

Menu follow-through is aim of dietitian at Willowbrook

By SUSAN FRY

Computer print-outs, 10,000 meals a day and a staff of over 200 are three of the most pressing responsibilities faced each day by Mrs. Lois Mosely in the kitchens of Willowbrook Developmental Center.

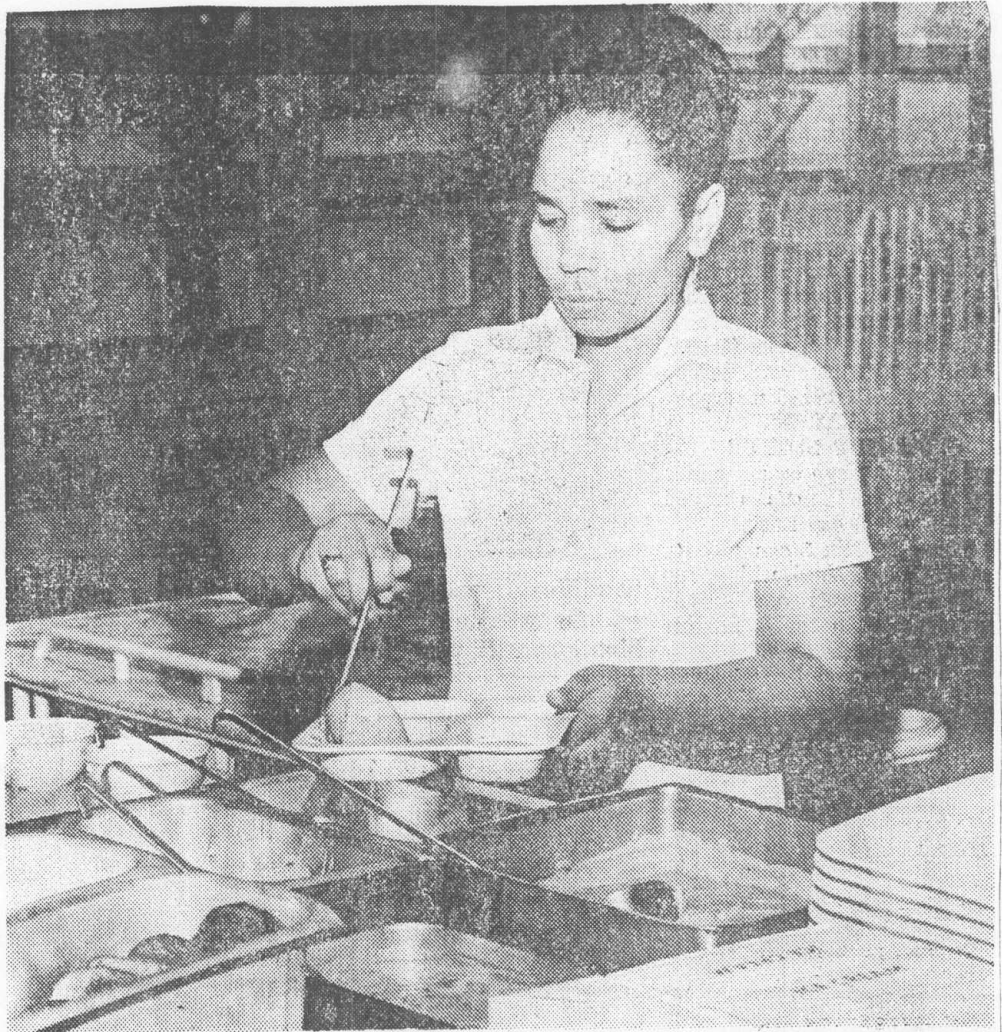
Outspoken, yet shy, very sensitive and loyal to the 3,345 residents whose appetites and health are her calling, Mrs. Mosely as supervising dietitian, is the boss of the food service department. She is presently doing the job of three since her two immediate superiors have been absent on sick leave and no substitutes have been brought in to help her.

Not only does she compose menus from computer print-outs sent from Albany, for each meal — which includes assigning special diets to many residents — but she also must order most of the food from Albany and purchase the rest from local merchants and see to it that her staff of three assistant dietitians, 75 cooks and kitchen helpers and 156 food service workers do their jobs . . . and do them well, she insists.

Asked why substitutes have not been hired, she shrugged her shoulders and answered, "Who knows?"

"This kind of department always suffers when an institution tries to make ends meet. We're the lowest things on the totem pole."

She told how her staff is underpaid, relative, she believes, to similar lines in other departments on civil service rolls. Food service workers are hired on a "grade 4" level in which the minimum annual salary is \$6,148, and regardless of the number of years worked, can only achieve "grade 7" status.



Mrs. Frances Wilkerson, a dining room attendant at Willowbrook Developmental Center, portions out lunch dishes according to a resident's prescribed diet. This job will be part of a food distribution program to be implemented at the center.

S.I. Advance Photos by Robert Parsons

Page 1 of 2 pages



Mrs. Florence Dombi serves a solid food lunch to David, center, as she did to Mike, right. Barry, left, however, has a different diet of soft foods. Willowbrook residents eat foods based on doctor's orders.

The minimum annual salary for that level is \$7,204, although it is possible to make a maximum, with extra longevity, of \$9,196.

On the other hand, Mrs. Mosely explained, "In other departments, you can enter right off the street at grade 7 and within two years, work up to grade 9," where the minimum salary is \$8,051 and, with extra longevity, the maximum is \$10,223.

"You can't expect anyone to stay in this department when there are no incentives," she said, so the insubstantial pay is responsible for much of the large turnover on her staff.

Because she can't keep her staff together to adequately train them, Mrs. Mosely is experiencing some difficulty in implementing a new food distribution program.

Presently, the ward attendants dole out the food to each resident, many times sacrificing nutrients essential to the person's diet because the resident likes one dish better than another, she claims.

"They feel they are the only ones qualified to handle the residents, but we feel we're the ones qualified to handle nutrition and dietary problems.

"The two just can't be separated and we want to, at least, see that trays are properly portioned and prepared. When the program is under way, there will be four food service attendants to accompany the food carts into the wards and do just that," Mrs. Mosely contends.

But even with all the problems, Mrs. Mosely has always been pleased with the quality of food prepared in her kitchens. In fact, she claims that there have been very few complaints from either the residents or attendants and other Willowbrook staff (who eat the same food) in her 15 years on the job.

She says that food is an important therapy for the residents because "they find contentment in it. Food is their life. You can see it at mealtime."

So each day, because she "loves children" (she has six of her own) and she "feels like I'm doing some good," Mrs. Mosely, who will start a master's degree program in education at Richmond College in the fall, directs her staff in preparing three meals a day — numerous special diets included — in one of Willowbrook's largest and certainly most important departments.

*Page 2 of
2 pages*