

Editorial page

It's your opinion

Retarded need normal lives

I am writing this letter in the hope of correcting some misconceptions that appeared in your editorial Nov. 2, about the suit against the Willowbrook Development Center. Your use of the words "mentally deficient" was in poor taste. The correct phrase is "mentally retarded." The wording you chose is unnecessarily stigmatizing and assumes that these people are devalued because they are different. Mentally retarded is a description of one facet of a person and is universally accepted.

There is no need for "an entirely new study of what's best for the retarded." Dr. Blatt, and many other experts in the field could tell you that "normalization" is what is needed. It has been proven that mentally retarded people living in residential homes, foster homes, at home, or even on their own, when proper supportive facilities are provided, can function up to their maximum potential as productive and self-sufficient human beings. This type of service system can be provided at half the cost it now takes to maintain a person at Willowbrook, which devalues and dehumanizes everyone in it.

It is necessary for the public to know that such services can be provided here, and are being provided now in other states and other countries with great success.

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