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'WE'RE PLEASED'
Dave Tilley

Youth settles drug center suit out of court

By Ellie Nevek

Staff Writer

The American Civil Liberties Union has claimed victory in an out-of-court settlement with STRAIGHT Inc., a drug treatment center for teenagers in Cobb County, on behalf of a west Georgia youth who said he was falsely imprisoned at the organization's Marietta facility.

Martin [redacted], 19, of Cataula alleged in a suit filed in U.S. District Court last July that STRAIGHT had indulged in medical malpractice, false imprisonment, assault and battery, the intentional infliction of emotional harm and violations of his constitutional rights.

The sealed settlement awarded [redacted] attorney's fees and other undisclosed damages,

ACLU cooperating attorney Kathy Wilde said.

STRAIGHT director Dave Tilley had only one comment on the case: "We're pleased that it's settled out of court."

The settlement applies only to E [redacted] and not to the future operation of STRAIGHT, Ms. Wilde said. "The [redacted] themselves dealt only with Martin [redacted] and his experience," she said. "It wasn't a class action, and it wasn't an injunction suit. It was a damage award and that was all we sought."

[redacted] was held at the STRAIGHT facility at 2221 Anstell Road from Sept. 22, 1982, to April 11, 1983, Ms. Wilde said.

During his stay at the facility, [redacted] tried to escape three times, Ms. Wilde said. Once he jumped out of a third story window,

hitchhiked home and was returned to STRAIGHT by his parents.

In an escape attempt on April 11, he scuffled with another youth and broke the boy's nose. The youth filed charges against [redacted] and he was placed in the Cobb County Jail.

[redacted] contacted the ACLU and asked the organization to defend him. The assault charges were dropped April 25 and he was sent to Brawner Psychiatric Institute, which released him shortly thereafter.

"The kids (in the STRAIGHT program) are held incommunicado, without being able to reach the outside world," Ms. Wilde said. "The STRAIGHT program depends on that level of isolation for behavior modification and peer pressure."