



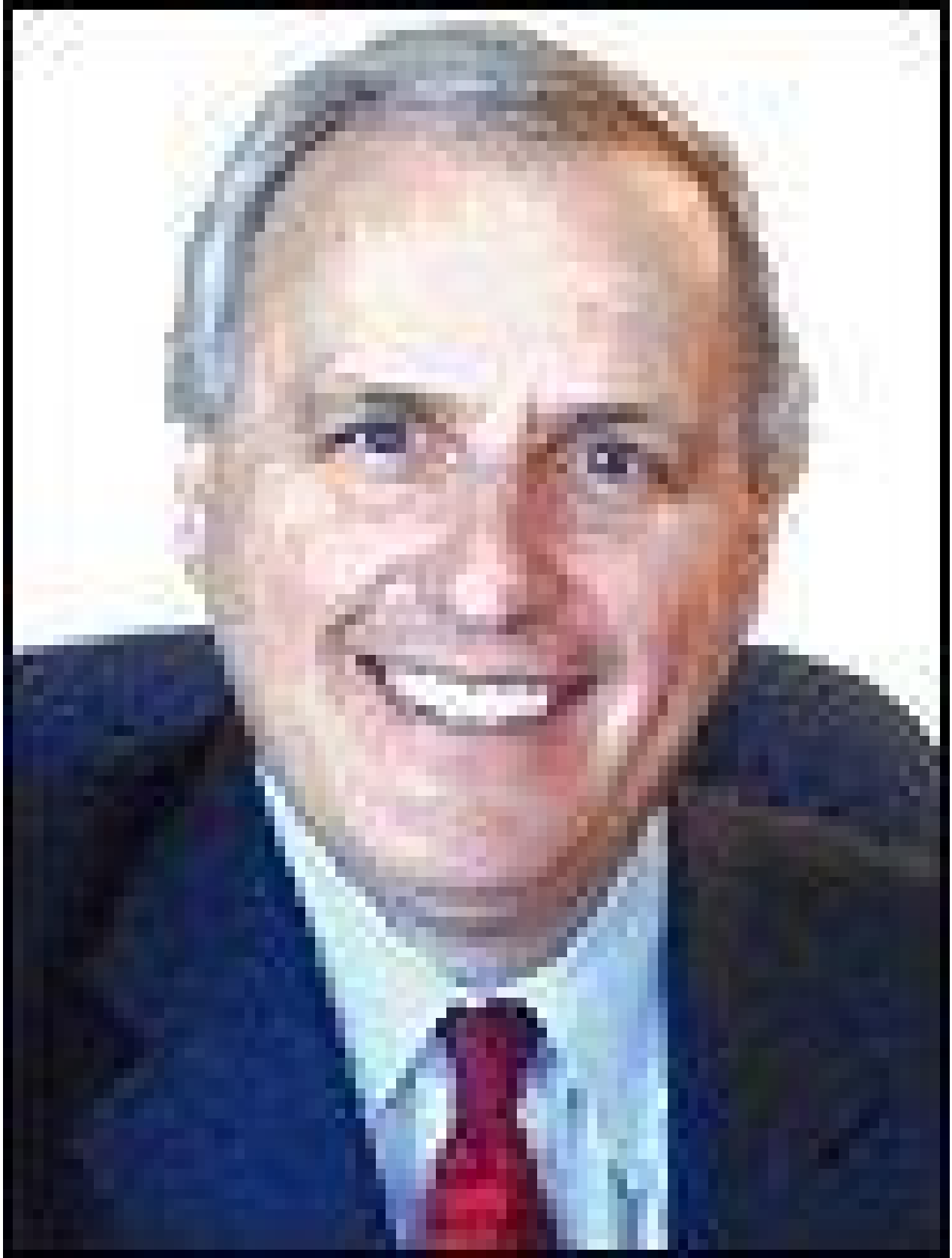
NEWS / PROFESSION

Campaigning for Chiropractic

GENE VENO: DC'S PERSON OF THE YEAR

Editorial Staff

If you aren't familiar with the name Gene Veno, there's a decent chance you've been stranded on a remote island for at least six months and have only recently returned to the comforts of civilization. As president and CEO of the Foundation for Chiropractic Progress, Gene Veno has been promoting the Campaign for Chiropractic since his appointment to the organization in June 2005. His mission: to get doctors of chiropractic, state and national associations, and chiropractic vendors to help change the image of chiropractic in the eyes of the public.



Of course, unity is nothing new to Gene Veno. As executive director of the Pennsylvania Chiropractic Association, he helped unify the chiropractic profession in the Keystone State; then he helped do the same for chiropractors in neighboring New Jersey. In June 2005, he began addressing the need for a unified purpose and message on a national level.

According to Mr. Veno, the Campaign for Chiropractic is a three-phase project:

Phase 1 (Research): This phase yielded valuable data that was used to develop a marketing theme to awaken consumers to the benefits of chiropractic.

Phase 2 (Communicating to the Profession): In this phase, the foundation developed prototype materials for review by the profession, and created an electronic infrastructure to keep doctors of chiropractic updated and informed on the progress of the campaign.

Phase 3 (Consumer Awareness): Phase three involves carefully planned placement of print and radio ads in markets where consumers are most likely to read or listen about their health care needs. Thus far, the foundation has 12 print ads and 12 radio commercials that offer a simple message to the consumer: "Think Again - Think Chiropractic." This theme will give consumers a reason to consider chiropractic care for themselves and their family when health issues confront them.

For his untiring efforts on behalf of the foundation and the campaign, we recognize Gene Veno as *Dynamic Chiropractic's* 2005 Person of the Year. In this exclusive interview, Gene explains why he joined the Foundation for Chiropractic Progress (F4CP) and wholeheartedly endorses the Campaign for Chiropractic, and outlines what the foundation plans on doing in 2006 to enhance the image of the chiropractic profession.

Dynamic Chiropractic (DC): Give us some background on your involvement with "unity" in the chiropractic profession - i.e., the Pennsylvania and New Jersey situations - and how that led you to join the F4CP and endorse the Campaign for Chiropractic?

Gene Veno (GV): I've always believed that this profession needs one voice when addressing legislators, whether we are trying to advance our scope of practices or defend our inalienable rights to practice free from regulations imposed by legislators. I realized that in Pennsylvania, we had a diverse profession - many different associations, organizations, councils and forums speaking on behalf of a simple majority of doctors of chiropractic. What I learned was that the many advocacy groups did not have a simple majority; simply stated, the small factions were trying to make policy for the many, who were not even involved in the process. Of course, it is as much their responsibility to participate and have their position heard, but with all of the infighting and name-calling that was occurring, the real message got lost, which turned off many of the doctors and was probably the reason they did not join any of the groups to represent them.

It was at this time that I was called the office of the Pennsylvania Senate majority leader and was asked, point-blank: "Why do you represent this profession? It cannot seem to get out of its own way." The majority leader suggested that if I had any desire to continue representing other clients, I should drop chiropractors from my lobbying firm.

I listened, but I did not drop the chiropractic profession from my list of clients, which included many other state and national allied health care professions. What I did do was ask the profession to allow me to speak for the entire profession in front of the legislature. What they did among themselves was their business; I just wanted the opportunity to represent all of the groups legislatively.

What we found after establishing the Pennsylvania Chiropractic Forum in 1991 was that we had excellent communication and legislative strategies to allow us to negotiate with strength and consistency. This was the major turning point in Pennsylvania, and one that I believe led to the leaders of the profession in the state to finally sit down and work out a unification in 1996 that is still viable to this day. Is it 100 percent perfect? Absolutely not, but these days, we discuss the problems before we present them to our General Assembly. We are now taken seriously by

legislators, regulators, department heads, insurers and other associations in Pennsylvania.

I believe our work in Pennsylvania was noticed by some of the New Jersey doctors, who chose to become members of the PCA. I also would get calls from some of them to speak at their gatherings. It took about five years, but in 2003, the last time I spoke to them, there was something different in their hearts. They wanted unity, and they wanted it no matter what.

I have received many accolades and awards for my involvement in the Pennsylvania and New Jersey unity efforts, but the awards all go to the many doctors who worked hard for unity. I was a mere participant in the process, and I was honored to finally see firsthand the accomplishments they have made for this profession. I believe they have both now created an example for many other groups to emulate, and it is my desire and wish to someday see this carry over to the national scene. It will happen - I just know it will!

DC: Give us a general timeline of events in terms of the progression of the campaign thus far - what has been accomplished?

GV: Since 2003, when Kent Greenawalt brought his idea to the profession and backed it up with a financial commitment, the Foundation for Chiropractic Progress has established itself as an organization set on creating a "positive message" for the chiropractic profession. Mr. Greenawalt single-handedly traveled all across the country, espousing his idea and asking for support from doctors and vendors who were willing to listen. It was not easy going at first - trying to run a major corporation in Foot Levelers, Inc., and still do all he does for the profession at large. But the Campaign for Chiropractic did not connect on a large scale for one obvious reason: I believe the profession often waits to see the outcome before participating in the creation of something important. The profession was promised so much in the past; that skepticism set in, and the profession was not sure what to make of the F4CP. I observed the campaign just like anyone else, wondering when we would see the first ad, and so on. As ironic as it may seem, I really got to know Mr. Greenawalt in person at the 2005 NCLC meeting, when he announced that the foundation was looking for an executive vice president. I indicated that I would help him and the F4CP in any way.

In March 2005, I received a call from Mr. Greenawalt, Don Petersen Jr., and Dr. Sportelli. I was literally in my car taking my son to class when I got a message to participate in a conference call. I assumed they wanted me to help find an executive director for the foundation, as I had done for the New Jersey society. Boy, was I wrong. They asked for my thoughts about the F4CP and I told them that as the executive director of the PCA, I knew about the foundation but did not know much about what they were doing.

I was on a plane to meet with Kent the very next day to discuss the F4CP. I learned quickly of his vision and passion for this profession, and I realized that when Kent sets his mind to something, things will happen. I felt an immediate connection and knew right then that I wanted to help. Little did I know that in less than three weeks, I would be appointed the president of the F4CP, a role I have served in since May 2005 in a part-time capacity, balancing my responsibilities with the F4CP and the PCA. The association and its board summed it up best when I presented them with this opportunity: "We believe in you, and we believe you can do both for the good of the profession."

So, since May, I have traveled every weekend, meeting with leaders of the profession I had only read about previously. I attended my first ACA House of Delegates meeting, have appeared before numerous association gatherings, and have been asked to write about the foundation on a regular basis. I have to admit that it was tough going in the initial stages-not many knew about the F4CP, just as I did not; others were skeptical, and still others were so negative that at times, I would leave my office late at night and wonder, "How did I ever get involved in this campaign?"

I persevered through the negativity and the complaints that we are not doing this or that, and finally came to this conclusion: We will never please this profession 100 percent, so I will do the best I can and work as hard as I can to establish something positive for this profession. I have to say that in the past month, the profession at large is taking note. We have arrived, and it will only get better - we have so many exciting projects planned in 2006.

DC: What specific steps will be taken to advance the campaign in 2006?

GV: For one thing, we will have a state-of-the-art Web page - it will be live as of Feb. 1, 2006. The site will be interactive and so much more; I am so excited for this next level of communication to the profession and cannot wait to unveil it. In the first quarter of 2006, we also will create a Web site for the public; they will be able to view our television ads, radio spots and print materials in real time. We plan to do a lot of communicating in the first six months of 2006 on the Web.

We will have many new radio and print ads. A new DVD will be sent to every state association, and we expect many more corporate sponsors to join the campaign. I use the term "campaign" quite a bit. I believe it is what we are all about. This is a campaign for this profession's future. I recall my days running for mayor of Scranton in 1981; I am utilizing many of those strategies for the Campaign for Chiropractic. We need to press the flesh, appear everywhere there is an audience, and inform and gain support from the profession all across the country. I believe we are doing it!

DC: What is the ultimate goal of the Campaign for Chiropractic? In other words, when all is said and done, how will it impact the individual DC and his or her practice?

GV: Simply stated: We will have established an image that this profession will once and for all be proud of and one that the public needs to see, read and hear about!

DC: Thank you.

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