Hosting UVU's 8th Annual World Polio Day Observation as a Rotaractor

On October 23, 2025, I, along with my fellow Utah Valley University (UVU) Rotaractors in the Foreign Affairs Club and Utah International Mountain Forum, had the opportunity to host our university's 8th annual observation of World Polio Day. For this event, we were privileged to be able to invite Mr. Oliver Rosenbauer from the World Health Organization to participate as our keynote speaker. Mr. Rosenbauer is the Communications Officer for the Global Polio Eradication Initiative at the World Health Organization and has dedicated his career to the permanent eradication of the Polio Virus.

Mr. Oliver Rosenbauer, Joining the Event via Teams

From Mr. Rosenbauer's remarks, I was surprised and pleased to learn that the permanent eradication of the Polio Virus is well within our grasp, and that cases of the disease are almost exclusive to Pakistan and Afghanistan. Mr. Rosenbauer emphasized the importance of persistence and urgent action to vaccinate the people of that region and expel the disease from the sewage systems. Continued conversation and advocacy are key to seeing that this is accomplished. He also noted that the Polio Virus is held in some labs around the world for research purposes, and that great care will need to be taken to ensure the virus is kept safely contained, so as not to reintroduce it after eradication. Mr. Rosenbauer's presentation was crucial for the local Rotarians and student Rotaractors, as we can take on the responsibility of educating our own community here in Utah.

My Fellow Club Leaders and I (Top Left Corner) Listening to Mr. Rosenbauer's Presentation.

This event was planned, organized, and hosted by the leadership of three coaligned clubs at UVU – Utah International Mountain Forum, Foreign Affairs, and Rotaract – namely Janessa-Michelle Purcell, Natalia Figueroa, Kade Van Rye, Curtis Bristol, Erynn Lammi, and myself. I was very grateful to be able to play a significant role in organizing and hosting this event. One example is that weeks before the event took place, I sent an email announcement to UVU advisors who work with students in relevant departments. Another way I was able to contribute was by introducing Dr. Jay DeSart, chair of the Department of History and Political Science at UVU. I had been in contact with Dr. DeSart the week before to coordinate his participation, to ensure that Mr. Rosenbauer understood our department's support for student engagement in international organizations, especially as we prepare for our upcoming trip to the UN in Geneva and New York this coming summer.

Me Introducing Dr. DeSart, With Visiting Rotarians and Students in the Audience

My peers and I organizing and hosting this event was a great representation of UVU's student-engaged learning (SEL) model. SEL encourages students to work as a group on resolving certain problems with a professor mentoring them. Not only did we attend an event about the Polio Virus, but we also took the initiative to work out the details and take actions needed to make sure we would provide an appropriate environment to highlight and spread awareness of this pressing issue.

By Aemish Brock, Vice President of UVU Foreign Affairs