

Murray Parents bring message to Springfield

*Association in Springfield
Wednesday to continue
fight against Murray
Center closure*

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SENTINEL NEWS STAFF

SPRINGFIELD — Members of the Murray Parents Association continued to spread the word about the fight to keep Warren G. Murray Developmental Center open to officials Monday in Springfield.

Parents, guardians, and other family ventured back to the state capital armed with information and their concerns about the future care of their loved ones should the state operated developmental facility be closed in favor of community integrated living arrangements.

There, the Murray Parents Association distributed an informative booklet about the risks of proposed facility closures, including details of how the Jacksonville Developmental Center closure has been allegedly mishandled by Community Resource Alliance (CRA), and why Murray Center specifically should remain in operation.

Association member Rita Winkeler said that Wednesday's visit showed that months of effort to spread the word to department heads and policy makers have paid off since the closure was announced early this year.

"Today went really well. One thing that helped is that there weren't many people there today. It wasn't crowded, so we were able to speak with all of the people we hoped to see," Winkeler said Wednesday. "We talked to senators and representatives, people with the Department of Human Services, human rights authorities, and more. What we found is that not only were people aware of our plight but were willing to say that they oppose closing Murray Center."

She said Rep. John Cavaletto is still working with lawmakers from both parties to convene a hearing to examine the state's contract with CRA and the practices they've implemented to relocate residents of Jacksonville Developmental Center.

"A lot of the people we talked to have seen how things have gone in Jacksonville, and even if they feel a community arrangement would be better they don't like the way CRA has done it," Winkeler said.

Murray Parent Monica Sobczak talked with representatives of the Department of Human Rights, the

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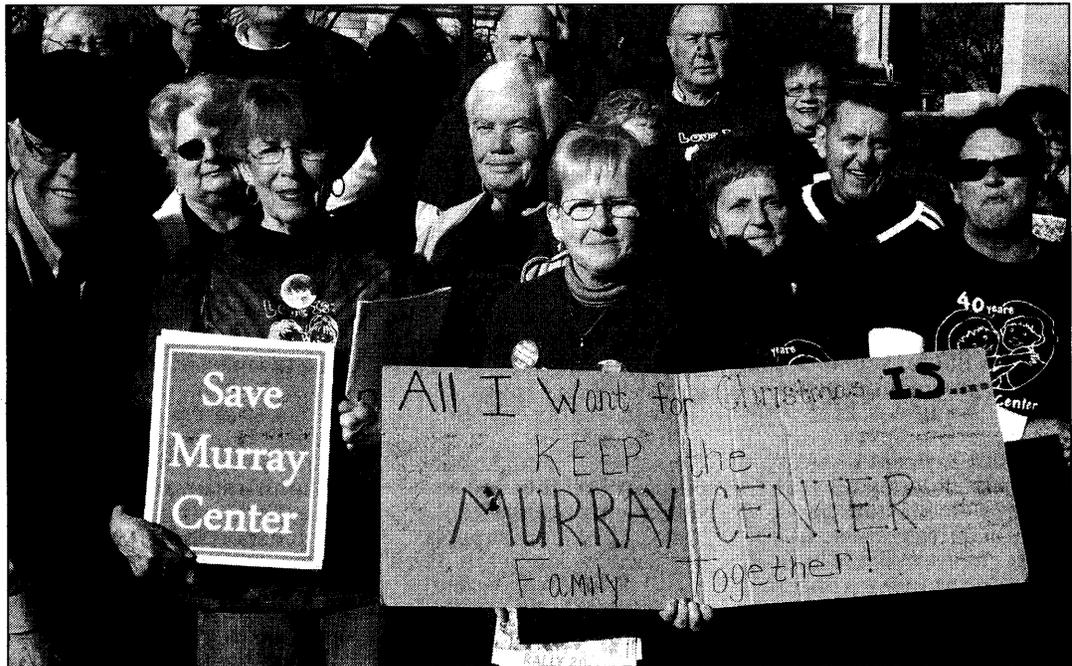
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Guardianship and Advocates Office, and the governor's constituent assistant and said the information the group was able to provide on Murray Center and the closure's impact was eye-opening for many in Springfield.

"This trip was so well organized and effective. I found that the map that depicts where all of the SOD-Cs are and how huge an area would be without services if Murray closed made a big impact, and they wanted to take the information to give to their offices throughout the state," she said. "I also left information with the Legislative Branch Ethics Committee and the office of Lt. Gov. [Sheila] Simon."

Parent Judy Groner said the Springfield trip helped renew the hopes of the families whose loved ones at Murray Center are potentially in jeopardy.

Groner said, "I think it's given us all continued hope.



Submitted Photo

RENEWED HOPE — The Murray Parents Association returned to Springfield on Wednesday to continue the fight to keep the Warren G. Murray Developmental Center open. Members distributed information packets about the center's importance, the dangers of its closure to residents in need of care to legislators, human rights officials, and other state leaders.

Our voices were definitely heard today. There were not a lot of other people there, just a lot of Murray Center T-

shirts. The legislators were in the hallways, so they could see us coming. It was a really powerful day."

Sobczak added, "They know how strong and united we are."

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