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Health Hazard

Mental health programs are not generally understood on Staten Island... or anywhere else, for that matter.

Many people, for example, think that Willowbrook State School is for the mentally deranged. Instead, it's the state Mental Hygiene Department's institution for the mentally retarded. And there's a whole of a difference.

If there's a mental health problem, some people feel that the persons involved should either "work harder" or give up and enter an asylum.

There's remarkably little understanding of what may be a minor illness or a chronic condition of the mind.

A somewhat sounder approach was taken at a meeting sponsored the other night by the New York State Society for Mental Health. It was decided to form a committee to determine what mental health treatment facilities should be established on the Island.

If such facilities are founded, two purposes may be served:

First, an educational program may be tied in with it, so that a fuller understanding of the problem may be realized.

Second, those in need of help may receive it from experts in the field.

The value of a program of this kind has long been established.

Physicians know that an ill mind can be just as important as an ailing body.

Willowbrook School Gives First Amateur Program

Patients of the Willowbrook State School, a facility of the state Department of Mental Hygiene, last night presented the first amateur program of entertainment in the school's history.

A total of 36 patients, both children and adults, took part in the show in the school auditorium. Featured were renditions by barber shop quartets, dancing and vocal acts. Winners of special awards were selected by a panel of psychiatrists and members of the school's medical staff, headed by Dr. Harold H. Berman, director of the school.

The show was staged by the department of recreation, headed by John J. Siang and Miss Belle Kerner.