

Better Times

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Committee Sees State School At Willowbrook

DREAMS don't always come true nor does every struggle bring concrete accomplishment.

Therefore the Welfare Council's Committee on Care of Mentally Defective Children Under Five got special pleasure from its tour Friday of the Willowbrook State School on Staten Island.

"We've worked at this thing constantly—kept after it and didn't let it drop," George Sylvester, chairman of the committee since its formation three years ago, commented. "At times we despaired of ever getting anything done. We realize now that a real effort was being made, and our persistence has paid off in the beginning of a program for the pitiful group of mentally defective young children and their families."

The group visited the ward for children under five, now caring for some 63 mentally defective children. These first children to be admitted were chosen on the basis of acute social need. Some emergency cases were cared for at Letchworth pending the opening of the new facility.

Dr. Frank B. Glasser, acting director of Willowbrook, and Dr. Walter Pamphilon, Deputy Commissioner of Mental Hygiene, showed the committee around the ward. The group was impressed by the clean and uncrowded physical facilities, by the special equipment and the amount of staff attention available to each child.

Most of the 63 children are bed patients, with varying types of deficiency. About 12 are up and running around, and for these an activity program is being planned, Dr. Glasser said. Although they do not have normal intellectual response, their need for affection and activity is as great as that of normal children.

All the children in the ward have improved physically, he added.

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Staff is now being trained to expand the facility, the committee was told, and new children will be brought in as rapidly as possible, although no concrete commitments were made as to the total number.

A check by the Welfare Council showed 330 children under five registered as needing care on October 20. Of these 52 have been accepted by Willowbrook.