

Humanity mission reaches 10-year mark

By **Dina Sciortino**

Chiropractor Anita Morgenstern, who has lived in and run her private practice out of Hastings for the last 13 years, has used a holistic approach to chiropractic to ensure the easing of the body and minds of well over 70,000 homeless people over the last 10 years. As Morgenstern puts it best, “That’s a lot of spines.”

After hearing about a soup kitchen at the Roman Catholic Church of St. Francis Xavier, on 15th Street in Manhattan, from a patient, Morgenstern, 55, saw this as an opportunity to fulfill her belief that “every person could benefit from chiropractic care.”

Morgenstern told the Enterprise, “It would make the world a better place if people were to get adjusted.” She added, “I’ve always felt that I wanted to give it [chiropractic care] to anyone and everyone.”

Morgenstern, who received her D.C. (Doctor of Chiropractic) from New York Chiropractic College in 1982 and has been in private practice ever since, began to enlist a group of chiropractors, known as Chiropractic for Humanity, to go to the soup kitchen every Sunday from 1 to 3 p.m., to provide free adjustments to those stopping in for a bite, as well as the parish and soup kitchen staff. At her office in Hastings, Morgenstern usually charges about \$45 for this service.

Morgenstern believes the homeless can especially benefit from an adjustment because “of the amount of physical, sexual, and substance abuse they might have been through in their lives,” which she



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Anita Morgenstern treats a patient at her office in Hastings.

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says causes their spines to be even more out of alignment than the average person's. "To correct that is to get the body free, so it can start to heal itself from all of those old traumas, and the person can come back to themselves," she said.

"Most people don't understand what chiropractic is about," said Morgenstern. A common perception is that it is about pain, "a neck ache, back ache or something of that nature, but its not." She says that when a body is properly aligned, it turns the brain's power on, allowing it to properly flow to all parts of the body. "People can think better, they are inspired by their connection with themselves, they can hear their inner voice telling them what to do in their lives."

She explained that spines become backed up from stress of all kinds, which causes subluxations, or misaligned vertebrae, causing nerve or spinal cord pressure. As much as 60 percent of impulses can be blocked by subluxations. When this happens, nerve impulses are blocked from properly traveling to and from the brain, clouding the thought process. Morgenstern says subluxations can also lead to other problems from the top of your head to the tip of your toes.

A properly aligned spine allows nerve impulses to travel quickly and freely

throughout the body, leaving it, and the mind, at ease. "I feel chiropractic is so essential to everyone, not just people with aches and pains," said Morgenstern.

After providing her service, "I've had people at the church tell me they haven't felt that good feeling within themselves in 20 years." With this good feeling and sense of clarity, Morgenstern says, they then can start to help themselves with addictions or emotional stress and depression, since their bodies can start to function in a more normal way after an adjustment.

Ten years after starting at St. Francis Xavier, Chiropractic for Humanity has grown to serve two other locations: an Episcopal parish on Ninth Avenue, Church of the Holy Apostles, which they have been working out of for about seven years on Thursdays from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., and Elijah's Promise, a soup kitchen in New Brunswick, N.J., where Chiropractic for Humanity has operated for the last five years, also on Thursdays, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Morgenstern has a core group of 20 chiropractors who alternate days and locations. Others from all over the tri-state area come in less frequently, however, Morgenstern says that any time these doctors can offer is greatly appreciated.

Among her die-hard volunteers are Emanuel Tsourounakis, who practices out of Queens, and brings a group from the New York Chiropractic Council to schedule sessions at Holy Apostles. Jay

Yuhas, a New Jersey doctor who traveled for an hour to volunteer his time to Chiropractic for Humanity, told Morgenstern about Elijah's Promise, and organized four doctors to rotate shifts there every week. Adam Lamb, whose office is across from Grand Central Station, and John Albaneze, out of Queens, both spent weekends at a time adjusting firemen and emergency workers at Ground Zero, after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and are among those who truly give of themselves, according to Morgenstern. "On a Sunday morning, if a doctor wimps out on me, I can call up and say 'Adam I need you,' and he'll just go."

About 60 to 100 spines get adjusted at each location in the two hours that the one or two doctors have to work. More often than not, there is only one doctor available. This could become a little tougher in the next week or so, since one of the four tables, which were donated to the group, is broken. Morgenstern is currently looking for someone to donate two more.

These tables are necessary to serve the hundreds of people who are from different states, and other countries, that come each week to get adjusted. "Some people who have never been adjusted in their lives may get the adjustment they need to really make a change in their life," said Morgenstern, adding that others "who get straightened up, and get a job and home, but still can't afford chiropractic care also come."

Morgenstern told the Enterprise that she has two ladies who can afford to receive local chiropractic, but use public transportation to get to Manhattan from Queens just to be worked on by Chiropractic for Humanity. This doesn't bother Morgenstern, whose motto, which can be read from a 10-foot-long banner hung above the adjustment area, is, "Releasing the healing power within every man, woman, and child."

When asked why she thinks people travel so far and come back over and over again to be healed by the doctors of Chiropractic Humanity, she pointed to her heart. "The heart is in the right place," Morgenstern said of the group's doctors. "People go to a chiropractor on the outside where they are talking about their pain, or your this or that; we focus on the freeing of the being within. It's more of a spiritual orientation, I think."

Morgenstern would like to see Chiropractic for Humanity expand to serve other locations, however, she says this will not be possible unless they get more doctors to volunteer. Morgenstern says that while she loves her patients in Hastings like family, there is "something about the feeling when I adjust people at the soup kitchen" that she says makes her feel like a million bucks. "What I've done for them is so incredibly significant — not that it's any less significant here [in Hastings]; it's just that those people are hurting so badly in so many different ways, to shed a little light there is very gratifying."