**Ridgefield Club Rocks to End Polio**

*By: Annemarie Mannion, Courtesy of The Rotarian*

As a packed audience sang and danced to “Crimson and Clover,” “Mony Mony” and other top hits from Tommy James and The Shondells, the Rotary Club of Ridgefield, Connecticut, D7980, was com-ing up clover too. James headlined the club’s April 13 End Polio Now Concert, which raised $220,000, the largest amount for a single fundraiser in the club’s history.

Robert Herber, club past president reached out to Ridgefield resident Brad Joblin, a music producer who had a con-nection with James through work earlier in his career at “Late Night with David Letterman” and with Dick Clark.

“Robert came to me and said he wanted to do something big,” Joblin says. “He didn’t want two guys with acoustic guitars playing in the park. I wanted it to be huge, too. I suggested Tommy James and the club agreed.” With James booked, the club was off and running. It had just four months to prepare for the concert at the Ridgefield Playhouse, where Joblin is a Board Member.

“We said, ‘Well, it’s a gamble, but let’s go,’” says Sue Manning, who was among four Rotarians who took lead roles in various efforts including nailing down busi-ness sponsorships, publicizing the event, organizing a live auction and planning logistics. They also had 500 tickets to sell at $99 each.

“Everybody came together,” Manning says. “You really need to pump it up to get that kind of money.” “The team was small, but the resources were stellar,” adds Herber.

The match from the Gates Foundation helped convince 19 businesses and fami-lies to kick in $2,500 each for sponsorships. Sponsors also were invited to a re-ception with James and received a signed copy of his book “Me, the Mob, and the Music: A Helluva Ride with Tommy James & the Shondells.”

Rotarians got the word out via traditional and social media and, as concert day approached, a local radio station donated free air time for ads, which helped ensure the concert was a sell-out. Herber notes that the money raised in one night, including the match, exceeds the club’s total contributions made to The Rotary Foundation over the 75 years since the club was founded in 1941. Just like the Rotarians, James enjoyed being part of all the good vibrations the con-cert created.

“It was heartwarming to see the beautiful town of Ridgefield come together in support of such a worthy global cause,” James says. “It was a remarkable even-ing for me, which I will never forget.”

While Joblin played a vital role, he gives credit to the Ridgefield club for making the event such a success. “It exceeded all expectations. That was because of the power of the Rotarians to go to the community for support, and the community responded.”