



Walking for Polio



Rotary District 7610 – Horace McCormack, District Governor

Rotary Walk Raises Thousands of Dollars for Polio Plus

When a group of soaking-wet Rotarians stood together for a picture on the Ellipse in front of the White House on October 24, 2009, with warm strands of sunshine cutting through the clouds and a rainbow appearing out of the mist, they knew the long journey they had made was worth every step of the way.

It all started a few months ago when we began challenging Rotarians across America and around the world to walk for any distance or length of time on October 24th, World Polio Awareness Day, to raise money for Polio Plus.



(The group in front of the White House)

The majority of the project was done on-line by a handful of people. An anonymous donor from the Gainesville-Haymarket Rotary Club of Virginia opened the door by providing the capital to setup the on-line registration and donation site (www.firstgiving.com/rotarywalk). We kept Rotary Walk simple and made it easy to sign-up and donate. Clubs in Virginia, Maryland, and Washington, D.C. signed up. By October 24th, there were 15 teams registered, including one in Costa Rica. And we reached our initial fundraising goal of \$8,000 for Polio Plus. All that was left to do was the walking.



(First group in front of "Entering Vienna" sign)

We had three main groups participating in Rotary Walk 2009. The first walked 25 miles from Herndon, Virginia to the Ellipse in front of the White House in Washington, D.C. The team was met by a larger group in Arlington, Virginia for the final five miles of the walk. We were also joined by several Interactors and a Rotaractor. And, we were thrilled that the 7610 District Governor Horace McCormack and his lovely wife and past president Carlota McCormack walked with us to the White House. There, Chris Mallin, Polio Plus Chair for the Arlington Rotary Club, Eric Latham, Rotary Walk organizer, and DG McCormack made short speeches.

“The Rotary Walk for polio was a well-organized and executed initiative. This has been an outstanding and exciting method of enhancing community awareness about the need for support of polio eradication and raising funds globally for this worthy cause,” said DG McCormack.

The second group was led by Rotarian Gary Filak, president of the Leesburg-Daybreak Rotary Club in Leesburg, Virginia. They had 17 walkers—8 club members and 9 guests, including the president of the Dulles Rotary Club. They raised over \$1,000 for Polio Plus through mostly small



(The Leesburg-Daybreak Walkers)



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donations from members, friends, relatives, and associates. At one of their club meetings, Rotarian Milo Robinson brought an apple pie he made which was auctioned off to raise \$100 for the team’s fundraising goal.

The third group was organized by Elaine Lydick, the daughter of Rotarian Susan Lydick of the Baileys-Crossroads Rotary Club in Virginia. While an exchange student from Roanoke College to Costa Rica this fall, Elaine and some of her friends hiked a volcano to raise \$157 for Polio Plus.

Of course, there were so many individual stories of success. There’s Marilyn Karp, one of the Rotary Walk 2009 organizers. She’s 67 years old, and she walked 25 miles to the White House! There’s my favorite Rotary couple, Dennis and Peggy Fargo, who raised more than \$2,500 for Polio Plus. And—they walked for several miles with us!



(Team Costa Rica- Volcan Poas)

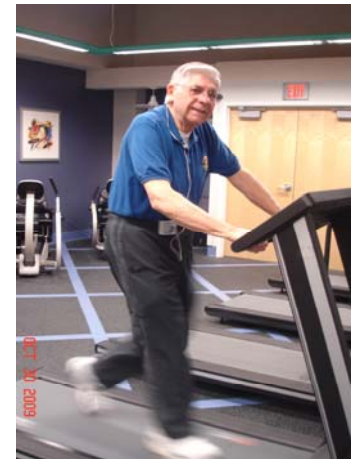
There’s Rotarian and club president Deren Reid and his wife, Ang, who drove all the way from Baltimore to walk the final five miles with us in the pouring rain. There’s Kim Durand, who participated in a Sprint Triathlon to help end polio. The event was in Inverness, Florida. Kim swam ¼ of a mile, rode a bike for 12 miles and then ran a 5k to “End Polio Now.” She met some of the Inverness Rotarians and challenged them to create a team for next year’s Rotary Walk. Kim successfully completed the triathlon in 1 hour and 31 minutes, which was her fastest time ever!



Before the Triathlon: Rotarian Kim Durand with her brother and sister who also participated.

Then there’s Rotarian Tom Rotelli of the Lake Ridge Rotary Club in Virginia. On World Polio Awareness Day, Tom walked on his treadmill for an hour covering a distance of two and half miles and, in doing so, raised \$800 for Polio Plus. What did he have to do to overcome this? He had never walked for more than a half an hour on his treadmill, one of his legs is nearly two inches shorter than the other, he has a pacemaker and three stents, his spine is fused with arthritis, and he’s 74 years old!

In organizing Rotary Walk 2009, we got much more than we gave. It was a time for fun and fellowship outside of regular meetings. It was a way to get in shape. It was a way to bridge the gap between generations. It was a way to discuss the future of Rotary.



(Tom Rotelli on the treadmill)

After October 24th, donations we were still receiving donations. To date, Rotary Walk has raised \$9,175 for Polio Plus. It means that more than 15,000 kids will receive polio vaccinations around the world. The organizers of Rotary Walk are on a mission to raise an even \$10,000 for Polio Plus in 2009. Then it’s time to start planning for Rotary Walk 2010. To get involved, go to www.rotarywalk.org.