

Homeless Action Committee, Inc.
393 N. Pearl Street
Albany, NY 12207

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Steve Longo
200 S Pearl St
Albany, NY 12202-1834

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
ALBANY, NY
PERMIT NO. 816

RECEIVED
DEC 19 P 3:36

A TENANT WHO IS ONE OF A KIND by Cody Arana

HAC's housing takes in the homeless who are in the most need. Demika has been fortunate enough to be a new part of the family at HAC. With Demika's constant struggles living on the streets, she now calls HAC her home. A home that Demika constantly mentions "is great" and where she feels safe.

Demika's past has been very difficult. She was sexually abused as a child and was in foster care. She was put up for adoption by her teenage parents who were alcoholics and from a Native American reservation in Manitoba, Canada. She went into the loving care of her adopted parents in the Bronx. Demika's adoptive father taught her how to cross country ski, ride a bike, and other things a child growing up deserves. To this day Demika looks back at her past and speaks about how her adoptive parents cared for her so dearly even though she feels she might not have necessarily deserved them.

By the age of 15 she and her adopted family moved to Niskayuna where Demika became mixed up in the wrong crowd and began drinking. Feeling out of place because of being away from home and racial slurs from classmates, Demika ran away from home. She ended up living with her grandmother in Philadelphia and then back with her adoptive parents. She played many sports in school. She was soon in trouble for fighting, and was sent to Saint Anne's Institute, where she graduated. She then briefly went to college at SCCC.

Demika ended up in relationships which had domestic violence. She has two daughters and a grandchild. She went to prison and then ended up at Equinox, until she found other living arrangements with her daughter. She was later kicked out by the landlord. Demika then lived on the streets of Albany for over three years. Every day consisted of her drinking from sun rise to sun down to bear with her miseries. One of the only highlights of her time outside was the brief moments the HAC van would bring food, listen, and comfort her. As soon as a vacancy opened at HAC, van staff felt Demika was the perfect fit.

When Demika first moved into the HAC house, she wasn't able to sleep in her room alone with the light off. Living on the street, Demika has been raped multiple times, which caused her to lose the ability to feel safe and secure. After months of adjustment Demika has gained the security and safety every woman deserves and now sometimes sleeps with the light off comfortably.

Demika explains though she still drinks every day, it doesn't feel like her whole life revolves around alcohol. She has people who care about her and a home to go home to at night. Demika feels that HAC has made a difference in her life and has allowed her enough stability to see her beloved grandchild. She explains that if she wasn't here she would be in the park drinking 24/7.

When Demika moved in, the Director was skeptical as to whether it would work because of her loud, and difficult behavior. Now, she is loved by staff, who love to listen to her discussions. As she explains, "I speak articulately, even though I'm a derelict." She is extremely articulate and bright. Everyone loves her nicknames for others: the Director is "Don Juanette"; my nickname is "CodyCo", Abe is "Abe Lincoln". James is "James Bond". Ptah is "Raj", etc. She has awesome sayings like, "it's a situation on the reservation"; "that's great (like Tony the Tiger)"; "I ain't nervous", "hush your mouth"; "who you think you're dealing with" and "on site". **We are happy to have Demika in our housing and she loves being here.**

TECHNOLOGY GEEK NEEDED

HAC is in need of finding someone who can assist us with our website, social media, as well as our mailing list. If you are computer savvy and have hours to donate, please let us know ASAP.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR HAC OUTREACH VAN

HAC is in need of volunteers for our Outreach Van program, Monday – Friday. The shifts are 2-5pm, 5-7pm, 7-10pm. We need volunteers to commit to volunteer once per week. During the winter on Code Blue nights, in the evening, it would be helpful if volunteers can commit to staying until 12am.

WISH LIST

- Coffee, creamer, sugar
- Men's toiletries
- Brand new pillows
- Twin fitted & flat sheets, pillowcases
- Brand new men's long underwear, socks, briefs, boxers, boot socks
- Silverware
- Men's gloves, winter hats
- Men's socks (new)

use note: we are very limited in the items we can accept at this time, so please call about anything else.

HOMELESS ACTION COMMITTEE

393 NORTH PEARL ST.
ALBANY, NY 12207

Office (518) 426-0554
FAX 462-5839

www.homelessaction.com

December 2016

UPDATE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR by Donna DeMaria

It has been quite some time since you've heard from us. Technology has not been cooperating with us as one computer failed and then, unfortunately, the computer our mailing list was on was hacked and all of the files held for ransom, which we cannot pay. We were uncertain for some time how we would go about rebuilding our support base. Then I remembered that each time we do a mailing, the PO requires that we go through a mailhouse, which is Mailworks. They had a copy of addresses only from 12/15. But unfortunately, it was not in a format that could easily produce labels. So we recently found a computer consultant, Charles Newton, who assisted us with this aspect. He had also recovered a very old version of the mailing list from the hacked encrypted computer that we spent about 10 hours updating before realizing how old it was. We had other mishaps, like I accidentally deleted the entire last name field in the program. After spending way too many hours on this, we think we have names and addresses from 12/15. We apologize in advance if there are errors on our mailing list. **Thank you to Charles and to Mailworks!** We are extremely grateful to both of you!

HAC's Outreach van program has been going strong in the community, operating daily. Outreach workers have successfully collaborated with other agencies and have been able to get several individuals into housing. Staff on the van are phenomenal at connecting with individuals who are resistant to help and work hard to establish a trusting relationship. Each day they check on these resistant individuals and bring them coffee, blankets, clothing and offer a listening ear. Sometimes, van staff are assisting a suicidal person and take action to keep the person safe. Other times, they are calling EMS for someone who is in need of their services and have opened up the line of communication with EMS personnel on better understanding the individuals the van serves. Now, as we approach the winter season, it is Code Blue time and van staff will ensure that individuals are sheltered when the temperature drops.

HAC's housing program has been full all year. This housing is absolutely critical for homeless people who had been living outside on the streets for years. They finally have a home and a place to lay their head at night and a supportive community around them. It has been gratifying to see how many lives HAC has impacted throughout the years with our housing and Outreach programs.

At the beginning of Nov, we lost a sweet tenant who had lived in our housing for 10 years. He had cancer and walked out of the hospital at the end of August after doctors told him there was nothing further they could do for him. He had just had a trach inserted as well as a feeding tube. He walked to the garage next door to our building, which was his drinking spot and adamantly refused to go back to the hospital, despite many people's best persuasive ability. Because I didn't want to see him die on the streets in frail health, we decided there was no other alternative than to take him back and learn how to care for a person with a trach. Our staff rose to the occasion and every single staffperson learned how to clean his trach and tube feed him, as well as assist with his medication regime. Hospice was involved, advising us as well as Dr. Bob & Leanne Paeglow. Staff were extraordinary in lovingly caring for him, and ensured that he did not die outside on the streets and instead died at his home. I would like to thank all of HAC's staff, as well as Community Hospice, and Dr. Bob & Leanne Paeglow.

Would you consider making a donation to HAC to help us continue impacting the lives of homeless people? We would like to thank you for your support throughout the past year. **Many of you continued to assist us without hearing from us, which we are grateful for.** However, the hacking unfortunately impacted us financially because we have not been able to send mailings. As a result, we are way under budget this year. We realize that it may be difficult for everyone to give but we are hopeful that you will be able to come through and help us at this difficult time! We wish each of you happy holidays! -by Donna DeMaria

PLEASE HELP HAC DURING THIS HOLIDAY SEASON!

HAC has to raise over \$110,000 in private donations each year. With rising costs and shrinking funding, any donation, whether it is large or small, will help HAC with our programs and in catching up to our fundraising goal this year. Can you help us out with a generous contribution? Perhaps you can consider becoming a **monthly sustainer**. Monthly sustainers donate a certain amount each month. Through HAC's work and your support, we are able to provide people who are homeless with crucial services and housing!

-Thank you!

Enclosed is my donation of: \$100 \$50 \$25 Other: \$

I am interested in becoming a monthly sustainer for \$

I would like to volunteer for:

Name Phone

Address Zip

Please make checks payable and mail to: HAC, 393 N. Pearl Street, Albany, 12207.