

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Fort Christianvaern Transformed With Red Lights For World Polio Day

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ST. CROIX -- The Rotary Clubs of St. Croix came together Wednesday night to mark World Polio Day in a remarkable way. The community groups lit up the Fort Christianvaern Park in red, in an effort to remind the territory that Polio still exists in some parts of the world, and that Rotary's goal to eradicate it remains as staunch as it's ever been.

Rotary has played a leading role in the battle to end Polio. Rotary and its partners have reduced polio cases by 99.9 percent worldwide since the first project to vaccinate children in the Philippines in 1979, according to information provided by local Rotarian leaders during a recent press conference. While Rotary and its partners are close to

eradicating the infectious and deadly disease, donations are needed to meet the ambitious goal.

On Wednesday night, Lionel Downer, a Rotarian of the St. Croix Harborside club and co-chair for the World Polio Day event last night, said the gathering was held in solidarity with other Rotary groups with similar events. He said billions of children around the world have been immunized to protect against the disease because of major partnerships with leading philanthropic organizations, including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and agencies like the United Nations' World Health Organization, through an initiative called The Global Polio Eradication Initiative.

"This evening we had a short program in recognition of Rotary's efforts worldwide, which included narratives provided by Rotarians Claudia Carrington, Rotarian Desiree Wilberg, Rotarians Richard Grant and his wife Dr. Rita Grant," Mr. Downer said.

The local effort also included a livestream of a similar event that took place in Philadelphia, where various speakers, among them celebrities, spoke about their support for the global Polio eradication initiative.

Mr. Downer thanked local entities whose help brought the event together, among them [KGP Virgin Islands](#), the National Park Service, Mountain Gas Station, and KDM Productions. The first World Polio Day event on St. Croix was held in 2015, according to Mr. Downer.