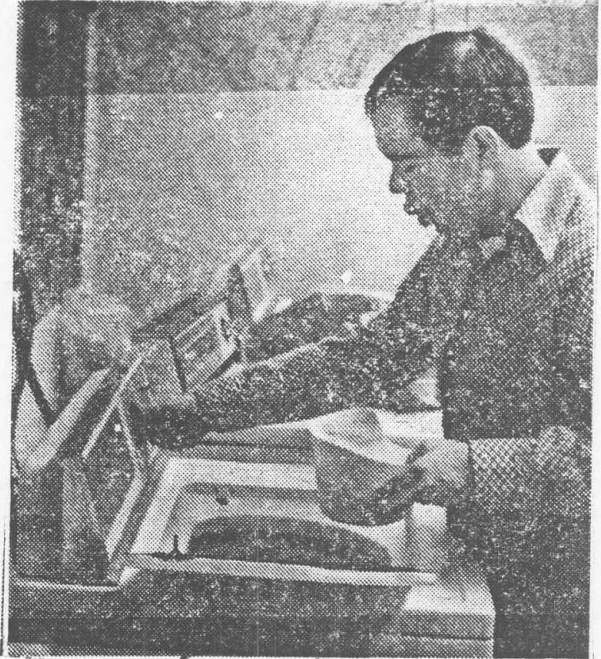


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In Williamsburg center, resident learns sewing by stitching pillow.



Another resident has already mastered use of washing machine as he prepares to add detergent.

# Retarded Seek Life in Mainstream

By LAWRIE MIFFLIN

When you think of the retarded, many people automatically classify them as helpless unfortunates who must be forever shut away in large institutions from everyday life.

But a movement is gaining momentum to span the gap between average citizens and the retarded, partly by bringing many retarded citizens into communities to live in small group homes, halfway houses and even their own apartments.

This effort has alarmed some neighborhoods, however. Residents concerned about the impact on their lives of a nearby home for the retarded often have taken an active role in debating the movement.

Whatever the impact on the neighborhood, professionals generally agree that for the many retarded people who do not need large institutional care, living in a more normal environment is extremely beneficial.

## Lot of Sympathy, But

Although "normalization," as the professionals call the goal, hasn't been easy to achieve, some communities have been very responsive to it, especially in Manhattan, where Greenwich Villagers have had an apparently successful relationship for more than two years with a center for 125 retarded.

Villagers even went to a public hearing in upper Manhattan to help persuade that community that there was nothing to fear from centers for the retarded. But other communities have been staunchly resistant to "normalization."

"Many people support the concept of offering the retarded a more normal lifestyle, but they say, 'Not on my street,'" complained James Forde, acting director of Willowbrook Developmental Center on Staten Island.

## Independence Gained

"The concept is lovely and, of course, everyone has sympathy for the retarded," said Sarah Holzka, a Staten Island resident who is leading opposition to the establishment of a halfway house for eight to 10 mildly retarded adults on her block of Tysen St.

"But you don't take to people, plunk them down in a block of one and two-family homes where they will stick out like sore thumbs, and call that normalization. It will stigmatize them even more, and it will stigmatize the neighborhood, too."

In a halfway house or small group home, people learn to live a relatively independent life, taking care of daily chores, traveling to work or therapy sessions each day and participating in community programs through churches or other groups.

At the Williamsburg Residential and Training Center in Brooklyn, a state-run group home, about 50 retarded adults travel to work or to sheltered workshops here they learn job skills by day and return home at night.

## Homes Hard to Find

As they become accomplished at their jobs and at cooking, cleaning, traveling and planning their recreational activities, they are transferred to more independent situations. Some go back to their families.