

Healing the Homeless -- Chiropractically -- at the Los Angeles Mission, Skid Row, California

Gary V. Phillips, MS, DC

There are many able-bodied and able-minded people in our city that have not discovered the healing benefits of chiropractic: what you might call a health care crisis among the middle class.

But an even more drastic health care crisis exists on our streets: those who are homeless and hopeless on our streets seeking shelter and the most basic of everyday needs.

These reasons, as well as the desire to take action toward a solution, paved the way for the creation of the Back to Health Chiropractic Clinic at the Los Angeles Mission. As chairman of my local Kiwanis Club Spiritual Aims Committee, I set up a field trip shortly after the L.A. riots to assist with the feeding of the homeless in a time of crisis. Much to my surprise, what I embarked upon was literally a paradise among the peril in the streets, a spiritual haven amongst hell, if you will.

The Los Angeles Mission, 303 E. Fifth Street, through years of donations and dedication, erected a new 155,000 square foot facility in January of 1992 to help the homeless of L.A. Following our tour of the mission, I thought that the people are blessed to have this awesome facility here.

Let me share a little bit of what makes this facility unique, special, and God-given, and why I felt chiropractic care was the missing health link. In the early 70s, the average age of the homeless person on the street was 50-55 years of age. Typically, a hot meal and a place to sleep for shelter were adequate. Now, the situation on the streets has dramatically changed. The average age of a homeless person is 28-years-old. This undoubtedly necessitates an entire new approach to the needs of today's homeless community. No longer is a hot meal and a place to stay enough. These people need gainful employment, spiritual and psychosocial guidance and readjustment, and education through literacy training.

The L.A. Mission's thrust and purpose is to provide a model for missions all over the world: the concept of total rehabilitation of the homeless. To achieve this reality, the mission provides the homeless community with gospel services; food; clothing; lodging; counseling; spiritual guidance; rehabilitation work therapy; bible study; education and literacy; medical services (Watts' Mobile Medical Clinic); job placement; and Hispanic programs.

During a one-month period, the mission will serve more than 50,000 hot meals (average 1,200-2,000 daily); average 6,500 lodgers; provide 7,244 items of clothing; have 11,400 attend chapel services; and have 106 men in the Fresh Start Rehabilitation Program (a 12-month program for those men who have demonstrated a desire to return to the mainstream of society).

The Fresh Start program combines vocational training in computer operation, building maintenance, cooking and kitchen duty, with honest productive labor; counseling and spiritual assistance is

included.

The Women's Ministry -- City Light Rehabilitation Program -- is accomplishing the same task, and presently has capacity for 32 residents. This new facility has allowed the mission to more than triple the people that can be served.

You may ask what this has to do with chiropractic -- everything. Seeing these people being helped in so many wonderful ways, I could not help but think how much more wholesome and complete their rehabilitation experience would be with the addition of physical/spinal rehabilitation through chiropractic. Therefore, like a divine calling to "help these people" from the good Lord upstairs, I proposed, was accepted, and began on August 11, 1992, the first chiropractic clinic the L.A. Mission had seen, staffed by yours truly on Tuesdays from 8:15-2:30 p.m.

The Mission's registered nurse, Anne Milligan, R.N., directs the AIDS Outreach Program, the only one of its kind in the downtown Los Angeles area. In addition, she works in tandem with me by directly referring the program participants and staff to me on a triage basis. The success of this service is beginning as there is already a one-week waiting list to see me. Fortunately for chiropractic, Reverend Mark Holsinger, the executive director, has been a chiropractic patient longer than I have been on the planet.

Driving through the trash-infested, poverty-stricken, indigent community on the streets of skid row surrounding the mission, the realization is always there of how very fortunate and appreciative I am to have my mental and physical faculties so that I may serve the needs of these desperate people with unconditional love; allowing me to give them all the respect, dignity, gratitude, moral uplifting, and humane treatment that they so rightfully need and deserve. After all, if we all could practice what we preach -- brotherly love and equality for the human race -- maybe the little things we do as loving humans in unison will make a dramatic impact and difference, bettering our communities for the children of the future.

I would like to personally thank Mr. Paul Mazurowski, president of Meyer Distributing Company, who graciously donated a chiropractic treatment table and stool for the clinic. Any and all donations of chiropractic equipment and/or supplies is always welcome.

Inquiries in this regard may be made by writing or calling:

Gary V. Phillips, M.S., D.C.
Director, Back to Health Clinic
Los Angeles Mission
8555 Reseda Blvd.
Northridge, California 91324
(818) 349-2225

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