

World Polio Day Celebration at UVU



Dr. Scott Leckman speaks during the event via Zoom

This was a great event for me to take part on October 21, 2020 when Utah Valley University hosted a World Polio day, since my father himself had polio which he was at a very young age. Growing up in South America in 1974 it was not feasible for him at all to have access to vaccines and hospitals. I like the fact that United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 3 is to “Ensure healthy lives and promote well being for all at all ages.” In 1988, Rotary International (RI) members started battle to eradicate Polio. Now today they are calling to action to not only eradicate polio but all other diseases as well. In 1988 there were 350,000 cases in 125 countries, and it is amazing that today nearly 99.9% of polio has been eradicated.

Target 3d focuses on strengthening the capacities of all countries specially developing countries for early warning, risk reduction and managing of global health risks. Rotary International is helping even more now during COVID since a lot of countries are experiencing hardship when it comes to health care. This is crucial for 3 world countries and developing countries as well.

Rotary International was founded in 1905 and is a service organization in global network that works together to provide needs and services for local communities as well as internationally. It consists of 1.2 million members worldwide. When United Nation was first formed in 1945, Rotary International as invited to be part of that conference. 49 Rotary members served in 29

different capacities as a part of the United Nations conference. And up to today Rotary is extremely involved with United Nations and there is even a Rotary International day in which they meet at the United Nations in New York.

The main goal of the event at UVU was to highlight Rotary International role in battling polio, and the statistics from the 1970s was mentioned for polio as having 350,000 cases worldwide. My father was one of these cases and he had polio on his right leg, which caused the muscles to not develop and due to this he has no strength whatsoever on his leg. So, RI saw a need to help battle this disease and brought us where we are today which is 99.9% reduction of polio cases.

The event took turns with presenters when one of groups called Rotaract was introduced. Rotaract is a student group that partners with RI and performs services and its participants gain leadership skills. There are over 11,000 Rotaract clubs around the world, with 10 clubs located in Utah with about 100 members.

UVU has a Rotaract club, which focuses on implementing 6 goals: promoting peace, fighting disease, providing an access to clean water, saving mothers and children, supporting education and growing local communities.

Doctor Scott Leckman, former governor of Utah Rotary understands that not all students may have polio on their radar, but he knows that our parents and grandparents do remember polio. Polio surfaced in the US in 1916 in New York and quickly spread around the world. This sounds very familiar with what happened with COVID. This caused an epidemic in New York city where 27,000 people were paralyzed and 9,000 were dead. After 1916 this epidemic would come back every summer.

In 1954 Dr. Jonas Salk developed the first polio vaccine, few years later in 1961 Dr. Albert Sabin developed “live” oral vaccine which became a standard. However, this is no longer the case in the US: in the US doctors administer 3 injection rounds of the dead virus which is less risky.

It is amazing to see the progress that was made in fighting with this disease, understanding the facts fully since my father had this disease I am very grateful of groups like Rotary International , which are still fighting disease to provide the rest of the world with a way to fight back.

Diogo Dasilva, UVU student