

Volunteer sees a brighter side

Mrs. Florence E. Brytcuk, a volunteer at Willowbrook State School the past eight years, visits Building 11 once a week. The following letter to the Advance, she said, was prompted by the news coverage, most of it critical.

By MRS. FLORENCE E. BRYTCUK

I get so excited talking about Willowbrook State School and all the horrible things I read in

the papers and hear on television. I was a volunteer there two years before Dr. (Jack) Hammond became director.

Each Wednesday I would take about 22 boys ranging from 8 to 12 years old to the playground, where we would have a picnic. Sometimes, I would get permission on a Sunday afternoon to take two little boys to dinner and the zoo or a ferry ride.

They looked forward to me coming, since it was a break in their routine.

Now on Thursday evenings, I go to one of the buildings and bring candy and play records. They look forward to seeing me; I look forward to seeing them, too.

They tell me they love me. They hug and kiss the attendants. They are so starved for love that if they can't get it from their own family they will get it from anyone who cares to visit them.

A very cute and sensible girl about 21 years old suggested I

take her out on Sunday. I found out she never has visitors — not even her mother. But her mother has refused to let anyone else take her out. So that was that.

I met a little boy when he was 8 years old but so small he looked like 5. With Dr. Hammond's permission I started taking him out and I still do. He's just turning 16 and dreams of getting out and becoming a bus driver. Now they are teaching him music, and he will play in their wonderful band.

Once I suggested to Mrs. Hammond that the more normal children be placed in the same ward, since they like to look at magazines and play with toys.

She told me they had hoped to do that, but they would have to build more buildings and didn't have the money. They want to do so much for the children, but without money their hands are tied.

Dr. and Mrs. Hammond are the two most lovely people I have ever met. They have been wonderful to me. I can make any suggestions, and they are always willing to listen.

All of the attendants I have met have always been very nice to me and act as if they love these little people. They all seem very happy there.

The ladies (adult patients) I visit Thursday night spend all day making rugs. They do beautiful work and are very proud of it.

Every ward I ever went in was always spotless, no matter what time I was there. As for food, my ladies are all getting fat.

Now everything would be just

wonderful for these people if only their families would give them a little love and attention. They mean more to these patients than anyone else.

They show me pictures of different members of their family and are so proud of them. Usually, all they have are pictures. Some don't know if they have a family. They wonder if they are all dead.

I always say they have everything at Willowbrook. But the best medicine of all is the love from some dear member of their family. That would do wonders for them.

I know, for I have been like one of them for many years and have had personal contact with them. The only horrible thing is the fact that some parents let them get into this condition by neglecting their babies from birth.

God forgive them.