

President's message

Dear fellow Rotarians and members of the family of Rotary,

Rotary's long-term, sustained battle against polio has defined our organization for decades. We have a right to be proud of all that we have accomplished through the years.

Our progress is real and noteworthy. In 1988, polio was endemic in 125 countries, with more than 350,000 new cases a year worldwide. Since then, Rotary and our Global Polio Eradication Initiative partners have reduced the incidence of polio by more than 99.9 percent, vaccinated more than 2.5 billion children against the virus, and prevented 18 million cases of paralysis. Over the years, Rotary has helped country after country move into the polio-free column. This includes India, which some considered impossible not long ago. Of the three types of poliovirus, type 2 has been eradicated and type 3 could soon be certified as eradicated. Nigeria has not reported a case of wild poliovirus in nearly three years. If this trend holds, we will be down to just one type of wild poliovirus in only one section of the world, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

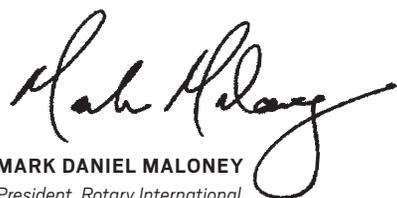
There are major challenges in that region. But it is crucial that we remain optimistic. Look at all that we have accomplished so far. This is no time to get discouraged or to think that the task is impossible. We will end polio forever, but only if we remain steadfast and vigilant. World Polio Day is a time for Rotarians from all over the globe to come together, recognize the progress we have made in our fight against polio, and plan the action we must take to end polio forever. The key word is action, because we still have important work to do.

This year, we want to see as many Rotary clubs as possible holding World Polio Day events around the world. Need some ideas? How about organizing a viewing party for friends and club members to watch Rotary's Online Global Update? You could also dedicate a club meeting to World Polio Day or create a fundraising event. Remember, every dollar raised is matched 2-to-1 by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Once you have created an event, register it at endpolio.org/register-your-event. Then promote it using the World Polio Day toolkit, available at endpolio.org/world-polio-day.

Mark your calendar to tune in to Rotary's World Polio Day Online Global Update on 24 October. This year we will stream our program on Facebook in multiple time zones around the world. Visit the Rotary International Facebook page to RSVP to your region's program. And do not forget to follow the event on social media and share it with your network.

When we reach our goal, polio will become only the second human disease eradicated on the planet, and Rotary will receive international acclaim. But what matters most is the children who will never again have to face this terrible, disabling virus. Rotary must continue to connect the world in the effort toward polio eradication. It is up to us. Let us finish the job.



MARK DANIEL MALONEY
President, Rotary International



Mark and Gay Maloney along with RI director of PolioPlus Carol Pandak during Rotary's record-breaking Sydney Harbour Bridge climb. The climb raised money for polio eradication and broke two world records (at the time): the most flags flown on a bridge (278 flags) and the largest number of climbers on the Sydney Harbour Bridge at one time (340 people).