

# Our readers discuss many vital issues

## **Center staffer objects to editorial**

Once again it has become quite apparent that the basic editorial philosophy of the Staten Island Advance is to make headlines rather than comment factually, especially where Staten Island Developmental Center ("Willowbrook") is concerned. It is well known that the editorial page is supposed to reflect the feelings, attitudes, conjecture, wishes, dreams and most often the informed opinion of the editorial staff. The editorial entitled "A New York disgrace," Jan. 7, goes beyond any of the aforementioned, except maybe wishes or dreams. In fact, the tenor of the editorial was to hitchhike upon an article condemning the conditions at the "Christmas Tree Inn," currently occupied by some discharged South Beach Psychiatric Center patients and welfare recipients. However, instead, the editorial focuses on Staten Island Developmental Center and not only wrongly condemns the efforts of the staff of Staten Island Developmental Center, but also totally distorts the accuracy of the article written by the paper's own reporter.

The editorial states: "As documented in the Sunday Advance today, the transfer of a retarded person from a large institution to a small privately run facility is in itself no guarantee that the individual will be better served or better cared for."

Contrary to the above quote, no such statement ever appeared in the Advance's own article. Not only are there no ex-residents of Staten Island Developmental Center living in the Christmas Tree Inn but it was Staten Island Developmental Center staff, including the director, who most recently brought the conditions at the inn to the attention of South Beach Psychiatric Center, the Advance and Community Board 3 officials.

Having been specifically mentioned by name in the article, I was obviously concerned about the possibility that the information I gave to Mr. Miraldi might be confused with the Office of Mental Retardation and Staten Island Developmental Center's Community Residence development effort, thereby damaging our progress. However, my concerns for the future of the people living at the Christmas Tree Inn and my belief in the assurances of Mr. Miraldi (that he would differentiate our placement procedures and strict standards from those of the Office of Mental Hygiene) compelled me to speak with him. Mr. Miraldi should be commended for honoring that commitment because by and large his article was accurate and did separate the two areas of state operation. My only regret is that the editorial editor obviously did not read the article before composing his editorial on Staten Island Developmental Center, which will undoubtedly take us back years.

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