

Success stories

Activist for retarded is honored

Friends, co-workers and political leaders attended a surprise dinner, billed as a "Night for Emma" last week, to honor Emma Colenan, a long-time activist in organizations for the mentally retarded.

Mrs. Coleman, a Silver Lake resident, was presented with a gold pendant and certificates of merit, including a citation from State Sen. John J. Marchi, at the dinner Thursday in the Pavilion on the Terrace, New Brighton.

The dinner also served as a farewell since Mrs. Coleman and her family will be moving tomorrow to Onley, Va., a small seacoast town.

Mrs. Coleman, whose 20-year-old son, Gregory, is mentally retarded, was one of the founders of Parents, Teachers and Friends of the Retarded, a group formed in 1964 to work for the establishment of an occupational training center for the handicapped on Staten Island.

A temporary center was opened two years later in the former PS 17 in New Brighton. When the school burned in 1976, Concord High School provided space for the center. All along, Parents, Teachers and Friends of the Retarded worked to have a center built specifically for the training of the handicapped, since the temporary quarters often posed problems, particularly of access, for handicapped clients.

Funds for the school were eventually secured, and now, a new Occupational Training Center, the first in the city built specifically as an OTC on Tompkins Ave. in Rosennbank is scheduled to open next month.



Emma Coleman

Mrs. Coleman is also a past director and vice chairman of the Staten Island Regional Retardation and Disabilities Council, a member of the Staten Island Aid for Retarded Children Parents Auxiliary, the Richmond County Association for the Developmentally Disabled and the Society for the Developmentally Disabled.

She has worked with the Special Olympics Committee and for the past few years coordinated a bowling league for retarded adults in the Colonial Bowling Lanes.

In 1974, former Gov. Malcolm Wilson appointed Mrs. Coleman to the Staten Island Developmental Center Visitors Board.

Mrs. Coleman is also a member of the Conference House Auxiliary, Friends of Snug Harbor, National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Early American Society.