Volunteers Make
Our World Go Round

Will You Help Us Bring Hope,
Love, and Care?
Open now to see why your impact
matters.

Volunteer!

for more information visit:
www.albanydamiencenter.org/volunteer.html
or email volunteers@albanydamiencenter.org

Become a Red Ribbon Partner by scheduling an automatic monthly gift.

- $30 = 30 meals
- $50 = 1 behavioral health session
- $75 = Vaccines for a PAWS program pet
- $100 = 4 pantry bags
- $250 = Keeps the lights on for 1 month

www.albanydamiencenter.org/recurringdonations.html
Or call us at 518-449-7119

Follow us on social media!
Facebook: @albanydamiencenter
Instagram: albanydamiencenter
Twitter: @albanydamienctr

WE ARE OPEN!
If you or a person you know is living with HIV and AIDS, we want to help with:
- Behavioral health/family support
- Housing
- Job placement
- Pet care
- Groceries
- Prepared meals

Please call us at: 518-449-7119
Home: Where The Heart Is

At the Albany Damien Center we firmly know that safe and affordable permanent supportive housing is a critical first step for persons who are homeless and living with HIV to have good health outcomes.

If you ask Monica, a member of the Damien Center since 2009, and a tenant as of February 2022, from her first time at the Damien Center she has felt “at home”.

“The Albany Damien Center has a very supportive and welcoming sense of community that also values member’s need to make their own life choices and decisions, but also be there to provide support. That means a lot!”

Monica recognizes the impact of the Damien Center community saying, “I thank the Albany Damien Center for making me come out of my shell. At my own pace.”

Housing continues to be healthcare for each of our residents. The Damien Center currently provides housing for 47 people with HIV and AIDS in 20 apartments on-site at the Damien Center and 27 off-site apartments.

Smart Meals Food vouchers increased

Rising inflation has impacted us all and a nutrient dense, healthy diet is essential for people with HIV to live healthier lives. Thus, in January we increased our monthly food voucher that allows participants in our Nutrition Health Education Program to purchase ingredients at local supermarkets to make 40 nutritious meals per month.

Our Community Nutrition Educator Nancy Coffey, provides nutrition education based on members purchases, guiding them as they identify habits which match their health and nutrition goals.

Kevin has been a member of the Damien Center since 2005 when he was first diagnosed. He says the voucher program, “is good because it teaches you how to eat healthy and how to shop for healthy food.”

He thanks Nutrition Educator, Nancy, for teaching him tips such as purchasing more frozen veggies than canned veggies (because they’re lower in sodium).

Thanks in part to the voucher program Kevin says, “my fridge is full.” To Kevin the Damien Center, “is like a safe haven which’ll get you to where you can live on your own.” A place where you can live and meet new friends along the way.

Smart Meals continues to provide food and meal options including three hot meals prepared on-site, pantry bags filled with fresh vegetables, fruits, and meats, and food vouchers—all combined with personalized nutrition education!

Are you or someone you know living with HIV and need help eating well to stay healthy?
The SMART Meals program can help. Call us at 518-449-7119 Ext. 106 to speak with Nancy.
Name Change Initiative Program

Grace remembers her first time being at the Damien Center, for our barbeque in 2021. She recalls the food being really good and the “bright, cheery, clean, homey” atmosphere of the center itself.

Grace, or “Mother Grace” as she’s known to her parish, has been going by her name for years, but this year with the support of our TGNC Employment Navigator, Teri, she went through the name change process.

Grace says, “This was something I’d been planning to do on my own. But I didn’t know the process and it was good to have somebody walk me through it. Teri did a really great job preparing me on what to bring, what to say, and what to do. She’s fabulous!”

Grace describes how it felt receiving her new driver’s license, “Getting my license made it feel more complete. It was a huge step in my affirmation.”

To anybody considering or currently working through their own name change process Grace wants to say, “Don’t do it alone. Make use of the Damien Center and it’s expertise. Once the name change process is over it’s concluded, but gender transition is a lifelong process. And the Damien Center is here to support you.”

Director’s Message – The Helpers

Mr. Roger’s quote to “look for the helpers” may have been meant for preschoolers, but I truly see “the helpers” every day at the Damien Center. The helpers are people who are doing what’s right and live their lives as helpers. They will look out for us for the rest of our lives. For people with HIV/AIDS, this is life-saving.

These continue to be extraordinary times. During the COVID pandemic, we have relived too many of the same traumas we experienced in the early days of the AIDS pandemic—and at the Damien Center I have witnessed that same resolve and fight by so many helpers to serve people despite the tremendous obstacles put before us.

In addition to COVID, we recognize that HIV stigma, poverty, trauma, racism, substance use, and mental health issues continue to create formidable, and often systemic, barriers to each person with HIV having equal access to the care and support they deserve.

Our grassroots, trauma-informed approach continues to leverage existing resources to maximize our mission’s impact locally and on a statewide level.

What the Damien Center needs today is even more Helpers!

Are you or someone you know looking for support in the name change process?
The MPower program can help. Call us at 518-449-7119 Ext. 109 to speak with Teri.
Thank you!
Together, we brought hope, love, and care to those struggling with HIV/AIDS and their beloved pets!

$33,600 Raised at Bowling for PAWS!

After a two year Covid-hiatus, Bowling for PAWS returned on Sunday March 20th, 2022. More than 165 of you, our amazing Damien Center supporters, came out to bowl with us. Many more sent in donations, contributed items to the PAWS pantry (which are already helping pets in our community stay warm and fed), liked and shared our posts, joined the Honorary Committee, told a friend or family member about us.

When the Pets Are Wonderful Support (PAWS) program was founded in 2003, now over 19 years ago, it was with two goals in mind: 1) that each person have the opportunity to experience the psychological and health benefits of pet ownership 2) that each pet receive unfettered access to the veterinary care, food, and love they deserve. Your help ensure that those struggling with HIV/AIDS and their beloved pets are never separated, often when they need each other the most!

Our eleventh year of Bowling for PAWS is behind us and our twelfth year is on the horizon—Sunday March 19th, 2023, we hope to see you there!
Event pictures are located here: http://www.albanydamiencenter.org/bowlingforpaws.html

The words of PAWS member Ashley Miller, sum up why this event is so important, “when you have a pet that you have to wake up and take care of every day it gives you a reason to hope and live.”

Thank you for your continued support of PAWS!!!

The Hero Awards Is On It’s Way
Join us Thurs, Sept 22nd, 2022

After postponing the 2021 Hero Awards due to the COVID pandemic, we are pleased to announce that our fall event will be taking place this September at the Century House in Latham. The Albany Damien Center Hero Awards recognizes an individual who has done extraordinary things to improve the lives of persons with HIV & AIDS in our local community and promote HIV awareness to stop the spread of HIV.

As planned, we will be honoring Benita Zahn, PhD whose continued focus on HIV and AIDS-related issues has been integral to keeping this public health pandemic at the forefront. Benita spent more than 40 years as a health reporter and news anchor at WNYT News Channel 13 where she greatly contributed to efforts to End the AIDS Epidemic across NYS. Her tenure as a news anchor and reporter coincided with the first reported case of AIDS on June 5, 1981. In addition, Benita has donated her considerable talents to performing at special events and has been instrumental to raising much-needed funds to help the Albany Damien Center. Thank you!

Proceeds from the Hero Awards will help the Damien Center continue to support people living with HIV and AIDS with what they truly need: housing, meals, counseling, access to medications and medical care, a pet’s companionship, and a community of love and support.

Looking to contribute a prize, become a sponsor, or know someone who is?
We’d love to hear from you! Call us at 518-449-7119 Ext. 121 to speak with AJ.