



Visitors at Willowbrook State School take a serious view of things as they visit children in walkers in one of the wards at the big Department of Mental Hygiene facility. Miss Elizabeth Smith, right, senior social worker, is in charge of the group.



A group of Staten Island citizens, right, get a behind-the-fence view of children at play on the grounds of the Department of Mental Hygiene's Willowbrook State School, as part of an "Institute on Mental Deficiency" to acquaint the community with the school's work.

Willowbrook Seen Essential Health Facility

Clinical Demonstrations,
Children at Study, Play
Shown Civic Leaders

Willowbrook State School, the controversial institution which will expand as Halloran VA Hospital grows smaller, was revealed yesterday as one of Staten Island's "big" facilities, a facility which calls for community understanding.

More than 40 citizens, heads of various Island civic, welfare and city agencies, were told that the Willowbrook school comprises a "necessary part of the community health program."

The occasion was the school's first "Institute on Mental Deficiency," and was designed, according to Dr. Harold H. Berman, the school's director, to make known to Islanders the work, trials, problems and aspirations of the school.

View First-Hand

So thorough was this process of revelation that the Islanders saw actual clinical demonstrations of cases treated at Willowbrook. They saw, at first hand, the school's program in action, at class and at play.

They saw a group of mentally deficient children perform a square dance as evidence of Willowbrook's ability to take advantage of the capabilities of the mentally retarded, and to channel those capabilities into health recreation.

More than 1,000 mentally retarded persons are already being treated at the growing institution, they were told.

The program gave overall evidence that the school looks to a bright and growing future here, but little mention was made by Dr. Berman and other officials as to how expansion will actually come about.

Dr. Berman pointed out that clarification of the procedure is still awaited, although the recent

decision on the Willowbrook-Halloran situation, under which Halloran must release nearly half its present buildings for use by Willowbrook, assures the school's expansion program.

Meanwhile, various aspects of the school's training program, occupied with medical treatment of patients, were explained by Dr. Milton Jacobs, supervising psychiatrist.

Community problems relating to mental deficiency and to the school, itself, were told by Miss Elizabeth Smith, senior social worker at Willowbrook. She stressed that there is need for the community at large to understand the work of the school, and so help remove the "stigma attached to mental deficiency."

Ward is Home

Ward service at the school was described by Miss Florence Goodfield, chief supervising nurse, who emphasized that the ward, in effect, becomes the "child's home," and that the ward personnel take on "all the duties of any homemaker."

In vivid clinical demonstrations, various children were brought before the group to make clear the various types of problems, relating to the mentally retarded, which Willowbrook must deal with, now and in the future.

The square dance, a climax to the explanatory phase of the program, was presented under the supervision of Miss Sara Leigh Bertschi, assistant recreation instructor.

Following a dinner served in the school's main dining hall, the Islanders were taken on a tour of wards and the grounds.