

Working Together Works Miracles!

Kent Greenawalt

In a profession that has often demonstrated a history of divergent opinions, chiropractic deserves a round of applause for a sincere showing of unity, generosity and kindness to our fellow man. On Aug. 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast region. The hurricane caused billions of dollars in damage and killed hundreds of people. The lives of hundreds of thousands of our neighbors in Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, and Louisiana were left in turmoil because of this massive storm. In response to this unprecedented disaster, the chiropractic community united to raise \$570,153.88 for the American Red Cross. [*Editor's note: See "Foot Levelers Raises \$564,000 (and Counting) for Hurricane Victims," Nov. 7 DC: www.chiroweb.com/archives/23/23/09.html.]*]

A concerted effort was necessary to accomplish a feat of kindness of this magnitude. Chiropractic publications graciously offered to share their e-mail lists and use their publication space and Web sites to spread the word. Almost immediately after the dollar-for-dollar matching campaign was announced, your donations started pouring in. As momentum continued to build, individuals and groups in the chiropractic community organized similar fund-matching campaigns, so that every dollar was matched. When the results were tallied, over 2,000 individual contributions were received from all over the United States, Canada, and Japan.

The Red Cross campaign was not the only effort that chiropractic made to reach out to the victims of Hurricane Katrina. Both the Mississippi Chiropractic Association and the Chiropractic Association of Louisiana set up similar relief funds in their states to help chiropractors and their families rebuild their damaged clinics and homes. The American Chiropractic Association (ACA) and the International Chiropractors Association (ICA) established resource Web sites to help coordinate relief efforts and assist chiropractors, their families, and others affected by the hurricane.

Chiropractors care deeply for humanity, healing, and wholeness. Truly wonderful things can happen when we come together. The hurricane relief campaign was not the first time the power of our unity has impacted the entire nation. A similar campaign raised \$508,522 for the American Red Cross after the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001. Chiropractors from all over the United States donated and showed we were united as a profession and as a country.

If you combine these two campaigns, the outpouring of kindness from our community has resulted in over a million dollars in donations to the American Red Cross. Although chiropractors are a relatively "small" group in numbers, they are by no means small when it comes to compassion. As the famous quotation from Margaret Mead goes, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

Chiropractic is larger than a small group of citizens; we are thoughtful, committed, and passionate about making a positive difference in the world. When we stand united as a profession and as human beings helping each other, we accomplish great things. Humanity benefits when we set our differences aside. Chiropractic truly cares. We should all be so proud - of our profession and of each other.

But we shouldn't wait for disaster to unite us. The aid we have given to the victims of 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina is only a small measure of the good that chiropractic can do for the world. Chiropractors do a terrific job of taking care of patients, but we have neglected the health of our profession for far too long.

We continue to lack professional wellness, which manifests as the inability to work together as a profession. The lack of standardization within chiropractic creates a weak and scattered perception about chiropractic to the government from which we seek research funds, to the public we're trying to educate, and to the world we're trying to make healthier. We can't help the people who need us if we're busy fighting each other.

The public deserves to know that chiropractic is natural, drug-free, cost-effective, and beneficial to overall health. Chiropractic is special because it takes a holistic and long-term wellness approach. We offer more gain, less pain - physically, emotionally, and economically.

The American people need to hear our message of wellness just as much as the victims of Hurricane Katrina and 9/11 needed our aid. In the United States, 65 percent of the population is overweight, with 30 percent of those being obese. Since 1980, the rate of obesity in the adult population has doubled.¹ The growing obesity problem, combined with epidemic rates of type 2 diabetes, heart disease, osteoarthritis, and other diseases, means that the public needs our help now more than ever. We can lead the way to a healthier nation.

However, we will never be able to reach the potential patients who need us without working together. There's an old expression: "Continue to do what you do, and you'll continue to get what you get." We can't do better if we refuse to change.

Wouldn't chiropractic be stronger if we functioned more like a team? If instead of being divided by our differences, we worked with each other for the greater good?

We have everything to gain with unity: busier, more profitable practices; increased enrollment at chiropractic colleges; a respected place in the American health care system; and more patients helped. Let's focus on what unites us, not what divides us. Let's work together as a team and become stronger than ever before.

The purpose of the Campaign for Chiropractic is to garner positive press for the chiropractic profession, and through that press, to stimulate greater interest among the public and more patients for everyone. If the chiropractic profession is going to have a bright and healthy future, we need to be unified. It doesn't matter whether you just started practicing yesterday or if you have been in practice for 20 years; chiropractic unity can benefit you. Everyone who has a stake in the chiropractic profession - chiropractors, vendors, students, etc. - should support chiropractic unity.

When we work together, we can achieve anything - even things that seem impossible or miraculous. We've donated over a million dollars to the American Red Cross. We've survived for 110 years in spite of the forces that oppose us. Now your profession needs the generosity and compassion that you've shown time and time again - to the survivors of Hurricane Katrina, to the victims of 9/11, and to your patients. Together, I know we can make this work.

P.S.: Donations to the Campaign for Chiropractic can be mailed to:

The Foundation for Chiropractic Progress
1335 North Front Street, Suite 201

Harrisburg, PA 17102

Reference

1. Flegal MK, et al. Prevalence and trends in obesity among U.S. adults. *JAMA* 2002;288(14):1723-1727.

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