

STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE, Tuesday, August 30, 1977

1,500 dance and clap at 'Starlite Concert'

By GARY LIBOW

The Willowbrook Developmental Center was transformed into a miniature Woodstock last night when about 1,500 residents and staff attended the facility's first "Starlite Concert," boogied to rock music an enthusiastically applauded the classical pieces.

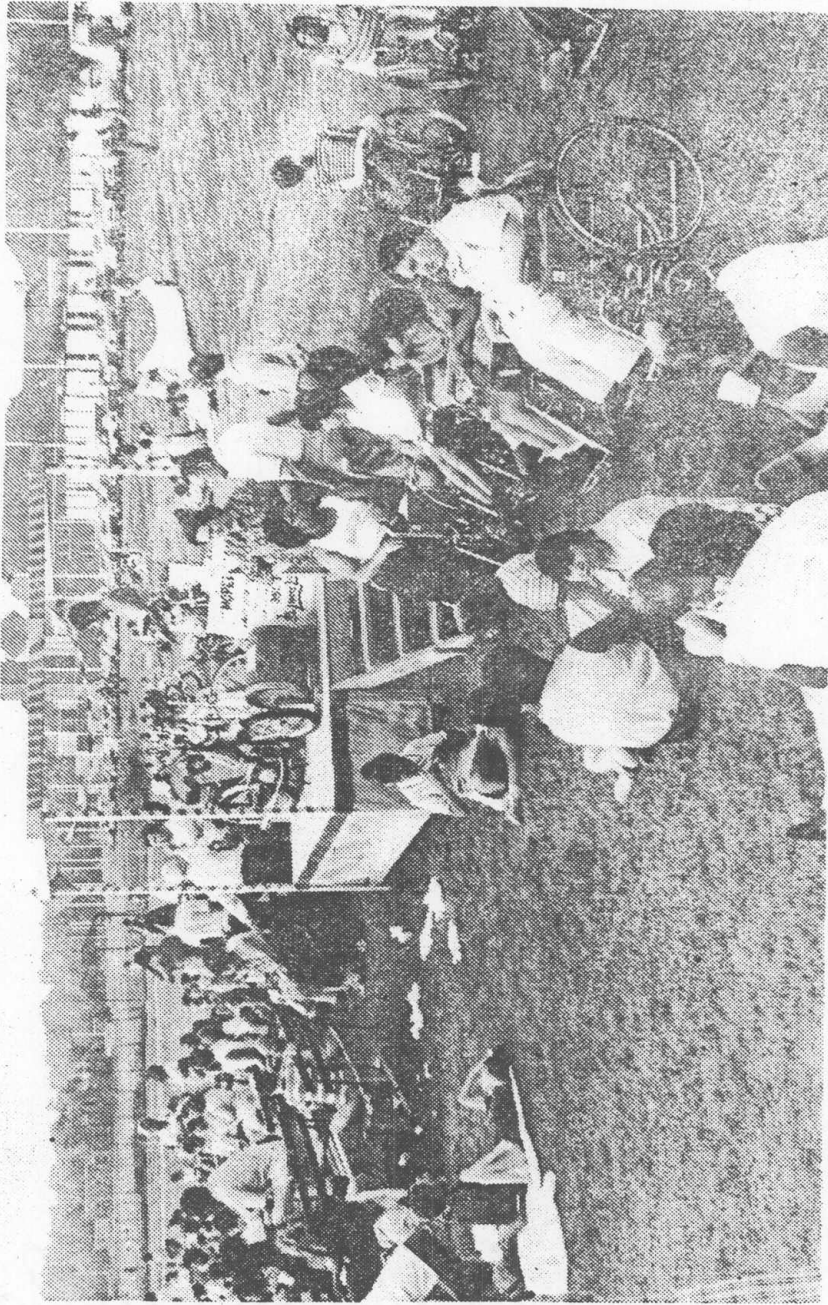
It seemed as if there was as many smiling faces as balloons and Frisbees. Billed as "a nite to remember," the evening provided four hours of eating, drinking, dancing and socializing.

A host of Island businesses donated their time and energy in providing an overabundance of hamburgers, hot dogs, soda, custard and ices for all to enjoy. The party atmosphere was aided by colorfully dressed clowns who shook countless hands, leading to countless mile-wide grins.

Staged under a full moon on the grounds of the 346-acre institution, the festivity was sponsored by "Reflections," the official newspaper of the center, and the Benevolent Society for Retarded Children. The sponsors urged everyone on hand to share in an evening of "good music and conviviality born of fellowship."

"I think it's magnificent that the togetherness and communication tonight is bringing such happiness to the children," said Genevieve Camen, one of the event's coordinators. "I love Willowbrook, I love the kids here," she added. Mrs. Camen's son had been a resident of the center for 26 years.

During a session of funky music provided by Corporation Ltd., most of the residents let it all hang out, doing the bump and hustle. Al Gaudet, who helped put the evening together, remarked, "They really seem to be responding to



A party atmosphere prevails at the Willowbrook Developmental Center as residents and staff enjoy plenty of food and wait for the music of the facility's first "Starlite Concert."

S.I. Advance Photo by Irving Silverstein

the music." James Jefferson, a music therapist at the center and a member of Corporation Ltd., has brought his group to the grounds many times. "The kids enjoy it and we enjoy playing for them," he said. "The residents aren't like you and I, so the music has to come to them." When the Staten Island Music Society

took the stage, the residents were equally appreciative of their music. The dancing didn't cease during the marches and overtures.

Councilman Frank Biondolillo and Assemblywoman Elizabeth Connelly, attended, as did Thomas Prisco, founder of the Exceptional Children's Social Club.

Prizes were donated by Moped Mania of New Dorp and Korvettes of New Springville. Many Island businesses donated the mountains of food.

The evening gave four hours of happiness to those who usually have little to smile about. "Look at all those people grinning out there," an attendant was overheard to say.