



Linda Polidori, left, and Marge Colonna, visitors at Willowbrook's open house, receive a map of the grounds and a summary of the center's goals from Mrs. Paul Carannante and Maria Thompson, right, SERVE volunteers. Nettie Evans, background right, a worker, looks on.

S.I. Advance Photo by Irving Silverstein

Open house at Willowbrook is an eye-opening experience

By SYDNEY FREEDBERG

At first, for Jonathan Terrison, a 28-year-old teacher living in Brooklyn, the Willowbrook Developmental Center was a place he cared little to know.

He had read about it in the papers for years. He was depressed by what he'd heard.

But yesterday's open house, Terrison said, helped him to understand, and a dim awareness gleaned from newspaper accounts became an uneasiness which, in turn, marked a change in his thoughts about the retarded.

"One way of putting it, I guess," the

tall, blond man said upon entering a Willowbrook building, the second of the day. "is that I was a white, middle-class man, one who did not very easily fit into this kind of (Willowbrook) society.

"But when you go there, you realize they're people, too, and you realize the injustice of it all is close at hand."

Maybe as a consequence of yesterday — when every Willowbrook living unit was open, when bands blared forth marching music and the sun smiled down on hundreds of visitors and non-visitors alike — Terrison and the others will take up their particular ef-

forts against the injustice.

At least that's what the institution's officials hope — that they educated some people who had refused to accept the mentally retarded because of lack of understanding or fear of the unknown.

Or that by visiting the 384-acre Willowbrook on a sunny Sunday, one or two or maybe more unaware citizens began to discover that "unjust" in the world is noticing the existence of a caste system that places retarded people at the bottom.

Terrison said it happened to him when

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