

Police hunt woman missing from center

A 29-year-old resident of the Staten Island Developmental Center in Willowbrook was missing yesterday, and police reports indicate she may have been abducted.

Police yesterday set up a temporary headquarters inside the center, to coordinate an extensive search for the woman, Helen Lever of Building No. 23, who was discovered missing about 4:45 a.m.

Capt. Robert McElhearn directed more than a dozen officers who searched the buildings and grounds of the center, while a police helicopter joined the search from the air. Capt. McElhearn said last night the search would break off about midnight and resume again this morning.

Ms. Lever was discovered to be missing shortly after the supervisor of her ward, whose identity was not disclosed by police, entered the ward to investigate why the patients were "acting up."

The supervisor told police there was a man looking in through the window of the ward, but he disappeared when he saw the supervisor. Police said the window was open and a screen that covered it had been slashed.

In addition to being retarded, Ms. Lever is also blind and deaf, according to Sgt. Robert Klaskin, a safety officer at the center. Klaskin said the woman was probably abducted since she would not have been able to leave the area under her own power because of her handicaps.

The last time a person was reported missing from the center was Oct. 24, when Ethel L. Atwell, 46, of Newark,

N.J., disappeared from the parking lot as she arrived for work about 6:30 a.m.

Mrs. Atwell, who was a metal hygiene therapist at the center, has not been heard from since. Another employee at the center told police then she heard a scream from the parking lot that morning, and police found a purse, a shoe and a set of false teeth which belonged to Mrs. Atwell next to her car.

Sgt. Patrick McCarthy of the Crimes Against Property Squad, who headed the investigation into Mrs. Atwell's disappearance, was also in charge yesterday of the beginning investigation into the disappearance of Ms. Lever.

Another employee of the center, Shina Lee, 44, of Sea View, was last seen alive July 20, 1978, as she left the center after work. Her body was discovered Aug. 6 on the grounds of the Institute for Basic Research, which is adjacent to the Developmental Center.

Mrs. Atwell's disappearance and the murder of Mrs. Lee are still open investigations.