

ILRU NetWork

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Ohio's "Wheelchair Mom" Rolls Into History

■ Woman determined to go places and do things with her child like any mother would

In her wildest dreams, Kelly Dillery never imagined her name would be known from one end of the American disability community to the other. Recognized by many today as "the wheelchair mom from Ohio," Dillery has spent most of her 30 years living a relatively quiet and inconspicuous life in Sandusky. That all changed in July 1998, when police charged her with child endangerment.

Local authorities say Dillery put herself and her child at risk by maneuvering through Sandusky streets in her motorized wheelchair with five-year-old Kelsi strapped to her lap. Dillery, who has mobility and speech disabilities resulting from Friedreich's Ataxia, claims inaccessible sidewalks and curb cuts which force her to travel in the streets are the real danger.

The charge against Dillery was a first-degree misdemeanor carrying a maximum sentence of six months in jail and a \$1,000 fine. Offered the chance to plead guilty, she declined—insisting that a jury hear the case. That decision and the sequence of events that followed are part of a fascinating story that is still evolving but has already taken a place in disability advocacy history. It's a story about Dillery's struggle to be independent and self-sufficient in a community that is largely inaccessible to her. Central to the story is Dillery's desire to be a good mom in spite of the stereotypes and obstacles that confront her.

There is no question that Dillery's story

might have taken an entirely different course had it not been for two Ohio independent living centers—LEAP/CIL in Elyria and The Ability Center in Toledo. Concerned for Dillery individually—and worried about the impact her case might have on disability rights on a larger scale—these two centers put together a support network and advocacy campaign second to none.

How did they do that? Why did they do it? Did they make a difference? These questions and others are the focus of this issue of *ILRU NetWork*. We talk a lot about systems change, advocacy, peer support and other independent living ideals. Dillery's story provides us an opportunity to actually look at—and learn from—them in the light of a real example.

WELCOME TO THE NETWORK!

Welcome to the inaugural issue of *ILRU NetWork*, a new quarterly newsletter brought to you by the IL Net and the Research and Training Center on Independent Living. In this and coming issues, *ILRU NetWork* will take a comprehensive look at one issue or event of interest to centers for independent living and statewide independent living councils. By limiting our focus to one topic per quarter, we'll be able to examine that topic from several different angles, always looking for what we can learn from it.

In this issue we examine how two CILs in Ohio have put peer support and advocacy into action to assist a young mother who experienced discrimination in her community. We hope you find it as exciting and thought-provoking as we do.

IL NET, ILRU and the National Council on Independent Living are excited about the addition of *ILRU NetWork* to the wide array of services the IL Net offers CILs and SILCs. And we're pleased to tell you this isn't all we have in store.

Coming in August, *ILRU NetWork* goes online to provide current events, late-breaking news and training schedules in an "in brief" format. To check it out, point your browser to ILRU.ORG and follow the links to NetWork On Line.

We want to know what you think of this newest offering. We're especially interested in articles and information you wish to see in future issues. Use the contact information on the back page and let us know.

Richard Petty, IL NET Director

DILLERY HEADS FOR NEW STATE AND NEW START

Meanwhile DOJ investigation and civil suit for discrimination are underway

Kelly Dillery is leaving Sandusky. Within the next few weeks she will move to Indiana to be close to her daughter, Kelsi, who will begin school there this fall.

Kelsi's move was planned long before July 1998, when Sandusky police charged Dillery with child endangerment. The original decision was based on Dillery's belief that Kelsi, who will live with her aunt while attending school, will get a better education there. Recently Dillery told friends the decision seems even better because of her ongoing difficulties with Sandusky police and her concern for Kelsi's safety and emotional well-being.

Dillery was found not guilty of the child endangerment charge during a jury trial last March. But that was not to be the end of her legal problems. In May, she was cited for being a "pedestrian in the roadway," this time without Kelsi. Her attorneys are waiting to move on that charge until they learn the outcome of an appeal for Dillery's conviction on an identical charge last January. She was cited for that alleged offense in early December 1998, a few days after she decided not to plead guilty to the child endangerment charge.

The citations are a part of what Dillery, her family and close friends believe is an ongoing campaign of harassment, discrimination and intimidation by local authorities. On June 10, Dillery formalized her complaints by filing a lawsuit against the city of Sandusky and several city officials individually.

Harassment and discrimination

In addition to charges of harassment, Dillery claims Sandusky officials have discriminated against her and violated her civil rights. The lawsuit also alleges that the city has violated a number of federal laws, including the Americans with Disabilities Act. The suit claims

the city does not have a transition plan, grievance plan or self-evaluation as the ADA requires.

Dillery has long maintained that she must take to the streets when curb cuts and sidewalks—when there are any at all—are dangerous to maneuver over or are completely impassable. In the suit, she asks the court to stop the city from



Photo courtesy The Sandusky Register

“Dislike Dillery if you must. At the same time recognize her courage for telling people--in fact, telling a whole city--what it didn't want to hear, and for refusing to have her issue ignored.”

Sandusky Register Editorial - July 18, 1999

building any new sidewalks or curb cuts that are not in compliance with the ADA.

Beyond that she asks the court to order the city to correctly install or re-install any curb cuts or sidewalks that have been built since January 1992, the first year the city should have been in compliance with the ADA.

DOJ investigates complaint

Meanwhile, as this article is being written, Sandusky is getting a visit from an investigator from the U.S. Dept. of Justice. The visit is a follow up to a civil rights complaint filed with DOJ last month. The complaint is based on an investigation of Dillery launched by Erie County Children's Services days after she filed the lawsuit.

Attorney Linda Van Tine says the investigation is "separate and apart" from the lawsuit. "They are focusing on the question of whether the city's or county's actions equate to acts of retaliation against Kelly for filing the ADA suit," she explains. "If they find it does, they will have the option of filing a separate suit in her behalf or attempting to enter into a consent agreement with the governmental entities outlining an agreement including damages for Kelly."

Dillery leaves, message stays

Dillery is happy about a new start in a new city. Some people in Sandusky are happy for her. Some are just happy to see her to go. News accounts from the beginning of Dillery's ordeal reveal a community that is clearly divided in its opinions about her. While some applaud her efforts to be independent and mobile, others chastise her for taking risks and challenging authority.

Some blame Dillery for drawing the unwelcome attention of outsiders—especially disability activists who came from other

cities to support her cause. Others say that outsiders had to come in, because people with disabilities in Sandusky are intimidated and afraid of being harassed like Dillery.

Dillery's departure may end the day-to-day debate about her circumstances. But there is no question she has made a lasting impression on the town she has called home for years.

The tale of two centers for independent living and how they turned the spotlight on Sandusky

■ CILs put advocacy and peer support skills to the test to support Dillery

When Kelly Dillery declined a plea bargain in favor of a jury trial, she had no reason to believe she would have any support beyond that of her lawyers, family and a few friends. While there are surely other people with disabilities living in Sandusky, by all accounts, they are not organized or visible as a group. It didn't occur to Dillery to expect their support.

Little did she know that accounts of her troubles were about to trigger an avalanche of support from people she'd never met before or even knew existed. In nearby Elyria, Mary Butler read newspaper stories about Dillery's plight and determined she had to do something to help. In Toledo, Shona Eakin, having read similar stories, had come to the same conclusion. Unbeknownst to each other, they each started making calls and asking questions to learn more about the situation and how they might help Dillery.

Butler and Eakin were not total strangers, neither did they know each other very well. They held similar jobs at different centers for independent living. Butler is the advocacy and outreach coordinator for LEAP/CIL. Eakin is the advocacy director at The Ability Center. They attended the same monthly meetings in Columbus.

They were at one such meeting in November 1998, during which Eakin began to tell Dillery's story. Butler recognized the story immediately and realized that she and Eakin had taken almost exactly the same steps—including trying to get in touch with Dillery—up to that point. "We need to talk," they said simultaneously.

Before they left the meeting they made a date to visit Dillery together. And the rest is—literally—disability history. Butler and Eakin ignited the spark that set off a national explosion of support for Dillery. They and their respective CILs formed a unique collaboration focused on a good outcome for Dillery—not turf or credit.

Recognized for successes, Ohio organizers share their strategies for effective advocacy

In June, the National Council on Independent Living honored Mary Butler and Shona Eakin with its Region V Advocacy Award.

They are proud of the honor and recognition, especially that it came from their peers. At the same time, they say effective advocacy is not about who gets credit. They hope the recognition of their work will inspire others to get involved in their own communities.

Based on what they have learned through their own experiences, Butler and Eakin offer the following tips:

- Take it personally. Get mad when you see discrimination and prejudice. A crime against one of us is a crime against us all.
- Think big. Look at the big picture. If you know that one person's rights are being violated, you can be pretty sure there are others in the same boat.
- Think beyond territory. The fight for disability rights is not about turf. We can get more done if we work together.
- Don't say "that's not my job." This is everybody's job. If we don't do it, nobody will do it for us.
- Appreciate the strengths that others bring to the effort. Nobody's an expert at everything but everybody's good at something.
- Learn about the system. Learn about the laws. Learn how to organize and move people to act. Learn how to work with the media. The more you know about the issues—and how to communicate them—the more you can accomplish.

Not only about Dillery

From the very beginning, Butler and Eakin knew they were motivated by the same thing—a concern that if Dillery lost her case it would set a terrible precedent with implications for people all over the country. "I'm a systems thinker," Eakin says. "I look at a situation to see how it affects the greater good."

"It's not that we weren't concerned about Kelly as a person—we were and are. But it has never been only about her," says Butler.

With that very similar "big picture" outlook, Butler and Eakin also realized there were differences in their approaches to some things. "I learned early on that Shona was definitely more comfortable with confrontation than I was at the time," Butler recalls with a chuckle.

"My process is to try to do it the nice

way first," Eakin responds. "But then I go ahead and do what I have to do. Mary probably has more patience than me."

Something big, something fast

If the difference in their styles would matter, there wasn't time to worry about it. With her trial scheduled for January 1999, they didn't get to meet Dillery until Dec. 16. At that meeting, Butler and Eakin—both wheelchair users—asked to see where Dillery had been cited for child endangerment.

"I was appalled," Eakin recalls. "The route was totally obstructed. In an hour and a half we never even made it to the actual location. We could see it, but we couldn't get to it. I knew for sure then that Kelly hadn't done anything illegal. We needed to do something big. And we needed to do it fast."

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“Political hunger” is the key to change

Is it possible to know when and where systems change begins? Can one person change a system?

Some would say that the change underway in Sandusky started near the intersection of Columbus and Perkins avenues on July 30, 1998. That’s when and where Kelly Dillery was cited for child endangerment for riding in the street in her wheelchair with her daughter strapped to her lap.

Some would argue this is not systems change—just one woman’s fight with the city.

Steve Gold, attorney for ADAPT and widely respected in the disability rights community, believes individuals can bring about systems change in several ways. “When the law has not been definitively clarified, individuals can impact the system,” he says. As one example he offers the recent Supreme Court ruling in the Olmstead case brought against the state of Georgia by two individuals. Creating or changing a law would be another way to change a system.

To this point Dillery’s experience doesn’t fall into either of these categories. Instead, from Gold’s perspective, it represents a third approach—“raising the consciousness” of a community. Her case has raised awareness of the “hatred and fear” that exist in the community. And that, he says, can bring about change.

But to talk about systems change in these terms alone is simply to “gloss over” what Gold believes is really important. “Just bringing a lawsuit isn’t enough,” he says. What it really takes to change a system is “lots of grass roots political action.”

“I have no doubt that other centers can be doing what the people in Ohio are doing,” Gold says. But they don’t seem “offended” when they see discrimination and prejudice against people with disabilities, he says, or at least not offended enough to do anything about it.

“It takes a political hunger for change,” Gold says. “That’s what changes systems.”

Principle before profit

ATTORNEYS PUT CIVIL RIGHTS FIRST

With much of the spotlight on the events in Sandusky focused on the advocacy effort, there has been relatively little mention of two of Kelly Dillery’s most important advocates—her attorneys. Linda Van Tine and



K. Ronald Bailey combined their respective talents and skills to stage a legal battle on Dillery’s behalf that some have described as “no less than brilliant.” All of that and they’ve done it pro bono. That’s right, for free.

It’s not that they would turn down compensation for their legal services on Dillery’s behalf. But they haven’t let the fact there is no immediate prospect for payment keep them from getting involved.

Van Tine, who specializes in civil law, first worked with Dillery on a family matter. That was months before Dillery’s problems with the city began. When she was charged with child endangering—a criminal misdemeanor—Dillery followed Van Tine’s advice and applied for assistance from the public defender’s office.

Out of personal interest, Van Tine was in court the day Dillery refused to plead guilty to the child endangering charge and insisted on a jury trial. Sensing the significance of the case, Van Tine was concerned that an “extremely overworked” public defender might not be able to commit sufficient time or attention to it. She called on Ron Bailey who is regarded, she says, as an excellent and aggressive criminal defense attorney.

“I told him that if there was ever a case that he should become involved with, it was this one,” Van Tine recalls. Not only did Bailey agree to get involved, he agreed to donate his services, too.

Bailey took the lead in developing Dillery’s defense. Van Tine supplied her knowledge of ADA and other disability related issues. The combination was effective judging by Dillery’s acquittal. Now the two attorneys are working together on Dillery’s civil suit against the city filed early this summer.

If Dillery wins that suit she will be awarded funds to pay Van Tine and Bailey for their services. In the meantime they continue to work on contingency. An unexpected gift from the Rutherford Institute saved them from having to spend their own money to produce exhibits and other materials needed for the criminal trial. The institute, dedicated to preserving human rights and defending civil liberties, sent \$5,000 to assist in Dillery’s defense.

Asked what CILs can learn from the legal side of Dillery’s story, Van Tine points to the financial aspects of taking a case through the legal processes. Not every attorney can donate time to a cause, she says. And even if they can, they may not have the financial resources to conduct research, pay for supplies or develop materials. “If they could help with the cash flow,” Van Tine suggests, CILs everywhere might find more lawyers willing or able to take on a legal battle.

Having said that, Van Tine is also quick to point out the important contributions the independent living community did make to Dillery’s case. They were extremely helpful, she said, in providing good background and connecting the attorneys to information resources to bolster the case. They were invaluable in the “PR aspect” of the case. “They kept the pressure on,” Van Tine says. “With their marches and other activities they kept the issue in front of people.”

When curb cuts don't cut it, advocates cut loose

■ Illinois and Pennsylvania advocates took to the streets to be able to use sidewalks

Sandusky's not the only place where accessible curb cuts and sidewalks are an issue. ADA requirements aside, people with disabilities in cities and towns large and small still encounter public passageways that just don't pass muster.

If it's a problem in smaller communities, what must it be like in the big cities? We checked in with the folks at Access Living in Chicago to find out. Jim Charlton, program director for the

independent living center, says for the most part Chicago streets and sidewalks are in pretty good shape. "There is no place on earth flatter than Chicago," he jokes, so there aren't too many steep inclines to begin with.

Nonetheless there was a time, 10 to 15 years ago, when street and sidewalk access was an issue. "We started at the city council to get an ordinance to prohibit new construction that didn't meet code," he recalls. That took some work, he says, but the real work started after the ordinance took effect. "Then we had to monitor new construction to make sure it was right. When it wasn't we had to draw attention to it."

Charlton remembers a couple of occasions when advocates tore up curb cuts when they weren't properly installed. "There's something about a quad with a jack hammer that gets people's attention." It at least helped make the point that a bad curb cut is no better than no curb cut, he says.

It didn't take too much of that and the accompanying media coverage, Charlton says, for the city to get the message and begin to be more consistent in proper installation. "I think monitoring is the key," he advises. "You at least need to stick with it until they keep getting it right."

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Personal Perspective: Do we have time for advocacy?

...by **Kathleen Kleinmann**

Executive Director, Tri-County Patriots for Independent Living

Kathleen Kleinmann was among the estimated 50 advocates who traveled to Sandusky in support of Kelly Dillery during her trial on a child endangerment charge. Kleinmann is the executive director of Tri-County Patriots for Independent Living in Washington, PA. The following is an excerpt from an excellent written account of her experience which details her struggle with two issues familiar to all of us—time and priorities.

As a wheelchair user who raised two children, I for one trembled with fear that we were on the verge of social catastrophe. You would think with all the emotion that it stirred in me, I would be ready to join the fight immediately. But, when the call came from Shona Eakin asking me to come to Sandusky to help organize the advocates who would be coming to watch the trial, I had a busy week planned, as usual.

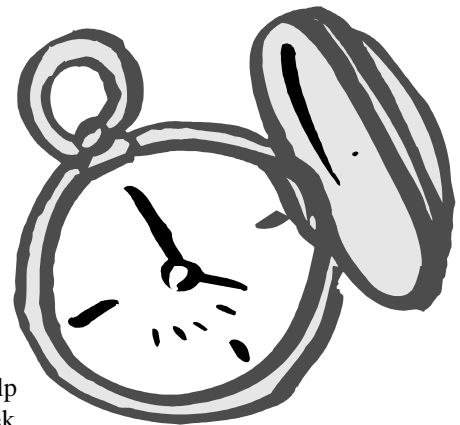
Being a director of a CIL in Washington, PA, there is NEVER enough time to do every thing that you want to do or needs to get done. You get used to saying "no, sorry, I can't." It was a Friday, and I was far from feeling that the work week was done. I told Shona that I wished them all success, and that I knew that they could do the job without me.

I proceeded to have three sleepless night in a row. How could I be too busy to help with a crisis of this magnitude? If being a CIL director means that you cannot perform this kind of work, who the hell needs it? If a CIL director with access to travel dollars and command over their own time does not have time to take a stand for justice, who is left to do it?

If Shona said that she needed my help, it must be true and to disbelieve her is the height of disrespect to her and to her efforts. I called first thing Monday morning to apologize to Shona and to assure her that I would be there and would bring others, too. I am willing to share my personal shame over this incident only to teach others the lesson that I have learned.

When I got there, I found two other CIL directors had come, one from Toledo and one from Dayton. Each had struggled with personal issues and work related issues and had made sacrifices to be there. We each knew that we were there to help but that we were also there to salvage the good name of CIL directors, in general. We knew that as CIL directors we were charged with the responsibility of being a good role model and a leader in the disability movement as a whole, and to our own staff, in particular.

We were grateful that we had found wisdom in time to know that CIL directors had to be represented in the crowd of advocates at the courthouse in order to maintain the credibility of all CIL directors.



MEDIA KEEPS ISSUE IN THE PUBLIC EYE

■ Sandusky reporter shares tips for effective working relationship with the press

“Wheelchair user faces sidewalk dilemma.” The Sandusky Register carried its first story about Kelly Dillery in August 1998, shortly after her citation for riding her wheelchair in the street with daughter, Kelsi, on her lap.

Since then the newspaper has chronicled each new development in the story. “Mom charged for carting girl around on wheelchair wants trial.” “Disability activists to rally today in Sandusky.” “Cold and quiet marks first night of vigil.” “Dillery’s ‘real happy’ with not guilty verdict.” “Dillery sues Sandusky.” “Dillery moves on; ADA problems stay.”

These and other articles—seasoned with a smattering of editorials—documented a local story with a world of significance to the international independent living community. In an editorial dated Dec. 12, 1998, managing editor Todd Franko wrote that the stories and editorials “... have generated the most response we’ve seen here in some time—possibly ever—over one issue.”

This is the kind of media coverage that disability rights advocates trying to bring public attention to an issue pray for—but don’t always get. Some complain that the media isn’t interested in our issues. That may be true, in some cases. But it may also be a matter of our own education about what makes news and what prompts reporters and their editors to pick up a story.

Michael Brice, staff writer for the Sandusky Register, wrote many of the stories about Dillery. It’s unusual for a reporter to agree to be interviewed about an ongoing news story. But, stressing that he does not want to become part of the

story, Brice did agree to discuss aspects of covering it that might give centers and SILCs a better understanding of how reporters work.

Why did the paper pick up the story? “It was the human aspect of a person trying to have some sort of normalcy to her life,” Brice says. “And the road blocks she was running into.”

From the time the first story was published, Dillery’s story generated strong public opinion. Brice lists that as another reason his paper continued to cover the story. “People were interested in it—both ways.”

A Dillery family member—not the independent living community—first brought the story to the Register’s attention. As reported elsewhere in this newsletter, Mary Butler and Shona Eakin were drawn to Dillery by the first news reports of her story and eventually took on the responsibility for working with the press. Brice says they did a good job of educating reporters about disability issues.

He recalls a packet of materials given out before the march to city hall that was useful. It included information about how to avoid stereotyping and offensive terms in writing about disability issues. Butler, Eakin and others were also helpful as subject matter experts. “They offered their own time, made us aware of seminars, put us in contact with ADA consultants, and looked at buildings for accessibility.” Reporters want to be accurate, he says, and these are things that help.

Speaking of the march, Brice commented on the number of things that made that a “good” story. Seventy people—many of them using wheelchairs—out on a cold winter day got attention, he says. The only thing that would have been better from the perspective of a local reporter, he says,

would have been to have more local people on hand. “Reporters prefer to interview local people whenever possible.”

Brice gives the organizers high marks for being “very reachable—even after hours.” They provided their home telephone numbers for those occasions when the reporters needed information beyond “normal” work hours.

Brice commends the advocates for keeping him and other Register reporters “in the loop as far as developments in the story.” He says that’s important, even if the developments don’t seem directly related to the story.

It can be a sensitive issue for local reporters when regional and national media “descend” on a story, Brice says. Sometimes local sources give more information to the networks and larger papers, even though it was the local news organization that broke the story and will still be there when the others leave. Loyalty, he says, is important to an ongoing relationship between a reporter and a source.

Bright ideas?



We’re always on the lookout for ideas for future issues. Call or write us with topics you think would be interesting and useful to the independent living community. If you know of materials or people who would be good resources for developing a topic, let us know about them, too. Use the information on the back page to contact us. Thanks!

The tale of two centers...

Two weeks later, on Dec. 29, approximately 85 Dillery supporters—including many who are wheelchair users—from throughout Ohio and several nearby states marched to Sandusky's city hall. It was the biggest disability rights rally in Sandusky's history. In fact, at that time it was the only disability rights protest in the town of 80,000. "People seemed surprised there was such a strong show of support for Kelly," Butler recalls.

None were more surprised than Dillery. "She was absolutely blown away by the immense presence of the disability community," Eakin says.

How did they organize such a big event in such a short time? "Countless, countless hours of work," Eakin recalls.

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Curb cuts...

It took folks in Philadelphia a trip to the state supreme court to be able to travel their streets and sidewalks. According to Cassie James, program manager and ADAPT organizer at Liberty Resources, the city "simply refused" to fund curb cuts until the 1993 court ruling mandated it. As the case made its way through the legal process, James said advocates "took over the mayor's office a couple of times" and engaged in "street activism" to make their point. "Sometimes you've just got to use the rights you have in order to get the things you need," she says.

James cautions advocates who may be dealing with similar issues in their own towns to avoid "letting people off the hook" when it comes to demanding curb cuts. She says some communities are using community development block grant funds—dollars intended for housing and community needs—to construct curb cuts. "That's giving up one thing we need to get another thing," she says. "Our folks need to pay attention to where the money comes from. If cities get federal dollars, they should be using dollars from their own budgets to fund curb cuts."

"We never really stopped to map out a plan," Butler adds. "We just dove right in and worked our strengths."

It worked out that Eakin, an avid and active ADAPT member, had the better contacts and community organizing skills. While she rounded up supporters, Butler focused on getting information to the international disability community with postings to disability listservs on the internet and messages to her personal contacts. They shared responsibility for contacting the news media and other tasks based on who had the time or was best equipped to handle a certain task.

Notable vigilance

Dillery's child endangerment trial began on March 9. If people were impressed by the protest march, they were likely amazed by the showing of support at the trial. Over two nights, braving bitter cold, snow and wind, small groups of supporters took turns keeping vigil beneath a makeshift tent pitched on the courthouse lawn. During the three days of trial, Eakin estimates as many as 50 crowded inside. Limited wheelchair seating in the courtroom forced some to watch the proceedings in the hall on closed-circuit TV. People from all over the country—who couldn't be in Sandusky—were represented by a steady flow of phone calls, letters and e-mail messages to city officials and the news media.

The show of support prompted the judge presiding over the trial to compliment advocates on the show of support in his statements before announcing the verdict—not guilty. "People finally had to take us seriously," Eakin states. "Even the judge acknowledged he had never seen a group as dedicated to a cause."

It's not about turf

But they are quick to point out that the effort went far beyond what they brought to it. And the first people they credit are their respective bosses—the directors of their CILs. Tracy Justesen is the executive director of The Ability Center.

Doris Brennan is his counterpart at LEAP/CIL.

"If they had been concerned about turf or protecting their own territory," Butler says, "we could have never worked together the way we did."

"Our directors didn't sit on us. They let us do what we needed to do," Eakin adds. "They made this possible."

Next, the two organizers pay tribute to the dozens of advocates who took the time and made the effort to be in Sandusky when a physical presence was important. And there were those who couldn't be present who showed their support in a variety of ways including writing letters, making phone calls, or gathering and circulating information.

"Kelly has the inner strength to be her own advocate," Eakin reflects, pointing out that Dillery was prepared to fight her battle alone. "I would like to think this experience has shown her the disability community is behind her. She doesn't have to fight alone."

And maybe, Eakin says, other people with disabilities will get the same message. "People with disabilities have to get out and fight for equality. If they know they'll get support from the whole community, maybe more people will be willing to."

More to come

While Dillery will move on to Indiana, Butler and Eakin will still be focused on Sandusky. They plan to provide whatever support Dillery needs as her lawsuit moves through the system.

Beyond that, The Ability Center is joining individuals in the disability community to file their own lawsuit against the city of Sandusky. Expected to be filed in the next few weeks, Eakin says this suit will focus on Sandusky's failure to comply with the ADA and its provisions for accessible sidewalks and curb cuts.

Butler and Eakin have formed a tight bond and lasting friendship. As for their differences in style, they agree they only make them a more effective team. Says Butler, "We're just getting started."

SOURCES & RESOURCES

For more information about the stories in this newsletter, go straight to the sources. Thanks to the following for sharing their valuable time, knowledge and experience in our effort to advance the independence of all people with disabilities.

K. RONALD BAILEY
K. Ronald Bailey & Associates
220 W Market St
Sandusky, OH 44870
(419) 625-6740

MIKE BRICE
Staff Writer
Sandusky Register
314 W. Market St.
Sandusky, OH
(800) 737-7572 #309
mikebrice@sanduskyregister.com

MARY BUTLER
Advocacy & Outreach Coordinator
LEAP/CIL
2100 North Ridge Road
Elyria, OH 44035
(440) 324-3444 (440) 324-2113 (tty)
leap@kellnet.com

JIM CHARLTON
Program Director
Access Living
310 South Peoria, Suite 201
Chicago, IL 60607
(312) 226-5900

SHONA EAKIN
Advocacy Director
Ability Center of Greater Toledo
5605 Monroe Street
Sylvania, OH 43560
(419) 885-5733 [Voice]
seakin@abilitycenter.org

STEVE GOLD
Public Interest Law Center
125 South 9th ST. #700
Philadelphia, PA 19107
(215) 627-7100
sfgold@compuserve.com

CASSIE JAMES
Liberty Resources, Inc.
1341 N. Delaware Avenue
Suite 105
Philadelphia, PA 19125
(215) 634-2000 (voice)
lri@libertynet.org

KATHLEEN KLEINMANN
Executive Director
Tri-County Partnership for IL
69 East Beau Street
Washington, PA 15301
(724) 223-5115
kleinman@tripil.com

LINDA VAN TINE
Attorney At Law
1410 Central Ave.
Sandusky, OH 44870
(419) 625-4010
lvantine@worldnet.att.net

ilru NetWork

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For more information, contact:

Carri George

IL NET Publications Coordinator

Independent Living Research Utilization

THE INSTITUTE FOR REHABILITATION AND RESEARCH

Mail Stop: ILRU

1333 Moursund

Houston, Texas 77030

Voice: 713/520-0232

TTY: 713/520-5136

Fax: 713/520-5785

Lex Frieden, ILRU Director

Richard Petty, IL NET Director

Laurel Richards, ILRU Training Director

Dawn Heinsohn, IL NET Materials Specialist

Kaye Beneke, Newsletter Production

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