

# Lawsuit regarding Murray Center closure concludes

BY JASON SILVEY  
SENTINEL NEWS STAFF

CHICAGO — A three-year old federal lawsuit filed against the closure of the Warren G. Murray Developmental Center in Centralia and other state operated developmental centers has reached its conclusion this week.

The suit was filed in February 2013 in federal court by plaintiffs including the Murray Parents Association, the Illinois League of Advocates for the Developmentally Disabled, and individual family members of residents of Murray Center and six other SODCs, a year after then-governor Pat Quinn announced a list of state facilities targeted for closure to offset the state's ongoing budget shortfall. Opponents, especially the families of Murray Center residents, vehemently opposed to the plan and argued the relocation of their loved ones to community integrated living arrangements would be detrimental to their well being. The lawsuit was filed against the Illinois Department of Human Services, the Community Resource Alliance, and specific state officials alleging that the procedures used by the state to close centers and relocate residents were violations the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Medicaid Act, the Civil Rights Act of 1965 and the Rehabilitation Act.

Although a federal judge in the case ultimately denied the plaintiffs' request for an injunction, they ultimately found many of the rights advocated for SODC residents reaffirmed through the process. Under the Rauner administration, the previous closure plans for Murray Center and other SODCs are no longer in effect. As a result, the lawsuit is no longer necessary.

Please see **Murray**, Page 3A

## Murray:

*Continued From Page 1A*

"The federal lawsuit filed by the Illinois League of Advocates for the Developmentally Disabled (IL-ADD), Murray Parents Association, and all seven state operated developmental centers was settled in Federal Court on Thursday, March 3, in Chicago," Murray Parents Association President Rita Winkeler, one of the plaintiffs in the case, confirmed Friday.

Winkeler explained, "The suit was dismissed with prejudice, which means the suit is over, and neither side can reopen the case. Judge Aspen ruled that the disabled have a right to the full range of placement choices and that the state must offer and provide these choices. This ruling was upheld in the settlement. The lawsuit is a victory for all of the seven centers and its residents as it reaffirms the Olmstead Ruling that there is a federal right to SODC services. The lawsuit was dismissed because the reasons for filing it are no longer in place.

Murray Center is open, the state has no plans to close any of the seven state operated developmental centers at this time, there is no rebalancing plan, and Community Resource Associates (the out-of-state company hired to move out residents from Murray Center) is no longer employed by the state of Illinois."

Winkeler expressed gratitude for the supporters in the legal battle on behalf of the Murray Parents Association.

"The Murray Parents Association is so grateful to the legislators who helped us in this fight, particularly Rep. Charlie Meier, and Rep. John Cavaletto. They are also grateful to the Friends for Murray Center group, the staff at Murray Center, and the hundreds of community members who helped us in the fight to keep Murray Center open. Murray Center is now in the process of rebuilding the infrastructure and continuing to hire new staff," she said.

The plaintiffs' attorney Judy Sherwin could not be reached for additional comments Friday.

[jsilvey@morningsentinel.com](mailto:jsilvey@morningsentinel.com)