



(NEWS foto by Jim Romano)

Mrs. Claire Manley plays Santa Claus as youngsters scramble for their presents.

600 Willowbrook Kids Enjoy a Xmas in July

By FRANK McKEOWN

Christmas came to the Willowbrook State School Wednesday and, despite the lack of snow and sleigh bells, the kids had a ball.

A full-scale party, complete with Santa Claus, a Christmas tree, presents, clowns and three rock 'n' roll groups, brightened the day for nearly 600 retarded children at the institution.

The affair has been arranged each year by a group known as Hospital Helping Hands International in cooperation with the Willowbrook Chapter of the Benevolent Society for Retarded Children.

Mrs. Claire Manley of the Bronx, founder of the New York chapter of Hospital Helping Hands, played Santa Claus despite a cast on her leg. She broke it several weeks ago.

Mrs. Manley, the mother of two normal children, said she began bringing Christmas in July to the school's patients four years ago because the children "needed it."

"We also go to other hospitals about six to eight times a month," Mrs. Manley said, "to help bring some joy to their lives. In addition to the Christmas party, we also are having a luau Aug. 9 in Bronx State School, where we will all dress Hawaiian. Other places we visit are Kings County Hospital, Manhattan State, Beth Abraham and the Bronx Home for the Blind."

Helped by Chicagoan

Mrs. Manley organized Hospital Helping Hands in 1960 and since then it has set up branches in Puerto Rico and Chicago.

"W. Clement Stone of Chicago, a wealthy insurance man, more or less pays the bills to the groups," she said. "And the members of the Chicago group are all employes of his Combined Insurance Co. of America."

Mrs. Shirley Epstein of Jamaica, Queens, president of the Willowbrook chapter of the Benevolent Society for Retarded Children, which helped sponsor the party, knows what they mean to the children. She had a child in Willowbrook herself.

Although the children are not normal, they can still enjoy the party and appreciate the extra lollipops, ice cream and soft drinks that are passed out, Mrs. Epstein said. "And they remember you," she added.

Mrs. Anne Barsky of Brooklyn, entertainment committee chairman, has a child in the school and the party gives her an extra chance to visit him. But even-

Parks Dept. Dance Series

The fourth of the Parks department's summer dances will be held Aug. 2 at 8:30 P.M. at the promenade in front of the bath house at Iroquois St. in Midland Beach. The dances are co-sponsored by Con Edison.

though the party adds to their lives, Mrs. Barsky says, what they really need are pool tables, ping pong tables and the like to keep the children occupied.

Those who would like to help them out, Mrs. Barsky said, should send donations to the Benevolent Society at 450 Seventh Ave., New York City.