

Finishing the Promise




PolioPlus SOCIETY

Every Club's Goal

PDG Bob Stowell
District Polio* Chair



Past District Governor Bob Stowell will discuss Rotary's PolioPlus mission, sharing how District 6960 clubs can help advance global polio eradication through the Polio* Society



Tuesday Noon
September 15th
Zoom Meeting ID: 860 6855 4560
Passcode: 908057
Club of Sarasota Bay
Rotary
District 6960

Has Rotary finished the job of ending polio? Not yet — and PDG Bob Stowell explains why. In his timely PolioPlus presentation, Bob reminded us that while worldwide cases have fallen more than 99.9 percent, “close” is not “finished.” As long as polio exists anywhere, it remains a threat everywhere. Turn to [pages 3 and 4](#) for Bob’s powerful message, the latest progress, and practical ways our club can help Rotary fulfill its promise to end polio for good.

Upcoming Meetings		
Oct 6	100 Central	Trevor Howard, elite gymnast, shares championship mindset and resilience.
Oct 20	Fogarty -ville	Broadway theatre manager and author shares behind-the-scenes stories <i>From The Back of the House</i> .
Nov 3	100 Central	Peter Rothstein, the new artistic director of the Asolo Theater



International Day of Peace

21 September

Rotary

Ways Rotary members and peacebuilders take action

Rotary members and program participants are people of action who advance peace in countless ways:

- Through every service project that fosters community well-being
- In Positive Peace workshops that build understanding and skills
- By participating in Rotary Friendship Exchanges or Intercountry Committees
- By joining a Rotary Fellowship or Rotary Action Group
- By facilitating young leaders programs that develop the next generation of leaders
- By supporting Rotary Peace Fellows and global grant or district scholars

GRANT APPLICATIONS DUE OCTOBER 31**Applications Due Saturday, October 31, 2026**

Apply for an RCSB Foundation Grant

FALL GRANT CYCLE DECISIONS BY MID-NOVEMBER

The Rotary Club of Sarasota Bay Foundation awards grants twice a year to support club-initiated service projects and community partners doing meaningful work across our area. If your committee—or a community partner—has a project in mind, now is the time to apply. The form is designed for ease of completion and review by our grant committee, so please make every effort to fill in all requested information. The grant must be sponsored by a club member.

REQUIRED APPLICATION MATERIALS

1. A completed Grant Application Form. Although the form is only one page, you may submit up to two pages of narrative document—a project budget is also highly recommended.
2. One additional support material file, such as a newsletter or flyer (optional).
3. A copy of your IRS determination letter - required for first time applicants only.

"The form is designed for ease of completion and review by our grant committee."**- RCSB Foundation Grant Guidelines****\$1,000 minimum - \$5,000 maximum grant award****DEADLINE & SUBMISSION****Submit by October 31 to ridenourstacy@gmail.com**

Decisions announced mid-December

(Spring cycle: deadline May 1 decisions late May)**RECENT FOUNDATION GRANTS**

- Riverview IBE² Last Mile Fund (\$5,000) • Celery Field Microforest Irrigation (\$1,000) • Phnom Penh Library Project (\$2,000) • Ukraine Hospital Solar Power (\$3,500) • Disaster Relief Trailer Resupply (\$1,900) • Riverview IB E² \$16,000

**Questions? Contact Stacy Ridenour at
ridenourstacy@gmail.com.**

Past issues of the Bay Breeze have spotlighted Foundation-funded projects like these in more depth—from the Crock-Pot Program to the Jacaranda Microforest. Watch for more project profiles as this fall grants are announced.

"The Friendliest Club in the World"Rotary Club of Sarasota Bay • District 6960 • rotarysarasotabay@gmail.com

RECAPPING THE SEPTEMBER 15 PROGRAM

Finishing the Promise

PDG Bob Stowell talks about 40 Years of Rotary Experience in the Case for Ending Polio

On September 15, Past District Governor Bob Stowell — newly appointed District 6960 PolioPlus Chair — spoke to the club about Rotary's 40-year commitment to eradicating polio worldwide. A Past President of the Rotary Club of South Fort Myers and a current District 6960 board member supporting 62 clubs across Southwest Florida, Bob built his talk, "Finishing the Promise," around one question every Rotarian eventually has to answer: after four decades of work, is the job actually done?

A Promise Made in 1985

When Rotary launched PolioPlus in 1985, wild poliovirus was paralyzing roughly 350,000 children a year in 125 countries. Rotary and the World Health Organization co-founded the Global Polio Eradication Initiative in 1988, later joined by UNICEF, the CDC, Gavi, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Four decades in, Rotarians have helped immunize more than 3 billion children and contributed over \$2.9 billion directly — unlocking more than \$11 billion more from donor governments.

What Polio Once Meant

Bob opened with a reminder of what the disease cost families before vaccines existed: iron lungs, leg braces, crutches, and — more than anything — fear. "Polio was not just a disease," he told the club. "It was fear." It's worth remembering because it's easy to forget how ordinary a diagnosis Polio once was, and how far it has receded from most of our lived memory.

Close Is Not Finished

That fear is now mostly historical — wild poliovirus cases are down more than 99.9% since 1988, and the disease remains endemic in only two countries: Afghanistan and Pakistan, which together reported just 29 wild-type cases through mid-2026. But "close" is not "gone." As Bob put it, as long as polio exists anywhere, it remains a threat everywhere — one untreated case can reintroduce the virus to a polio-free country within months.



PDG Bob Stowell (left) gives polio vaccine drops to a child during a National Immunization Day in India. Photo courtesy of Bob Stowell.

"Polio was not just a disease. It was fear."

— PDG BOB STOWELL, DISTRICT 6960 POLIOPLUS CHAIR

AT A GLANCE

PDG Bob Stowell, District 6960 PolioPlus Chair • Past President, Rotary Club of South Fort Myers • 40+ years in Rotary leadership

1985

350,000 annual polio cases the year PolioPlus launched

29 Confirmed Type 1

Afghanistan - 25
Pakistan - 4

Sept 15, 2026 by WHO

3 BILLION+

Children immunized against polio by Rotary since 1985

3X

Every Rotary dollar matched 2-to-1 by the Gates Foundation

Rotary raises ~\$50M/year, matched by Gates at ~\$100M/year, on a three-year agreement running through 2028 (~\$150M/year total). Bob also mentioned the 2026 eradication budget was cut from a planned \$1B to about \$800M due to a funding shortfall

HOW YOU CAN HELP FINISH THE JOB

Every Contribution Protects Another Child

Mark Your Calendar — World Polio Day Is October 24

Bob's presentation wasn't just a history lesson — it was a handoff. World Polio Day falls on October 24, and Rotary clubs everywhere, including ours, are being asked to mark it. The day was established by Rotary to build awareness of the fight against a disease that, at its peak, paralyzed or killed more than 350,000 people a year, and to keep the pressure on until the case count reaches zero everywhere and stays there.

Did Rotary Finish the Job?

Bob was clear, and the honest answer is: Not Yet. Eradication isn't declared country by country as cases fall — it's certified globally, and only after three full years pass with zero wild poliovirus cases anywhere on earth. Afghanistan and Pakistan are the last holdouts, and progress there has been slowed by access; in parts of Afghanistan, restrictions on door-to-door vaccination teams have made it harder to reach every child with the vaccine. Bob's point wasn't discouragement — it was urgency, with new cases also emerging in Democratic Republic of Congo. The final mile of a 40-year campaign is often the hardest, and it's also the one most at risk of losing momentum and funding before it's finished.

How You Can Help

- Give to PolioPlus. Any gift counts, and every dollar is matched 2-to-1 by the Gates Foundation. Members can give directly at endpolio.org.
- **Join the PolioPlus Society.** An annual gift of \$100 or more earns recognition as a Society member — ask Bob or club leadership how to enroll.
- **Wear purple on October 24.** The "Purple4Polio" tradition marks the little-finger dye used to show a child has been vaccinated — a small, visible way to start a conversation and it's free.
- Contact Bob directly with questions. As District 6960 PolioPlus Chair, he's available to speak to committees, share materials, or help plan a club World Polio Day activity.

OCT 24

World Polio Day — raising awareness of Rotary's fight to end polio

ONLY2

Countries still endemic — down from 125 in 1988 (Afghanistan & Pakistan)

\$2.9B+

Contributed directly by Rotary to polio eradication since 1985

\$100/YR

Minimum annual gift to join the PolioPlus Society

"Polio...anywhere in the world, it remains a threat everywhere.."

— PDG BOB STOWELL

Questions, or want to help plan a World Polio Day activity? Contact PDG Bob Stowell, District 6960 PolioPlus Chair, at bobstowell00@gmail.com or 651-775-0935.

