

Sent: 26 May 2011 18:15PM  
To: 'CFWF' info@cfwf.org

We thought you might be interested in this article.  
Kind regards, Lona Raye at FCF

Facing thousands of Rotary Club members in a vast convention hall in New Orleans on Tuesday afternoon, Microsoft founder-turned-philanthropist Bill Gates praised them for their efforts to wipe polio off the face of the Earth. But that's not enough, he said, even though the disease that used to be a universal scourge has been found in only 153 people this year, a 24 percent drop from this time last year.

"Your work has brought us so far, 99 percent of the way there," Gates said. "The last 1 percent will be the toughest. It'll require more work than ever before, but I'm convinced that this fight is winnable."

Eradicating polio is the chief global priority of Rotary International  
<[http://www.rotary.org/en/serviceandfellowship/polio/pages/ride\\_fault.aspx](http://www.rotary.org/en/serviceandfellowship/polio/pages/ride_fault.aspx)> , whose convention here ends today, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. As Gates addressed the delegates, who gave him several prolonged standing ovations, his lapel bore a Rotary "End Polio Now" pin.

The hardest part of the struggle lies ahead, he said, because the virus-borne infection, which is transmitted through human waste and contaminated water, is hanging on in countries where public-health standards are abysmal.

In such nations, the oral form of the polio vaccine is used because it doesn't require medical professionals to administer it.

A dose consists of two drops, and six doses normally are required to confer immunity.

But in squalid conditions, 10 doses might be necessary, said Carol Pandak, manager of the PolioPlus Division, Rotary's antipolio initiative.

The Gates Foundation has pledged \$355 million to Rotary for its antipolio work, and it challenged the service organization to raise \$200 million by the end of June 2012.

So far, Pandak said, Rotary has raised about \$170 million, and the Gates Foundation has given \$280 million.

Gates, whose \$56 billion fortune makes him the richest person in the United States, described himself as "an impatient

optimist” in this fight, which, he said, merits a higher profile.

“We need to make polio front and center, beyond where it has been in the past,” he said, adding that there is no alternative.

“If we fail, this disease will not stay at its current low level,” Gates said. “It will spring back to the old level. We could lose decades of progress. We can’t afford to let that happen. Failure in this fight is unacceptable.”

Speaking to Rotarians from all over the planet, Gates urged them to lobby their political leaders to put more money into the antipolio initiative.

“Leverage the power of your 1.2 million members to keep polio front and center,” he said. “With your credibility, you are the most important advocates for polio eradication.”

The United States has spent about \$130 million a year on eradicating polio, Gates said, and \$18 million more is in the not-yet-approved budget for the fiscal year that starts Oct. 1.

When Rotary launched its PolioPlus initiative in 1985, about 350,000 children worldwide were infected with the crippling disease each year, according to the Gates Foundation’s website. By 2008, that figure was less than 2,000.

“Polio is still a disease of the present,” Gates said. “If we fail to make leaders of the world aware of it, it will still be a disease of the future.”

Rotary’s meeting at the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center has drawn about 17,000 people to New Orleans.