

Shelter chiropractor is giving back

Shaw says volunteer work is true to profession's credo

By **Richie Rathsack**
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MERIDEN — When Rick Imbro first came to Shelter Now, he walked with a cane and was in pretty rough shape. With the help of a chiropractor who volunteers at the shelter, he now walks without any assistance.

"In a matter of two to three weeks, I didn't walk with a cane anymore," Imbro said. "I think it's really great of him to do that."

The chiropractor, Robert Shaw, said it was a twist of fate that may be a bit beyond coincidence that led to his volunteer role at the shelter. Shaw, of Shaw Family Chiropractic in Southington, volunteers his time and his skills once a week at the shelter to give free adjustments to residents and staff.

"It's just a service. It's being able to come and give back," Shaw said. "Chiropractic has given me everything I have. If you don't give back, the wheel stops."

Both employees and residents of the shelter are very appreciative of his efforts. Imbro used to be a resident of the shelter and is now in a transitional home.

Shaw said he and about two dozen other chiropractors, who call themselves the Band of Brothers, try to follow the old standard of the profession: The goal of chiropractors is to help the body heal itself.

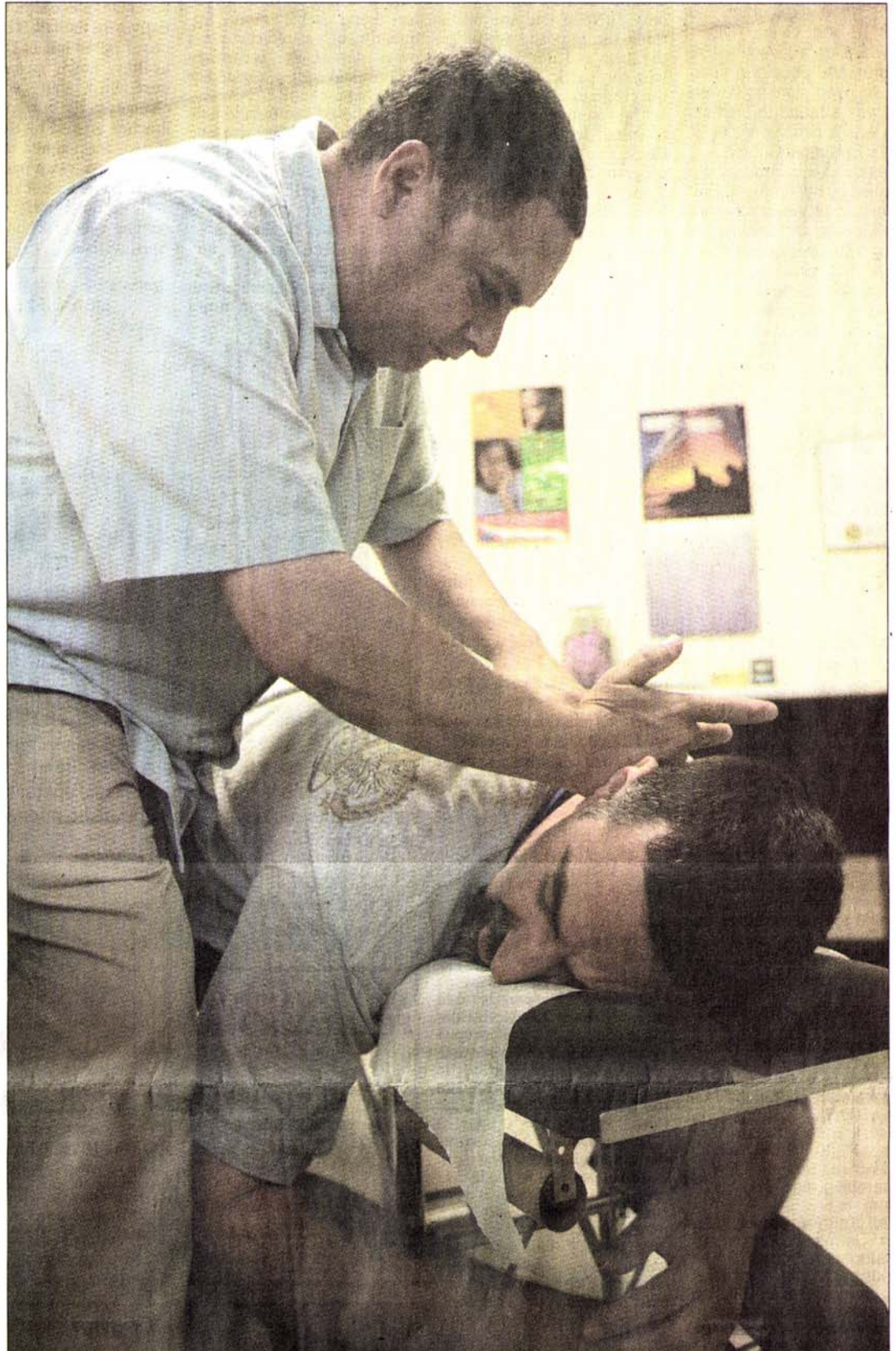
"The goal of chiropractors is not to teach people about aches and pains, but about how to heal themselves," Shaw said. "When people come here, they are all jacked up from a lot of stressful situations."

Many of the chiropractors go on mission trips to help people who really need it. He said his group was looking for ways to do that kind of missionary work at a local level. One of his patients happened to work for the United Way and, during casual conversation, mentioned that she worked with doctors who do that kind of work.

"Within a week, she called back and put me in touch with the shelter. It just kind of happened," Shaw said.

He said it was a weird coincidence that he ended up doing this work, considering the story of his profession's founder, B.J. Palmer.

Being homeless and jobless, Palmer asked a stranger for food one day. The man replied that food would not help him, but that he had to find "that something" to make his life better. Palmer described "that something" as a part of the soul that can make a person succeed and be great.



Johnathon Henninger / Record-Journal

Robert Shaw, a Southington chiropractor who volunteers at Meriden's Shelter Now, works on realigning shelter worker Tony Goriss' spine Monday.

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Shaw said chiropractic takes care of the spine, which is the main conduit for the nervous system. When stress can cause blocks or misalignment of the spine, the body cannot make the most of the conduit, he said.

When that conduit is working to its fullest, the body can respond and heal itself. He said he helps people be in a position to find "that something" for themselves.

"The body gives little clues when there is something wrong," Shaw said as he examined the feet of a patient. "When there is stress on one side, it tenses up. How the spine feels tells me a lot."

As he felt the spine of his patient Monday, Shaw asked about headaches or heartburn. Some of the new patients were kind of surprised to hear him ask about the issues they have. Shaw said certain places in the spine can cause different symptoms when they are not lined up properly.

He felt the patient's spine, told him to relax, then pushed down hard on an area. The patient tensed but then gave a big sigh of relief as Shaw finished his work.

Tony Goriss, kitchen supervisor at Shelter Now, really appreciates Shaw's generosity in working with the people at the shelter.

"I think it's an outstanding thing he does. A lot of the guys do not even know they are in pain until they see him," Goriss said. "Not too many people volunteer their time anymore. It's really nice to have him here."

Shaw said he doesn't volunteer for recognition. He does it, he said, because he feels his life is blessed and he wants to help others by carrying on the traditions of chiropractic.

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