

## Herald & Review (Decatur, IL)

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### Rally draws attention to needs of disabled Event ends today in Springfield

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DECATUR - Forty-eight-year-old Stefan Black of Decatur has lived in his own apartment for 28 years and would hate to give that up. "I like the way I'm doing right now because I can do group (with Macon Resources Inc.) and take the city bus," he said.

Because he needs supportive services to live independently, Black is among scores of people with disabilities participating in the first-ever **Freedom Quest '09**, speaking out for changes in state laws so people with disabilities can live free, independent and inclusive lifestyles like everyone else.

The brainchild of Lester Pritchard, co-founder of the Campaign for Real Choice in Illinois, the event began Tuesday with caravans starting in Murphysboro, Rock Island and Zion and concludes today in Springfield with a rally at the Capitol.

The 42 people who started from Zion and spent Tuesday night in Joliet were joined Wednesday evening by about 50 people from Macon Resources for a rally in Decatur's Central Park.

Pritchard, who is traveling with the group with his wife, Barbara, said Illinois ranks last in the United States in providing community integrated support for people with developmental disabilities and likened the state to Alabama in the 1960s.

"For African-Americans, changes didn't come until people who were affected spoke up," Pritchard said. "This is the beginning of what could be a long effort in Illinois."

Lynda Hazenfield, 67, and her boyfriend, Tommy Henne, 65, are afraid they will lose their apartment in Decatur if something isn't done. "We can't lose our caseworkers," she said.

Several people with disabilities, those who had started out in Zion and those who joined the group Wednesday, spoke into the microphone about the more than 16,000 people waiting for services in Illinois.

Jason Rosborough, 26, of Decatur carried a sign reading "Help Us Be Independent" and said people with disabilities should not have to wait. "We want to go on our own, do stuff on our own and rely on ourselves," he said.

Barb Jordan of Decatur, who is in her mid-50s, simply said, "We want to live in this community, too."

Angie Severe, 32, of Mount Zion made her point loudly when her turn came. "We need actions, not just words," she said.

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