grents of Retarded Child Are Hard Hit, Kiwanis Told

youngster who is retarded mentally closet." -was described sympathetically to of such children, and many of them members of the Kiwanis Club yes-live normal or near-normal lives; terday. But the picture that emerg-contrary to belief in some quarters. ed vividly from the talk, given by they are very gentle persons, she Miss Elizabeth M. Smith of the Willowbrook State School staff, was that of the troubled, even des- parents, who often go from doctor perate parents of such a child.

at the school, said that children, they such as several thousand under she said. care at the institution, are "forgot-

The "forgotten child" - the known quantity, a skeleton in the

There are hundreds of thousands

'Parents Seek Miracles'

The blow falls heaviest on the to doctor, clinic to clinic, "seeking Miss Smith, senior social worker a medical miracle," spending money cannot afford to spend,

Each family reacts differently, ten because people are scared to Miss Smith added, but fundamentalthink about them. They are an un-IV they had dreamed for their child e same dreams that other parents old dear — dreams wrecked "in one little minute" by an expert's diagnosis.

She painted a word picture for the Kiwanians meeting in the Meurot Club, of last hopes of parents' helplessness, of families broken up, of emotional disturbances, physical breakdowns, financial stress.

"People with mentally retarded youngsters feel at a deadend," said Miss Smith. "They should be norm-ally functioning, healthy, average people, holding jobs, keeping house. They can't possibly do this.'

The affliction "strikes whenever, wherever, and no one knows how,' she explained.

'Miserably Unhappy'

She told how parents come to Willowbrook State School with their children, "always miserably unhappy." The problem is most difficult, she went on, when there are other, normal children in the family.

"Our school represents a tremendously difficult task" she said. "You need a tremendous amount of courage to work in this field."

She praised highly the volunteer workers who help out at Willowbrook, on such matters as picnics, in supplying candy and cake and, as an example, in organizing a band. The children love music she added.

"We at the school have a fundamental philosophy," Miss Smith explained. "These children are human beings. They have certain rights and those rights cannot be trans-gressed. This (the school) is a world which they can understand and in which they are understood. We try to say to them: 'We are thinking, not in terms of what you are not, but in terms of what you can be!

"They just have a bit of limitation but you can love them in spite of that WE WAS SWAS

Advance, June 29, 1953

The story which people don't hear was told the other day. The stor trightens people, so that they shut the and ears to it. The story, that is, of n ly retarded children.

But this time it was told sympa to to

ally and courageously.

The speaker was Miss Elizabe Smith, senior social worker at the V brook State School. The place, the meeting of the Staten Island Kiwanis The children being discussed, of course were those who are cared for at the school The picture of these children is an un-

happy one, the more so because people shun the subject, "are scared to think bout them," as Miss Smith said.

But a phase of the problem which is not salgenerally understood is the plight of the parents. If the mentally-retarded youngster is "the forgotten child," its parents, too, are overlooked by the public. Yet they too. meed help. Help and understanding.

This is an unhappy story, no matter how one looks at it. But there were redeem ing features.

This: First, the picture, as Miss smith presented it, of devoted, tireless volunteer workers. Second, the picture, not put in words but clearly revealed, of dedicated persons who labor, with love, with tenderness, among these children daily.

At the risk of troubling this Willow brook worker's modesty, it may be said that those who suffer this affliction in their own families should take courage from the knowledge that there are persons like Miss Smith to care for their children. We are majority of those employed at Willowbrook

But "the forgotten child" needs to be some the remembered child. It is time for that ME YEAR & REOL CIMOME