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Survivors of polio gather to express hope

By **Amanda Nalley** • DEMOCRAT STAFF WRITER
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The Capital Polio Association celebrated the 20th anniversary of the passing of the Americans with Disabilities Act on Sunday by honoring a humanitarian and stalwart in the medical field.

Dr. Charlotte Maguire, 92, was honored with a "Spirit of ADA" award for outstanding service for her work, not only with children with disabilities, but for her work with those affected by polio, a debilitating virus that often causes paralysis of limbs and lung function.

"If it was not for people like Dr. Maguire, we wouldn't have beaten polio," said Capital Polio Association founder Mark Ravenscraft, who fought polio at the age of 2. Ravenscraft organized the event.

The ceremony was held in The Maguire Center at Westminster Oaks in eastern Leon County. The center, named in Maguire's honor, offers an electronic library as well as a dining room and cafe.

The doctor, who remembers keeping polio patients alive during blackouts by manually pumping air into iron lungs, also lives at the continual care facility.

"Polio was very dreaded," she said of the disease.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, there were about 13,000 to 20,000 cases of paralytic polio reported each year in the United States before the vaccine was invented in 1954.

The celebration of the ADA, which was passed July 26, 1990, was also important to Ravenscraft, who called it "our civil rights day, our day of freedom."

After lunch and the award ceremony, Mike Shadix, the librarian for the Roosevelt Warms Springs Institute for Rehabilitation, spoke to the crowd about the history of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who himself battled polio from 1924 until his death in 1945.

He also touched upon the history of the vaccine.

"When most people were ready to close the book on polio history, Shadix stood up," Ravenscraft said.

"There are a lot of things that are still relevant today," Shadix said about the history of the virus. "If people don't continue to take the polio vaccine, it makes the world vulnerable."

Ravenscraft said that if immunizations fall below 70 percent, it is common belief among the medical community that another outbreak could occur.

"People become super confident that polio is gone, but it's only gone if immunization levels remain high," he said, listing countries currently known as polio hot spots, including Afghanistan, Nigeria and India. "We must overcome polio to prevent happening to them what happened to us."

The group, which has nearly 160 members, meets from 6 to 8 p.m. every third Tuesday of the month at Select Specialty Hospital, 1554 Surgeons Drive.

Learn more by calling 580-2227 or e-mailing capitalpolio@gmail.com.

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