

Willowbrook Given U.S. Grant to Train Retarded

By JACK MALLON

At a dinner honoring him for his dedication and perseverance in improving conditions at the Willowbrook State School, Dr. Jack Hammond, director of the school, announced that a \$97,000 federal grant has been awarded to the Staten Island institution for intensive training and education of the retarded.

The 1,600 parents and School gathered at the annual Benevolent Society dinner at the Hotel Commodore at the Hotel Commodore last week were also told of a \$25,000 gift from the Society which will be used to build a covered picnic area at the 600 acre school.

"We are well on our way toward unraveling our problem. But this doesn't mean that our task is done or that we are becoming complacent," Dr. Hammond said.

Last year public attention was riveted on the Staten Island institution after Senator Robert F. Kennedy sharply criticized the "deplorable" conditions in the state supported institutions for the retarded.

Supported Charges

The Benevolent Society, headed by Mrs. Shirley Epstein and consisting of the parents of the retarded at Willowbrook, supported the Senator's charges but rallied behind their director.

The 51-year old director was given a medallion by the Society for fighting to rectify the problems in the institution since he took over in August of 1964.

A Staten Island grand jury investigated charges of brutality and a number of suspicious deaths after the exposures in the press. Its findings haven't been released yet.

Mrs. Epstein also informed the dinner guests of two important bills that were passed in the state Legislature this year as a result of the disclosures.

Sen. William Conklin (R-Bklyn), introduced legislation which mandates a formal educa-



Children entering the Willowbrook State School in Staten Island.

tion for retarded children between the ages of 5 and 21 in state institutions. It was signed by the Governor earlier this month.

The second bill, also introduced by Sen. Conklin, removes the legal requirement for parents to continue reimbursing the state for maintenance in these institutions once the patient has reached the age of 21.

Mrs. Epstein, in her speech entitled "Their New Hope," said that the public is now aware of the problems of overcrowding in the institutions for the retarded.

She appealed to the guests to continue writing to their local legislators to demand greater appropriations to alleviate the remaining problems.

Dr. Alan H. Miller, the newly

appointed Commissioner of Mental Hygiene, promised the parents that he would do everything possible to improve conditions in the seven state schools caring for approximately 26,000 patients.