Dr. John L. Sever embodies the concept that “one person can make a difference.” In 1979, the successful pediatrician was serving as governor of a Rotary International (RI) district in Maryland when he approached the organization with an intriguing idea. Sever proposed that polio be the focus of RI immunization efforts worldwide.

In 1985, that idea became Rotary’s now famous PolioPlus program, which set as its goal the eradication of this life-threatening, debilitating disease from the face of the Earth. A quarter century later, more than 2 billion children have received the oral polio vaccine, reported cases of the disease have dropped 99.8 percent, and the live virus only exists in small regions of four countries, including India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Nigeria.

Sever’s story should serve as an inspiration because it shows that one person can make a difference, especially when they have organizational muscle behind them. And what is really inspiring is that heroic things like this happen every day in Pickaway County. They may not get the global attention of a PolioPlus program, but many local efforts are making a huge difference in the lives of our families, our neighbors and our friends.

It happens with civic-minded people join organizations like Rotary International, which boasts two clubs in Circleville. But these efforts are much bigger than Rotary as other civic organizations, such the Lions, Sertoma and Kiwanis clubs, to name just a few, are also doing the work of angels throughout our community. So too are church organizations, fraternal groups, non-profit agencies, as well as clubs and groups within our school districts.

The work shouldered by these groups includes feeding, clothing, housing, and providing medical and health care to the poor and needy. The dedicated individuals of these organizations also work to improve the quality of life for area residents, whether it’s building new playgrounds, ball fields, and parks, or making sure no child goes without a gift during the holidays.

Dr. Sever has made a difference in our world, but I know hundreds of people just like him in our community. If you are not involved but so inclined, please join one of our county’s civic organizations. You will have fun making a difference in a world that needs it.