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Albany rumors and roomers

State Mental Retardation Commissioner Thomas A. Coughlin says that rumors that he's about to resign are only rumors.

The rumors started flying through capital halls so wickedly that Gov. Carey told Tom either to resign or announce he was sticking.

Tom announced he was sticking yesterday during a meeting of the state advisory council on mental retardation.

"I said very clearly that I was going to be around for awhile," Tom said.

Just last month, he helped nurture the rumors when he conceded he was talking about job openings with the United Cerebral Palsy Association of New York State.

Tom's coworkers said he was trying to be funny when he suggested to some lawmakers that he would not have to deal with budget cuts planned for his department because he might quit soon.

But Dr. Kevin Cahill wasn't laughing.

If there's anyone in Albany it helps to keep laughing — it's Kevin, since he is the governor's health adviser.

Kev told Tom to speakout on his future.

Tom said he would stay on the job for the "foreseeable future." Folks in his office said that means at least until Jan.

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Mental health group benefit luncheon

The Benevolent Society for Retarded Children will conduct its annual benefit luncheon May 26 at noon in the New York Hilton Hotel.

The luncheon is the keystone of the society's Willowbrook Chapter fund-raising efforts. Proceeds are used to defray the cost of trips, parties, toys and major gifts donated to Staten Island Developmental Center clients. This year the society has pledged \$6,500 toward a new physical fitness program at the center.

The society, at 39 West 32nd St., Manhattan, may be contacted for reservations at \$35 per person.