



Thanks for Life Week –End Polio Now

Rotary International, the first and largest service organisation in the world announced in 1985 that it would be eradicating polio. At that time polio was endemic in 125 countries with 1,000 new polio cases every day. Today huge progress has been made; only four countries still have polio (India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Nigeria) with only 1500 cases reported in a year. This year requires one last push to eradicate it completely.

Polio is a horrible disease which attacks the nervous system and has an acute effect on muscles. It attacks mainly children under five, whose limbs are deformed or they are paralysed or their lung muscles do not work and they need an iron lung. Indeed many of us in the United Kingdom who can remember schools in the 1950s may remember that polio claimed many victims here in the UK. Many still have strong images of callipers and iron lungs. It was not that long ago.

There is no cure for polio, but it can be eradicated by immunisation. Two drops of vaccine taken orally protects a child for life. The cost of immunisation is very little -50p can immunise a child against polio for life.

Bill Gates, the founder and owner of Microsoft, believes Rotary can do it. He has offered \$200million to match the funds that Rotary is raising during Thanks for Life Week –February 21st to February 28th. Therefore every £1 collected in the UK, the Gates Foundation will add another £1.78. £2.78 will pay for the immunisation of five children.

This is an international campaign and as this is a children's disease we are talking to children around the world to make them aware of our campaign. In the coming days we are presenting to most of the schools in the Woking area too, asking the children to understand what we are doing and to spread that news to their parents.

If anyone reading this letter can help, whether it is ideas for raising money or simply giving a little themselves; please visit our shop in the Peacocks centre in Woking during the week of February 21st 2010. We will be showing films, explaining what we are doing and inviting people to help Rotary or simply make a donation.

Any support you can give will be much appreciated. If you have any questions, look on the web at www.thanksforlife.org or for local information contact me on 01483 766182.

Peter Kleyn
Woking District Rotary Club