# NEWS RELEASE

**‘Good Wife’ co-star Archie Panjabi partners with Rotary, Northwestern to put polio eradication on center stage Oct. 24**

*Special World Polio Day program highlights progress in the global effort to end polio*

**EVANSTON, Ill., USA (Oct. 18, 2013) —**Emmy-winning actress Archie Panjabi, best known for her role as Kalinda on the hit series “The Good Wife,” will talk about her volunteer work in support of polio eradication during a special program co-hosted by Rotary and Northwestern University’s Center for Global Health on Oct. 24 – World Polio Day 2013 – in downtown Chicago.

The program,*World Polio Day: Making History,* will include remarks by [Dr. Bruce Aylward](http://www.who.int/dg/adg/aylward/en/index.html), the world’s leading expert on polio eradication and assistant director-general for polio, emergencies and country collaboration at the World Health Organization; [Dr. Robert Murphy](http://fsmweb.northwestern.edu/faculty/facultyProfile.cfm?xid=12723), director of Northwestern University’s Center for Global Health; and U.S. Paralympian[Dennis Ogbe](http://dennisogbe.com/),a polio survivor and ambassador for the United Nations Foundation’s Shot@Life program.

The event will be streamed live to a global online audience at [endpolionow.org](http://www.endpolio.org/) from Northwestern University’s John Hughes Auditorium, 303 E. Superior St., Chicago, beginning at 5:30 p.m. CST on Oct. 24. About 200 invited guests are expected to attend.

The program will include an overview of the progress of the [Global Polio Eradication Initiative](http://www.polioeradication.org/), which Rotary co-launched in 1988;the challenges that remain in the corners of the developing world where the crippling virus persists, and a discussion of the ways private citizens, corporations, and non-profits can participate in the historic final push now underway to end polio once and for all.

Due to the eradication initiative’s success in reaching the world’s children with the oral polio vaccine, the disease today remains endemic to only three countries: Afghanistan, Pakistan and Nigeria. Ogbe, the Paralympian, is originally from Nigeria, where he contracted polio at age 3.

Panjabi is one of Rotary’s End Polio Now celebrity ambassadors. Last year, the British born actress helped Rotary volunteers immunize children in India, her parents’ homeland,where she spent part of her childhood. Once considered the nation facing the most serious challenges to eradication, India was removed from the polio-endemic list in January 2012.

“”Seeing India become polio-free is tremendous, and I am committed to making sure that no other child anywhere suffers from polio again,” Panjabi said in an interview published in the November issue of The Rotarian magazine.

“How fitting that we are holding this important program in Chicago, Rotary’s hometown,” said Dr. Robert S. Scott, MD, who chairs Rotary’s polio-eradication program. “Rotary began the fight to end polio, and today – World Polio Day 2013 – we and our partners have never been closer to our goal of a polio-free world. Rotary invites everyone -- private citizens, businesses, non-profits – to join us in this historic effort. Only one disease – smallpox – has ever been beaten. Now is our best chance ever to make polio the second.”

Dr. Murphy of the Center for Global Health concurs: “It is very important to finish the job soon, because we are so close. Eradication is completely doable, and when it happens, it will be a huge public health achievement.”

Dr. Aylward notes that when Rotary began its polio eradication work, the disease infected more than 350,000 people a year, compared with the 223 cases for 2012 – a drop of more than 99 percent. “When Rotary set out to eradicate polio over 25 years ago, most of the world thought it was impossible,” Aylward said. “Today, it is very close to inevitable. There is still huge work to do, but Rotary has shown the world how the impossible can be converted to the inevitable with the right strategy, the right tools, and the right commitment.”

Ogbe, now the wellness coordinator at Brown-Forman in Kentucky, claims a personal stake in the effort.

“This fight to end polio is personal to me,” he said. “Polio still exists in Nigeria and is still killing and disabling children. We cannot afford to lose the fight against polio.”

**Rotary and polio eradication**

In 1988, Rotary helped launch the[Global Polio Eradication Initiative](http://www.polioeradication.org/) with the WHO, UNICEF, and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Since then, Rotary club members worldwide have contributed more than $1.2 billion and countless volunteer hours to the polio eradication effort.

Overall, the annual number of new polio cases has plummeted by more than 99 percent since the 1980s, when polio infected about 350,000 children a year. Only 223 new cases were recorded for all of 2012. More than two billion children have been immunized in 122 countries, preventing five million cases of paralysis and 250,000 deaths. Polio today remains endemic in only three countries, Afghanistan, Nigeria and Pakistan, although “imported” cases in previously polio-free areas – such as the Horn of Africa -- will continue to occur until the virus is finally stopped in the endemic countries.

This year, World Polio Day fundraisers will have greater impact due to the new fundraising campaign, [*End Polio Now: Make History Today*](http://www.endpolio.org/)*,* recently launched by Rotary and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The Gates Foundation will match two for one every new dollar Rotary commits to polio eradication up to US$35 million per year through 2018.

**About Rotary**

[Rotary](http://www.rotary.org/)is a global network of volunteer leaders dedicated to tackling the world’s most pressing humanitarian challenges. Rotary’s 1.2 million members hail from more than 200 countries and geographical areas. Their work improves lives at both the local and international levels, from helping families in need in their own communities to working toward a polio-free world. For more information, visit[rotary.org](https://www.rotary.org/) and [endpolionow.org](http://www.endpolio.org/).

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