

Building International Community: World Polio Day Observation at Utah Valley University

On October 23rd, 2025, Utah Valley University hosted a World Polio Observation Day event in room 233 on campus. The event, sponsored by the Orem-Lindon Rotary and UVU Rotaract, featured the PolioPlus Effort. PPE is a World Health Organization-affiliated initiative to eradicate the polio disease worldwide. A combination of in-person and virtual attendance allowed for Mr. Oliver Rosenbauer, the Communications Officer for the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, to deliver the keynote presentation.



Mr. Oliver Rosenbauer, CO for GPEI

There was a particular focus on the region of Central Asia, where some of the last endemic cases of polio exist. Over the past few decades, the GPE Initiative has drastically reduced polio cases worldwide and is extremely close to global eradication of the disease. In particular, Afghanistan and Pakistan contain some of the last regions where the disease is endemic, resulting in a particular focus on these areas. In addition to actively monitoring contamination of the water supply and studying the strains of polio found in active cases, providing vaccines to remote mountain regions has been a major project of the initiative. Two of the greatest challenges facing the initiative are the

mountainous geography of these regions and the hostile political climates, both of which are highly relevant to our academic studies of Central Asia.



Janessa-Michelle Purcell Moderates the Event

With the difficulty of transporting the vaccine to these remote regions, including an adverse political climate, the support of organizations such as the Orem-Lindon Rotary and UVU Rotaract has provided important support both in Utah and internationally. With the cooling of the political situation, such support will become even more important as the initiative can redouble its efforts in these regions, hopefully finally eradicating polio worldwide.

In addition to providing the Rotary and Rotaract important updates on the success of their contributions and the work that has been done in support of global polio eradication, the event provided an excellent opportunity to inform more people of the important work being done and involve the students of UVU in a meaningful endeavor. The event was open to those on campus to attend, and was

widely promoted within the Political Science department.



Group Photo of the Event Participants

Additionally, as part of UVU's Student Engaged Learning Model, students were directly involved in organizing the event on campus. In particular, Janessa Purcell and Natalia Figueroa were essential in organizing student efforts to prepare for the event. It was an energizing experience to see so many different tasks in motion simultaneously by fellow students, and it provided a much stronger connection to the issues discussed by being a direct part of the preparations for the event. A strong organizational effort and a caring attitude laid the groundwork for a successful and enjoyable event that I was glad to have assisted in preparing for.

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