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PEDIATRICIANS TO AWARD ROTARY INTERNATIONAL FOR POLIO PROJECT

Washington, D.C.-The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) will present its Excellence in Public Service Award (EPSA) tomorrow to Rotary International for its work to eradicate polio worldwide. Each year, the AAP honors national officials and organizations for distinguished service on behalf of children and adolescents and their health care.

"Rotarians are child advocates in action. They have raised \$500 million, and delivered vaccine around the globe to prevent children from contracting a crippling and life-threatening disease," said AAP President Carden Johnston, M.D., FAAP. "Rotarians, like pediatricians, know prevention is much better than treatment."

Rotary is an organization of 1.2 million business and professional leaders from more than 160 countries united worldwide who provide humanitarian service and help to build goodwill and peace in the world. Rotary's community-based leadership, volunteer support and initial funding for vaccine in 1985 were the catalyst for the World Health Assembly's resolution in 1988 to eradicate polio. The Global Polio Eradication Initiative, spearheaded in part by Rotary, has helped reduce the cases of polio from approximately 350,000 cases in 1988 to fewer than 1,000 cases in 2003. Polio is a virus that attacks the brain and spinal cord, and can cause paralysis and death.

"I am honored to accept this award on behalf of Rotary members worldwide whom have volunteered their time and personal resources toward a polio-free world," said Rotary International President Jonathan Majiyagbe. "Though almost forgotten in the United States, polio is still crippling and killing children in six countries in Africa and Southeast Asia. As Rotary was the first to have the vision of a polio-free world, we are more committed than ever to ensuring that every child is safe from this age-old scourge."

The EPSA award will be presented tomorrow evening during the Rotary International Assembly in Anaheim, CA.

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The American Academy of Pediatrics is an organization of 60,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and well being of infants, children, adolescents and young adults.