

# NEWS RELEASE

**Rotary hosts film screening contrasting polio – a virus on the brink of global eradication – with the growing threat of preventable diseases in California**

**SAN DIEGO, Calif. (Jan. 13, 2015)** — Rotary will screen two documentary films: ***Invisible Threat,*** whichexplores the immune system in relation to the debate on vaccine safety in the United States; and ***The Final Punch,*** which shows the challenges and ultimate sacrifices made by polio vaccinators in Pakistan – one of the last holdouts of a disease on the verge of global eradication.

The free film screening and panel discussion with local and global public health experts will be held on Thursday, Jan. 15, (6:30 – 9:30 p.m.) at the University of San Diego’s Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice (The Rotunda), 5998 Alcalá Park, San Diego.

“Most people would be shocked to learn that polio is still paralyzing and sometimes killing children today, despite an effective vaccine that’s been in existence for more than 50 years,” said Michael K. McGovern, chair of Rotary’s International PolioPlus Committee. “Though we are very close to ending polio, until the virus is completely gone, all unvaccinated children are at risk. These two films shown together effectively convey the importance of protecting every child from polio and other preventable diseases.”

***The Final Punch*** gives a behind the scenes look at the challenges and sacrifices made by polio vaccinators in Pakistan, who are risking their lives to ensure every child receives the oral polio vaccine. In the last two years, more than 65 health workers lost their lives while immunizing children against polio in Pakistan, a country that accounts for more than 85 percent of polio cases worldwide. Although Pakistan continues to battle this crippling disease, polio is 99 percent eliminated from the planet. Once eradicated, it will be the second disease since smallpox to be eliminated from the world.

In contrast, parents in California and the United States are increasingly opting out of vaccinating their kindergartners. As a result, children are contracting a number of preventable diseases, including more than 9,000 infected with pertussis in 2014– the most cases in 70 years.

“In addition to pertussis, San Diego is experiencing its third moderately severe flu season in a row, and California just had the highest number of measles cases in two decades,” said Dr. Eric McDonald, Deputy Public Health Officer, County of San Diego. “All of these illnesses can be prevented with vaccines. Getting vaccinated not only protects you, but it also protects your loved ones and your community from these potentially deadly diseases.”

Produced by Carlsbad High School students and supported by San Diego-area Rotary clubs, ***Invisible Threat*** explores the immune system in relation to the debate on vaccine safety in the United States. The film includes interviews with physicians; parents who believe vaccines are linked to autism; and parents who have lost children to vaccine-preventable diseases. Lisa Posard, producer and mother of one of the 16 student filmmakers said the film was created to serve as a peer to peer learning tool.

"While filming Invisible Threat and after interviewing experts, our students found that under-vaccination puts the community at risk especially the most vulnerable, such as newborns too young to be vaccinated and kids with cancer," said Posard.

In addition to Dr. McDonald and Posard, the panel will include: **Dr. Peter Salk**, President, Jonas Salk Legacy Foundation and **Dr. Hamid Jafari**, Director of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, World Health Organization (WHO). Click [here](http://www.eventbrite.com/e/protect-every-child-film-screening-and-panel-tickets-15036978006) to register to attend the film screening.

**About Rotary**

Rotary brings together a global network of volunteer leaders dedicated to tackling the world’s most pressing humanitarian challenges.Rotary connects 1.2 million members of more than 34,000 Rotary clubs in over 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.

**About Rotary in San Diego County**

With over 500 local members, the San Diego Rotary club includes some of the city’s well known civic, business and community leaders. Since 1911, San Diego Rotary has been providing San Diego’s leadership with an opportunity to connect with others toward the common goal of improving the community in which they work and live, as well as the world beyond. This work is channeled through 60 [committees](http://sdrotary.wpengine.com/committees/) whose projects include supporting a school for the homeless, building schools in Mexico, instructing high school juniors in the free enterprise system, providing surgical services to underdeveloped areas worldwide and more.

**About polio eradication**

When Rotary launched its PolioPlus program in 1985, polio struck more than 1,000 children around the world every day. Just 350 cases have been confirmed in 2014 – primarily in the countries where polio has never been stopped: Nigeria, Pakistan, and Afghanistan.

As the volunteer arm of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI), Rotary has contributed more than US$1.3 billion and countless hours of volunteer service to ending polio. To date, more than 2.5 billion children have been immunized against the paralyzing and sometimes deadly poliovirus.

The Global Polio Eradication Initiative includes the World Health Organization, Rotary International, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

Visit [rotary.org](http://www.rotary.org/) and [endpolio.org](http://www.endpolio.org/) for more about Rotary and its efforts to eradicate polio. Video and still images will be available on the [Rotary Media Center](https://www.rotary.org/en/news-features/media-center).

###

**Contacts**: Tom Gable (619) 251-3881 [tom@gablepr.com](mailto:tom@gablepr.com)

Vivian Fiore (847) 656-6976 [vivian.fiore@rotary.org](mailto:vivian.fiore@rotary.org)

Chanele Williams (847) 866-3466 [chanele.williams@rotary.org](mailto:chanele.williams@rotary.org)