

**March 16, 2010**

**Issue 2, Volume 3**

Maryland Disability Law Center (MDLC) had a big week last week, achieving and celebrating major milestones in two of our landmark cases that have improved the lives of thousands of Marylanders with disabilities.

**Vaughn G. Agreement**

First, MDLC reached an agreement with Baltimore City Public Schools that paves the way to ending our 26 year old Vaughn G special education litigation. The agreement ends active court oversight, terminates the special master position as of July 1<sup>st</sup>, and sets up a 2 year period during which the Maryland State Department of Education will monitor BCPSS according to federal standards. A Settlement Agreement Liaison will also participate in the monitoring process.

BCPS has continued responsibilities in the areas of discipline, the provision of supplementary aids and services, and compensatory services for students whose services are not provided. The school system will undertake an intensive, comprehensive project with an outside consultant to provide professional development and technical assistance in the area of supplemental services, and will hire an outside consultant to evaluate the effectiveness of the project.

Our agreement was announced at a press conference that included Governor O'Malley, State Superintendent Grasmick, Mayor Rawlings-Blake and BCPSS CEO Alonso.

**Smith Settlement**

In addition, MDLC and class representatives celebrated the culmination of our Smith class action case that significantly improved paratransit transportation services for people with disabilities. As a result of this work the Maryland Transit Administration developed a new call center, purchased a new telephone system and other new technology, increased staffing and added hundreds of vehicles. The number of daily trips provided to the individuals we serve has increased tremendously, now averaging nearly three thousand trips per day for people with mobility impairments to travel to work, school, medical appointments and more. On-time performance has improved and additional services have been added as well.

**In Other News**

MDLC, in addition to its powerful, change-making advocacy to improve the lives of people with disabilities, is working to improve communication and engage our community. One of the ways MDLC is doing this is by launching our new website. Check us out at [www.mdclaw.org](http://www.mdclaw.org). We believe you will find the new website easy to navigate and locate information. (MDLC is always interested to know what you think, so drop us a note at [feedback@mdclaw.org](mailto:feedback@mdclaw.org).)

Among other things, visitors can sign up for our e-newsletters, download publications, jump to our [Facebook fan page](#), and buy tickets to BOTH of our fabulous upcoming events!

**Movie Screening: *Healing Neen***

MDLC is excited to announce a special advance screening of our amazing new documentary, *Healing Neen* at the Charles Theatre in Baltimore! *Healing Neen* is the sequel to MDLC's 2007 award-winning documentary, *Behind Closed Doors*, which chronicled the experiences of 4 women with the mental health system and is now used in trainings on trauma-informed care for mental health professionals across the country. One of the 4 women, Tonier Cain, participates in those trainings and is also the focus of *Healing Neen*. Join us at the Charles Theatre on March 22, 6-8 PM to see this powerful new film, meet Tonier, and hear music by talented local musician Caleb Stine, who wrote the film score. Tickets are affordably priced at only \$9 each, and only a few tickets remain.

**Breaking Barriers**

Also available NOW on the website – tickets to MDLC's inaugural annual awards gala, *Breaking Barriers*! Be among the first to experience Baltimore's newest fundraising fête, an inspiring evening to celebrate achievements in the struggle to secure the rights of Marylanders with disabilities. Come for the fantastic food, drink and music; mingle with fun, interesting and caring folks like you; and see the presentation of our *Breaking Barriers* achievement awards honoring advocates for people with disabilities.

*Public Policy Award* – Congressman Dutch Ruppersberger

*Legal Advocacy Award* – Earl Bartgis, Jr.

*Grassroots Advocacy Award* – Floyd Hartley

*Lifetime Achievement Award* – Lorraine Sheehan (posthumously)

**MDLC's BREAKING BARRIERS**

Thursday, April 22, 2010

6:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

American Visionary Art Museum

Baltimore, Maryland

**Please join us and support our advocacy efforts!**

*Breaking Barriers* is presented by Whiting-Turner Contracting Company, and sponsored in part by Law Offices of Evan K. Thalenberg, Saul E. Kerpelman & Associates, Gallagher Evelius & Jones LLP, McCormick & Company Inc., and David F. Albright Jr.

**Buy tickets now at [www.mdclaw.org](http://www.mdclaw.org).**

You are receiving this email because you were suggested as someone interested in disability issues. If you would like to unsubscribe, please send an email to [inmotion@mdclaw.org](mailto:inmotion@mdclaw.org) with "unsubscribe" in the memo line.