

# St. Michael's considers center for retarded

An official of St. Michael's Home in Greenridge informally proposed operating a group home or day-treatment center for mentally retarded youngsters at yesterday's monthly meeting of the Staten Island Regional Retardation and Disabilities Council.

Betty Player, director of the home's eight group residences housing 67 children, said St. Michael's is "interested in providing services as a volunteer agency on Staten Island for a long time." She asked for direction from the council, an umbrella group of provider agencies and consumer groups with a focus on the mentally retarded, to supply direction on the needs and priorities of the borough.

Miss Player said there are currently 33 Staten Island children in the Willowbrook Developmental Center, many of whom will need to be placed in the com-

munity as the center reduces its population to a targeted 250 by 1981.

Willowbrook and council officials expressed the need at yesterday's meeting, held at the Volunteers of America group residence for the retarded in Mariners Harbor, for additional privately run group residences.

Elin Howe, director of the sprawling 1,680-resident developmental center, said group homes are being sought in the Community Board 2 and 3 areas, but that it was hoped the state would not have to open and operate the homes if sufficient voluntary agencies could be found.

"We want to make it clear we would prefer to have private voluntary groups," she said. "We really don't want to go out there and open them our-

selves." She called state-run homes the "least preferable" alternative.

The morning meeting included reports from officials of two private agencies now developing group homes for the retarded.

Barbara Abraham, United Cerebral Palsy official connected with the UCP's planned Castleton Park group residence in St. George, said the 20-person home for physically handicapped and mentally retarded adults was in the final planning stages, with negotiations for a lease in progress. She could not estimate when the home would be opened.

Joan Hodum, representing Staten Island Aid to Retarded Children, said the organization's transitional facility on the grounds of Willowbrook would prob-

ably be opened in early December. The home, a facility for mildly to severely retarded adults who require intensive training before their shift to community living, will house five men and two women, Mrs. Hodum said.