



To the Editor:

St. Lawrence NYSARC was founded by a group of parents of children with disabilities in 1959. They have developed programs over the years that help all people with special needs. The sheltered workshop is one of these programs. Workshops allow individuals to work at their own ability levels. This is very important because not everyone works at the same pace.

It may take someone two hours to do a task or someone else 10 minutes. It is logical that people get paid for the amount of work they do. Last year, a reinterpretation of the Supreme Court Olmstead decision of 1999 determined that the workshops should be closed as they were deemed unconstitutional.

After a great deal of outcry from families and the public the State is asking the workshops to provide jobs for everyone at minimum wage to make it constitutional for them to be at there. This could mean a closure of the workshop because the State has not approved a Medicaid rate increase to adjust for drastic change.

Our legislators and community need to understand that St. Lawrence NYSARC's workshop provide so much more than just a work place. It's a place to have friends, a daily routine and do meaningful jobs. Everyone needs to be able to contribute what they can to the make their lives whole. Our community is stronger because of these workshops.

What it comes down to is that the State government has already taken \$1.5 million in funds away from the workshops. St. Lawrence NYSARC was already forced to close two workshops and consolidate services with the Massena and Ogdensburg sites. As of three years ago the State stopped allowing people the option to be admitted into a workshop program. It is wrong to take away choices for people!

I'm urging everyone who believes we need to help others to contact their elected officials and ask them to support workshops for people with developmental disabilities.

A very concerned parent,
Angele and Randy LePage

