



Polio Survivors Serving One Another

Information & Inspiration
For All Polio Survivors and their Families

The PA Polio Survivor's Network
www.papolionetwork.org

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Owen's Odyssey:

Telling The World About the Realities of the Poliovirus and The Miracle Of Modern Vaccines.

It's been more than a year since we met Rotarian Owen P. Standley, more than a year since we grew to respect his passion to be in service by taking this extraordinary odyssey; raising funds to eradicate a disease that has haunted the vast majority of us our entire lives. For more than a year he trained, worked two jobs, sought out sponsors, wrote songs and introduced himself to Rotary Clubs that went from Maine to Georgia – the entire length of the Appalachian trail. For more than a year, he called complete strangers seeking information (like us) and to talk about his journey.



It was a month into that journey when he called. He was ill and unable to complete the 2,100 miles. His sadness and disappointment in himself was apparent as we spoke. At that moment in time, he was unable to grasp the beauty of what he had accomplished.

- Was he going to make the entire 2,100 miles he set as his goal? No.
- Did he manage to walk over 425 miles? Yes.
- Did he draw attention to the permanently disabling realities of the poliovirus to a generation that thought polio was only a “word” ? Yes.
- Had he raised enough funds to provide 200,000+ vaccines ? Yes.
- Did he give a new voice to survivors whose voices went unheard for most of their lives? Yes.

Owen P. Standley has accomplished far more than the 400+ miles he walked. He has drawn attention in a unique and creative way to the realities of the permanent, life altering damage that polio and other vaccine preventable diseases can do. He gave us a new and creative opportunity to share the real life stories of polio survivors . . . survivors who are forever grateful that his effort will save an untold number of children from experiencing the pain and disability that we personally understand.

When he asked if we would help him tell the story as to the reality of this terrible disease, we were happy to participate. What none of us realized is that he would be helping us as well.

As we wrote the scripts for our short, two minute videos, we dug deep for the words that would describe life with the permanent damage from the poliovirus. Then, the heart felt stories and videos and stories started to arrive. We realized more than ever, that [these stories](#) – although difficult to tell, need to be told. They need to be told and retold to a generation of young adults, like Owen who have never seen the reality of vaccine preventable diseases. They need to be told to those who push off vaccines as harmful and unnecessary. They need to be told because it helps us go forward.

Through an effective and uniquely creative use of social media, Owen started sharing our stories and videos – sharing them because he believes in his heart that the need to eradicate polio and to draw attention to the miracle of modern vaccines was his purpose. It was the reason he would have to leave his family for months as he went on this extraordinary (some said impossible) journey.

Back home, Owen is resting and figuring out what's next – he knows that his Odyssey has just begun. He knows that his body will heal. He knows that someday, in bits and pieces he will complete the 2,100 mile trek. He knows that he has had an opportunity to serve – in ways we believe he has yet to see.

We know that Owen is a man of service, and we look forward to supporting him going forward, as his Odyssey has only just begun. We know he will complete his amazing journey – wherever it takes him.

We understand what it is to fall, have to get back up again and follow paths we did not expect. Thank you Owen for reminding the world that polio is real and that *no* child needs to suffer needlessly from a vaccine preventable disease.

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Donate: www.hikeforpolio.org

