

Missing woman search expands

Police were expected to conduct a painstaking foot-by-foot search of the grounds surrounding the Staten Island Developmental Center today, in a final attempt to turn up clues in the disappearance of Ethel L. Atwell, the 46-year-old mental hygiene therapist who vanished after stepping out of her car early Tuesday morning.

At least 200 volunteer auxiliary police, 25 police officers, and members of the National Guard were expected to join in the search. Yesterday, Inspector Samuel Marino, who is coordinating the search, said they had not yet received confirmation that the Nation Guard would assist.

Marino said they will use photographs of the area, along with helicopter sur-

veillance "to make sure that nothing is missed."

Marino labeled the search as "the most extensive ever conducted on Staten Island."

Yesterday police dragged Willowbrook Pond, but failed to find anything, while workers at the center continued to volunteer their time to look for Mrs. Atwell.

Many workers at the center continued to express fear about the lack of security and improper lighting on the grounds at night.

Jim Shea, deputy director of the center, said "the incident involving Mrs. Atwell has affected the entire staff personally and emotionally."

He said some workers, especially

women on the night shift, have not been showing up for work because of the general fear the situation has created.

Illustrating the feeling among employees that security at the center is lacking, Mary Ann Ranaldo, an employee, said when her car broke down just outside the center's gate Thursday evening at 11:30, she became frightened and walked to the entrance to ask a guard to help her get to Building 21, where she works.

She said the guard on duty told her, "I'm sorry sweetheart, I can't help you."

"There was nothing, not a soul, to help me. Finally a cab driver took me to building 32, but I still had to walk two

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blocks. I was petrified," she said.

"They are still not doing anything to help the employees here. It's unreal, especially with what just happened," she said.

When told of the incident, Shea said he was "suprised that the guard did not help the woman."

"We have made a concerted effort to improve security," he said, "We are providing transportation between buildings, but sometimes it difficult to accommodate everyone."

He said the new security measures, including the addition of security guards and a patrol car, a new monitoring device at the gates which will be in operation soon, and increased foot patrols, "were not simply a response to Mrs. Atwell's disappearance."

"Most of the improvements were initiated long before this happened, but it takes time," Shea said.

Police continue to maintain temporary headquarters in Building 47 at the center.

They ask that anyone with information concerning Mrs. Atwell's disappearance call 727-4200, or the 24-hour number 979-4633. Police said all information will be kept confidential.