



By Joe Pratt, Past Governor of District 7870
(parts of New Hampshire and Vermont,)

In October of 2011, my wife and I along with another Rotarian couple traveled to Pakistan to participate in a National Immunization Day (NID). The trip came about because of a Pakistani Group Study Exchange team visit to my Rotary district and the subsequent invitation to visit their country.

Despite the State Department's warnings against travel to Pakistan as well as an outbreak of dengue fever, we decided that this was a once in a lifetime opportunity. At this point I had been training for my climb on Mount Everest for eight months and it was the consensus of our group, in particular Steve Puderbaugh, that the climb be dedicated to raising funds to help eradicate polio.

When the idea was presented to our Pakistani Rotarian hosts, it was enthusiastically received. Upon our return to the United States, we promoted the goal of US\$29,030 which equaled \$1 per foot for the height of the mountain, 100 percent of which would go to the polio eradication effort. The idea caught on in the local community, where a significant number of checks were received from non-Rotarians.

My climb began on 10 April in Kathmandu, Nepal, where I joined the Seven Summits Club — a Russian expedition. We then flew to Lhasa, Tibet, to approach Everest from the north side. After five weeks of training and acclimatization on the mountain, we waited for a weather window to make the summit attempt.

That attempt began on 15 May. I reached the top of Everest on 20 May at 9:30 a.m. In my 25 years of climbing experience, this was by far the greatest challenge. I owe my successful summit in great part to the professionalism of the Seven Summits Club and particularly to the skill, strength and tenacity of the Sherpas that supported the expedition. Most of all I am humbled and grateful for the benevolence the mountain showed me.

Since returning to New Hampshire, I have been making presentations to Rotary clubs in my district in order to continue to raise awareness for the polio campaign and to reach the goal of \$29,030.