

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Local Rotary member helping fight polio

STAFF REPORT

Because 90 percent of all polio cases throughout the world occur in Africa, Rotary members from the United States and Canada joined in a massive effort to immunize every child under 5 years of age in 23 western and northern Africa countries in a synchronized campaign from Nov. 18 through Dec. 4.

In support of Africa's largest ever coordinated health initiative for children, Jim Golson, a member of the Auburn Rotary Club, departed for Egypt on Nov. 23 and returned to Auburn on Dec. 4. While in Egypt, he was part of a 32-member team of Rotary members from the U.S. and Canada who worked with teams of Egyptian volunteers who went door-to-door in homes, schools, day-care centers and high-rise apartment buildings in downtown Cairo administering drops of oral polio vaccine to children.

"I am proud to be part of this historic effort to rid the world of a crippling disease that has impacted millions of lives throughout the centuries. No child today should suffer from polio as an effective vaccine has made it totally preventable," Golson said.

A highly infectious disease, polio

can cause paralysis and sometimes death. Because there is no cure, the best protection is prevention. For as little as 60 cents worth of vaccine, a child can be protected against this crippling disease for life. After an international investment of \$3 billion over 15 years, and the successful engagement of over 200 countries and 20 million volunteers, polio could be the first disease of the 21st century to be eradicated.

When Rotary began its polio immunization program in the mid 1980s, approximately 1,000 children were infected by the polio virus every day in 125 countries. In 2003, there were fewer than 800 cases of polio reported in six countries all year — Afghanistan, Egypt, India, Niger, Nigeria and Pakistan — and the number of cases year-to-date in 2004 is even less.

Much of this progress is due in part to Rotary's commitment. Rotary has contributed more than \$205.8 million to eradicate polio throughout the African continent and more than \$500 million worldwide; as well as countless volunteer hours during national immunization campaigns.

Glenn Bstess, president of Rotary International, noted that volunteer efforts are an integral part of Rotary's campaign against polio.



SPECIAL TO THE NEWS

Auburn Rotary Club member Jim Golson administers oral polio vaccine to a child in Cairo, Egypt, during the Egyptian National Immunization Day sponsored by Rotary International and the World Health Organization.

"The dedication shown by Rotary members is not only inspiring, but it is also a fundamental component of our fight against polio," Estess said. "Thanks to the dedication of Rotary volunteers worldwide, soon there will be one less threat against the children of the world."

Rotary International is the largest private supporter of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative. By the time the

world is certified polio-free, Rotary's contributions to ending polio will exceed \$600 million. In addition to raising and contributing funds, Rotary has provided an army of volunteers to promote and assist during national immunization campaigns throughout the world.

For more information visit, www.rotary.org or www.polioeradication.org.