HIV stigma makes the path to equitable healthcare a challenging one. A diagnosis of HIV carries with it a weight built from a misconception that “HIV is the end of the world.” What we hope you’ll see reflected in Marcus’ story is that through strength of character, it is possible to transcend stigma and realize a fulfilling life with HIV.

Marcus remembers when he was diagnosed with HIV, he was surrounded by a group of “godly men” who inspired him to grow in his faith. If not for this support Marcus says, this diagnosis “would have given me an excuse to destroy myself.”

When Marcus speaks about the Albany Damien Center he says, “I have Gratitude with a capital G.”

Marcus credits the support he has received from the Damien Center with helping him to break through a stereotype mindset. He states “I didn’t know you could get HIV if you were heterosexual”.

At the Damien Center, “I have felt a hardness about me broken.”

Marcus was the first tenant to move into apartments at our current location at 728 Madison Avenue. “It was like moving from a homeless situation to a 5 star hotel. The apartments are beautiful.”

“A life boat in a storm”

In the picture you’ll see Akeem and David holding up a pencil holder that David made. David is an artist. His work has been shown in a number of local exhibitions.

When David was diagnosed with HIV he went to a dark place. His art, as well as support from the Albany Damien Center helped him to find himself again.

As David searched for a job, what he needed most was someone to talk to and who would actively listen. That’s when he would call Akeem.

David is one of our off-site tenants. He described the process of moving into his apartment as exciting and nerve racking. When he first moved in he felt a sense of shock. “I had an interview, but I couldn’t bring myself to leave the apartment because I didn’t know if it would be there when I got back. So I made a call.” The Damien Center staff encouraged him to hang his artwork on the walls. He started to feel more at home. He made it to his interview.

David would like anyone living with HIV/AIDS, who is considering coming to the Damien Center for services to know that the Damien Center is “like a life-boat in a storm.” David thanks the Damien Center for giving him the space to be secure in himself.

The Albany Damien Center scattered site housing program provides a supportive framework in which members can realize their goals for independence while remaining connected to key supports.
THANK YOU to St. Peter’s Episcopal

We love our donors and supporters! You make our work possible through your continued support!

Today, we wanted to take a moment to recognize the efforts of St. Peter’s Episcopal Church. St. Peter’s through the leadership of Laura Saffares, Sharon Couch DeBonis, and the entire parish community has shown a true commitment to service.

This year, St. Peter’s donated Easter baskets for each of our tenants. Over the years they have been a pillar of support at our Memorial Day and Labor Day BBQs, Bowling for PAWS, and in many other ways.

Thank you! We look forward to continuing in our partnership!

Staff Recognition– Employee of the Quarter

Recognizes one Damien Center employee each quarter for exceptional job performance, promoting a positive work environment, and dependability and/or innovation during the quarter.

Congratulations Akeem Tyrell and Shawn Temple, our Q1 & Q2 Awardees!

Director’s Message – Fight for what is RIGHT!!

Fighting for what is right and what is best for the people the Damien Center serves has always been a core value for me and has guided me through decisions that have helped the Damien Center grow to help more people.

Which is why 3 years ago, when NYS Office of Medicaid decided to implement a policy that would have cut our annual budget by over a quarter, I simply said NO. Not on my watch. Not from the people we serve.

And for 3 years, with a coalition of like-minded non-profits throughout NYS called the Save the NY Safety Net (SNYSN) and YOUR help, we fought hard to keep the funding we received as 340B entities, that has helped us serve so many persons, as was intended by the federal government back in 1992 when they instituted the program.

Today, I can report we were successful in securing a funding commitment with the AIDS Institute to make up for the losses we would have experienced. We still may need to fight in the future to keep it, but that is a fight for another day.

For now, I, along with our amazing Executive Team and staff, can continue to focus our efforts on helping others. Thank YOU for all of your on-going love and support! Sincerely, Perry Junjulas, Executive Director & Person with AIDS
June 2023 - Pride Month!

At the Damien Center we support the LGB (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual) and TGNB (Transgender and Non-Binary) communities through our programs. Pride is woven into our history as a center. Since 1988 we have been an inclusive safe space for our LGBTQIA+ community.

This Pride Month, the Damien Center continued our commitment to foster and promote diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Our MPower program serves our LGB & TGNB community regardless of HIV status (Status Neutral), helping to reduce barriers to receiving health and human services in our community.

Director Perry Junjulas states, “the transgender community often lives in fear of physical violence and the Damien Center offers a safe space as well as connections to improve wellness.” The Damien Center provides assistance with legal name changes and gender-affirming care. Employment assistance is also available. We have witnessed how connecting clients with LGBTQ+-friendly employers, as well as helping applicants through the interview process to secure a job can prevent some of the negative health impacts caused by poverty.

Bowling for PAWS 2023

Bowling for PAWS was held on Sunday, March 26th, 2023. More than 200 of 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, or told a friend or family member about us.

The Pets Are Wonderful Support (PAWS) program ensures that each person has the opportunity to experience the psychological and health benefits of pet ownership while each pet receives unfettered access to the veterinary care, food, and love they deserve. Your help ensures that those struggling with HIV/AIDS and their beloved pets are never separated, often when they need each other the most!

Our twelfth year of Bowling for PAWS is behind us and our thirteenth year is on the horizon— Sunday March 10th, 2024, we hope to see you there!

Thank you for your continued support of PAWS!!
Volunteers Make Our World Go Round

If you or someone you know is struggling with HIV - we can help with:

- Housing
- Food
- Employment
- Behavior Health
- Pet Care
- & Support

518-449-7110

Your Donation Matters!

- $30 = 30 Meals
- $50 = A Behavior Health Session
- $75 = Vaccines for a PAWs program pet
- $100 = 4 Pantry Bags
- $250 = Keeps the lights on for the month

Schedule your automatic monthly gift today!

www.albanydamiencenter.org/recurringdonations.html

Town Total Health Pharmacy

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Phone: 518-257-7294
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Volunteer!

for more information visit:

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or email volunteers@albanydamiencenter.org