OLDER VOLUNTEERS SERVE RETARDED

Five years ago 22 retired persons from Staten Island, *New York*, arrived at Willowbrook State School to begin work as volunteers. They were the first participants in SERVE (Serve and Enrich Retirement by Volunteer Experience). Today there are 564 active SERVE volunteers working at 24 agencies throughout Staten Island. The largest contingent - 208 - works at Willowbrook.

Some of the volunteers give direct one-to-one service; others provide equally needed indirect service working along side residents in the sewing room, the occupational therapy shops, the warehouse and the supply room.

SERVE volunteers, most of whom are in their 70's, have provided Willowbrook with many dividends in addition to their service. They are goodwill ambassadors to the community, interpreting the services of the institution. They also are effective recruiters, not only of new volunteers, but also of needed materials - clothing, toys, items for use in the occupational shops, etc. They have stimulated other volunteer activities for the benefit of Willowbrook in churches and housing projects.

The weekly volunteer training meetings are the heart of the program. Here volunteers trade thoughts and opinions, make suggestions, voice complaints and compliments and have an opportunity to learn more about mental retardation as well as new treatment techniques from the institution's professional staff.

SERVE is believed to be the largest program for older volunteers in the country. Initially funded through a federal research and demonstration grant, it has led to the establishment of other SERVE programs in New York State and been the model for the National Retired Senior Volunteer Program.

For additional information contact: *Mrs. Elizabeth Hammond, Coordinator of Volunteer Services, Willowbrook State School, 2760 Victory Boulevard, Staten Island, New York.*