised the issue that many people assume that if those in their environment is vaccinated and that those without vaccinations are few then there is no need for vaccinating the last remaining unvaccinated people and children. He explained that this is idea is unequivocally false. There are many cases every year of vaccine derived polio virus. In layman’s terms, if person A is vaccinated and person B is not, person B can still derive the virus from person A’s environment. More than 400 million children are vaccinated every year, but it until the virus is completely eradicated, it is not enough. Governments, specifically in the three countries listed above, need to ensure the safety of their civilians against this disease in order to produce a prosperous country by providing for the local levels. This is the most effective way to ensure prosperity and sustainable development in these third world regions, providing a needed boost into the modern international system.

As the event was in fact sponsored by the Orem Rotary Club, some emphasis was additionally placed on the organization’s role in both local and international systems. Dr. Dean Robinson of the Orem Rotary Club, as well as a personal acquaintance of mine, described the organization as that of a volunteer organization of 1.2 million professionals. There are over 11,000 clubs around the world where local professionals, whether it be in the health sector or the agricultural sphere, are able to assist in ensuring the development in those specific spheres. He explained that just here in Utah alone, in an unreported year and on an underreported basis, the Rotary Club affected over 1 million lives just here in Utah. He would go on to describe that the organization, through global connections with other professionals and philanthropists around the world, miracles can and do happen. If the Rotary Club was able to practically eradicate over 99% of polio cases in 50 short years, then with the right connections and government cooperation, deadly diseases such as polio can and will be eradicated completely in the near future.

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