

**CITY PLACE MALL MANAGER SHUNS PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

A lawsuit will be filed by University Legal Services in Federal District Court in Greenbelt on Wednesday, November 12, 2003 against City Place Mall on behalf of people with mental retardation who were told to leave and stay out of the food court at City Place Mall based on their disabilities in violation of Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

The case involves adults with mental retardation and their instructors who visit City Place Mall during community outings for shopping and eating lunch in the food court. In September, the group sat in the food court after shopping at their favorite store when the assistant manager of City Place confronted the instructors and claimed that she did not want “those people” in the Mall because they “make the mall look bad.” Even after the instructors explained their intention to buy lunch at the food court, the manager insisted that the people with disabilities leave the Mall following their lunch and not return to City Place. The manager had no legitimate reason to confront the individuals with disabilities, to subject them to verbal abuse, or exclude them from the Mall. “This is blatant discrimination. City Place has clearly violated the civil rights of people with disabilities. There’s simply no excuse for it,” said Pamela Williams, attorney for the Plaintiffs.

Since 1990, the ADA has prohibited public accommodations such as restaurants and shopping malls from denying equal access to people with disabilities. Just as restaurants cannot refuse to admit people based on their race, the ADA forbids restaurants from refusing to admit people with mental retardation or other disabilities or subject them to rules that are different from those applied to non-disabled people. The ADA also prohibits public accommodations from discriminating against people who accompany individuals with disabilities and advocate on their behalf.

The Plaintiffs are seeking a federal court order requiring the owners and managers of City Place Mall to: stop their discriminatory conduct, develop policies and procedures that clearly prohibit disability-based discrimination, sanction the manager of City Place,

issue a formal apology to plaintiffs, train City Place staff and lessees regarding the civil rights of people with disabilities to equal access to City Place. Pamela Williams and Marjorie Rifkin of University Legal Services – P&A, the protection and advocacy agency for the District of Columbia, are representing the plaintiffs.

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