



Some of the 100 workers who occupied Building 1 at the Staten Island Developmental Center.

S.I. Advance Photo by Robert Parsons

## Willowbrook protesters demand immediate return of docked pay

By DOUGLAS PATRICK

More than 100 Staten Island Developmental Center workers — angered after being docked pay for an alleged sickout last month — occupied the administration building through the night and vowed to stay until they're paid the money they say they deserve.

Although the number staying in the building had dwindled to about 20 this morning, as some workers returned to their posts to serve breakfast to center residents, or returned home, a spokesman for the group said the protest will continue.

"Some people have left to help

their co-workers get breakfast out and some have gone home to shower, but they're all coming back," Jeri Bell, an employee union representative said.

Of the 800 basic resident-care employees that called in sick during the four-day period from July 24 to July 27, administration officials docked 371 people who did not produce any proof, such as a doctor's note, that theirs was a legitimate absence, the officials said.

"During this four-day period there were an inordinate number of sick calls by employees of the residential buildings," said James Shea, developmental center deputy direc-

tor.

"As a result of this, we requested that all these people bring in a doctor's note or some proof that they were actually sick by the deadline last Aug. 4," Shea said.

"Those who were out as part of the sickout were docked pay for the time they missed," Shea said.

Officials of union Local 149 of the Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA), who denied the absences constituted a sickout, said that no worker was compelled to produce a doctor's note under their current contract unless they had

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missed four consecutive days because of illness.

"We have a contract that says a doctor's note is not required until the fourth day of sickness," said Ms. Bell, head of the local's public relations committee.

Like Felton King, the local's president, she further contended that many of those docked pay, which could amount to \$40 to \$55 a day, were out for legitimate reasons such as approved vacation days or sick days.

Irita Dennis of Grasmere, a therapy aide at Willowbrook for 10 years, said she had approved vacation days from July 24 to July 26 and yet she was docked three days' pay.

"They took \$150 from my check and I'm not about to lose this money," said Mrs. Dennis, who joined others who sat in the lobby of Building 1 and occasionally clapped and chanted, "Money, money."

Union leadership at Willowbrook presented five combinations for halting an employee sickout last month after King had charged that officially sanctioned understaffing had endangered the welfare of both workers and the 1,100 mentally retarded at Willowbrook.

Absenteeism during the job action hovered at about 20 percent or twice the norm for the summer season, according to administrators.

Shea said administrators would continue to negotiate with King and other union officials until a resolution could be reached.

Shea said any worker who could now produce a doctor's note to justify their absence during the four-day period last month would receive the money in their next check in two weeks.

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## Man shot in Willowbrook

An argument over a backgammon game between two employees of the Staten Island Developmental Center erupted into violence last night, leaving one man shot and an onlooker with leg injuries, police reported.

Henry Rodriguez, 35, of 362 Willow Rd. West, Graniteville, was shot shortly after 9 p.m. in Building 9 at the center, located at 2760 Victory Blvd., Willowbrook.

He was listed in fair condition this morning in St. Vincent's Medical Center.

According to police, Rodriguez and a second employee of the center had argued over a backgammon game about an hour before the incident. Shortly after 9 o'clock, police said the second man returned and fired four shots at Rodriguez, the last one hitting him in the right leg.

The assailant then fled with two others, who were not identified, in a car that had been waiting outside.

Another employee, Audrey Skelton, 31, of East Orange, N.J., hurt her right knee after she tripped while trying to flee the shooting.