

## **PARENTS AND FRIENDS OF LUDEMAN CENTER**

**JUNE 16, 2012**

Dear Parents and Friends Member,

As you know these are challenging times in Illinois and we, the Parents & Friends Board, may very soon be turning to you for help.

As a member of PFLC, you have long been committed to the well-being of your loved one and in turn all the residents at Ludeman Center. But budget deficits loom large in our state and are driving potentially dangerous decisions in Springfield. The push is on to solve the state's fiscal problems in a way that may threaten its most fragile and voiceless population, the developmentally disabled.

In recent months, two of the eight State Operated Developmental Centers (SODCs), Jacksonville and Murray, have been designated for closure. However, unlike past closures (ex. Howe Developmental Center) the goal this time around is not to consolidate residents into other SODCs, but to force these individuals out into community settings whether they are appropriate placements or not.

Established legal processes honoring your guardian rights and your loved one's safety and well-being are being trampled. As evidence, 459 residents currently live at Jacksonville and Murray. The state is budgeting for only 26 of them (less than 6% of the entire population) to be moved to another SODC. In contrast, when Howe was closed, 70% of residents at their guardians' request moved into other SODCs, like Ludeman. And the plan does not stop there. Two more SODCs, yet to be named, are slated for closure after Murray and Jacksonville. Ludeman could indeed be next.

As an organization, PFLC must continue to be the voice for our loved ones and to advocate for them. Letter writing campaigns and lobbying legislators and the Governor have largely fallen on deaf ears, as evidenced by the movement of the first eight Jacksonville residents to unapproved facilities in late May. Sadly, within the first week one of the eight suffered a serious injury requiring surgery and hospitalization.

It is for these reasons that it may soon be necessary to launch a class action lawsuit against the State of Illinois. This is not a step to be taken lightly. Lawsuits of this type are long and difficult to wage and extremely expensive to conduct. But it is the opinion of the PFLC Board that we need to prepare for this likelihood.

Should the decision be made to move forward with the lawsuit, it would be in conjunction with the seven other SODC parent groups. The legal counsel would be coordinated on our behalf by the Illinois League of Advocates for the

Developmentally Disabled (IL-ADD). Many of you heard the President of IL-ADD, Rita Burke, and her husband, Kevin, speak at our last General Meeting on April 29<sup>th</sup> where they advised us on the direction Illinois is taking towards the developmentally disabled and their guardians, a situation that has only grown worse in the passing weeks.

We are writing at this time of membership renewal to make you aware that we all may be facing a very difficult chapter ahead. Now is a more important time than ever to be an active, involved member in PFLC. In the past, many of you along with your annual dues have made an additional donation in support of protecting our residents. In the current climate these donations are more appreciated than ever.

As a board we will continue to keep you apprised of events and notify you in regard to any advancements toward a class action lawsuit. In the event a lawsuit is initiated, we will need to turn to you again for your support and for additional donations in order to keep protecting the well-being of all our loved ones at Ludeman.

Many Thanks,

Board of Parents and Friends of Ludeman Center