



A garden grows some children

Tucked away behind a residential complex, a group of children has constructed a "Garden of Earthly Delights," complete with a play hut, an animal area and a vegetable garden. But this garden was created by some very special children in a special place. See Page 13.

S.I. Advance Photo by Tony Carannata

Willowbrook's 'garden club' blossoms

By ROBERT MIRALDI

First, they called it the "Garden of Earthly Delights." Then, it was renamed the "Farm of Earthly Delights." And now, it's tagged the "Kingdom of Garden Delights."

Call it any name you want, but it's indeed a delight—and a learning experience—to the over 200 Willowbrook residents who, for the past two years, have been experiencing the vegetable-flower garden that has blossomed in a once overgrown courtyard on the grounds.

"There are a thousand different things kids are learning here," says woodshop teacher Harris Rimshnick, pointing to the one-half acre of land where Willowbrook teachers and residents have cultivated an abundant garden and constructed a log cabin—with real, live Staten Island tree trunks.

"Every resident can learn up to their potential," says Mrs. Hanna G. Glasser, educational supervisor. "You can't teach academics to the majority, but they can learn something... especially from projects like this."

The project, which includes a garden, fences, a log cabin, a corral and wooden animals, began two years ago when Rimshnick and science teacher Joseph E. Markowski surveyed the courtyard which was covered with four-foot-high weeds.

"We wanted to do something with that area...it was there for no good reason," says Rimshnick about the land which is sandwiched between two new wings of an education building.

What the teachers did was mow the weeds, clear half the land and requisition top soil. Then came setting up the garden, with the residents, most-

ly teen-agers, "having a hand in everything," says Markowski. They helped assemble a wooden bulletin board with their names for all visitors to see, helped design and cut a trellis.

The garden process started indoors, with a planting of various flowers and some standard vegetables like corn, carrots, tomatoes, string beans, peas, and some not-so-standards like egg plant and pumpkins and strawberries.

The "Garden of Earthly Delights" was a success, evidenced when the residents were able to go to cooking class, with the aid of home economics teacher Dorothy Lines, and cook—and eat—the finished product. "A total learning experience," says Mrs. Glasser, who last year was presented with the one strawberry that the residents harvested.

Markowski and Rimshnick

were not satisfied with just a garden. "Why not build a shack to store the tools?" they asked. "Why not build a log cabin?"

No reason why not, so the duo received a clearance to chop down some trees from Willowbrook's 384 acres. "The kids actually worked on the log cabin," says Rimshnick. "The notched the logs." Result? A cabin now stands adjacent to the garden, replete with home-made furniture.

The cabin-building resulted in leftover logs and, as Markowski says, "we had to do something with the wood." A corral came next, followed shortly by wooden animals in the corral.

By this spring, the teachers hope, five speakers will have been installed in the courtyard, speakers which will tell the story of the animals and the story of the garden. The

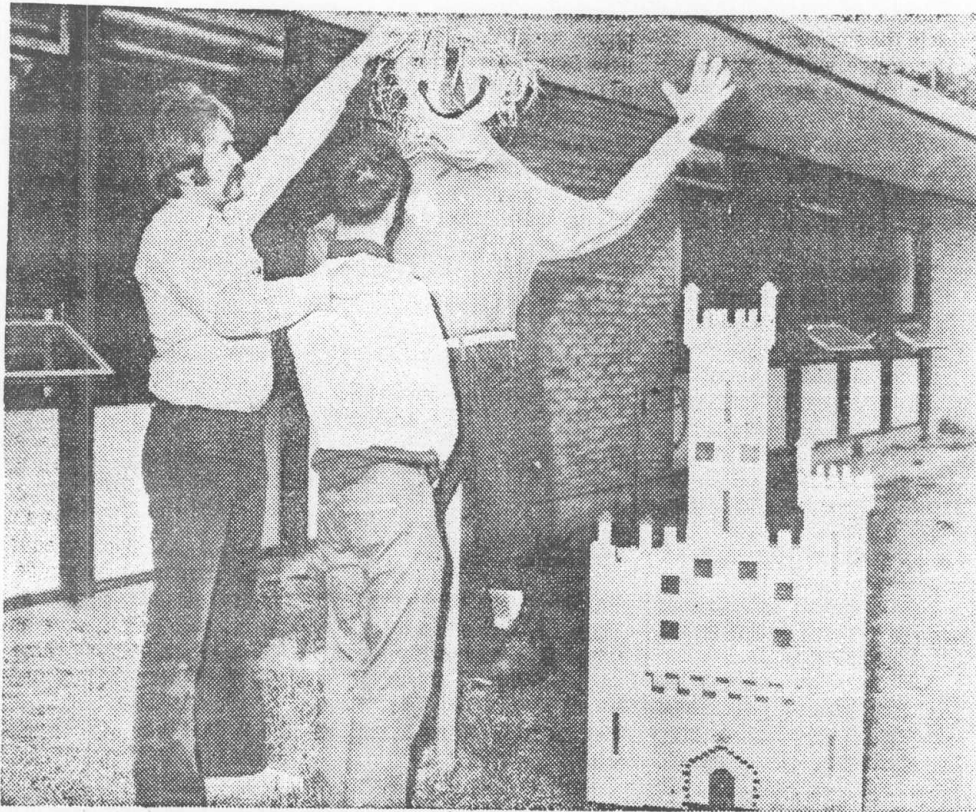
teachers hope to cut their own recordings and place the records in a jukebox which will play the educational stories.

The residents couldn't be happier. "When the kids come into class they want to know, 'When are we going to the garden?' They can relate to the whole planting-growing-replanting process," says Rimshnick.

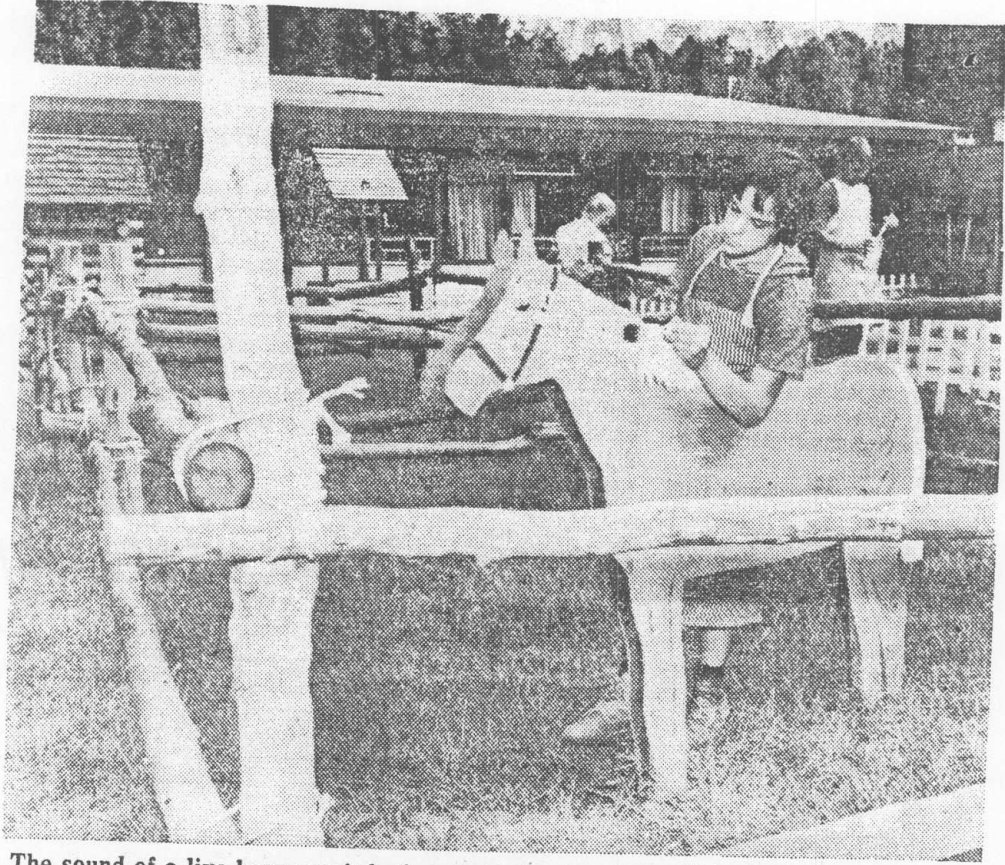
The duo's next project? Rigging up a wishing well with running water. And then the residents can wish for more teachers like they have today.



Science teacher Joseph Markowski and a resident with an eggplant grown in the courtyard garden.



A Willowbrook counselor and a resident admire the handicraft that staff and residents have put together in the form of a scarecrow and castle.



The sound of a live horse can't be heard yet, but this Willowbrook resident makes do as he paints a wood-carved pony in the court-yard.

S.I. Advance Photos by Tony Carannante