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Dr. Dan Strelcheck Sr. and Dr. Daniel Strelcheck Jr. in the lobby of Strelcheck Chiropractic Clinic in Crystal Lake. The elder Strelcheck opened the clinic 50 years ago, and they now occupy a round building of his own design.

Chiropractors mark 50 years

By KURT BEGALKA
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CRYSTAL LAKE – Kitty Johnson was tired of the tried and true.

Her son, 17-year-old Blain, had been battling debilitating headaches for 15 years. He wasn't getting better. In fact, she said, the medication was making lethargic and causing him to "sleep for hours on end." Allergy treatments and pain management techniques proved ineffective. He became depressed.

This spring, the Marengo resident scheduled an appointment with Strelcheck Chiropractic Clinic in Crystal Lake. X-rays revealed cupped neck vertebrae – that led to muscle strain – and a jaw joint condition known as Temporomandibular Joint and Muscle Disorder.

"We met with Dr. Daniel [Strelcheck Jr.] and he did an adjustment," Johnson said. "It wasn't immediate results, but as we kept doing it we could see the difference in Blain. He came out of his room rather than hibernate in the dark with a headache. It's making a huge difference. ... If there is something of value that works, it's worth the commute."

Daniel's father, Dan Strelcheck Sr., launched the practice 50 years ago at the corner of Route 14 and Pingree Road. After a year, he moved to 105 W. Crystal Lake Ave., at the corner of McHenry Avenue. A decade later, he built a 6,400-square-foot office on the corner of Route 14 and Green Oaks Drive. Dan picked a round design to maximize space.

"They called it the swimming pool, the silo," he said with a shrug.

Back then, he rented out three-quarters of the building. No longer. To accommodate the 22 percent growth last year, the clinic fills the entire building. "Dr. Daniel," 49, bought the practice from his father

Strelcheck Chiropractic Clinic

Owner: Daniel Strelcheck Jr.
Where: 10 N. Virginia St., Crystal Lake
Hours: 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., 3 to 7 p.m.
 Monday, Wednesday, Friday; 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., 3 to 5 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday; 8 to 10 a. m. Saturday.
Services: Chiropractic, physical and massage therapy, nutrition counseling.
Information: 815 459-3860 or www.strelcheckchiro.com
Open house: Oct. 3.

in 1998 and began a modernization campaign. He added three exam rooms, a physical therapy department, six massage therapists, a nutritionist and many technical improvements.

Ten years ago, the practice had six employees. Today it boasts a staff of 28, including chiropractors Peter Norton and Stephanie Pittenger. They average 360 to 390 patients a week.

"Back then, 10 out of 10 kids wouldn't know what a chiropractor does," Daniel Strelcheck said. "Today, eight out of 10 say 'They work on your bones.'"

Bone of contention

When the elder Strelcheck went off in 1954 to study chiropractic at Palmer College of Chiropractic in Davenport, Iowa, a skeptical public awaited him after his graduation.

"We were called quacks," Dan said. "There was no chiropractic license. It did not exist in Illinois; just a medical practice license."

Wisconsin did license chiropractors – where Dan Strelcheck's uncle ran a successful practice in Stevens Point, Wis. And there was a chiropractor in St. Petersburg, Fla., who treated Dan after a football injury.

crushed his facial bones and led to headaches and convulsions. Chiropractic weaned him off pain medication.

"I thought if I can help one person the way I got helped, it is a worthwhile career," said Dan, 73.

Chiropractors were among the first to treat chronic conditions such as carpal tunnel syndrome and chronic fatigue. In fact, Daniel envisions chiropractors following Europe's lead and becoming the medical "gatekeepers" one day.

"In the past 23 years, \$300 billion has shifted from traditional medical care to alternative care," he said. "Chiropractic represents 80 percent of that amount."

As a typically rebellious teen growing up in Crystal Lake, the last thing that Daniel Strelcheck wanted was to follow in his father's footsteps. He worked in construction and sales before learning about Anthony Robbins and "neurolinguistics." Daniel began working with Chicago's homeless, questioning his priorities. He enrolled at Palmer College.

"I needed to work with people; I needed to change lives," he said.

The Strelchecks said that traditional medicine was more nuts and bolts – a find it and fix it mentality. Chiropractic deals with the underlying nervous system.

"It's good to know there are other alternatives for [patients] to look at," Dan said. "It's very rewarding. ... Chiropractic has come a long way."

Leova "Mickey" Schaefer agreed. The 30-year patient credits Strelcheck Chiropractic for "saving her life" and helping many family members.

"I've had back problems and a new knee put in," Schaefer said. "Now my hip is getting bad. I don't think I'd be here today if I didn't start [treatment] when I did."