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United States

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Peter Teahen and John Ockenfels, two seasoned pilots, have taken their commitment to eradicating polio to new heights, quite literally. After completing a global flight that landed them in headlines, their mission to support the Rotary Foundation's polio eradication efforts has seen them raising over a million dollars, with engagements continuing to pour in for their compelling presentation, 'We Believe'.

Flying Against the Odds

Launching from The Eastern Iowa Airport on May 5, 2023, Teahen and Ockenfels embarked on a journey that spanned 25,323 miles across 21 countries, despite facing challenges including icy weather, technical difficulties, and health issues. Their flight, aimed at raising funds and awareness for polio eradication, was supported by a 2-for-1 match from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, doubling the impact of their fundraising efforts. Their dedication to the cause has been unwavering, even paying their own way throughout the mission to ensure that all funds raised directly benefit the Rotary Foundation's initiatives.

Spreading the Message Far and Wide

Their 'We Believe' message, which debuted at a news conference in Karachi, Pakistan, emphasizes their firm belief in the end of polio over mere hope. Since their return, Teahen and Ockenfels have been in constant demand, sharing their experiences and the critical need for continued polio eradication efforts through in-person and virtual presentations. Their talks have not only contributed significantly to fundraising but have also played a crucial role in educating the public about the ongoing challenges in eradicating polio, particularly in regions like Pakistan and Afghanistan where the disease remains a threat.

Impact Beyond Fundraising

The journey has brought unexpected benefits, touching the lives of many beyond just the financial contributions. From engaging with individuals following their journey online to hearing personal stories from those affected by polio, Teahen and Ockenfels have fostered a deeper connection with communities worldwide. Their efforts have also inspired inquiries about vaccinations and treatment for polio-related health issues, showcasing the broader impact of their mission beyond the initial goal of fundraising.

As they continue to share their story and the importance of eradicating polio, the duo remains hopeful and determined. Their journey serves as a powerful reminder of the difference individuals can make in the global fight against polio, encouraging continued support and vigilance to finally close the door on this disease. With their sights set on presentations into 2025, Teahen and Ockenfels's mission is far from over, but their impact is already immeasurable, proving that belief, coupled with action, can lead to extraordinary results.

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