

Willowbrook palsy team helps handicapped to cope at home



Ronnie, a Down's syndrome child, will have to ask for something rather than just point and have it handed to him, as a result of speech evaluation testing by the United Cerebral Palsy mini-team working out of Willowbrook Developmental Center.

S.I. Advance Photo by Robert Parsons

By ELAINE HESS

And what will tomorrow bring for the Staten Island handicapped at home?

A 40-year-old cerebral palsied man will eat by himself and no longer be fed like a child by his parents.

He is learning with the help of a mini-team of experts sponsored by United Cerebral Palsy of New York State working out of Willowbrook Developmental Center (formerly the State School) in a new program of focusing one day a week on handicapped at home.

Vincent Montalbano, program community coordinator, explained that in this field ignorance is definitely not bliss. He said the team wants to reach the physically disabled and the mentally retarded at home who may not know their lives can be improved.

The parents of the cerebral palsied son never thought their son could be helped with his eating. "All these years they fed him dutifully," remarked Montalbano.

The UFC team will continue working four days a week in the Willowbrook wards. On Thursdays it wants to penetrate

the Island and break down some barriers for those who are unaware they can be helped.

IMPROVEMENT POSSIBLE

Miss Karen Christensen, overall program coordinator, claims that the days of those "stuck in a wheelchair" or "put away somewhere in the corner" are over. Disabled lives can be improved, she contends, through evaluation and recommendation by the multi-disciplinary UFC team composed of speech and occupational therapists, social workers, registered nurses and others.

Other UCF mini-teams in other boroughs are to start in the fall. The Willowbrook team has two "firsts" to its credit: the first private agency team to work in a government institution and, second, the first to go beyond the wards into the community living rooms and bedrooms while simultaneously working at the institution.

But give pioneers a whole new forest and they want to knock down still more trees. Miss Christensen wants the Island to have a centrally located unit which all the handicapped at home can attend regularly for ongoing