

It's your opinion

Friday, November 26, 1971

Willowbrook can be helped

Your newspaper is to be commended for the articles written about the shocking conditions at Willowbrook.

Although it is factual that most institutions are understaffed and operating in the red, it is heartbreaking to know that the unfortunate persons at Willowbrook, ill not by choice, are being treated worse than if they had committed a heinous crime.

Because I am employed as a director of volunteers at an institution in the city, I am very much touched by the plight of residents at Willowbrook.

Staten Island always has been and I am certain still is a community-minded borough. There is no reason not to appeal to the community for help such as:

- Launch a clothing campaign (washed and ironed) through the churches and synagogues. So many persons have children who simply outgrow clothing and affluent families change clothing each season.

- I am aware of the fact that SERVE has volunteer senior citizens visiting Willowbrook. Why not appeal to teen-agers and college students to become volunteers via the school

system, to begin a program of recreation for Willowbrook residents—simplified games and musical programs?

- Appeal to philanthropic organizations to make Willowbrook a 'pet' project — run a monthly birthday party (donations of cake and juice and entertainment suffice) — take a group on a summer picnic — take a group on a trip to the Staten Island Zoo.

- Recruit volunteers to help feed and dress residents from senior community centers and ladies' groups . . . civic groups . . . PTAs.

Persons in institutions are so in need of tender loving care and someone who cares to give a few hours but once a week will have a sense of well-being because there is so much gratification in seeing a sad face smile, have a hand warmly hold yours as if to say "Thank you."

"There but for the grace of God go I" — for which one of us can be certain that although we may have borne healthy, normal children that our children and theirs to come will not be afflicted?

Your paper with its wide circulation in Staten Island can publicize such a program. My faith in people is strong . . . they will reach out to help.

MRS. ALBERT RACHMAN,
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Bay Terrace

Thursday, December 2, 1971

Willowbrook still does well

I don't know how to begin. I have been reading about Willowbrook and I like to tell you that I am a volunteer in SERVE there and they are short of help. I go Mondays to care for babies in Ward 28 and sometimes I have to dress the child to take her out in a wheel chair. Then I take her back and help the nurses to feed them. I also go Wednesdays and dance with the boys and girls. Dr. Hammond is the right man for his job.

I had a son in Letchworth Village for 43 years. When I went to Willowbrook as a volunteer I had my son transferred to Willowbrook two years ago. He is in Building 9 and I am

very happy. He does things here that he never did there. The care they have here is remarkable. When I went to Building 26-28 I thought it looked like Disneyland. It is beautiful. I hope they will do something to get more help.

MRS. ANNA DiGIOVANNI,
13 Savin Ct.,
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School must get its fair share

We read your articles about Willowbrook, and found them to be very disgusting. We work with these children and we know what it's like. We know that it is hard to work with them unless supplied with enough money and materials. We're not kicking Willowbrook, but the people who are taking money away from the place.

If there was enough money then these children would have a chance to be somebody. Once they are taken care of the right way when they are small, then when they are older they won't be recognized as "The Untouchables."

As a solution for this crisis we think that the government should spend as much time and thought on these children as they do to buying Yankee Stadium. There is sufficient money to support the state institutions and we feel that Gov. Rockefeller should see to it that Willowbrook State School should get it's fair share.

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