

FROM THE HEART

A Magazine of Arts and Opinions

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Albany Damien Center

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We Are Not Alone

Our stories may all be different, but yet they are often all the same. We are in a daily fight for our lives, a fight against an enemy that threatens to destroy us, t-cell by t-cell. We fight back with the tools we have, the skills we've learned, and we adapt with each passing day and experience. In all, we share one common thread - We are not alone!

Maybe you tested HIV+ very recently; maybe you've known it for some time but this is the first time you've reached out for information or support. The Damien Center creates an environment where people can gather to share information, experiences, and make new friends - friends who understand what it is like to live with this disease.

There's no need for you to handle this by yourself. You are not the only person in our community facing this. Just hearing how someone else has adjusted to living with the virus can be enough to help you realize that life is still good, that you can still have love and laughter. We are not alone. And neither are you.

By Perry Junjulas Executive Director of the Albany Damien Center and person living with AIDS. Reprinted in part from *The Body Positive*

Another Haiku

The phone rings loudly.
She answers and squeals with joy,
Good to hear your voice!

Haikus written while sitting in Damien Center living-room

by Jim Masters

One day while I was sitting in the living-room at the Center watching all that was going on, I was suddenly inspired by all that was going on to write haikus about what I saw and heard.

Here are a couple of them:

The fish are all gone.
Last week many swam around.
Death has taken them.

How did it happen?
Once your hair was straight and black.
Now short, curly, blond.

A haiku is a poem with three lines. The first and third lines have five syllables each. The second line has seven syllables.

Anyone can write them. I'll be having a workshop on writing haikus before long. If you already know how to write them, go ahead and write some and give them to me so they can be in the next *From the Heart*.

Another haiku is located to the left.

Robert

By JM

We know a Puerto Rican.
Roberto is his name.
He jokes and laughs the whole day long.
That's the basis of his fame.

With words he is a whiz,
both English and Spanish.
Ask him a question,
and he won't vanish.

Good-looking he is,
And modest, too.
He's a first-class member
of the Damien crew.

Uninvited Guests

By VW

You come without notice.
I give notice; you don't leave.
Little by little you are
desperate to succeed.

One cell at a time,
you say you'll be mine.
And if I say no,
you'll rob me I know.

So I'll let you stay,
And God knows I'll pray
That we'll find a way
to live together
Somehow; some day.

Interview with Luís Ruíz.

Luís, how long have you been coming to the Albany Damien Center?

I've been coming here for 20 years. For 23 years I've been HIV+, and the help I've gotten through the Center is a big part of the reason that I am healthy and happy at age 59.

How do you maintain your good health?

I have a positive attitude about myself. I follow the doctor's directions about taking my meds and eating properly and getting rest and exercise. I have a good relationship with my doctor. I am in love with my body, accepting its HIV+ condition. By that I mean that long ago I knew I had to stop using drugs or anything else that would go against my health, and I did stop.

I was born in Puerto Rico, and before I moved to Albany 23 years ago, I had lived for 20 years in the Bronx, using drugs and messing my life up. Recovery and rehab programs helped me become clean and sober and stay that way.

What is necessary for recovery and rehab programs to help a person?

(Continued on page 6)

Here's a **gem from *Plato and a Platypus Walk into a Bar...Understanding Philosophy Through Jokes*** by Thomas Cathcart & Daniel Klein. It's found on page 179.

The lookout on a battleship spies a light ahead off the starboard bow. The captain tells him to signal the other vessel, "Advise you change course twenty degrees immediately!"

The answer comes back, "Advise you change course twenty degrees immediately!"

The captain is furious. He signals. "I am a captain. We are on a collision course. Alter your course twenty degrees now!"

The answer comes back, "I am a seaman second class, and I strongly urge you to alter your course twenty degrees."

Now the captain is beside himself with rage. He signals. "I am a battleship!"

The answer comes back, "I am a lighthouse."

Life is Short

By Chris Horsman

When I was young, I didn't think my life would be like this.

My life was supposed to be filled with love and joy. So many nights I sat at the window, hoping life would show up,

But one day life happened, and so much pain filled my soul,

And I didn't know how to deal with life as it came.

Life is short. Life is filled with so much up's and down's, But most of all it is filled with so many lessons to learn from.

So many times I feel like my life is over,

And just when I feel like it's over, a miracle seems to happen before my eyes.

Life is good. Life is sweet. And Life is filled with so much blessing and so much joy.

As you move forward to the blessing you will reap a reward so great

And a reward that will just keep giving to you,

And you will know what it is and will never lose the faith to carry on.

And the love I have for all those I lost and all those who have lost the will to carry on.

Life is filled with so many wonderful things,

And life is something to cherish and be filled with love and joy.

Life is good. Life means

"L" is for Life.

"I" is for Impress.

"F" is for Forever.

"E" is for Eternity.

I'll love you forever and always.

May you be blessed forever.



Getting facial filler
to fill out lipoatrophy

This black and white drawing was done by Theresa Hernandez while she was sitting in the living-room at the Damien Center on 18 February 2008.



This drawing is by Rafael.... It was drawn on plain paper with a black pencil on February 18, 2008, while he was sitting in the living-room at the Damien Center.

Anyone may submit black and white drawings to be included in *From the Heart*. Submit them to me, Jim Masters. I am usually at the Center on Mondays from noontime until the middle of the afternoon. If you want to do your drawing while you're at the Center, see me for paper and pencil.

(Continued from page 2)
(Interview with Luís...)

You have to make sincere decisions that you are going to deal with your problems in every aspect of your life. You have to decide that you are going to deal with HIV 100%. Don't fool yourself that you can do it only 60% or 70%. Make friends with your doctor and follow a plan that works best for you. Never compare yourself to others, because every individual is unique.

What particular skills do

you have that help you maintain good health?

I was a professional cook. So I cook my own meals. I use olive oil and high quality food, real garlic, natural foods, not synthetic. I don't go to eat out. I don't eat any junk food.

Thank you, Luís, for telling us about yourself and your healthy life style.

You're welcome. The past is past. Bury it. Every day is a new beginning in life. Create your world one day at a time.

Good Nutrition

Amy, Our dietician at the Damien Center, emphasizes that maintaining good health depends a lot on eating nutritious food. She will do complete nutritional screenings for any members who are interested in improving their diet and lifestyle.

She also conducts nutrition education sessions, and will introduce members about Bioelectrical Impedance Analysis, which measures body fat, body water, and lean muscle mass.

SEE AMY ABOUT THESE MATTERS AND EAT RIGHT FOR GOOD HEALTH

A Cowboy Joke

From *Plato and the Platypus Walk into a Bar...* by Thomas Cathcart and Daniel Klein

An old cowboy goes into a bar and orders a drink. As he sits there sipping his whiskey, a young lady sits down next to him. She turns to the cowboy and asks him, 'Are you a real

cowboy?'

He replies, 'Well, I've spent my whole life on the ranch, herding horses, mending fences, and branding cattle, so I guess I am.'

She says, "I'm a lesbian. I spend my whole day thinking about women. As soon as I get up in the morning, I think about women. When I shower

or watch TV, everything seems to make me think of women.'

A little while later, a couple sits down next to the old cowboy and asks him, 'Are you a real cowboy?'

He replies, 'I always thought I was, but I just found out I'm a lesbian.'

From the Heart is published at the Albany Damien Center to provide a way for the guests, staff, friends and volunteers of the Center to share their interests and their creative talents with others. Poems, jokes, op-eds, photos, drawings can all be included. They should be submitted to Jim Masters, who is serving as the working editor. Perry Junjulas will be the editor-in-chief, and what can and cannot be included will be finally decided by him. Nothing can be included that might out someone who does not want to be outed, nor can anything be included that might insult or harm anyone.