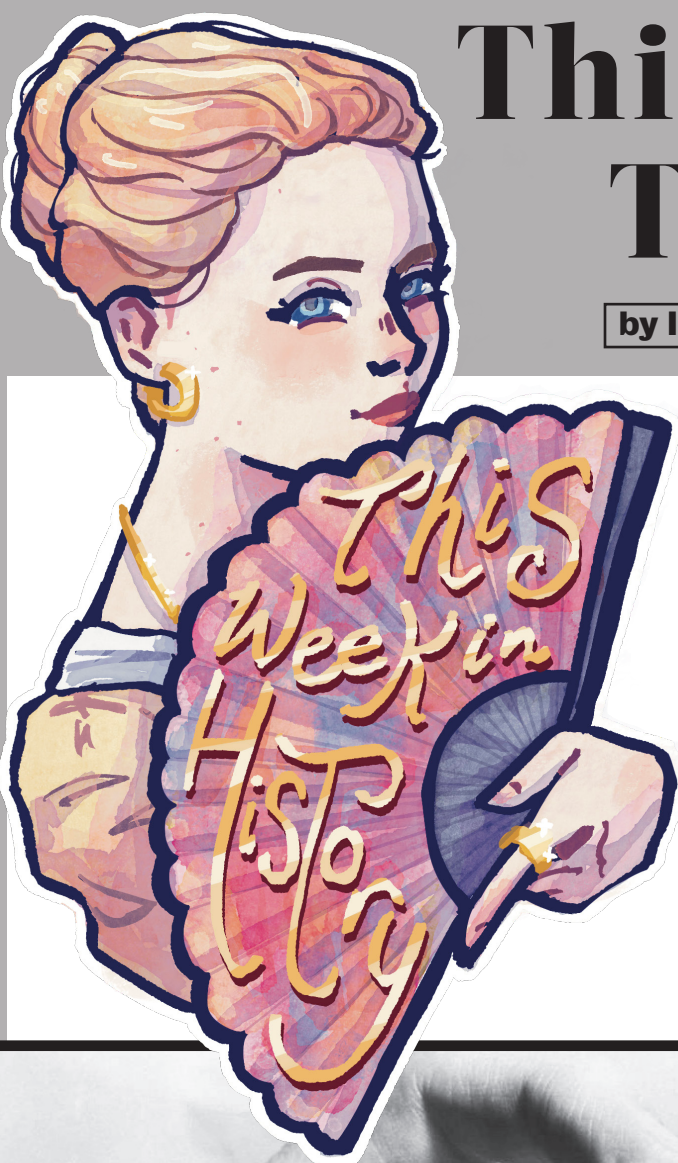




This Week in History: The Salk Vaccine

by Isabella Kulawik | ASSOCIATE MANAGING EDITOR | SHE/HER/HERS | imk24001@uconn.edu

The time has finally come for the last This Week in History column of the 2025-2026 school year. Over these past few months, it has been a lot of fun writing about different events over the course of time and learning something new about the past each week. For my final column, I want to dive into the Salk vaccine, an innovation that revolutionized immunization and drug trials in the 1950s. On April 26, 1954, testing began for the vaccine, with high hopes that it could eradicate the infectious disease poliomyelitis or polio. As a disease, polio has existed since prehistoric times, with depictions of it found in various

art forms throughout history. It can be contracted through water contaminated with the virus and through droplets from the sneezes or coughs of those infected. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, epidemics of the virus occurred, making it widely feared for its potential lifelong paralysis effect. With no cure, the need for a vaccine was of the utmost importance. The vaccine itself was developed by Jonas Salk, an epidemiologist who worked on a flu vaccine at the University of Michigan before beginning his work at the University of Pittsburgh to develop an Inactivated Poliovirus Vaccine (IPV). Finding success in the early 1950s, Salk first tested the vaccine on both himself and his family in 1953, a year before the official vaccine trials began, according to the article “History of the polio vaccine” published by the World Health Organization. The testing process was one of the largest and most publicized clinical trials, involving 623,972 children in the United States and more than a million others in control groups, according to the article, “‘A calculated risk’: the Salk polio vaccine field trials of 1954” by Marcia Meldrum. It was sponsored by the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, currently known as the March of Dimes, an organization founded by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. At the age of 39, Roosevelt was diagnosed with polio and experienced infantile paralysis, losing feeling from the waist down on a trip to Campobello Island in New Brunswick, Canada. His own struggle with the disease led him to found the National Foundation for In-

fantile Paralysis, which still works today to end preventable maternal health risks and deaths. Through grassroots organizing and fundraising, the organization was able to fund research for the vaccine. Statistically, scientists approach the trials by testing the vaccine with the demographic that had the highest incidence of polio paralysis; grade school children in counties with the highest case rate of polio. The foundation sent volunteers to school districts to encourage parental consent for their child to participate in the trials. The vaccine proved to be a success and was 80-90% effective in preventing paralysis, according to Meldrum. Polish scientist Albert Sabin developed another type of polio vaccine shortly afterward; the oral poliovirus vaccine (OPV), which could be delivered via a sugar cube. Easier to produce and deliver, the OPV eventually replaced the Salk vaccine, but it can cause issues for under-vaccinated communities, as the weakened form of the virus can begin to circulate. The history of the polio vaccine is something that I think we should continue to learn about today. Vaccines have become a topic of controversy, and I believe that people forget what life was like without them. In today’s world, it is unlikely that a clinical trial for a vaccine on school-age children would ever occur, because drug trial methods have changed, but also because of the socio-political landscape. Regardless, it’s important to consider the positive changes that vaccinations have contributed to public health and rejoice in the rarity that we rarely see the need for an iron lung.



A black-and-white photo of a hand holding a bottle labeled “poliomyelitis vaccine,” next to other bottles and a box with similar labels. Polio vaccine trials began in 1954. PHOTO COURTESY OF WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Sounds of Storrs concert resonates throughout Spring Weekend 2026

by Elijah Polance | STAFF WRITER | HE/HIM/THEY/THEM | elijah.polance@uconn.edu

The Sounds of Storrs concert was hosted at the Student Union Terrace on Saturday, April 25 at 5 p.m. as part of the University of Connecticut’s many Spring Weekend activities. The performance took place under a tent enclosure, which came in handy amidst the evening’s light rain. Chairs and tables were spread around for spectators, with many onlookers coming over with food from the Food Truck Festival. The UConn Rock Ensemble was first to take the stage at 5 p.m. The lineup of students performing and their instruments changed after each cover of a popular rock song, allowing the group to channel different styles of the genre. A few performances included a brass section, consisting of two saxophonists and a trumpeter, which added a dynamic flair to the covers. Among the highlights was a rendition of The Smashing Pumpkins “Mayonaise,” a heavy performance amplified by the inclusion of two guitarists. The penultimate cover was Carly Simon’s “You’re So Vain,” which featured all three vocalists from the group singing at once. The ensemble capped their performance off by playing “Movin’ Out (Anthony’s Song)” by Billy Joel. The impassioned playing ended fittingly with an intricate keys solo, which transitioned into a dense brass finale. The group was followed by

Ever So Slightly, a Storrs-based band. Unlike the UConn Rock Ensemble, the group of four, consisting of a singer, drummer, bassist and guitarist played mostly original songs. “Flash Flood,” the second song performed, began with a traditional verse-to-chorus structure, before devolving into a dramatic jam session that built in volume and intensity. “Indigo,” another original, featured desperate calls for a lover to stay, which culminated in impressive belting toward the end. The band’s aggressive and intricate rhythms, along with the powerful singing, echoed through the center of campus, and was in hearing distance of the people waiting in line for the nearby food trucks. Ever So Slightly came in with some covers as well. Halfway through the set, they broke out into an energetic cover of Radiohead’s “Jigsaw Falling Into Place.” They ended their performance with a cover of “You Oughta Know” by Alanis Morissette. The final performance from the night came from AshBABY, another local band. Their style of rock deviated from everything heard earlier in the concert, with the band emphasizing jazzier elements, long songs and lengthy instrumental sections. The band kicked off by covering the band Phish’s “Down with Disease” and followed it up with a performance of

“Dark Star” by The Grateful Dead. By the time the second song ended, nearly 30 minutes had passed, yet the band’s technical prowess and the shifting structures of the songs kept them engaging. The band then played two original songs, which were also on the longer side. The first was entirely instrumental with very defined sections. The band kept flirting with silence at moments where the song seemed to be over, only for a new guitar riff to get things going again. The final track also

had a series of segments, though it featured some vocals and got a small crowd from the audience dancing. Anna Kremer, an eighth-semester anthropology and psychology student, said she came to support her friend Tomas Hinckley, the keys player for AshBABY. “I thought it was really good,” Kremer said. “I liked the energy; I liked the jazz; I liked the beats.” Kremer was among the group that first began dancing and continued to do so for most of the performance.

She said the songs weren’t always easy to dance to, but she said she enjoyed doing it. “It was a little hard sometimes, but we got the music in us,” she said. Laura Coderre, a sixth-semester environmental and natural resources economics student, said it was her first time seeing AshBABY perform. “I thought it was really sick,” Coderre said. “They had a really interesting mix of the jazz and a little more rocky elements. It had a good groove to it.



UConn Rock performs during the Sounds of Storrs event on the Student Union Lawn at the University of Connecticut on Sunday, April 26, 2026. This event was part of UConn’s Spring Weekend. PHOTO BY PARKER MEYER, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS