

An Aspect of Willowbrook Life



News photos by Jim Romano

Dr. Stan Slawinski, chief of services at Willowbrook, and Mrs. Connie Johannsen, a team leader, discuss one of the programs in photo at left. Diane Buglioli, a recreation therapist, helps children enjoy tumbling (above).

By MARY ENGELS

Such leisure pursuits as horseback riding, bowling or joining the Girl Scouts are taken for granted by so many people that few stop to consider that there are those who never get a chance to enjoy those activities.

A group of dedicated staff workers at Willowbrook State School on Staten Island is making sure that the mentally retarded residents at the school do not miss out on such fun. The workers, staff members in Building 21, are volunteering their own time to assure that the residents experience the joy of riding a horse learning to bowl or joining the Girl Scout movement.

Dr. Stan Slawinski, chief of services at Willowbrook, said, "I've never seen such dedication as these women have here. It's due to the staff input that the residents are getting a slice of life as it is out there in the community."

Slawinski added, "They've started a series of special programs during the

course of the year and the goal is to make the residents prepared to go out in the community when they leave Willowbrook and be useful, productive citizens."

The program, Slawinski feels, will help residents adjust to the recreational facilities in communities that do not make special provisions for the retarded.

Slawinski credits two women with playing leading roles in starting the program. They are Diane Buglioli and Genevieve Benoit, both residents of New Dorp and recreation therapists at Willowbrook.

One of the projects FARM (Familiarization with Animals for Recreation and Motivation) was begun last summer because "many of the residents had little or no contact with animals of any kind," said Ms. Buglioli.

"They also had a limited concept of the ways in which animals may serve man. So we designed the program in order to expose them to animals of all kinds and to teach them to differentiate between situations which require re-

actions of fear and those that do not."

Progress in the program can be measured by the fact that there are residents at Willowbrook enjoying horseback riding who had never seen a horse a few months ago.

"With FARM," noted Ms. Benoit, "we hope to teach them to care for animals and enjoy them."

Another program which has proved successful at the school is Operation WOW (Willowbrook Outside Workshop).

"This one shows the residents what playgrounds are like, how they can function properly in this type of setting," said Ms. Buglioli. "Also, as part of the program we've begun to teach the girls how to bowl at one of the local facilities. They've responded well and are very excited about the new skills."

"The final segment of WOW involves local trips to movie theaters and shows, all part of a cultural education."

They Need Transportation

The cultural program is hampered by a lack of transportation, said Ms. Buglioli. She added, "If we could get

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