

Drug rehabilitation 'forced,' woman says

By Nancy Berlier
Post-Staff Reporter

MT. CARMEL, Ohio — An 18-year-old Mt. Carmel woman, who said she overcame a drug dependency a year ago, maintains she was forced to enter a strict drug rehabilitation program in Clermont County and was kept there against her wishes.

Cynthia [redacted] who has moved back to the Fairfield home where she lived when she entered Straight Inc. Feb. 27, said she "escaped" from the home of her parents, Robert and Sharon [redacted] on May 2 in order to get out of the program.

[redacted], A Mt. Carmel attorney, has filed a criminal damaging charge against his daughter for breaking a bathroom window when she left the house.

"It was my hope that rather than being incarcerated, she would be given some kind of probation and one of the terms of which would help her with her drug problem," [redacted] said.

He said his daughter voluntarily entered Straight. She was not locked in the Mt. Carmel home, he said.

Jerry Rushing, director of the Milford-area Straight center, said today he cannot comment on any specific case because it would violate confidentiality of clients.

Straight has been criticized before because it is a tough program, he said. "We just have to absorb that because we're not going to violate our end of the trust," he said.

MISS [redacted] said she has not taken drugs since she completed a drug detoxification program at Brown County General Hospital in Georgetown a year ago.

She said she went to Straight Feb. 27 to visit her brothers, ages 13 and 18, who are in the program.

Once there, she said a Straight staff member and three female program participants yelled at her for three to five hours in an effort to get her to sign up for the program.

She said her parents came into the in-take room and threatened to never let her see them or her brothers again unless she entered the program.

MISS [redacted] said she is a les-

bian and that her parents wanted her in the program because of that.

"I think it's ridiculous that he filed charges against me," she said. "I'm seriously considering filing charges against my parents and Straight."

Miss [redacted] surrendered to Clermont County authorities on the criminal damaging charge Wednesday. Her case has been scheduled for a pre-trial conference June 10. Her attorney, Jonathan Schiff of Cincinnati, has asked that the case be moved from Clermont County.

Schiff said the Ohio Bureau of Drug Abuse conducted an investigation into the activities of Straight last week. Schiff said the American Civil Liberties Union presented four cases to the drug abuse bureau to investigate.

STEWART BELL, drug abuse bureau director, said today the report of that investigation is not in its final form. He would not comment on any findings.

Miss [redacted] said she agreed when she signed the entrance form for Straight to stay in the program for 14

days.

"I didn't see any alternative," she said.

Miss [redacted] said a female staff member strip-searched her in a bathroom and led her by her belt loops into a large group meeting where she was introduced.

All the youngsters in the meeting responded in unison by saying, "Hi, Cyndi. Love you, Cyndi," she said.

On the first and second days of the program, she said she demanded that she be let out, but 15 to 20 girls tackled her and held her down on the floor for 20 minutes.

MISS [redacted] said she conned her way into the second level of the program, in which she could go home with her parents.

Miss [redacted] said Straight staff members would not let her leave voluntarily.

"I said (to Straight personnel) you're violating my inalienable rights," Miss Masters said. "They said, 'Well, you gave them up a long time ago.'"