



Mrs. Evelyn Stockert, right, has a long way to go before she can cross off the names of all of Willowbrook's 3,500 residents off her shopping list. Helping her arrange the meager supply of this year's holiday gift donations is Miss Linda Fonti.

S.I. Advance Photo by Frank Johns

Willowbrook's 'boutique' keeper feeling pinch in gift donations

By SANDRA ZUMMO

On entering building 18 of the Willowbrook Developmental Center, you get the impression that disaster has struck.

There are clothes everywhere and a careless step too far to the right or left could land a visitor in a heap at the top of a carton of plastic toys.

Moving amid the confusion of this, Willowbrook's "boutique," is a small, nerve-charged woman with salt-and-pepper hair, named Evelyn Stockert.

"The boutique doesn't usually look like this," she tells you as you follow her yellow work smock through a maze of jackets, blouses and dolls. "It's only because it's Christmas that we're so disorganized."

As you speak to Mrs. Stockert, you get the feeling that even though she's standing still, she's working just the same.

That's not too difficult to understand when you realize that there are six shopping days remaining 'til Christmas, and she hasn't checked off every name on her Christmas shopping list of Willowbrook's 3,500 residents.

As a matter of fact, she hasn't even checked off half.

"This is the worst year we've had in the eight years that I've handled the Christmas gifts," she says of donations from the public.

"It's dropped a little each year, but never like this. We usually have enough to present each resident with an article of clothing and a toy, but this

year we'll be lucky if we can give everyone one gift."

Pointing to four or five cartons of Fisher-Price toys, new and un-opened, she says that they were surplus from last year and had been donated from a store.

Leading you behind a rack of men's suits, she shows you boxes containing about 200 used toys which have been donated thus far. Another pile of used toys lies beside a rack of children's suits.

"These just came in," she says, "but some of them can't be used." Picking up a word game called "Perquacky," a fast-paced scrabble-type game, she continues, "Some toys, like this one, are just too advanced. People mean well, but chess sets and Monopoly are just of no use to the severely retarded."

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