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## Willowbrook Parents Have Group To Aid Mentally Retarded Children

By ERWIN ENDRESS

There are hundreds of mentally retarded children in the Willowbrook State School. They must not be forgotten.

So say hundreds of the children's parents. They are banded together in the Benevolent Society for Retarded Children, an organization devoted to the welfare and help of mental defectives.

According to Irving Lesnick, Manhattan trade magazine executive who is president of the society, the group is dedicated to "lead children from despair into sunshine and hope."

"THE MOUNTING number of mentally deficient children being crowded into institutions," this society says, "has become a serious problem and is viewed with alarm by all concerned with mental hygiene.

"The stigma attached to this subject has allowed, even condoned, the lack of interest, the severe neglect and the failure to provide decent standards for housing, care, educational facilities and opportunity for rehabilitation.

"For committing the crime of being mentally defective, these children are unjustly doomed to a life

of failure, misery and confinement."

It is just such conditions, officials of the state Department of Mental Hygiene say, which is being overcome through the agencies and facilities of the department, and in overall plans being laid by the department, together with parents and relatives of mentally deficient children.

GOING EVEN further, Lesnick says, the society looks to a day when the state department, with the cooperation of the society, can institute a full-scale research program into the causes and possible cure of mental deficiency.

It is pointed out that experiments and some research undertaken in the Lechworth Village (N. Y.) School operated by the department, indicate brain operations are sometimes valuable in overcoming some types of mental deficiency. At present, a study of the blood of adults and children is being made.

Dr. Harold H. Berman, director of the Willowbrook school, said such experiments were conducted in the school last year, but that the results were "not conclusive."

In addition to this hope for furthering a research program, the society proposes, Lesnick says, to aid

in providing certain "comforts" and help at the Island school.

ALREADY, the society provides ice cream once each week for the children at the school. Tons of clothing and toys have been donated, and the society's most recent gift was a television set.

The society also provides candy and cookies, sound movies, and furthers a program of what it calls "recreation of educational value."

The work of the society, officials of the group say, has received the endorsement of high leaders in all churches, as well as mental hygiene officials and others.

At present, the society is conducting a drive for funds within the liquor industry. Lesnick is circulation manager of the Beverage Retailer Weekly, a trade publication.

Although the society's membership is made up, primarily, of parents of the children at Willowbrook, all persons interested in the welfare of the mentally retarded are eligible for membership in the group, Lesnick says.

His office is at 1819 Broadway, Manhattan.