

## Unity Campaign Is Turning Chiropractic's Dream Into a Reality

For 112 years, chiropractic has fought to gain a position in the nation's health care system that reflects the significant value of this approach to healing. Yet after more than a century, our profession still has just 8 percent to 10 percent of the consumer health care market. Often, we have been our own worst enemy, disagreeing on even the most basic concepts and ideas.

For the first time in memory, we have developed a unity of purpose and intent that includes the ICA, the ACA, many of the chiropractic colleges, and nearly two dozen state associations. Those organizations, along with hundreds of individual doctors, have joined forces with their time and money to create the Foundation for Chiropractic Progress. I am truly heartened that our profession appears to be coming together in such a way that they can develop a sustainable, long-term effort to win the hearts, minds and spines of every American.

Northwestern Health Sciences University (NHSU) is a strong financial supporter of the foundation's efforts to motivate the general public to utilize chiropractic services. Northwestern donated \$15,000 to the campaign this year and will donate another \$15,000 next year. We believe everyone in our nation could benefit, at some level, from chiropractic care and that current consumer usage of chiropractic is completely unacceptable.

This isn't the first campaign I've seen that intended to raise the profile of the chiropractic profession. It is, however, the first one I think can make a real difference in increasing consumer awareness of our profession. I am optimistic for a number of reasons, including the following:

- So many chiropractic organizations, national leaders of our profession and individual doctors are supporting the campaign.
- CPR Communications is doing the public relations work *pro bono*, which means the money raised will go directly to media buys, not to paying a high-priced public-relations agency;
- The level of giving is impressive and, combined with the CPR Communications approach to spending the dollars via remnant space media buys, will result in a maximum number of "gross impressions" in the months ahead in the consumer marketplace.
- The campaign couldn't come at a better time, because American consumers are fed up with the current health care system and are looking for alternatives (and they have the discretionary cash to purchase those alternatives through new health care vehicles, such as Health Savings Accounts).

The ongoing unity campaign can be strengthened even further if every one of the tens of thousands of DCs in this country does two things. First, make a donation immediately to the Foundation for Chiropractic Progress. If each of us were to donate \$1,000 to this critical campaign, the foundation could build a war chest of more than \$60 million. With that amount of money, CPR Communications would have the ability to reach tens of millions of Americans with our message about the value of chiropractic.

The second way you can help leverage the national buzz created by the unity campaign is to spread the chiropractic message in your own community, with your dollars and time. Become a community

resource for natural approaches to health and wellness through chiropractic.

NHSU has introduced four programs into the consumer marketplace in the past several years that are intended to build the stature of natural health care and chiropractic and can serve as valuable models for building awareness:

- The Natural News Service provides four articles about natural approaches to health and wellness to 1,000 upper Midwest newspapers on a monthly basis.
- HealthyU, our consumer-focused Web site ([www.nwhealth.edu/healthyu](http://www.nwhealth.edu/healthyu)), provides more than 1,000 pages and 1,200 links of natural approaches to health. (The site is averaging 500,000 unique visitors annually.)
- Our Wellness Wave Symposiums bring consumers to campus for seminars and health fairs focusing on natural health care.
- Vinnie the Vertebrate, our costumed, chiropractic character, spreads a "Stand Tall America" message at schools, community events and other venues.

I mention these awareness-building tactics because each of them can be replicated in your own community. Use the articles from the Natural News Service as a foundation for a monthly column you write and send to area newspapers.<sup>1</sup> Develop a robust Web site for your clinic and let your community know about its existence as a resource for leading a healthy life. Consider using the vast amount of information on HealthyU as a resource to enhance your Web site; create topical links from your site to areas of HealthyU that are relevant to your practice. Offer monthly talks in your community about chiropractic approaches to health and wellness; use the information from the Natural News Service and HealthyU as resources to build a portfolio of presentations. Finally, consider using Vinnie the Vertebrate in your community, as he is available to private practitioners for their community events.<sup>2</sup>

If every practitioner in America devotes dollars and time to build the chiropractic profession, we can increase the power of the unity campaign's media buys by a factor of 10, 100, 1,000 or even more. I know how hard it is to survive as a private practitioner. For more than 25 years, I fought the same battles you now wage daily. Obviously, you have to advertise and publicize your own practice in order to put food on the table for you and your family. But the next time you are reviewing your marketing plan, think about how you can advertise your practice and your profession. Be creative, think outside the box, and be a part of this valuable campaign of unity.

I would like to think our profession has finally turned the proverbial corner and is now ready to seize its rightful place as a cornerstone in the American health care marketplace. The late J. Lamonie DeRusha, DC, a dean emeritus at Northwestern and one of the great chiropractic minds of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, regularly told his students they should "take a back seat to no one" as doctors of chiropractic. I think Dr. DeRusha's words just may come true, thanks to the efforts of each of you and the Foundation for Chiropractic Progress.

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*References*

1. Go to [www.nwhealth.edu/media/healthnews/index.html](http://www.nwhealth.edu/media/healthnews/index.html) to access dozens of articles.
2. Go to [www.nwhealth.edu/community/connect/costume.html](http://www.nwhealth.edu/community/connect/costume.html) for more information on using Vinnie the Vertebrate to promote chiropractic in your community.

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