

Advance

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Troop 58 members aid recruits at Willowbrook

By PETER REICH

The special handshake, the salute and the language of scouting are becoming an important part of life at Willowbrook State School where 30 young boys are working toward their tenderfoot badges as Boy Scouts.

"It is a regular Boy Scout program. We're not sparing the boys, because they must learn to live like normal people," said Mrs. Jack Hammond, director of Volunteer Services at the hospital. She said the boys, despite generally low IQs, are "trainable and educable, and all are benefiting and learning."

The program began late in November of last year, after the Staten Island Rotary club agreed to sponsor the group, that ranges in age from 12 to 17.

Most of the new, enthusiastic

scouts have completed requirements for the tenderfoot badge with the help of scouts from Troop 58 at St. Rita's Church, Meiers Corners.

"It's a two-way street," said Mrs. Hammond, commenting on the relationship between the Scouts, "because working together gives the boys from St. Rita's credits for community service. It is also exposing our boys to fellows in the community, so they're both learning and it's very good."

Boy Scout oaths, signals, handclasps, songs and knots are some of the activities that the two groups of Scouts go through in regular Thursday night meetings.

Working on a one-to-one basis, the two troops recently spent a field day at Pouch Camp, complete with council fires, stalking, tracking and singing. Plans are in the works

for an overnight trip to Alpine Camp, in New Jersey, later in the spring.

Many of the Willowbrook Scouts now have uniforms or parts of uniforms as a result of contributions prompted in part by mention in the Advance.

Mrs. Hammond, wife of the director of Willowbrook, said there are at least 500 boys out of the 5,500 patients in the school who would benefit from the scouting experience.

"We're attempting to start a Girl Scout troop too," she said "and we have a sponsor, but we need leaders."

"Responsible leadership," said Mrs. Hammond would bring the advantages of scouting to many children at the school, but without leaders there can be no troops. "We take all the help we can get," she said.



Troop 58 scouts James McCallion, left, and Robert Troiano do the dishes the old fashioned way after a meal at Pouch Camp.