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Dr. Douglas Manfra talks about his nearly three decades of experience working as a chiropractor in the Sunrise area. Even those who may not have visited his office may be familiar with Manfra's voice, as he serves as the announcer at junior varsity baseball games for Las Vegas High School.

Advocate for health

Sunrise practitioner supports athletics

By F. ANDREW TAYLOR

VIEW STAFF WRITER

Dr. Douglas Manfra has been a chiropractic practitioner in the valley for almost three decades, becoming a bit of an institution in a town he never expected to live in.

"Really I took the Nevada Chiropractic Exam as a practice for the California exam," Manfra said.

Manfra first came to the valley 28 years ago when a North Las Vegas chiropractor offered him a position in his office. At the time, he and his wife had college loans to pay off and some heavy debt incurred by the birth of their first child, who was delivered by Caesarian section without insurance.

"It was unlike any place we'd ever seen before," Manfra said. "Of course, there was all the gambling and the 24-hour lifestyle. We'd never seen so many bars."

In a very short time they settled into the town and became involved with the Las Vegas the tourists rarely see.

"We've really met some great people here," Manfra said. "Real down-to-earth folks."

Wendy Skinner has been seeing Manfra for 15 years and has recommended him to friends, family and co-workers. She initially began

seeing him following an accident that left her with neck and back pain. Although the pain was getting worse, Skinner was a single mom with six kids and a full-time job, and taking the time to see someone was not an easy task. Finally, a co-worker not only urged her to see Manfra, but also made the appointment.

"He took some X-rays and adjusted me," Skinner said. "I felt immediate relief, although it was still four weeks before I had really good relief. It was so much better then."

Although his office is by no means convenient to where she lives and works, Skinner feels Manfra's care is worth the effort. He has become not only a trusted medical practitioner, but also a trusted advisor.

"Although I do a fair amount of injury work, a lot of people come in with problems that aren't traumatic," Manfra said. "I deal with arthritis, bursitis tendinitis, backache, neck ache, headaches. I even deal with some organic problems, like constipation, breathing disorders and allergies, things that you wouldn't necessarily associate with chiropractic care, yet chiropractic can address some of these issues."

Those who haven't seen Manfra

professionally might still be familiar with his voice. For the last few years he's been the announcer at the junior varsity baseball games at Las Vegas High School.

"I'm just up there in a box behind home plate. I've had a lot of fun doing it," Manfra said. "I'm not sure how much longer I can do it, though. It's really a job for a parent."

Manfra's youngest son is a senior at the school, and his fall season of high school baseball wrapped up more than a month ago. He's got his eye on medical school. All three of Manfra's children are examples of the apple not falling far from the tree, sharing his interest in sports and the medical profession. His eldest son has a degree in psychology from the University of Nevada, Reno, and is currently a martial arts instructor. Manfra's middle son played some college football and is currently in pharmacy school.

The halls of Manfra's office, the Northeastern Chiropractic Center, are covered with photos of local kids' athletic teams. Some teams feature Manfra's children or the children of his office staff. Some he coached, and others he sponsored over the years. Manfra was a college athlete and confessed that initially he was more of an athlete than a student. A

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series of injuries changed that.

"I played football in college for two years. This was back when the players weren't so big and good. I was neither," Manfra said. "I dislocated my ankle and they told me if I got the same injury again I wouldn't be able to walk anymore, so I went on to baseball. I was good at baseball."

Unfortunately, Manfra was injured again, this time breaking his hand in batting practice. It was at that point he decided to take his academics seriously.

"I was an average student up until then, but I decided to see what I could do and brought my Bs and Cs up to As," Manfra said. "I got my master's in public health from UCLA, but I couldn't afford graduate school."

Manfra spent a few years working nights while living with his parents, before gathering the funds to carry on his education. He worked nights and went to schools studying pre-med and then earning a chiropractic degree during the days, frequently getting only a few hours of sleep each night.

"I had to keep the alarm clock on the other side of the room, so I had to physically get up to shut it off."

His schedule has settled down some over the years, but Manfra estimates that he still works 50 to 60 hours a week.

"People ask me if I'm going to slow down or retire, because I'm 59, but I still feel great," he said.

Manfra has recently taken up running, a new sport for a man who has always been around sports. Encouraged by his wife, who is an avid runner, he entered and won his age class in a 5K run. Manfra pointed out a display of newspaper and magazine clippings that he jokingly refers to as his shrine to Jack LaLanne.

"Jack LaLanne graduated from chiropractic college. When I was in chiropractic school, he came and gave us a lecture and he was just a dynamic guy, an inspiration," Manfra said. "He just turned 95, and I keep this up here because I like to show people the kind of things you can do if you take care of yourself."

Taking care of yourself has been weighing on Manfra's mind lately. He's pondering getting into health education based on his voracious reading regimen.

"I try to read at least a book a week," Manfra said. "The Sunrise Library is just an incredible resource. If they don't have it, they'll get it. They've gotten me books from Utah, San Francisco. I can't believe the connections they have."

Not surprisingly, as a health professional he's been reading a lot of books on health, diet and exercise. What he sees doesn't thrill him.

"The food culture in which we are participating is ruining us," Manfra said. "I really feel like getting the word out about it. That may be my next project."

Manfra's Northeastern Chiropractic Center is located at 4500 E. Bonanza Road. For more information, call 388-0599.