

Staten Island Advance

Staten Island, N.Y. Tuesday, October 25, 1977

Willowbrook schedules open house for Sunday

Willowbrook Developmental Center, attempting to educate what it sees as a largely unaware community, is inviting anyone and everyone to the institution Sunday to see for themselves what being mentally retarded means.

Every living unit of the 384-acre home, including those operated by the United Cerebral Palsy Association, will be open to the public in the largest event of its kind in Willowbrook's history.

"We want people to have the opportu-

It's good news

nity to observe what they want to observe," said Joan M. Hartman, Willowbrook's coordinator of volunteer services. "We don't want people to come and stare. What we want is to have members of the community who have not had firsthand knowledge of Willowbrook to come and gather their own facts.

"They'll find that the normal world can sometimes be just as strange as Willowbrook," Miss Hartman said.

Miss Hartman noted that in the past, mentally retarded persons have been placed in institutions away from the public eye.

"Now," she explained, "as we l...

normalize the lives of the retarded, we find the community may be unfriendly. In most cases, it is based on a lack of understanding of mental retardation and fear of the unknown.

On Sunday, the living units of Willowbrook will be open. People will be able to see how residents live and observe some of the programs and activities that seek to develop their activity to care for themselves.

Visitors are asked to report to the auditorium in Building 3 by 1 p.m. to see visual displays of Willowbrook.

Booklets and maps will be available for self-guided tours, with guests selecting which type of living units — one, for instance, housing profoundly retarded men, or another housing moderately retarded children — they wish to see.

State and private workers will be on hand to answer questions about the facilities until 3:30 p.m.

The open house is under the sponsorship of the Volunteer Services Office and along with Miss Hartman, is being worked on by Robert LoCicero, Frank Markussen, Jay Ross, Jack Philbin, Carol Switlyk, Joyce Kocsis, Nettie Evans and Doris Hatchett.

Those seeking more information may call the volunteer services offices at Willowbrook, which is located at 2760 Victory Blvd.