

Centennial Spotlight

PETER J. SZAKACS, D.C. '78



Beating the Odds and Bucking the Trends: Peter J. Szakacs, D.C. '78

Tell Dr. Peter J. Szakacs that he can't do something, and he will prove you wrong. Tell him he can't x-ray patients, and he will help change the law. Tell him he's going to be disabled, and he will fight back to health and help others do so, too.

NYCC YEARS

Even in college, "Dr. Pete" was aware of how politics could undermine common sense and good treatment options. Asked once by his favorite instructor what he would do if a law was enacted that mandated him to do something he didn't want to do, Szakacs responded that he would move to another state. It turns out that comment might have been prescient.

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

In private practice since 1979, Szakacs became active with the New York State Chiropractic Association (NYSCA). While serving as NYSCA's county president, he decided to personally challenge the antiquated "lumbar x-ray law," which had been in existence since D.C.s were first licensed in New York state in 1967. The law stated that Doctors of Chiropractic (D.C.s) could not take x-rays of the lumbar spine, could not x-ray an extremity, and could not take an x-ray of anyone under the age of 18. It was common for D.C.s to disobey this law, hiding illegal films. Szakacs purposely allowed inspectors to find prohibited x-rays in his office.

The state of New York began its prosecution, a case that garnered widespread media attention. A plea agreement eventually allowed Szakacs to practice in his home state of Pennsylvania, but it wasn't long before "backroom" politics in New York produced the more equitable law that is in place today.

STARTING OVER

In Bucks County, Pennsylvania, Szakacs expanded his natural health approach with education in acupuncture, anti-aging medicine, nutrition, and sports chiropractic. During that time, he also served on the NYCC Board of Trustees for three years.

THE ACCIDENT AND RECOVERY

In Pennsylvania, Szakacs was seriously injured in a motor vehicle accident. He was diagnosed with severe spinal injuries and multiple sclerosis and considered totally and permanently disabled. Szakacs retired and moved to Florida. However, disability was another "can't" that Dr. Pete was about to turn in a different direction.

During the next two years of what he half-jokingly calls his "extended sabbatical," Szakacs underwent chiropractic care, acupuncture, and nutritional rehabilitation. Overcoming his disability, he returned to active practice in 2006, concentrating on helping seniors with serious spinal health conditions.

"THE HALFWAY POINT"

At age 60 ("the halfway point of my life"), Szakacs moved to The Villages, Florida, the largest 55+ community in America. There, he continues serving seniors, helping them to "get back in the game" of life. What others might perceive to be a dead end, Szakacs proved to just be another way—and not just a different way, but a better one.