

PA polio survivors support immunization awareness, urge parents to vaccinate children

Carol Ferguson Your Turn

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Our recently updated website states: "Our Polio Network, managed by polio survivors and friends, is in service to bring support and information to polio survivors, their families, caregivers and health care providers. Known as the PA Polio Survivors Network (PPSN), we work with many professionals providing valuable information to help educate and spread awareness about the late effects of the poliovirus, and the importance of being vaccinated against this terrible disease. We serve others all across the globe."

In January 2019, the World Health Organization announced that vaccine hesitancy was one of the top 10 global health threats. That's when we at the PA Polio Survivors Network decided to start speaking out about the importance of pediatric vaccines — from a personal view as polio survivors living with the lifelong effects of this terrible disease.

As a result, we added polio awareness to our statement of purpose.

Our ongoing goal of awareness has a dual purpose. The first being to draw attention to the estimated 1 million polio survivors in North America, the vast majority of whom are realizing the disabling effects of post-polio syndrome.

Second, and equally important, is to draw attention to the importance of being immunized against polio and all crippling childhood diseases.

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We came up with this simple message:

- No child should suffer from a vaccine preventable disease.
- The pain and disability can last a lifetime.
- Please vaccinate your children.

With guidance from the Polio Plus Team at Rotary International and Dr. Paul Offit, M.D., at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, we created our vaccine information cards to help combat vaccine hesitancy. The PA Immunization Coalition gave us permission to use their logo on the back of each card.



Carol Ferguson PROVIDED BY CAROL FERGUSON

We presented our vaccine information card project to Rotary Clubs throughout Pennsylvania, raising the funds to print them. Our goal was to provide everyone with credible vaccine information. Our message was printed with our logo and a QR code that goes to the Vaccine Education Center at CHOP on the front. The back of each card has easily assessable resources for vaccination information — names, addresses, phone numbers and websites.

With help from private donations, the Pennsylvania Immunization Coalition and the Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, we have printed and distributed more than 49,000 cards in vaccine information projects throughout Pennsylvania.

Our advocacy and vast amount of information regarding polio and post-polio syndrome is available at www.polionetwork.org. For more information email: info@polionetwork.org.

More: [Erie hospitals await latest COVID-19 vaccine, which is due this fall](#)

Carol Ferguson is the founder of the PA Polio Survivors Network.