

Nursing home director says we won't accept mental patients

By MARC LEVINSON

The administrator of the New Brighton Nursing Home told the Parent-Teacher Association of nearby PS 40 last night he was unaware that up to half the beds in the nursing home can be occupied by patients released by state mental institutions.

But Joshua Levy, director of the partially completed facility, promised the PTA that an influx of released mental hospital patients "certainly wouldn't happen under my administration.

"I think the main concern here is that we'll take in a lot of young people who are mental patients. That is not our intention," Levy said.

The director was responding to remarks by Ernst Bendix, chairman of the West Brighton Community Council and a member of Community Board 2. Bendix also stated that, according to state law, all the beds in a domiciliary care facility may be occupied by released mental hospital patients. Such a facility, planned to contain more than 420 beds, is part of the New Brighton Nursing Home complex.

In response, Levy, a former rabbi, cited a Biblical proverb that one learns from teachers and from friends, but most of all from pupils.

He said that, to the best of his knowledge, the nursing home's owners, whom he identified only as Mr. Paley, Mr. Handler and Mr. Lieber, have not approached the state Department of Mental Hygiene concerning referral of discharged mental patients.

"The average age of patients in a home like this is 75 or 80. You might have one or two who are much younger. That's not the goal, that's not the purpose," he added.

The New Brighton Nursing Home complex consists of two buildings, one containing both nursing and health-related beds and the other, still under construction at 110 Henderson Ave., to be the domiciliary care facility. The latter building is owned by Solomon Heisler, who also owns the Vanderbilt Nursing Home in Clifton.

The nursing home itself contains 80 nursing beds and 220 health-related beds, Levy said. He said the nursing beds were for residents who require intensive medical care, while occupants of the health-related beds "must not require intensive nursing care but may require some." Such patients must be ambulatory or capable of wheeling themselves in wheel chairs, he added.

The facility, which has been open about a month, presently has about 30 nursing patients and 40 health-related patients.

When the domiciliary care facility is completed, Levy explained, it will house senior citizens who currently live alone but are not completely able to take care of themselves. He said that there would be meals provided for those unable to cook for themselves, entertainment, and supervision for those who require it.

Local residents will be given priority in admission to the facility, he assured questioners, saying he was aware of complaints that not enough places in Island nursing homes are available to Islanders.

"Any facility that I'm with, whether you can afford it or

not, if you're a resident of the Island, you'll be given first choice," he promised.

In response to questions, Levy said that he did not know if the owners of the nursing home operate nursing homes elsewhere. "I don't know of any other home that they're with," he said. "To the best of my knowledge, they have no other homes."

But later, in response to questions about the future of the home should he leave, he said, "I was told they've never yet asked an administrator to leave."

While some of the 40 parents in attendance said they were reassured by Levy's commitment not to house mental patients in the facility, others expressed dissatisfaction with the administrator's answers.

"I can't believe he didn't know about those things," one woman said later. "He's in charge; he's supposed to know."