

STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE, Friday, November 19, 1976

# Hostel opened at Willowbrook

By JOHN E. HURLEY

A transitional hostel in what was formerly a director's residence on the grounds of Willowbrook Developmental Center was officially opened yesterday. It may be the first of several staff buildings to be eventually converted to halfway houses for outgoing Willowbrook patients.

The clean, spacious house, formerly known as Building 52, was turned over to the Association for Children With Retarded Mental Development months ago by the state, and six Willowbrook residents were moved in Aug. 9.

ACRMD, a non-profit, volunteer group, will pay the cost of operating the home, now known as the Abe and Emily Plastik Residence, in honor of two donors to the charity.

"When you see this place and then think of what's down there in the wards, it's unbelievable," said Mrs. Ida Rappaport, executive director of the association. "And what's more important is that we have the day programs to prepare the residents for living out in the community."

The 25-year-old association now provides day programs to about 500 residents of Willowbrook and other developmental centers in New York City, but this is its first venture into the opera-

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Willowbrook director Dr. Levester Cannon, left, talks with two officials of the Association for Children with Retarded Mental Development during open house yesterday for a new hostel on the Willowbrook grounds. They are executive director Mrs. Ida Rappaport and associate director Mickey Marlib.

S.I. Advance Photo by Robert Parsons

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tion of a halfway house.

Mrs. Rappaport noted that since the residence is on Willowbrook grounds, the association does not have to contend with the community opposition that regularly greets such homes in the community. She added that her group is interested in operating in a similar manner the three other large homes now occupied by high-ranking Willowbrook staff.

"There has to be someone from the administration on the grounds at all times in case of an emergency," she said. "But if they're making \$30,000 to \$40,000 a year, they don't really need these houses free of charge."

The six residents chosen for this first hostel, four men and two women, are all over 20 years of age and classified from moderately to severely retarded. Each weekday, they are taken to Manhattan for a six-hour workshop program run by ACRMD to prepare them for living in the community.

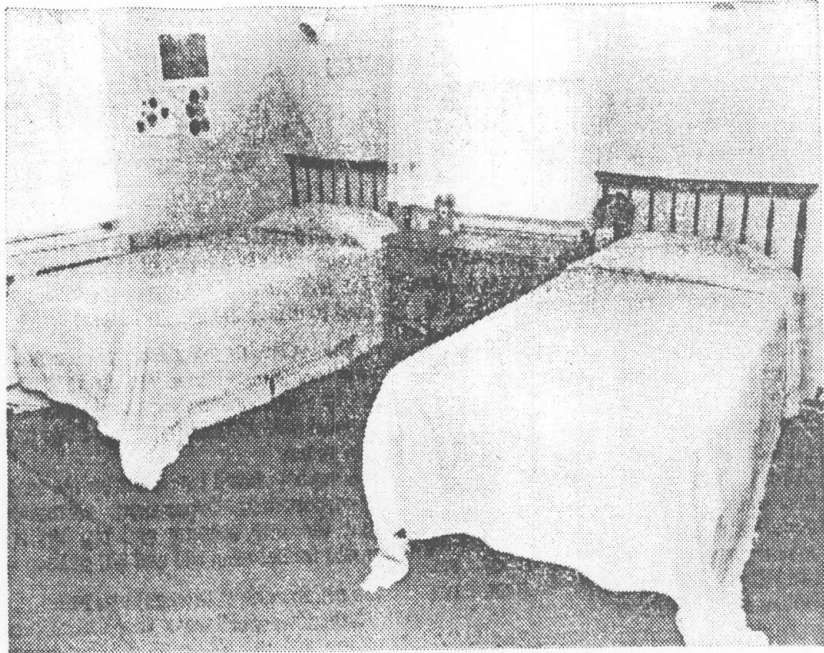
Mickey Marlib, an associate director of the agency, said the length of time each resident spends in the transitional hostel will be based on each individual case and the number of openings in community residences.

Mrs. Rappaport said, "Our greatest priority is to facilitate the transition for each resident into the mainstream of normal community life and to win their right to live in peace anywhere in the city."

The clean living quarters found in Building 52, supervised by a live-in house couple, are in sharp contrast to some of the facilities to which many Willowbrook residents have been sent since the Willowbrook Consent Decree mandated the sharp depopulation of the institution. Last September, a report issued by the Willowbrook Review Panel charged that more than 1,300 persons transferred from Willowbrook had been sent to conditions worse than those at the Island institution.

Marlib said yesterday that the six residents living in the new hostel had shown "marked improvement" in both daily living habits and workshop classes. "It's given them a sense of dignity they didn't have before," he said.

Among the guests invited to yesterday's open house ceremonies were Manhattan Borough President Percy Sutton, State Sen. William Conklin, R-Brooklyn, and Assemblyman Andrew Stein, D-Manhattan. Also attending were Dr. Levester Cannon, Willowbrook director, and Mrs. Barbara Blum, director of the Metropolitan Placement Unit for the Department of Mental Hygiene.



One of the bedrooms in the "transitional hostel" at Willowbrook, which was formerly a director's residence. S.I. Advance Photo by Robert Parsons

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