



POST-POLIO HEALTH INTERNATIONAL
INCLUDING INTERNATIONAL VENTILATOR USERS NETWORK



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Post-Polio Health International kicks off WE'RE STILL HERE! for October 12-18, 2008

St. Louis, Missouri - In an effort to spread understanding of polio's long-term effects, Post-Polio Health International (PHI) urges all polio survivors and post-polio support organizations to tell their personal polio stories at local Rotary club meetings.

Polio Survivors and Associates (PSA), a Rotary Action Group, made up of individual polio survivors and Rotarians with a special interest in polio, such as volunteer participants in current polio vaccination programs, is asking clubs to tell the polio story in their own community through the experiences of their own community survivors.

Both organizations believe this interchange of experiences and information will increase public awareness of the current effort by Rotary International to eradicate polio worldwide. The groups also want to emphasize the need to create rehabilitation programs that provide healthy and productive lives for individuals with physical disabilities.

“Our goal is to offer Rotarians a better understanding of the long-term after effects of having had polio as well as the initial effect,” said Joan L. Headley, Executive Director of PHI. Headley continues, “Rotary International’s commitment to eradicating the poliovirus from the world is unyielding. PHI and the extensive post-polio network carry on from there, assisting those for whom the vaccine was too late.”

Ann Lee Hussey, Chairperson of PSA, said, “As Rotarians who are also polio survivors, we know personally the significant difference rehabilitation made in our lives and how it contributed to our success in life. Our goal is to ensure that younger polio survivors have the same opportunity.”

According to an analysis done by PHI, there are 920,000 survivors in the US, with 500,000 experiencing new problems in maintaining their quality of life. Most debilitating is new weakness that may require new assistive devices, such as new bracing, custom-made shoes, wheelchairs and scooters. Some are in need of home health care and new breathing machines, such as bi-level devices and ventilators. Additionally, aging polio survivors are in need of health professionals who understand how to manage their health issues.

Because of the success of the eradication effort, the total number of survivors worldwide has dropped considerably. The exact number is unknown, but polio survivors worldwide are in need of programs that provide rehabilitation, which is key to getting an education and to participating in society.

Experts are concerned about the recent cases of polio in Nigeria, India, and Pakistan, and the effects of conflict on the vaccine campaigns. Hussey states, “Polio is a distant memory for many, but we need to remind everyone that it has never been eradicated in some parts of the world and that contributions of manpower and funds can help finish that job and turn our focus to rehabilitation.”

Post-Polio Health International’s website (www.post-polio.org) is home-base for facts, ideas and latest updates on the WE’RE STILL HERE! campaign, with a link to Polio Survivors and Associates at www.rotarypoliosurvivors.com.

Post-Polio Health International is a nonprofit organization based in St. Louis that serves as international resource for health professionals and both polio survivors and users of home mechanical ventilation. PHI and PSA can facilitate media interviews.

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