

Robert's *I Choose Home NJ* Story  
April 2025

## Grateful for where he is. ***"This was God's plan for me."***

Robert and his son Brendan are watching a replay of last night's Yankees game, which Brendan missed because he works nights.

The living room is cozy despite a chilly, gray April morning that just won't make the leap forward into springtime.

Robert has been living with his son and Brendan's girlfriend Stephanie since February, after six years at a Passaic County nursing home.



He was able to leave the nursing home thanks to **I Choose Home NJ**, a federally funded program that helps people move from institutional care to the community. The program connects individuals to services such as personal care assistance, meals, and transportation that are provided through Medicaid's Managed Long-Term Supports and Services program.

How Robert ended up in a nursing home in the first place is a long story that begins with health problems that were exacerbated by smoking and many years working construction and inhaling all sorts of things that are not lung friendly.

Robert developed COPD and later sustained a stroke that resulted in an extended hospital stay.

When he was ready to leave the hospital, Robert was transferred to the nursing home for physical therapy and other rehab services to continue his recovery.

Robert's former home in West Milford, a township on the New York border, had been sold off by then to help pay for his care.

So when he was ready to leave the nursing home, he had nowhere to go. Robert became part of a growing group of nursing home residents — individuals who could live in the community but are in limbo due to a statewide shortage of housing they can afford.

He was on an affordable housing waiting list for several years. Last year, when an apartment opened up, Robert went to check it out with Brendan.

The place was in a remote location, and Brendan advised him it wasn't a great fit.

At some point, Brendan suggested that Robert move in with him and Stephanie.



Robert is grateful that they welcomed him in and that the I Choose Home NJ team helped make it happen.

He also thanks the nursing home social services director for helping with the transition. Robert, in fact, has positive things to say about all of the nursing home staff.

"They were good to me," Robert says. "I just didn't belong there."

These days, a home health aide comes out four times a week to help around the house. A physical therapist visits twice a week to help Robert — who still uses a wheelchair to get around — to continue building strength and mobility.

Brendan drives Robert to appointments with his primary care provider and two specialists, a cardiologist and a pulmonologist.

There are times when Robert misses West Milford. He had a nice place, right on the lake. But he harbors no bitterness.

He is grateful for where he is.

"This was God's plan for me," he says.

*I Choose Home NJ is a federal demonstration program to help individuals transition from institutions to the community. For more information, visit [www.ichoosehome.nj.gov](http://www.ichoosehome.nj.gov) or call 855-466-3005.*