

# Future of Willowbrook's group home remains unsettled

By ROBERT MIRALDI



This big house on the Willowbrook Developmental Center grounds formerly housed the center's director. Soon it will be the site of a halfway house for center residents.

S.I. Advance Photos by Frank J. Johns



Willowbrook staff member Melanie Adams helps a smiling resident, Robert, learn to make a salad — part of the program's daily living skills training.

Three years after the state has purchased a New Brighton house and prepared it as a group home for eight Willowbrook Developmental Center residents, the two-story frame building remains vacant and the project is beset with difficulties.

The latest snag in the attempt to open 200 Tysen St. as a group home for Staten Islanders at Willowbrook is the sudden discovery that despite \$27,000 worth of renovations to the \$64,000 house, modernization of kitchen and bathroom areas are still needed.

Further complicating the issue is approval needed from Community Board 1 before the group home can open. Planners of the project expect to meet with leaders of the newly constituted board this week.

The home was purchased by the state Department of Mental Hygiene in July 1974, and the state intended to operate it as a halfway house — a transitional facility — for 10 to 12 retarded residents of Willowbrook.

Opposition developed in the surrounding New Brighton community, however,

and a stormy fight ensued, including a heated confrontation at a community meeting. The community finally approved a two-phase proposal for 200 Tysen St.

The first phase, which was to have begun in the winter of 1976, was a year-long training program to teach the Willowbrook residents daily living skills — shopping, laundry, cooking, personal hygiene, household cleaning. That training was to be done on a 9 a.m.-to-5 p.m. basis at Tysen St.

The second phase, assuming all went well with the training and that the community as well as the Willowbrook residents adapted, was to be the live-in phase. Tysen St. would have 24-hour, on-the-premises staff to supervise its residents.

The renovations at Tysen St. went slowly, however, and the first phase was delayed. By this time the Tysen St. project had changed its scope a bit.

The state no longer runs the program. It is ostensibly administered by the Willowbrook Benevolent Society, a parents'

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