



## A daily dose of hope

By Brian McGrory, Globe Columnist  
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As certain as the sun rises and sets, the phones will ring in the newsroom with overeager public relations people on the other end of the line, breathlessly pitching stories of wealthy clients who have donated ungodly amounts of money to deserving causes.

Which is fine. These are good people, deserving people.

But what often escapes notice are the thousands of regular people who give every day in every possible way all over this town. They're at shelters, feeding the homeless. They're in prisons, ministering to inmates. They're in hospitals, giving hope to those descending toward death.

And one afternoon earlier this week, Robert Hoy was taking a rare and brief break at The Boston Home in Dorchester.

He has no press agent, no desire for publicity, no ego to feed. What he does have, though, is a legion of appreciative fans.

The background: Hoy's son, Tim, was for years a successful field engineer, with a young wife and a condominium and a job that took him to all corners of the country. At age 32, he was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis.

Too soon, the disease overwhelmed him and his family, and he found himself in The Boston Home, an extraordinary 125-year-old facility where MS patients and others with neurological diseases live out their difficult lives.

Robert Hoy, a retired postal worker, visited his son at the home every day, taking the subway from Malden, walking 10 minutes through Dorchester, then slowly climbing the long driveway to the front door.

He came in the rain, in the snow, in the baking heat. He came on holidays and on holy days. He came in awe of his oldest son.

"Never did I see him down," Robert Hoy said of Tim. "It amazed me. I would always wonder, how could he go through this?"

Robert Hoy, as is his way, got to know the other wheelchair-bound patients at the home. He would help them in the hallways. He would visit them in their rooms.

He would bring tapes of National Geographic shows and lead discussions in the activities room of exotic places that these people would never get to go.

"Residents would look out the window and see him coming up the drive and say, 'Here comes Mr. Hoy,' " said Sister Bridget Haase, director of the home's spirituality programs. "What they're really

saying is: 'Here comes hope. Here comes someone who knows my name. Here comes someone who cares.' "

Three months ago, on Aug. 22, Tim Hoy died, at age 47, in what should have been the prime of a successful life.

The entire Boston Home mourned, not only for the patient who never complained, but for the father who visited so faithfully and helped so eagerly. Most patients and staff members assumed they'd never see the elder Hoy again.

And that's when the strangest thing happened. A few days later, the place still thick with grief, Robert Hoy came trudging up the driveway.

He came inside and, without fanfare, did what he always used to do, which was help patients, lead discussions, offer private words of hope to the ones who needed them most.

And he's done it ever since, just about every day for the last three months, with no plans to stop. He is a thin man, 73 years old, with oversized eyeglasses that cover much of his angular face. When he smiles, which is often, his teeth are ramrod straight.

He's quick with a joke, and before his wife died in 1999 the couple would often head to their living room after supper and quietly dance the night away.

When I asked why he does it, why he comes back day after day to where his son died, he said simply: "This is something that Tim would love me to do. I feel good about coming here. When I walk up that driveway, I thank the Lord that I'm here as a server instead of receiving."

And although he can't hear it, there are other words of thanks every time he walks up that long drive: "Here comes Mr. Hoy."

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