

## Retarded should get more volunteer care

I am responding to an editorial in the Advance, Jan. 31, titled "A Willowbrook nightmare?"

Nowadays, too many people take for granted the comforts of home, respect they receive, and all the love given to them.

Ever since the skyrocketed use of drugs, more children are born mentally retarded. The rehabilitation centers, in return, are being quickly overcrowded and nobody really seems to care. How come?

A majority of people are preoccupied with their own problems. They claim they have no time to help out. Now stop right there with the excuses, and take a look, because the way these children are being treated is inhuman. They get no love or respect at all. Their possessions are meager. Many of the parents are too embarrassed to visit them. The child feels lost, and unloved, and to a child that can be devastating.

I'll ask you a question — How come nothing has been done? I'll bet you many of us teen-agers would help out if someone older and familiar with the situation would help us form a group and get us on our way.

We'll let those children know they're loved. If we don't, who will?

**PAMELA FOSKET,**  
15 years old,

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## Willowbrook problems are far from solved

Regarding your editorial of Jan. 31, I wish to take some exception. I disagree with your statement which implies that Staten Island Developmental Center has regressed. As you know we have been undergoing massive change and our emphasis has been the preparation of our residents for a better life, in an outside environment...

It is no lie that we have had many problems in the past. Many of those problems were caused because we lived in a period when very few people had the desire to acknowledge the existence of retardation in our society.

I am reminded of many instances where parents never came to see their children, and the State of New York had to fill that gap. That condition continued for many years, and the structure began to decay. It became obvious then that very serious decisions had to be made in order to pull ourselves together, and upgrade the conditions. That process was in effect when Sen. Robert Kennedy entered the picture. Many of us rejoiced, believing that at last one of the more demanding politicians had finally come to the rescue, and we would get the money and equipment that we needed so desperately. Sadly that was not to be the case; instead we got political rhetoric. The senator was to be joined by many more politicians who instead of helping us gloated in their new role as liberators...

Today state employees are faced with the gloomy prospect of massive layoffs, residents are slated to be placed in other facilities. No one truly knows the results of such hasty moves, or the traumatic impact such sudden change may ignite.

One of our residents called me Wednesday night. "Heath," he said, "I want to tell you that I don't care where they send me. I am not interested in wall to wall carpets, or large television sets. All I want is to be here with you, and my friends. It is true that this young man cannot speak for all. Nevertheless I was touched, and found great significance in his remarks..."

**ALLAN HEATH,**  
Stapleton