

CITY ROOM

A Chiropractic Touch for the Homeless

By JONATHAN SCHIENBERG

Dr. Anita Morgenstern and her team of New York chiropractors provide relief for aching backs and spines to a group of people who ordinarily have little access to such care: the homeless.

On any given Sunday, Dr. Morgenstern, who normally charges patients \$45 a session at her practice in Hastings-on-Hudson, N.Y., sees clients whose living conditions on the streets make their physical aches worse.

"I have one patient I recently adjusted at the soup kitchen who lived in a cardboard box for six years," she said. "I've never seen a spine like his."

At the Church of St. Francis Xavier, a Roman Catholic parish in Chelsea, hundreds of men, women and children gather every week for the Sunday soup kitchen, some seeking a nourishing meal, others seeking relief from bodily stresses and strains.

Ten years ago, Dr. Morgenstern learned about the soup kitchen at St. Francis through a patient who worked there, and she felt compelled to do something. Her mission: address the



A frame from a video of Dr. Anita Morgenstern, who formed a group of chiropractors to donate their services at soup kitchens.

physical trauma of being homeless, a problem often overlooked.

She also began recruiting support for her vision: Chiropractic for Humanity.

Dr. Morgenstern organized a group of chiropractors in the New York area to volunteer their services at soup kitchens twice a

week. After getting the leadership of St. Francis and the Church of the Holy Apostles, on board, she and her team received four chiropractic adjustment tables donated by local chiropractors — two for the Sunday soup kitchen at St. Francis, and two for the Thurs-

day soup kitchen at Holy Apostles, one of the largest soup kitchens in the city.

Since then, several hundred homeless men and women have received chiropractic services at the soup kitchens. Dr. Morgenstern estimates that at least a few hundred have become dedicated patients, visiting the chiropractors at least once a week.

Jerry Capers, for one, has been visiting the chiropractors since the program began nearly a decade ago. He has made a living collecting cans since 1989, vacillating between life on the street and transitional housing. His bout with homelessness and depression has been a crippling 17-year struggle. On Saturdays, he rises early to make the trek between Flushing and the Bronx to cash in 50 pounds of cans, which he hoists on his back. On Sundays, he heads to church for rest and adjustments with Dr. Morgenstern and company.

"I gave it a shot, and since then, it's been the best thing that has ever happened to me," Mr. Capers said of the chiropractic care. "I'm not concentrating on pain anymore."