

Willowbrook aid group formed

By BRIAN LALINE

The Willowbrook Volunteer Advisory Council, an organization comprised of representatives from various community organizations throughout Staten Island, met in Willowbrook State School last night to outline the workings and define the goals of the council.

Although in existence since June, the group was "formalized" at last night's meeting with the presentation of a constitution and bylaws to the membership.

According to Mrs. Jerome Isaacs, a council member and representative from the Benovolent Society for Retarded Children, the goal of the group is to increase outside participation in the Willowbrook community.

"Our goal is to increase volunteerism at Willowbrook," she said. "We want to educate the public as to what a retarded person is and to emphasize to them that the retarded need love."

Mrs. Isaacs explained that the basic aim of the council itself is to gather together community leaders to determine ways of encouraging people to participate as volunteers and to set up programs for the children to participate in.

"We desperately need volunteers," she stressed, however. "Right now there is a trip set up for 20 residents

in wheelchairs to go to Pete's Restaurant on Clove Rd. Sunday, but we have no volunteers to help us. We need at least 15 people to assist and feed the residents," she went on.

"This trip is only one small part of the program," Mrs. Isaacs said. "We are looking into many areas for volunteer participation."

"If a person does not feel qualified to work with the children, there are many other things he can do," she said. "Melvin Hicks, the coordinator of the volunteer program, is the only one working in that office. He simply cannot fulfill all the requirements of the job."

It is not in the state's guidelines to provide money for the office, according to Mrs. Isaacs.

"We are going to try and work through the Department of Mental Hygiene for more staff," she said, "but we're not

very optimistic. Volunteers could be a great help here."

Hicks also explained a number of activities and programs that volunteers could work in.

"There is a very bad need for volunteers to work on a one-to-one basis with the very active male and female residents," he said. "There are also special needs in the education program — speech therapy, physical therapy, occupational and recreational therapy, for example."

"Volunteers need no special training for these programs," Hicks explained. "They would be trained by our therapists."

"We also want to set up special recreational programs," Mrs. Isaacs added. "Cub Scout troops, field days, day camps, and other summer programs." "The summer presents a special problem to us," she

continued. "There is no school and the residents have nothing to do."

Although Mrs. Isaacs is grateful for the participation the council has already received, she is rather dismayed at the amount of community participation that is being shown.

"I'm appalled," she said. "With all that's been going on at Willowbrook, the participation has been very poor. We've contacted 60 organizations on the Island and there were only seven people at our meeting."

"Our next meeting is Jan. 10 at 8 p.m. All we hope is that the organizations that we have contacted respond in some way. They need only donate a small amount of time."

"We just want to help the residents learn some skills and live an everyday kind of life," she said.