



Staff Photos By Ann Strates

ACLU'S GENE GUERRERO (L) GOES OVER HEARING MATERIAL
With Him Is Bob Halford Of Metro Council On Drugs, Alcohol

STRAIGHT

ACLU, Drug Program Form Study Committee

By **DONNA ESPY**
Staff Writer

After an all-day hearing Thursday in the Cobb Superior courtroom of Judge Dorothy A. Robinson, attorneys for the American Civil Liberties Union and STRAIGHT Inc. reached a joint agreement which includes formation of an independent committee to study procedures at the Cobb drug rehabilitation center.

A suit filed last week by ACLU claimed STRAIGHT was holding five area teenagers against their will. ACLU attorney Kathleen Wilde filed five writs of habeas corpus — "orders to produce the bodies" — on behalf of Travis [redacted] of Dunwoody, 18; Bill [redacted] no address given, 18;

Allen [redacted] and Kathy [redacted] both of Marietta and both 17, and Janice [redacted] of Spartanburg, S.C., also 17.

ACLU state executive director Gene Guerrero read the joint statement reached late in the afternoon, saying, "The parties have agreed on a process to review and then resolve the concerns that they, parents or clients may have about STRAIGHT Inc. This process includes the nomination of an independent committee to confirm the adequacy of the admission, treatment and discharge procedures utilized in the program, in general, and in respect to the remaining habeas corpus petitions.

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This review will include cooperation on an interim basis, review of all complaints, cooperating within the ongoing Department of Human Resources licensing process, and negotiations to make any necessary long-term adjustments in the program.

Travis [redacted], one of the five youths named in the suit, took the stand in the early hours of the hearing and told the judge he had not authorized anyone to file the habeas corpus on his behalf. In a signed statement, [redacted] said he had never been contacted by Ms. Wilde or

the ACLU and had given no consent to bring action against STRAIGHT.

[redacted] said he was not being held against his will and could leave the drug program whenever he wanted and could return voluntarily. He told the court he wanted the case dismissed.

Ms. Wilde said several of [redacted] friends had contacted her, claiming he was being held at STRAIGHT's facility at 2221 Austell Road against his will. She said she tried to talk to the five teenagers named in the suit but was denied the opportunity.

"I filed on his behalf on the basis of

what was told to me," Ms. Wilde told the judge, admitting she did not talk with [redacted] or his parents and then withdrawing the petition and dismissing his case.

Leaving the courtroom, [redacted] said he "pretty angry" about the proceedings.

The case of Janice [redacted] was also thrown out when STRAIGHT attorney Robert Grayson of Marietta told the court Ms. Brock was in Florida and not under the control of STRAIGHT.

Judge Robinson "closed" the courtroom proceedings after Grayson filed a request to retain the confiden-

tiality of those minors who might have to testify about their involvement in the non-profit drug rehabilitation program.

After a steady stream of witnesses, including parents of those named in the suit and teens who were formerly involved in STRAIGHT, attorneys for both sides went behind closed doors to hammer out an agreement.

"The parties share a desire that children with drug problems receive appropriate care and treatment if their individual needs require such services," the joint statement read.

Treatment Policies

"All parties agree to a postponement of the habeas corpus hearing in the hope that the process agreed upon to review STRAIGHT will lessen present concerns and allow dismissal of the habeas actions."

"We've got to stop this if we can," said Atlanta attorney Paul Webb Jr., who represented Travis ██████ in court. "Fragile damage is being done. Not only do parents, but children, too, have a right to privacy."

Webb called the ACLU's allegations "outrageously false."

Guerrero said the ACLU is interested only in seeing that persons are not held against their will in the future at STRAIGHT, adding the suit was filed because the civil rights group had received "serious complaints" about the program.

Guerrero also charged the Cobb program is in violation of a 1978 state law requiring licensing of alcohol and drug rehabilitation agencies.

The Department of Human Resources, responsible for licensing such agencies, admitted earlier in the week they had made a mistake in not licensing STRAIGHT because clients do not stay overnight in the facility which opened in August 1981.

Dave Tilley, director of the STRAIGHT program in Cobb and former principal at J.J. Daniell Middle School in northeast Cobb, was not present at the court hearing Thurs-

day but kept in contact with his attorney throughout the proceedings from the STRAIGHT facility.

Tilley said this morning he spent most of Thursday with DHR officials working to resolve the licensing question. He said agency officials visited the facility and would be back today to complete licensing procedures.

"(The DHR) indicated Thursday we would receive our license," Tilley said today. "They said there were no problems in proceeding with the licensing."

Tilley said the court hearing "went as we expected," and he added he was happy with the court's decision to dismiss two of the five cases.

"I'm pleased the judge dismissed the two cases because it was obvious the ACLU had no contact with either client or the parents of either client," Tilley said.

He added he would be involved in organizing the independent committee to study STRAIGHT as well as ACLU and other involved parties.

"I feel the issue will be resolved to our benefit," Tilley said.

Several teens and parents involved in Thursday's hearing said the STRAIGHT program has worked in freeing them or their children from their drug habits, but many questioned the procedures used and possible emotional mistreatment clients undergo during their stay at STRAIGHT.