

Doubt persists, but good Willowbrook programs shown

By ROBERT MIRALDI

James A. Forde had his back against the wall — literally and figuratively — as members of the New Brighton and surrounding communities hammered away with questions about a proposed halfway house at a recent community board meeting.

No one trusted the state Department of Mental Hygiene. No one believed what the department's spokesmen had to say. No one believed that anything concerning Willowbrook Developmental Center could ever be good.

Forde, the acting director of the institution for mentally retarded, held out his hands pleadingly. "The public doesn't know," he said, his voice rising. "The public just doesn't know. We do have good programs at Willowbrook."

No one was convinced.

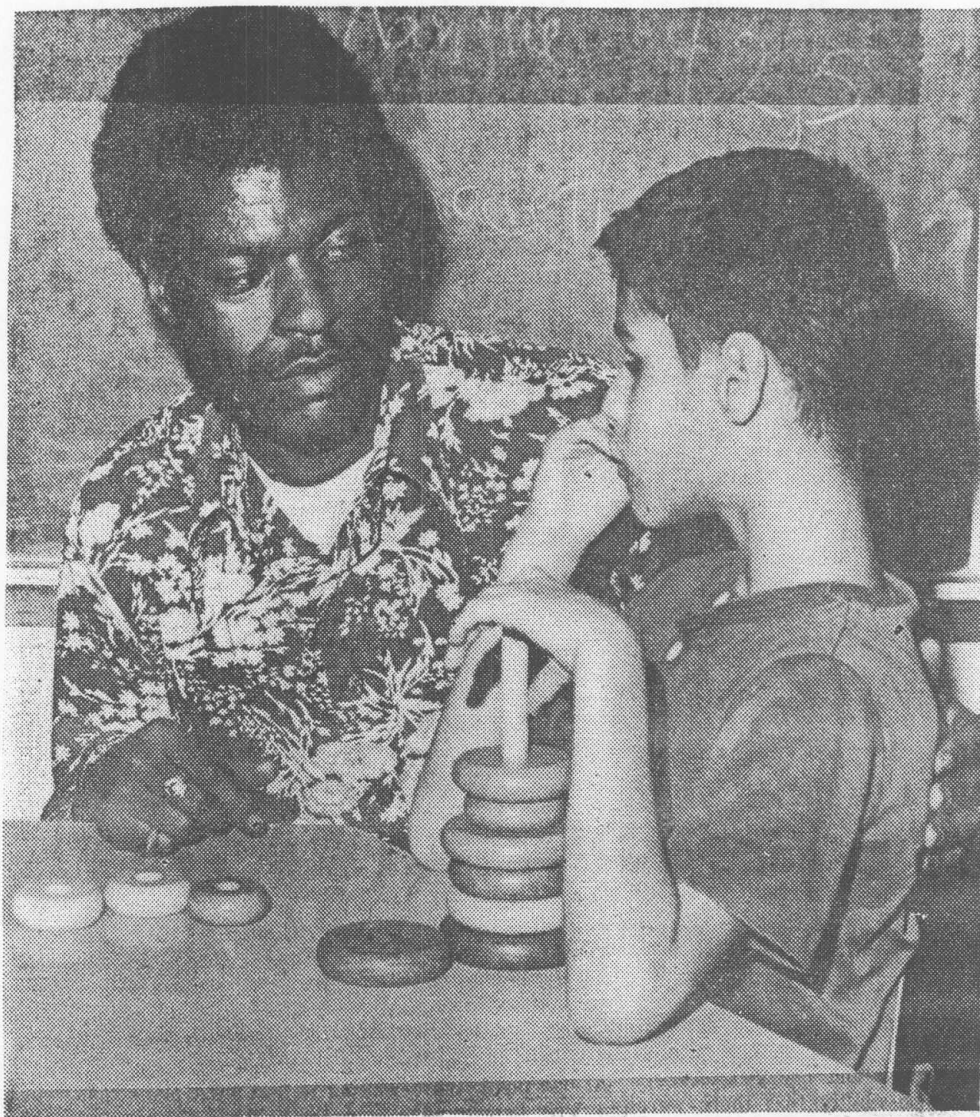
Enter Building 28 on the Willowbrook campus. Walk down a corridor cluttered with wheelchairs. Standing outside a therapy room are four aides, smiling. They are holding the hands of three profoundly retarded deaf-blind residents.

The aides are communicating

~~~~~  
**It's good news!**  
~~~~~

with children who, not too long ago, were unserved, unloved, virtually untouched. Today these retarded children, with IQs ranging from four to 21, have a chance.

They have a chance to make



Therapeutic aide Robert Charles helps a deaf-blind Willowbrook resident improve finger dexterity.

S.I. Advance Photos by Irving Silverstein