

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 1954

Willowbrook Aid Explained To Kiwanians

The process of educating a retarded child was described to members of the Kiwanis Club of Richmond County last night at their weekly supper meeting in Celini's Restaurant, West Brighton.

The speaker was Arnold Cortazzo, an instructor at Willowbrook State School. In addition to explaining the various techniques and materials used, he exhibited handmade articles of ceramics, wood and cloth.

The speaker urged members of the club to take an interest in the activities at the school, explaining that an endeavor is being made for the school to become part of the Staten Island community.

"It is well for the community to know the work being done," the instructor told the group after he encouraged them to visit the school. He also asked those in business to think seriously of employing these people when they are finally sent out to become part of the community.

Two new members, Frank Maloney and Fred Grannis, were welcomed at the meeting.

George Boelger, president, presided. The group will meet again next Monday at 6:30 P.M.

Cops Seize 2 Who Fled State School

Two youths missing 24 hours from Willowbrook State School for Mental Defectives were caught by a pair of uniformed cops after a hill and dale chase through the woods in Castleton Corners late yesterday afternoon.

The patients, Robert Victoria, 22, and Frank Vinci, 18, were spotted near Fairview Cemetery by the cops, who had been among a search party scouring the area for them since early morning.

The youths bolted as the policemen, Charles Vroom and James Smith approached, and the chase was on. It ended almost a mile away, near Ocean terrace and Todt Hill road, where the two were nabbed.

They were brought to the New Dorp stationhouse before being returned to the institution by detectives.

Dr. Harold H. Berman, director of the school, said they had spent the night in the woods.

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Retarded Kids In S. I. Yearn For Carousel

By DICK OWEN

Has anyone a carousel to spare? If so, the children at Willowbrook State School in Staten Island would be glad to get it. This was disclosed yesterday at the annual luncheon of the Benevolent Society for Retarded Children, held at the Waldorf as a testimonial to Dr. Harold H. Berman, director of the school.

Famed during the war as Halloran Hospital, the school is host to 4,000 children, including 1,000 infants in cribs. And one of its major problems is to find kind-hearted persons who'll help buy the youngsters playground equipment, toys and other things needed to make life a little brighter.

Some Not Adjusted

Dr. Berman, a tremendous favorite with the children, explains that the retarded youngsters are certified to the hospital and cannot be released until their application has been reviewed by a parole committee. Those who show dangerous tendencies are not allowed out. The school still has adults who apparently cannot adjust to the outside world.

In the school at Willowbrook the children learn simple writing, reading and arithmetic. For those who cannot be taught these subjects, special training is given.

Boys are taught to run simple machines or are trained as hospital orderlies. Girls are taught domestic science so they may later take jobs in private homes. The girls clean and tidy rooms, polish furniture, vacuum rugs and learn to cook. All the furniture and kitchen gear needed for these courses is provided by the benevolent group.

One of the school's showpieces is the boy's band. Vincent Lombardi, musical director, aided by his brother Joseph, got a group of the boys together, and by painstaking symbolic teaching, taught them to read music.

Here again, money for instruments had to be provided by the benevolent group. Now the girls also have a string orchestra with instruments similarly donated.

Berman Optimistic

Dr. Berman, who admits his job isn't all a bed of roses, is an optimist about the future of retarded persons. He says the medical profession's hope lies in continuing research. As for the children under his care, he says they all respond to affection and need attention so they will develop confidence and a sense of security.

In addition to classroom training, the children are taught sports and swimming. Occupational therapy teaches them to make useful things such as mats and table covers which are sold.

William Heisler, president of the benevolent society, says there are hundreds of children who never see a visitor from one year to another. But his group makes sure there's a party in each building at least once a month and the children have movies, dances and roller skating.

The youngsters sleep in dormitories, about 50 in each, and are under guardianship 24 hours a day. Applicants for jobs are given intensive training before being hired. A staff of 20 doctors helps Berman watch over the children and there is a fine hospital.

But above all, Berman says, don't forget that carousel, it's needed by the youngsters.