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Polio survivor: COVID-19, polio's return make us remember the power of vaccines, act now

Joe Randig Your Turn

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World Immunization Week and National Infant Immunization Week is an annual April event, this year observed April 24-30. Its aim is to educate the public about why vaccines are necessary for the health of millions of people around the world. For numerous reasons, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, children and adults miss out on essential vaccines which increases their risk of contracting various preventable diseases such as polio, measles and smallpox. The purpose of this week is to identify the challenges in gaining access to vaccines and to overcome those barriers for the benefit of the global population.

More: Polio is back, PA survivors recall its terrible toll, urge vaccination

COVID-19 reminds us that disease outbreaks anywhere can be a threat everywhere. We now realize that unless everyone is safe from disease, nobody is truly immune and those who have a weak immune system are more vulnerable to getting viruses.

How many of us have known a child who has died of tetanus, diphtheria or polio? I suspect none! That is because since the 1970s, the majority of children are protected from these diseases by immunizations.



Joe Randig



Joe Randig, 6, is pictured with his crutches during a 1953 weekend home visit to Butler after he contracted polio. |

PROVIDED BY JOE RANDIG

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Joseph Randig is the western Pennsylvania coordinator for the Pennsylvania Polio Survivors Network.

PA Polio Survivors Network is an online organization created by a polio survivor for polio survivors to provide information to all polio survivors, post-polio support groups, survivor's families and their caregivers. Our website, www.papolionetwork.org, offers an extensive collection of information on polio, post polio syndrome, rehabilitation and health care maintenance for polio survivors.