

World Polio Day Observation: Learning Through Global Partnerships



UVU Students, Staff, and Orem-Lindon Rotarians attended the World Polio Day Observation.

On October 24, 2025, I attended a keynote lecture hosted by Utah Valley University in observance of World Polio Day. The event took place on campus, organized through a service-learning model in collaboration with the UVU Rotaract Club and the Orem-Lindon Rotary Club. The keynote speaker was Mr. Oliver Rosenbauer, Communications Officer for the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) at the World Health Organization (WHO). The event was also joined by Cathy Ambrose, President of the Orem-Lindon Rotary Club, and Dr. Jay DeSart, Chair of the UVU Department of History and Political Science.



Rotarians of Orem-Lindon, Utah in attendance.

During the lecture, Mr. Rosenbauer explained the mission of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative and Rotary International's long-term commitment to eradicating polio. He described the scientific, political, and ethical dimensions of this global health campaign. I learned that polio is one of the few diseases with the potential for total eradication, much like smallpox, but it requires worldwide cooperation to succeed. Mr. Rosenbauer shared that since 1985, polio cases have been reduced by 99%, with only small endemic areas remaining in Pakistan and Afghanistan. What stood out to me was his explanation that finishing eradication is no longer a medical challenge; it's a political one. He highlighted how cooperation between opposing groups, like in Gaza, made it possible to stop violence to allow vaccination efforts temporarily.

That story made a strong impression on me because it showed how humanitarian work can inspire peace, even in the most divided places.



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As a student participant, this event was a great example of the student-engaged learning model in action. It connected classroom discussions about international cooperation with real-world experience. Seeing how faculty mentors and student hosts collaborated to make the event possible showed me the value of teamwork, civic engagement, and leadership development.

Even though my role was simply attending the lecture, I felt part of something bigger, a community of learners and volunteers working toward global change.



UVU Student Leaders, along with Rotarians listening to the keynote speaker.

This event helped me better understand how service, diplomacy, and science intersect in solving international problems. I also appreciated learning how Rotary International acts as a bridge between NGOs, governments, and the UN system. It was inspiring to see that ordinary people, volunteers, and students can contribute to something as meaningful as disease eradication. I left the lecture with a deeper sense of gratitude for global partnerships and the dedication it takes to achieve lasting health equality. Overall, attending this event reminded me why community and global service matter. It made me more aware of how collective action can protect future generations from suffering, and it encouraged me to stay involved with programs that promote public health and peace.

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