

# Building 29 brings a new world to Willowbrook

By DOUGLAS PATRICK

Since Building 29 was chosen to spearhead the creation of a vastly smaller and more humane environment at the Willowbrook Developmental Center, it has been the scene of much change.

The most recent is the newly partitioned living areas which will be limited to four residents and will also include new wardrobe units, chests, mattresses, and beds.

The new living arrangements, which will replace the jam-packed open ward of the recent past, are designed to provide a semblance of privacy and personal comfort for the residents of the building.

In addition the number of residents has been reduced from 140 to 70 residents over the past several months by relocating the former residents of Building 29 in other buildings while simultaneously transferring fewer residents into the newly refurbished building. Having started on April 21, the last new residents arrived on June 5.

Because those transferred out of Building 29 were among the most severely handicapped at Willowbrook, some therapists aides complained of the undue hardship they would undergo as a result of the move. Dr. Stan Slawinski referring to those who complained about the move. He has been supervising the move since Jan. 23. when the building was still crowded with the non-ambulatory residents who have since been transferred to other buildings.

"I cannot accept the assumption that a change of environment is bad. It provides what I would call stimulation. It makes the residents more aware of their surroundings," added Slawinski.

He also explained that additional staff were also transferred with relocated resi-

dents to sustain the staff-resident ratio.

Some parents had complained of their child's transfer because of temporary overloading in some buildings but, he said, that the problem had been overcome.

The 70 residents transferred into Building 29 were selected from the 207 Island residents at Willowbrook to provide an accurate crosssection of the varying degrees of mental and physical disabilities found at Willowbrook.

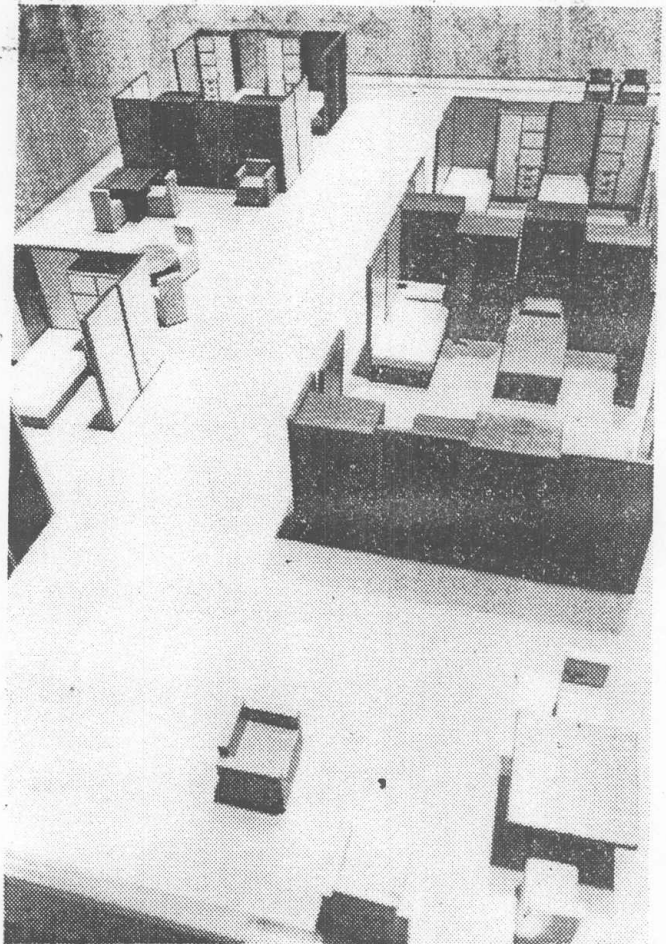
Building 29 was chosen as Willowbrook's nucleus after a two month-old court decree

stated that Willowbrook must house only 250 Staten Islanders by 1981, a far cry from the present 2,847 residents and the 5,000 of three years ago.

The building also provided a site in which a move could most easily and quickly be made and this was necessary to secure a \$2.6-million grant from the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

The grant provided a program that would computerize medical residents and, more importantly, set continuous goals dealing with the quality of resident behaviour.

These computerized medical records, vastly improved physical conditions, and resident population reductions may add up to a system which will provide a meaningful program for each resident at Willowbrook.



Privacy modules, currently being installed in Building 29 at Willowbrook Developmental Center, will provide some privacy and comfort for residents.