



Mrs. Elizabeth Hammond, left, and members of Maj. Philip Lehman Auxiliary, Jewish War Veterans, an off-Island group, sing along with patients at Willowbrook State School. S.I. Advance Photos by John Schneider

Volunteers Recruited for Willowbrook

By SANDRA FREED

At Willowbrook State School there are 140 volunteer workers. At least 1,000 are needed, or maybe even 2,000!

"After all, there are 6,000 patients to be serviced. We need all the help we can get." Thus Mrs. Elizabeth Hammond, supervisor of volunteers, summed up her problem and her goal.

Recruiting that many men and women to work long hours with no pay may seem a staggering task, but Mrs. Hammond is optimistic.

When she became volunteer supervisor one year ago, there were two workers in the program.

Wife of Willowbrook's director, Dr. Jack Hammond, she is a veteran recruiter. Prior to coming to the Island, she

successfully organized volunteer programs at two other state schools for the mentally retarded.

IF YOU CAN play billiards or checkers, teach mending or ceramics, lead group singing or a rhythm band, you could be a volunteer, Mrs. Hammond explained.

If you can supervise youngsters at play or read aloud, you could be a volunteer, she went on.

"A volunteer worker must be sympathetic, but not lenient, patient and able to maintain discipline," the recruiter added.

"The volunteer must find what is there to develop and develop it, as much as we feel like crying."

And she has found most people measure up. She noted in

the 15 years she has worked with volunteers, she dismissed only one.

PROSPECTIVE workers unfamiliar with the faces and ways of the mentally retarded are sometimes overwhelmed with pity and disbelief.

For this reason the volunteer supervisor screens the workers by taking them on a tour of the institution before giving them an assignment.

In specialized areas, volunteers are needed for speech therapy, to teach Braille, teach brain-damaged children, organize Scout troops and develop a library for patients.

For the 75 per cent of the patients who never had a visitor, Mrs. Hammond has instituted an "adopt-a-patient" program. A volunteer regularly visits a certain patient,

with a goal of taking the patient home for a day.

WOULD-BE workers who cannot come to the institution can collect or make an infinite number of items at home. Lists of these items can be obtained by writing Mrs. Hammond at the school.

Elizabeth Hammond was a psychiatric nurse when she met her husband. She organized her first group of volunteers at Willard State Hospital, while her husband was a supervising psychiatrist there. When he became assistant director of Rome State School, she began a volunteer service group for that institution.

Within five years, 1,000 men and women were participating in the program which included teaching services and a baseball team which participated in an inter-city league.