

## 1987: Lancaster Rotary Club Achieves Model Club Status in RI Polio Program

In 1979, Rotary International began a project to immunize six million children against polio in the Philippines. This led to Rotary making polio eradication its top priority.

Robert Montgomery recalled:

“The Rotary Club of Lancaster formed an ad hoc committee in December of 1986 by President Rick Oppenheimer for the purpose of conducting a campaign to raise funds for Rotary International's Polio Plus Project.

The Polio Plus Project was the most ambitious and most challenging project in RI's history, and was by far and away the most ambitious project the RCL ever attempted.

The overall problem was and is that there are six preventable diseases that all the health organizations in the world are concerned about in developing countries of the world, where over 100 million children are born each year. These six diseases are measles, whooping cough, diphtheria, tuberculosis, tetanus and polio. From these six diseases, 3,450,000 children die each year. The overall problem would cost too much, approximately 1.5 billion dollars per year, an insurmountable amount for any one organization to undertake.

RI offered to tackle the Polio problem. This alone was a huge problem: approximately 27,500 children die each year from the disease with over 275,000 afflicted. This undertaking by RI involved organizing, publicizing, providing volunteers to vaccinate, train others for support and provide the \$120 million to buy the vaccine for approximately 800 million children over a period of five years.

At the time there were approximately 23,000 Rotary Clubs in the world. RI had a plan for



raising the \$120 million and they decided to ask ten clubs to be model clubs as part of their "testing" of the plan. These ten "model clubs" were chosen to provide motivation to all the rest of the Rotary Clubs in the world. The Rotary Club of Lancaster was invited and after our Board of Directors and membership approved the program, we were off!

Our statistical share of the \$120 million was \$65,000. This was a number derived by RI. Since we were a "model club," we were asked to set a goal of two to three times our "share." This was true of all model clubs. RCL reviewed the goal and set our sights on \$200,000.

The campaign began with an eleven week duration from February 16, 1987 to May 4, 1987. We had a very large, active and dedicated committee. Practically every one of our Club members was contacted by one or two of our committee members. Approximately 97% of our members made commitments. At the end of the campaign we had tallied a total of \$260,000. This equated to four times our club's share or \$1,130.00 per member.\*

This money raised by the Rotary Club of Lancaster was enough to vaccinate 2,080,000 children or about 35 times the entire population of Lancaster at the time.

Our membership responded as we knew they would and we all "felt pretty good about it."

In 1988, Rotary began the PolioPlus campaign with an initial fundraising pledge of \$120 million. Providing vitamin A supplements during polio immunization has averted an estimated 1.5 million childhood deaths since 1998 – hence the "plus" in PolioPlus.