



Polio Survivors Ask...

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Q: PHI's WE'RE STILL HERE! campaign has a catchy title. What does it mean?

A: It means: TAKE NOTICE, WORLD! There are a million polio survivors out there living and functioning in our United States (20 million worldwide!) with remnants of what, to many, is a forgotten disease. We're saying, "HURRAH for medical science—we wiped out wild virus polio in this country. But we didn't wipe out the survivors of those epidemics—and WE'RE STILL HERE!"

It means: HEY, BETCHA DIDN'T KNOW that guy you sat next to on the bus yesterday contracted polio when he was three years old, living on a farm outside of Des Moines back in 1958. And remember your daughter's second grade teacher? She was the third member of her family caught up by the disease—spent a year in Lincoln General Hospital and rehab. Our mayor's a polio survivor, too, as is the pastor at the church down on the corner. All living productive lives, contributing to the welfare of their families and their community. And all STILL HERE!

It means: LISTEN UP, PEOPLE! We're citizens out to make a difference, and this year we're focusing our attention on bringing more access to the world around us all. We're offering suggestions to businesses that want to serve their customers better, communities that seek more convenience through access for everyone in their towns. We're helping to create an environment where it's easier for mom to take her toddler to the zoo in a stroller—or for grandpa to get into his favorite restaurant—or for shoppers to get that armload of packages out the front door of the mall. It's OUT with physical barriers—and IN with ramps and curb cuts and easily-opened doors, clear pathways, reachable credit card processing machines, and usable grab bars near public restroom toilet stools. Whatever—it's goodbye to obstruction, hello to independence.

It means: GET THIS! Not only are we hit with the vicissitudes of growing older, but with the complications of the late effects of polio, and for at least 40% of polio survivors, the new challenge—post-polio syndrome, with its varying symptoms and puzzling paths to effective treatment. As the need for talented, questioning newcomers in the medical community continues and more are attracted to our cause, we want them to realize that WE'RE STILL HERE!

It means: TAKE HEART! Know this, too: Post-Polio Health International exists for polio survivors and all who love and care for them in any way. Help is available. PHI's mission statement explains that this organization is meant "to enhance the lives and independence of polio survivors and home ventilator users through Education, Advocacy, Research and Networking." Says it all, doesn't it. Everyone should know—as PHI does—that WE'RE STILL HERE!

So the WE'RE STILL HERE! campaign is the attempt of polio survivors to reach out, to connect with the rest of society in a meaningful way. We offer awareness, enlightenment, a broadening vision to those who do not know of such things as post-polio and polio survivors. We build a bridge to those who have never been down this trail, in hopes of forging new and mutually-beneficial relationships. It's a WIN-WIN deal—'cause, after all, WE'RE STILL HERE!

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