

# Willowbrook building renovated for 'warmth'

By DOUGLAS PATRICK

Intended to provide more humane and aesthetically pleasing living quarters for 20 residents at the Staten Island Developmental Center, a newly designed section of Building 5 was officially opened yesterday after a brief ceremony.

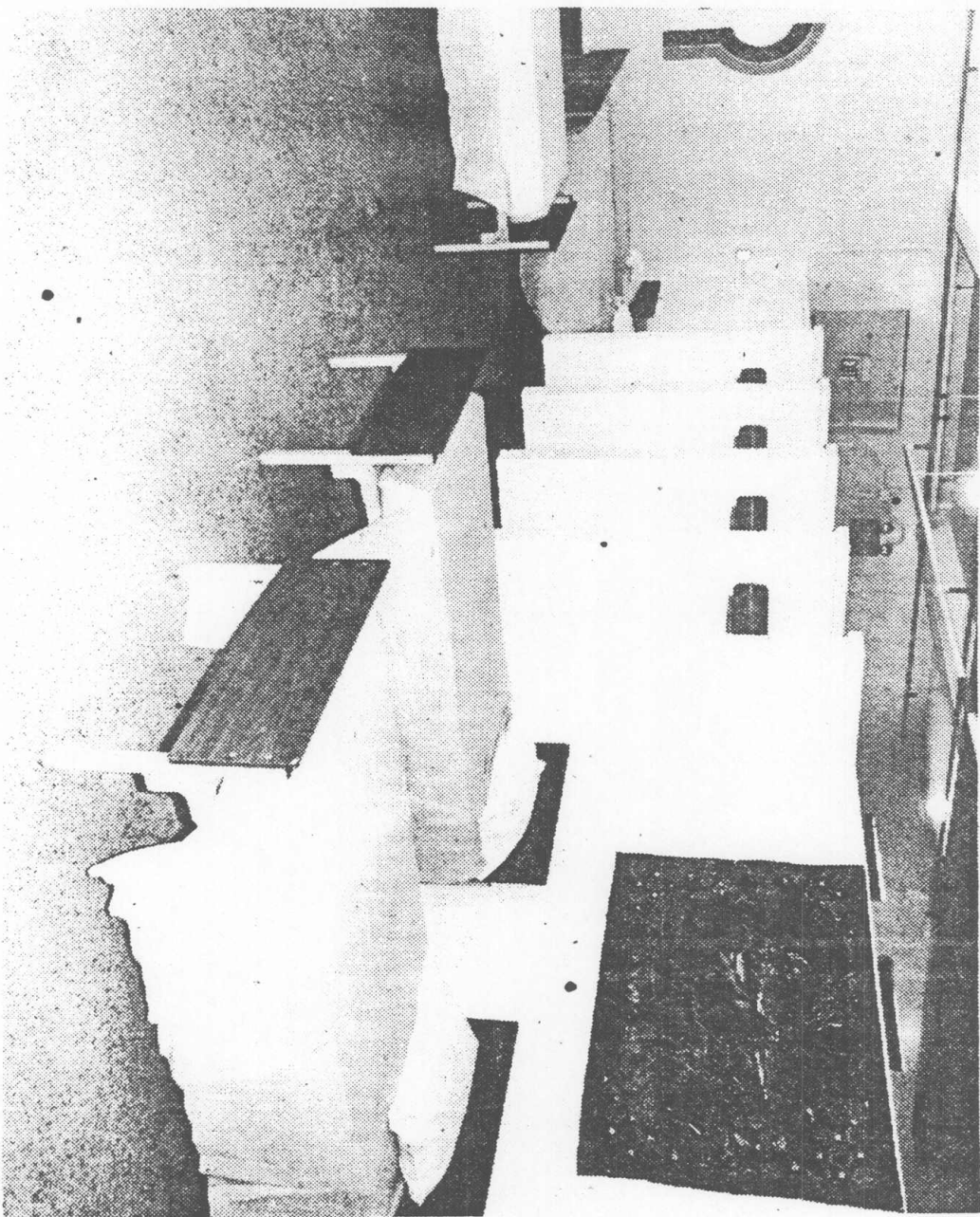
The refurbishing of three rooms in the building — including a large sleeping area partitioned into four smaller sections for added privacy — is the result of a pilot program designed "to transform a characterless, typically institutionalized setting into a warm atmosphere," according to Dr. Ella A. Curry, the center's acting director.

Work for the project, which cost \$6,000 for supplies, was done by state workers at Willowbrook and took eight weeks to complete.

In addition to the partitioning of the sleeping area, which puts five residents in each section, a recreation or living area with a simulated fireplace and simulated wood beams was completed, as were other alterations intended to make the room more attractive.

Ed Hart, coordinator of the Willowbrook Consent Decree Office, said that if "the project goes well we hope to extend it to other buildings to provide more attractive and comfortable settings for more clients," Hart said.

He said a crucial factor will be "the condition of the redesigned building six months from now."



Once an open dormitory area for 20 Willowbrook residents, the room has been divided into four smaller sleeping sections to provide residents with increased privacy.

James Walsh, projects director at Willowbrook, said the newly designed section in Building 5 will help clients make the transition from an institutional dormitory to their own small apartment at the center of a group home in the community.

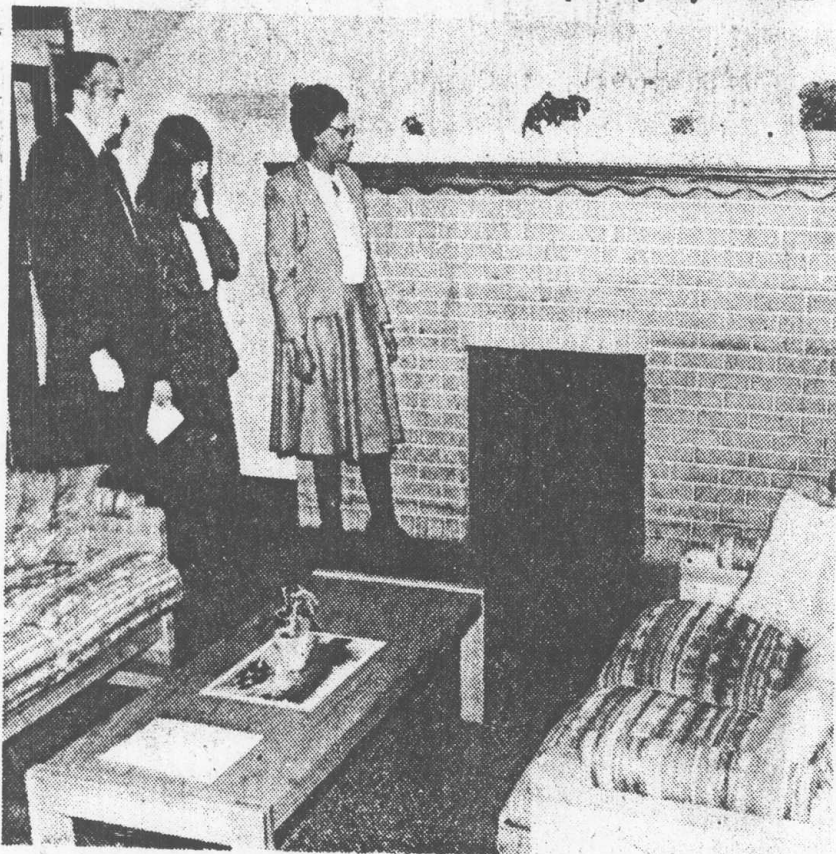
"This type of living quarters will help the clients make the transition when they move into their own apartment here at the center or go out in the community," he said.

Walsh said there are approximately 30 apartments at Willow-

brook available as living quarters for residents.

A 1975 federal court decree made the Willowbrook institution the model for the state's policy of transferring the mentally retarded from institutions into smaller community-based facilities.

James Introne, New York State Commissioner of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, did not attend the ceremony. He was represented by Alice Lin.



Admiring a simulated fireplace in the newly refurbished recreation area of Building 5 at the Staten Island Developmental Center are Edward Hart, coordinator of the Willowbrook Consent Decree Office; Alice Lin, representing James Introne, state commissioner of mental retardation and developmental disabilities, and Dr. Ella Curry, acting director of the center.