

by the MPU, a job the agency maintains even after community placement.

The MPU also provides for the ex-Willowbrook resident's transportation to and from classes or workshops, gives him a clothing allowance, assumes the burden of his medical care and arranges regular visits from a social worker.

"Placement of a retarded person into a foster home doesn't cause any drastic change in the family's daily life," assures Cook, who points out that caretakers receive a monthly stipend of \$273.70 in payment of room and board. And he maintains that the relocation program begun last year with the creation of like MPU offices throughout the city, has had a high success rate, with one per cent or less of ex-residents returning.

Reflecting on the task ahead of him and the people he must place, Cook momentarily loses the composure of a borough coordinator.

"The way they were placed here was ridiculous! A child might have had an undiagnosed hearing problem, his parents were told the child was retarded and so the kid was clapped into Willowbrook."

He pauses for a moment, then continues.

"It's important that we begin to place these older people in the community...we've done them such an injustice..."

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John knew that, having lived the first 12 years of his life in the Bronx, he was supposed to be relocated into his borough of origin as per the Metropolitan Placement Unit's directive.

"But, he didn't want to go back to the Bronx," his social worker confides. "He really enjoys his job at the workshop and feels that it won't be able to function smoothly without him. So he asked us if he could remain on the Island."

Perhaps it is prophetic that his request to have a say in his future met with success. It may presage fruitful years with the family he will join when he becomes an ex-Willowbrook resident next week.

"He's ecstatic about it," declares Andrew Cook about John's reaction to community placement. "Workers who know him tell me that he's been very excited and has told them many times that he has a home."

John will be living with a young couple and their three children. He's been visiting them on weekends, to see if both he and the family wanted each other. Fortunately, they did.

If things go as Cook says they most often do, John should be making measurable progress by next year. He cites improved speaking skills, more pride in appearance and competency with money, among other things, as "remarkable changes" that begin to take place when the retarded person leaves the institution and settles in the community.

His acquaintances say that John has been a bit more out-going these days. He's anxious, too. Anxious about succeeding outside the Willowbrook grounds, anxious about pleasing his new-found friends, anxious, and "jubilant," about starting a whole new way of life.