

Rotary takes on polio, and is winning the battle!

This year marks 30 years since Rotary launched [PolioPlus](#), its campaign to rid the world of polio. Beginning on Rotary's anniversary, 23 February, Rotary members worldwide will be holding events to celebrate three decades of polio eradication progress.

Since 1985 Rotary and its partners have helped reduce the number of cases from 350,000 annually to fewer than 400 in 2014, and they remain committed until the disease is eradicated. Rotary has contributed more than \$1.3 billion and countless volunteer hours to protect more than 2 billion children worldwide. In addition, Rotary's advocacy efforts have played a role in decisions by donor governments to contribute over \$10 billion to the effort.

Before the global scope of PolioPlus, individual clubs with Rotary funding were attacking the disease closer to home.

In 1979 Rotary members and delegates of the Philippine Ministry of Health looked on as volunteers administered drops of the oral polio vaccine to children in the Manila barrio of Guadalupe Viejo.

When [James L. Bomar Jr.](#), then Rotary president, put the first drops of vaccine into a child's mouth, he ceremonially launched the Philippine poliomyelitis immunization effort. Bomar joined Enrique M. Garcia, the country's minister of health, in signing the contract committing Rotary International and the government of the Philippines to a joint five-year effort to immunize around 6 million children against polio at a cost of about \$760,000.

In a 1993 interview, Bomar recalled how the brother of one of the children he'd immunized tugged on his pant leg to get his attention and said, "Thank you, thank you, Rotary."

The success of this project set the stage for Rotary's top priority to rid the world of polio. Since Rotary introduced its PolioPlus campaign, the number of polio cases worldwide has dropped 99 percent, and the virus remains endemic in just three countries -- Afghanistan, Nigeria, and Pakistan.