

EMC uses storage expertise to track care for homeless

BY ROBERT CELASCHI
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There are segments of society that are nearly impossible to track and even more challenging to care for.

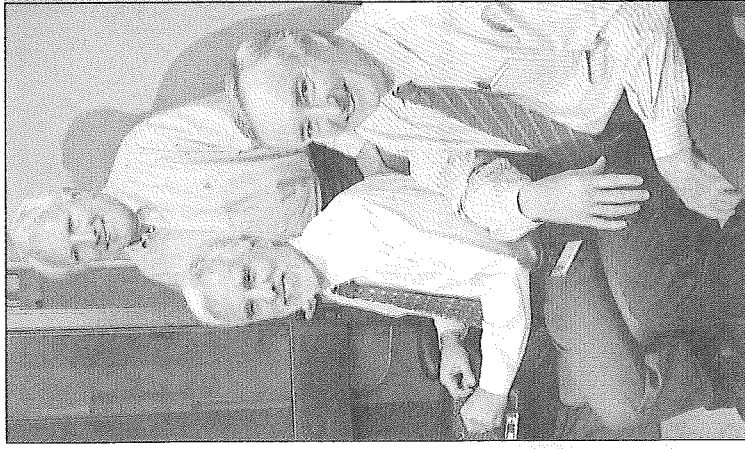
That said, a new partnership between local nonprofits and one of the area's largest technology giants aims to eliminate many of the barriers to identifying and addressing the health needs of the homeless.

Greater Boston's homeless. The **Boston Healthcare for the Homeless** program delivered services to more than 9,000 homeless men, women and children last year, providing care to people too sick to stay on the street or go to shelters, but not sick enough for the hospital.

It's a complex operation. On a given day a patient might show up at any of the program's affiliated hospital clinics, shelters or community centers such as the **Pine Street Inn**, **St. Francis House** and the **New England Shelter for Homeless Veterans**.

Clinicians move among the locations as well.

It takes a sophisticated and well-maintained data system to make sure the right information on each patient is up to date and available wherever a



WHERE INFORMATION LIVES: **EMC's Christopher E. Goode, top, with Boston Healthcare for the Homeless Executive Director Robert L. Taube, left, and President Jim O'Connell.**

software and services to the nonprofit's renovated data center on Albany Street on the **Boston Medical Center** campus. The gift couldn't have been any more timely, say officials from the local nonprofits on the receiving end.

"We've really experienced very rapid growth over the last five years, just an explosion of data," said **Lee Cowgill**, technology infrastructure manager for the program. "It really began to strain our abilities to back up during an overnight window."

The system holds not only patient registration, appointments and billing information, but employee personnel files and e-mail.

"For a relatively small nonprofit organization we have pretty big data needs because of the way we do business," said Cowgill, adding that the group's patients are constantly on the move, tend to be sicker than the general population and have more complex medical histories.

EMC, a homegrown data storage giant and one of the largest employers in the region, jumped at the chance to assist.

"When we were contacted about the program and learned of their upcoming relocation to a larger facility, we realized there was a unique opportunity to donate our technology and leverage our expertise to help upgrade and relocate

the organization's datacenter," said EMC spokesman **Patrick Cooley**.

The health care program made a wish list, then met with EMC to discuss which items would be most helpful, Cowgill said. They decided on a package that included EMC software for the nonprofit's backup system.

EMC also helped with the move of the data center this past summer. While it was complex and challenging, it went extremely well, Cowgill said. None of the program operations had to be interrupted for the move.

EMC's donation will help the health care proved helpful in less-obvious ways as well.

The **Kresge Foundation**, a Michigan-based nonprofit that offers strategic assistance and financial support for independent charities, has offered a matching grant if Boston Healthcare for the Homeless can raise \$4.5 million by the end of this year.

The \$250,000 in-kind donation will count toward that goal.

The senior IT staff at Boston Healthcare for the Homeless got one more benefit from the donation. As EMC and BHH have grown more acquainted, the corporation has bought tables at fundraising galas and invited the nonprofit staffers to attend. It's the kind of event the IT staff normally would never get to see, Cowgill said.