

Willowbrook pupil's art work wins national recognition



Bruce Shaw, a pupil at the Willowbrook State School, puts a few last-minute touches on one of his sketches.

S.I. Advance Photos by Tony Caranante



Bruce's rendition of Frosty which was second-place winner in a national contest sponsored by the Associations for Retarded Children.

By SALLY PLUNKET

What 16-year-old wouldn't be thrilled to win second place in a national art contest? And for Bruce Shaw, the recognition of his artistic talent was especially significant.

Bruce is classified as mentally retarded and has been a pupil at the Willowbrook State School for the past five years.

Life for Bruce never has been easy. His parents are deceased and his only living relative — an elderly aunt — is unable to visit him.

And yet, Bruce's future is optimistic!

Upon his entrance, he was described by Mrs. Jack Hammond, director of Willowbrook's volunteer service, as "quiet and withdrawn." Today, his supervisors and teachers rave that he's "alert," "a delight" and "very well-behaved."

He and 37 other boys now live in the newly organized

Training Adults for Community Living ward.

Having been judged as eligible for community placement, they presently are in the process of painting and decorating their new quarters.

"I like the new program a lot," said the soft-spoken Bruce enthusiastically. "They let us make our own decisions."

Bruce first became interested in art during classes that he attended while living at another institution. "I first traced to get the idea," explained Bruce. "Then I began to copy pictures in comic books and magazines," continued the youth, as he held up a pencil sketch that he had done of the Road Runner.

"Finally, I started to look out the window for inspiration," said Bruce. "I draw in pencil and then go over it in crayons," he continued.

Bruce's prize-winning entry in the National Associations for Retarded Chil-

dren's contest was his first attempt with paints. In describing his illustration, he said, "I didn't know that it was for a contest. I just did what I felt like."

ALL THE HOLIDAYS

When questioned about the heart and shamrock on either side of the blue-muffled snowman, he explained, "I wanted to put all the holidays together. If the paper had been bigger, I would have used more of them."

Bruce's drawing now adorns the face of one of the Christmas cards being sold by the Associations for Retarded Children. "Sales," noted Bruce proudly, "are going well."

Besides art work, Bruce enjoys swimming, baseball where he plays left field shortstop and baseball where he is a guard. "Our team was 10 and 0 for the season," he said, flashing a gigantic grin.

He will begin working from 9 to 5 in Manhattan

next month under the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

"I think that I'd enjoy working in electronics," said the handsome teen-ager. "But what I'd really love," added Bruce, "is a job drawing cartoons or doing illustrations," he added.

Bruce said of himself, "I was real hung up when I came here and Willowbrook has helped me a lot. I can't think of anything bad about the place."

And of Bruce, Mrs. Hammond says, "we have great confidence in him. In his five years with us, he has made tremendous improvement."