

## *Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles*

Carroll's Yesteryears  
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### **A look at polio vaccine fund-raisers**

By Jay Graybeal

The recent death of oral polio vaccine discoverer Dr. Albert B. Sabin reminds us that this dreaded disease was a major health concern less than 40 years ago. Introduced in 1961, Dr. Sabin's oral vaccine provided an alternative to the injectable vaccine developed by Dr. Jonas Salk in 1954. The twin specters of the "iron lung" and crutches haunted parents and galvanized public support for research, care and education.

A look at the January 1957 countywide campaign reveals innovative fund-raising activities and a broad level of support. Gladys M. Wimert of Westminster served as campaign chairperson. A square dance at the Ag Center, sponsored by the Older 4-H group under the direction of Joseph Haines and Robert Meunier, kicked off the month-long campaign.

Fund-raising activities included a Milk Bottle Parade organized by the Civitan Club. Bottles labeled with the name of each street, rural delivery route and community were placed on a table in front of the Hub store on East Main Street. Wishing wells were also placed in front of the A and P and Acme grocery stores. The effort raised \$475, the second highest total since the event was begun in 1952. East Main Street donors scored highest with \$36 given; East Green Street placed second with \$14.

A mothers march was organized by Mabel Reese. Citizens were urged to turn on their porch lights to alert marching mothers that the occupants wished to make a contribution.

Doris Crist was in charge of Peanuts for Polio. Bagged peanuts were distributed by local teenage groups. This effort was part of a statewide American Legion project to raise funds for the treatment of polio victims.

Groups outside of Westminster held their own events. Residents in the southern part of the county gathered at the Cow Palace in West Friendship. The fund-raising event was sponsored by the Sykesville Fire Department Auxiliary, Freedom District Lions Club, Sykesville Rotary and the American Legion.

Perhaps the crowning event was the selection of the March of Dimes Queen. Photographs of the seven contestants, Sylvia Ford, Ann Bixler, Carol Bixler, Loretta Leister, Rose Marie Frock, Elaine Myers and Ginny Owings, were arranged in the window of the Westminster Trust

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Company by Eltinge Reifsnider. The young women stationed themselves outside of the Carroll and State Theaters and collected funds. Miss Ann Bixler won this popularity contest and was crowned by 1956 Queen Miss Patricia Welk.

The broad support for polio fund-raising mirrored public concern for the victims of the disease. The fund-raising techniques provide an interesting look at life in the 1950s.

*Photo credit: Courtesy of the Historical Society of Carroll County*

*Photo caption: School Health Officer Dr. George Schochet gives a polio shot to Lucinda Kester at Sandymount Elementary School, April 1955. He was assisted by Public Health nurses Maude Manahan and Beatrice Robinson.*

*Photo caption: Civitan Club Milk Bottle Parade January 1957. At left holding a microphone is Thomas Senseny. Myron Upperco examines the bottles.*