



by Oliver Rosenbauer
Communications Officer
Global Polio Eradication Initiative
World Health Organization

Rotary and Rotaract's PolioPlus Effort- A Global Quest to Eradicate an Ancient Scourge

To my friends in Utah - here's to a polio-free world!


When: Oct. 23rd, 2025, 11:30am

Where: LA 233, Utah Valley
University

More info at:



Entry is open to all students and refreshments will be provided

Event hosted through Student Engaged Learning

Design by Curtis Bristol



UVU 8th Observation World Polio Day: Mr. Oliver Rosenbauer Evokes Hope in Polio Eradication

By Grace Jergensen, Student in Political Science and Foreign Affairs in Utah/USA

On **October 23, 2025**, World Polio Day, Utah Valley University (UVU) welcomed Mr. Oliver Rosenbauer, Communications Officer and Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) official for the World Health Organization (WHO), via Microsoft Teams, about WHO mission to eradicate the disease, Polio. He addressed members of the Rotaract and Foreign Affairs Clubs, as well as faculty and international health leaders.



Dr. Janet Colvin, Associate Dean, College of Humanities and Social Sciences speaks during the event

Members and students were welcomed by Natalia Figuero, President of the Foreign Affairs Club and Chief Operator of the event. As we patiently waited for technical difficulties to be adjusted, the opening remarks were given by the President of the UVU Rotaract Club, Janessa Michelle Purcell, emphasizing the collaborations between students and faculty to provide this opportunity.



Photo of Mr. Oliver Rosenbauer of the World Health Organization addresses students and faculty at UVU 8th World Polio Day Observation

Mr. Rosenbauer's presentation centered on WHO's mission to eradicate polio and increased global cooperation to achieve these goals. He provided an overview of the history of the polio epidemic. The polio epidemic reached its peak in the mid 1900's, reaching 21,000 cases of paralysis in the United States. As polio cases rose, the first polio vaccine was administered in 1950. However, it was scarcely available in underdeveloped countries; polio remained the leading cause of paralysis.

Today global efforts have succeeded in that polio is now 99% eradicated, yet s2 countries continue to suffer from the epidemic. Afghanistan and Pakistan continue to experience outbreaks, positively, the outbreaks are limited to one strain of the virus, indicating lower genetic diversity of polio, this strain is known as WPV-1. Despite the epidemic being contained in Afghanistan and Pakistan, Mr. Rosenbauer mentioned that have been outbreaks as well in Gaza. As Gaza in currently suffering a humanitarian crisis, due to the Israel-Gaza conflict, outreach to contain this outbreak was limited. Through a temporary cease-fire agreement between Israel and Gaza, health workers were able to provide treatment, and the outbreak was contained.

To ensure complete eradication, Mr. Rosenbauer discussed the creation of the PolioPlus project in Philadelphia in 1985. The PolioPlus project was the first largest public health initiative created. As Communications Officer and Global Polio Eradication Initiative official, Mr. Rosenbauer oversees the data and efforts of the PolioPlus project.

He emphasizes developing strategic planning and adapting strategies to better combat future outbreaks. To do so, Mr. Rosenbauer has overseen vaccine administration, delivering vaccines to

over 450 million children each year. Vaccine administration is a crucial step in areas with limited healthcare access. Mr. Rosenbauer mentioned, rarely do children live to the age of 5 in these countries. Providing mass vaccine campaigns gives greater accessibility to vaccination, with the hopes of a longer life.



Group Photo of UVU Students, Faculty, UMIF Members and Rotary Leaders Gather Together to Celebrate World Polio Day - October 23, 2025

As our meeting came to an end, Mr. Rosenbauer concluded by encouraging students at UVU to continue contributing to global awareness and service projects. Both the Rotaract and Foreign Affairs Club play vital roles in spreading awareness and supporting public health and humanitarian initiatives through our outreach projects. and we thank Mr. Oliver Rosenbauer for taking time to speak with us and the great effort he and his team are doing to eradicate this disease.

As a student pursuing a career with the United Nations Sustainable Development Programs and preparing to attend the UVU Political Science study abroad in Geneva summer of 2026 with Mr. Rosenbauer, I am extremely grateful to have participated in this inspiring discussion. What I took away from Mr. Rosenbauer's speech was that we must come together as nations to help create the impact we expect and want to see. As I work towards my professional career, and continue in university, I will remember Mr. Rosenbauer's emphasis on creating global connections, and working together to overcome conflicts we may face. Solutions are created through unity. We must be committed to working together, this is not a fight won individually. As club members, we must continue to use our platform and provide opportunities, such as this one, to raise our voices and awareness, to advocate for public health and other issues we are passionate about.

This event was made possible by the students of UVU. Under the guidance of teachers and other faculty members, students from the Rotaract and Foreign Affairs Club organized and lead the event, allowing them to step into professional roles and expectations for the future. Thank you to Natalia Figueroa, the President of the Foreign Affairs Club, Erynn Lammi, VP of the Rotary Club, Kade Van Ry, Curtis Bristol, Janessa-Michelle Purcell and Aemish Brock for organizing and hosting this event. I would not have been able to receive this amazing opportunity if it weren't for the efforts of my fellow students.

Mr. Rosenbauer expressed his well wishes to the students and members, looking forward to see some of us at the UN in Geneva next summer of 2026 for the UVU Political Science Study Abroad. A special thanks to Dr. Janet Colvin, Dr. Jay DeSart, Cathay Ambrose, DJ Smith, Clark Merkley, Cherise Armstrong, Mike Rich, Debbie Laurent, Cholpon Akmatalieva and the members of the Rotaract Club for hosting this event. Especially, thanks to Dr. Baktybek D. Abdrisaev for providing students with incredible opportunities to engage directly with global policy leaders.