

STATEN ISLAND, N. Y., FRIDAY, MARCH 27, 1964

13

WILLOWBROOK'S CITY OF 6,000

Skilled Personnel Not Easy to Get

By ALFRED G. HAGGERTY
LAST OF FIVE ARTICLES

The efficiency evident in the operation of Willowbrook State School may seem to preclude problems. Nothing could be further from the truth.

With 6,000 mentally retarded children and adults to be cared for and trained in facilities designed for considerably fewer patients, and shortages in personnel, Willowbrook represents a monumental undertaking.

"Nurses?" Dr. Frank B. Glasser, acting director says. "I have 56, but I could use 100 more. I can't get them. They're just not available."

"We couldn't get a physical therapist for the Rehabilitation Building. We had to go of it ahead with this work, so we

trained a nurse as a physical therapist. She does a good job."

A GREAT MAJORITY of the help at Willowbrook needs some training because they will be dealing with mental defectives. Even ward attendants, who have direct contact with the patients, must learn how to handle themselves.

In-training courses are set up to meet this problem. When a worker is hired, he's given several weeks training before being assigned to his regular job.

Other workers receive on-the-job training enabling them to take over more advanced tasks. Volunteer help is invaluable, but there's not nearly enough

mapped now to urge more Staten Islanders to donate time to the volunteer program at Willowbrook. There's a feeling that many persons have never volunteered because they've never been asked.

MRS. H.P. MOULTON, in charge of the volunteer program, points out that there is plenty of work not involving patient contact for those persons who would prefer it. She notes that a volunteer doing a non-patient job might very well be freeing someone who could work with patients.

There's also the type of volunteer work which provides non-essential extras for the patients. For instance, one man has painted several beautiful murals on the walls

In children's buildings. Personnel problems are not the only ones facing Dr. Glasser and his staff.

The problem of taking patients outdoors to reach dining halls was solved with the construction of dining facilities accessible to each building without going outdoors. Food is transported from one of the main kitchens through tunnels or enclosed passageways. The food is then kept hot in steam tables until it is served.

Money can also get to be a problem when the school wants to provide something a little extra for the patients' recreation.

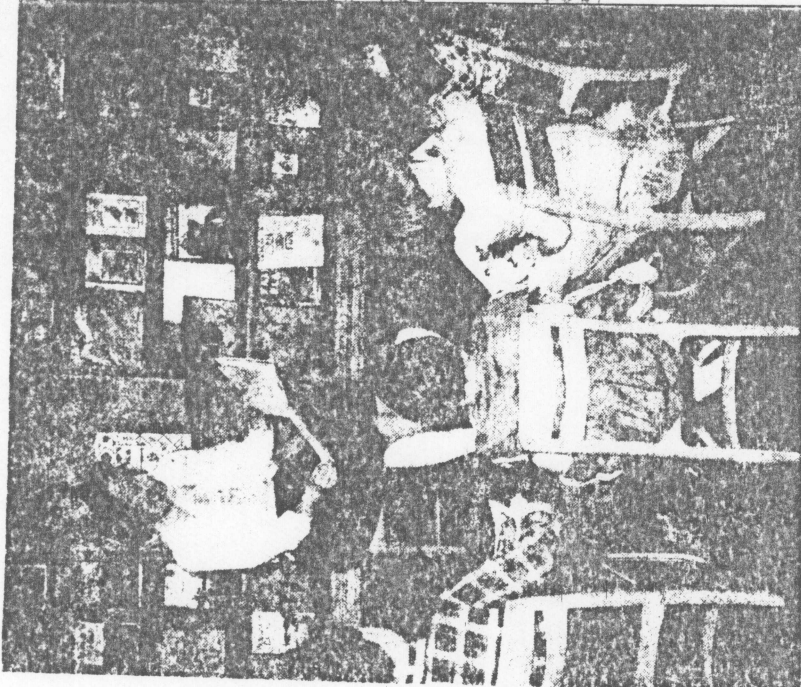
This stumbling block is eased considerably by the Willowbrook Chapter of Be-

nevolent Society for Retarded Children, a volunteer group which runs benefits to raise funds for the school.

"The state can't give me everything I want," Dr. Glasser said. "It has its own budgetary problems. But the society usually gives me what I ask for."

The acting director said the society had provided, among other things, the money for a merry-go-round, which the younger children are given rides on during the warm weather.

Dr. Glasser also credits such groups with helping improve the public attitude toward mental retardation and to spur the passage of legislation which has provided more funds for care and research.



VOLUNTEER HELP — A volunteer worker recovers a group of children at Willowbrook State School. Volunteer help at the school is invaluable, but there's not nearly enough of it.