

Foreign profs see SERVE in action

Five professors from Colombia, South America, who are attending Columbia University's School of Social Work on an exchange program, visited the Staten Island branch of SERVE (Serve and Enrich Retirement by Volunteer Experience) yesterday.

The tour started out in the Cassidy-Coles Senior Center in New Brighton for Alcira Caicedo and Martha Naranjo of La Javeriana University, Bogota; Edgar Ramirez of Santander University in Bucaramanga; Emely deLeal of La Salle University, Bogota, and Ana Maria Ulloa of the National University in Bogota.

The visitors saw arts and crafts rooms, a book restoration project, kitchen, gameroom and television parlor. They were then whisked away to Willowbrook State School to see volunteers in action.

There they saw nurseries and classrooms and witnessed a lunchtime feeding program for babies. A question and answer period followed lunch at Willowbrook, and the group later returned to the center to see apartments and discuss the senior citizens' self-government system there.

Martha Naranjo, the only one of the group who spoke English, noted that in their country there's nothing in the way of an elderly volunteer service. All of the professors seemed impressed with SERVE'S activities and success.

During the question and answer period, the professors carefully questioned the volunteers on why they chose to work in such a program, through an interpreter. One of them, who has more than 2,000 hours in his credit, said it was important to help someone who can't help himself and illustrated his answer with examples of progress he's made with several children.