

My World Polio Day Observation with Utah International Mountain Forum

October 23rd, 2025, was World Polio Day, a day of observation at Utah Valley University. The event was hosted by the Utah International Mountain Forum as well as the Orem-Lindon Rotary Club. President of the Utah Valley University Foreign Affairs Club, Natalia Figueroa, led the event. Oliver Rosenbauer, the keynote speaker for our event and the Communications Officer for the Global Polio Eradication Initiative at the World Health Organization, spoke on the challenges currently facing us in finally eradicating Polio from the earth. Rosenbauer called upon us as Rotarians to take the challenge upon each of us personally to see the job through that no children ever have to worry about contracting Polio or not. He did so by evoking compassion with personal stories of Polio survivors and statistics regarding the persistence of Polio in Afghanistan and Pakistan. I also learned for the first time that this initiative involves Rotary International and Rotaractors as a student club of the Rotary International directly, and of their history participating in this fight.



The audience listens while UVU Rotaractor Erynn Lammi introduces the next speaker.

The fight against Polio until recently seemed entirely inconsequential to me. Aside from learning from my history books that Franklin D. Roosevelt contracted the disease and was bound

for life to his wheelchair, my life had been completely unaffected by the illness. Now, in retrospect, I have grown a deeper sense of gratitude for the work that has been done so that I might have lived a life that was Polio-free. This sense of deep gratitude is a compelling force of compassion for those who still suffer from the spread of this virus. I now understand my role in this fight as a rotaractor, and thanks to Mr. Rosenbauer's presentation.

Until the 23rd, I was unaware that there are still two nations fighting Polio outbreaks, namely Afghanistan and Pakistan. Together the countries share a population greater than that of Russia and Mexico combined. In each country the outbreak of the disease has been mostly contained, but the sheer size of these countries has prevented complete eradication as they've struggled for a unified political front for the eradication of Polio.



Rotaractors Natalia Figueroa and Kade Van Ry (Myself) listen intently to Mr. Rosenbauer's presentation.

In addition to the keynote speaker, we had Dr. Janet Colvin during the event, who shared her gratitude for the close relations shared between both Utah Valley University's Rotaract Club, now an involved part of the Student Engaged Learning Model within the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, and the Orem-Lindon Rotary Club. We are grateful to Dr. Janet for her attendance and involvement with our event. Cathy Ambrose, President of the Orem-Lindon Rotary Club spoke about recent achievements with the Orem-Lindon Rotary Club and their contributions

in the donations made to the fight. Her leadership and partnership with the student rotaractors at our university means a great deal to us. Dr. Jay DeSart, Chair of the History and Political Science Department spoke to us about the part Oliver Rosenbauer has played in preparing for our study abroad to Switzerland.



Mr. Clark Merkley awaits a response after asking Oliver Rosenbauer a question during the Q&A portion of the event.

All speakers emphasized the importance and great impact of the Rotarians and Rotaractors on leading service within our own communities. They also confirmed their support for UVU Rotaractors involvement in both the initiative on polio eradication and coming trip to Geneva next summer. We as Rotaractors and Rotarians are responsible for setting the example for sustainable development and service. We are grateful to all who attended and helped us make this possible.

Attending UVU's 8th Annual World Polio Day Observation has broadened my horizons. It was an opportunity to exercise my empathy and challenge myself whether I care enough to help or what I might do to aid those in need. I was able to aid in preparing the broadcast for a larger audience to get involved. I also had the opportunity to lead out in editing the video to be shared on UIMF's Youtube for all viewers. It was also a hopeful experience as I got to see the charity of other Rotarians as they set aside time to attend the event with us and share of their knowledge and questions.

I'm glad to have been a part of the preparation for this year's World Polio Day Observation. I believe that my active participation in hosting the event has helped me feel closer to the issue at hand, and in that way I might become an advocate in my immediate circles and future circles as well.

Kade Van Ry, Vice President, Utah Valley University Foreign Affairs Club