

Willowbrook Has Jobs for Seniors

An opportunity for low-income persons over 60 to make some extra money in a worthwhile project will begin April 1 when Willowbrook Development Center on Staten Island receives a federal grant to sponsor a foster grandparent program.

Some 80 Staten Island men and women who qualify will be phased into the program in various steps and will be trained to work with the retarded youngsters put in their charge. Under the plan, a foster grandparent is required to spend four hours a day with two children (two hours per child) Monday through Friday.

According to Linda Carelli, director of the Office of Consumer and Citizens Affairs, "The establishment of the program will meet one of the requirements of the 1975 Willowbrook consent decree."

Successful Elsewhere

Miss Carelli said the purpose behind the program is to provide meaningful part-time opportunities for low-income older persons to render supportive person-to-person services to children with exceptional or special needs.

"It is a program that has been tried in other centers throughout the state, most recently in Brooklyn Central, with great success.

"A foster grandparent," she said, "provides children under 21 with individual attention, companionship and physical and emotional support and encouragement."

"Activities both people may participate in include

playing games, singing, dancing, reading, taking walks, field trips, talking and especially listening.
"In some cases, the foster grandparents have even attended the youngsters' classes."

Warm Feelings for Patients

Most of all, she noted, was the fact that "It gives the residents the warm feeling of someone caring. "It will be good for Willowbrook, for it provides that approximately 80 people will look after 160 youngsters, "thus relieving some of the staff to look after others."

The director added that it is especially good for the seniors who will participate in the program for it "gives them extra money without worry that it will be counted toward their over-all income. It won't." Benefits, she said, will be particularly good.

"There is a stipend of \$1.60 an hour, transportation to and from the center, a hot meal each day, paid vacation and sick time.

"Also, workmen's compensation, social service assistance, a comprehensive annual medical exam and personal leave time."

In addition to the federal grant, which is in the neighborhood of \$135,000 for the period of 1977-78, the state is putting up funds for supervision of the program, as well as providing the meals and transportation for the seniors.

Requirements for Post

The applicant must be of low income, age 60 or over, no longer in the regular work force, in good health and willing to work with the children.

"We will be phasing in about 25 to 30 people at a time," said Miss Carelli, "and there will be 40 hours of training orientation and in-service training."



News photo by Jim Romano

Willowbrook Development Center resident is joined at playtime by foster grandparent Louise Pervall.

She also noted that from time to time there will be recognition events and activities for those who serve.

Anyone interested in participating should contact Robert Slawinski, Foster Grandparent Supervisor, Willowbrook Developmental Center, 2760 Victory Blvd., Staten Island, N.Y. 10314.