2020 ANNUAL REPORT
For over 33 years, the Albany Damien Center has been advocating for and assisting individuals and families affected by HIV/AIDS.

Like never before, our mission was put to the test in 2020 with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Studies show that persons with HIV experienced poorer COVID-related outcomes (higher rates of severe disease requiring hospitalization) as compared to persons without HIV, making our work even more critical during the pandemic.

Particularly affecting those who were already facing discrimination, stigma, and exclusion, the pandemic’s effects were far-reaching, exposing vulnerabilities and inequalities in health services, social protection, and employment. As a result, our services were and are needed more than ever.

Our work is rooted in breaking down barriers and our deep commitment to diversity, health equity, and inclusion. We look forward to making real change in collaboration with our many community partners, and through the hard work and passion of our team.

**IMPACT**

**MISSION AND VISION**

Our Mission is to enhance the lives of people affected by HIV and AIDS in an affirming environment and to reduce new infections in the communities we serve.

Our Vision is a community where people with HIV and AIDS achieve their desired potential and are respected as coworkers, neighbors, and friends, while striving for an HIV free generation.
A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This past year challenged us in many ways, and I am so grateful to our Board of Directors, staff, volunteers, tenants, and members, who were amazing at being flexible and resilient as the Damien Center continued to serve our community in a safe and caring manner throughout the pandemic.

While the year brought many challenges, we also experienced the wonderful generosity of our donors and supporters when we needed them most. Because of you, the Albany Damien Center has been able to continue to be a leader in HIV advocacy in New York State while providing a trauma-informed, comfortable, and loving environment for each person who needs us.

In 2020, the Albany Damien Center was clear in stating that we stand with the Black Lives Matter movement and the fight for justice and equality for all. We committed to leading by example and expressed zero tolerance for racism or any other form of discrimination.

Our work is far from done. Poverty, HIV stigma, systemic racism, trauma, mental health issues, and substance use disorders continue to be formidable obstacles to each person receiving the love, care, and services they need to not just survive, but also to thrive.

Your support makes the magic of the Damien Center happen each day and is helping us achieve our vision of a community that embraces health equity. Thank you, for being a valued part of our incredible journey.

- Perry James Junjulas, Executive Director & Person with AIDS who is still UNDETECTABLE

A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

Though 2020 was a year like no other, this report demonstrates that the Damien Center had another strong year. COVID-19 changed everything, as lockdowns, social distancing, masks, and capacity restrictions became the new normal for all of us. But the Damien Center, in its role as an essential service provider, had to figure out how all of the new requirements would work in the context of providing housing, nutrition, employment, and support services while protecting the health of our members and employees. Staff worked tirelessly to continue the Center’s vital mission by utilizing new technologies and approaches.

Now, with the wide availability and acceptance of COVID vaccinations, the board looks forward to physically coming together again as a community of mutual support and caring in the way we were before the pandemic.

We owe a huge thanks to the diverse community of funders, donors, and volunteers who continued their support throughout 2020. One highlight, in particular, was the virtual award ceremony honoring our local hero Ken Screven. This highly successful event raised tens of thousands of dollars for agency operations without anyone having to leave home.

As always, none of what the Damien Center accomplishes would be possible without our long-time Executive Director, Perry, and our extraordinary staff and volunteers who do the day-to-day work that helps so many. And of course, we thank the hundreds of members who continue to put their trust in the Damien Center. You are our reason for being.

- Dan O’Connell, Board President
In 2020, the Albany Damien Center’s Housing Program provided safe and stable housing for 40 individuals living with HIV/AIDS who were homeless. This provided access to other supportive services such as case management, peer support, counseling, skills-building, employment assistance, access to medical care, and pharmacy services.

While the year brought many new challenges, we were able to swiftly adapt and are proud to say all tenants and staff safely came together - six feet apart of course - to keep the virus and its disastrous effects at a minimum. Masks, social distancing, extra disinfecting, limiting visitors, and contact tracing are just a few of the preventative measures we implemented, and we recognize and thank our residents and staff for their sacrifice and understanding of the restrictions put in place to keep everyone safe.

“I am able to access all the resources I need. I have stable housing, a pharmacy in the building, a supportive community, and the available counseling has definitely been a plus. Counseling has 1000% improved my life, as well as the Housing staff and Community. I have no complaints!”

– DD, Tenant
Food insecurity is often associated with chronic health problems, and studies show that poor nutrition can exacerbate HIV, hasten the progression to AIDS-related illnesses, and impede response to anti-retroviral therapies (ART).

Our Smart Meals Program combines food and meals with group and individual Nutrition Health Education aimed at improving diet quality, food safety, physical activity, and shopping savvy. These services address the unique nutritional, cultural, and social needs, and other challenges faced by those we serve, including poor diets and health issues, food insecurity, and social isolation.

At the onset of the pandemic, our staff quickly pivoted to re-imagine both classes and meal services by conducting virtual classes, one-on-one phone sessions, and congregate meal and pantry bag pickup and delivery to meet our members’ needs.

“I couldn’t get to the grocery store due to the pandemic, the pantry bags have been such a help”
More than 250 employment services provided in 2020

EMPLOYMENT PATHWAYS

Serving individuals looking to obtain employment, our Employment Pathways Program provides intensive employment case management including assistance with resume building, job searches, benefits counseling, and strategies for maintaining financial health.

Research shows that people living with HIV experience unemployment rates three times higher than national unemployment rates, and the impact of the pandemic created even more challenges for those seeking work due to budget cuts, health concerns, and lack of access to technology.

In addition to employment assistance, our Employment Pathways team was able to assist members in working toward their educational goals through degree and certification programs through a partnership with CAPCOM Cares.

In the coming year, we will strengthen our efforts to address issues related to income instability through skills development, reducing and removing the barriers facing job seekers, and helping to curb unemployment and underemployment among underrepresented groups.
The Supreme Court’s ruling on June 15, 2020 that LGBT individuals cannot be discriminated against based on their sexual orientation or gender identity in the workplace provided critical protection as well as access to employer healthcare.

MPower

Provides affirming and empowering services to the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Gender Non-Binary (LGB-TGNB) community by working to decrease the disparities in healthcare, housing, employment, and other community and social services.

This year, the pandemic diminished LGB-TGNB individuals’ access to the critical emotional and support networks that are vital to their well-being, as they work to navigate identity development, stigma, and discrimination. MPower continued to provide services and worked with the community to provide essential household and personal care items.

Over **200 health and human services** were provided in 2020, including advocacy, job readiness, benefits assistance, supportive counseling, name changes, and linkage to affirming medical and community based providers, regardless of HIV status.

Through strong community partnerships with local LGBTQ-specific law programs like the Legal AID Society of Northeast New York and the Volunteer Lawyer’s Project of Onondaga County, our members were able to receive free or subsidized legal services.

With the generosity of the Ernest O. Reaugh Foundation, we have been able to assist the Transgender and Gender Non-Binary community achieve legal name and gender marker changes.
Behavior Health and Support

There is a growing amount of research suggesting that behavioral health and physical health are closely related, and individuals living with serious health conditions and trauma have a higher chance of developing mood, anxiety, and cognitive disorders.

Designed to be more inclusive and incorporate the specific challenges that our members face, our Behavioral Health Program takes a clinical and professional consultative approach, with a focus on overall physical and mental well-being.

With over 730 behavioral health services provided last year, we recognize the growing urgency of behavioral health needs in our community. Partnering with local organizations such as Albany County Mental Health, Crime Victims, Albany Medical Center, Alliance for Positive Health, and local colleges to incorporate interns, has helped us to meet the demand.

But there is more to do. New and innovative approaches are needed to help individuals get access to the exact services they require in a more effective and efficient way, which requires funding to hire skilled staff, employ evidence-base practices and adopt improved technology. These critical resources are needed so that individuals facing extreme hardship are able to access services, receive more highly coordinated care, and improve health outcomes.

1 in 5 adults suffer from a mental health condition or substance abuse disorder.
Stigma is still very real for many people affected by HIV, and that can lead to feelings of isolation, loneliness, and depression. Pets can not only provide companionship, but can significantly reduce pain, anxiety, depression and fatigue.

The Center’s Pets Are Wonderful Support (PAWS) Program recognizes these benefits and provided in-home pet care, pet food, supplies, and assistance with veterinary care for over 115 individuals and 119 pets in 2020, so pet owners living with HIV and AIDS are not separated from their animal companions when they need each other most.

Diane Metz, our PAWS Program Coordinator, retired from the Center in January 2021. We extend our deepest gratitude for the hard work and dedication Diane has brought to the Center over the past ten years. Jeanie Vanier will be stepping in as the new Coordinator. The PAWS Program will continue to provide pet pantry services, quarterly clinics, and at-home assistance as needed.
HIV testing, linkage to care, effective antiretroviral therapy (ART), and adherence to treatment is referred to as the HIV Care Continuum.

Development of antiretroviral drugs to treat HIV has dramatically increased the life expectancy of those diagnosed. Daily antiretroviral therapy can reduce the amount of HIV in the blood to levels that are undetectable with standard tests.

People with HIV who take HIV medicine as prescribed, and get and keep an undetectable viral load (stay virally suppressed), have effectively no risk of transmitting HIV to their HIV-negative sexual partners. But staying on treatment is crucial to keep the virus suppressed.

That is why we have a full service pharmacy right on site. Town Total Health Pharmacy is open to the public and provides a convenient way to assist members in remaining virally suppressed.
FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

The Albany Damien Center relies on grants, contracts, gifts and philanthropy to support both core operations and programming. Over the past year, the Center focused on addressing near-term performance and better execution while investing to meet future needs.

SOURCES OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Through the generous support of our sponsors, donors and partners who share our passion for helping others, the Albany Damien Center raised over $6m in 2020.

EXPENDITURES

We work hard to keep unnecessary expenses down. In 2020, 90% of all expenditures went to support programming.

TOTAL: $6.2M

95% FROM GRANTS & PROGRAMS

TOTAL: $5.7M

PROGRAM EXPENSE $5m

Committed to Sustainability & Innovation
# A Thank You to Our 2020 Donors

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- Jeffrey Brimmer
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Community Congregational Church of Clinton Heights
Congregation Beth Emeth
First United Methodist Church of Schenectady
Hellions of Troy Roller Derby League
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Roessleville Presbyterian Church
National Catholic Church of America
St Andrew’s Episcopal Church
St Andrew’s Lutheran Church
The Woman’s Club of Albany

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NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA)
US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
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We are honored to be part of remembering and celebrating special family, friends, and occasions. The love and spirit in which these gifts are given is reflected in our work every day.

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If we have listed you incorrectly, please let us know!
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GIVE MONTHLY
Just select 'reoccurring' to make a monthly gift

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Organize a car wash or other event - a great project for school, church or employers!

HONOR A LOVED ONE
A memorial or tribute is a meaningful way to celebrate someone important to you

PLANNED GIVING
Gift through your will, trust, or estate to leave a lasting legacy

VOLUNTEER
Donate your time and talent and serve your community

DONATE GOODS, SERVICES, OR TIME
We value every in-kind donation we receive

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Please consider making a small gift to the Albany Damien Center as your help is needed now more than ever. Your kindness, compassion and support will truly make a world of difference.

Yes! I would like to make a difference and help the Albany Damien Center!

Name(s): __________________________________________
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