



Whatever Happened To Polio?

Exhibit Documents Strides In War Against Polio

(NAPSA)—While America's polio epidemic may seem just a sad bit of history to those under 50, people over that age remember the disease as something very much to fear.

At its peak, in the late 1940s and early '50s, the disease affected between 13,000 and 20,000 people in the United States each year, many of them children. Thousands died. Many others were permanently paralyzed. It wasn't until Jonas Salk and then Albert Sabin developed vaccines that the number of cases dropped.

What many Americans of any age may not realize is that, globally, the disease still threatens children in parts of Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

To help, Rotary International, one of the world's largest humanitarian organizations, has set eradicating this crippling and potentially fatal disease worldwide as its top philanthropic goal.

To that end, Rotary International has contributed nearly \$620 million and countless volunteer hours to immunize more than 2 billion children in 122 countries. That means, medical experts estimate, 5 million have been spared disability and over 250,000 deaths have been averted while polio cases have been slashed by 99 percent.

Global health experts now say it is possible to stop polio if we can halt the spread of the virus in the remaining four polio endemic countries (Afghanistan, India, Nigeria and Pakistan) from where it can continue to be exported into polio-free areas. In



Photo credit: Jean-Marc Giboux

Rotary volunteer immunizes a child against polio in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

this age of global travel, anyone can come into contact with a polio carrier.

To help more people understand the extent of the problem and the search for a solution, the "Whatever Happened to Polio?" exhibit, first shown in the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History, is now at the Roosevelt Warm Springs Institute for Rehabilitation—the natural spa where Franklin Roosevelt had his polio treated. The Institute is located an hour south of Atlanta, Ga.

The exhibit also addresses efforts to make polio only the second disease—after smallpox—to be eradicated. Photos and artifacts highlight the ongoing efforts of Rotary volunteers worldwide, many of whom have traveled overseas to administer the drops of the oral polio vaccine to children and have educated families and communities on the importance of having children immunized against polio. To learn more, speak to a Rotarian or visit the Web site at www.rotary.org.