

Center to be named in honor of Connelly

A newly renovated building at the Staten Island Developmental Center in Willowbrook will be named the Elizabeth Connelly Program Center in honor of the assemblywoman from Staten Island.

The announcement was made yesterday by Dr. Ella Curry, director of the developmental center. She praised Connelly, "who has worked hard for many years for the clients of the center.

"I think it is time we give her an official acknowledgement and thank her, for few public officials have taken as great an interest in the welfare of the developmentally disabled as has Mrs. Connelly," she said.

THE CONNELLY CENTER will be formally dedicated at 1:30 p.m. Oct. 2.

It will be used to teach basic living skills to 120 of the center's most severely disabled clients.

According to Curry, "The staff will use a 'multi-sensory' approach in an attempt to teach personal hygiene, sensory stimulation, body awareness, self help and motor coordination."

While pleased with the honor, Connelly, chairwoman of the State Assembly's Mental Health Committee, said, "It's far more important that we are now going to have a center for the intensive training of these disabled people. As far as the disabled are concerned, nothing is more important than giving them as much self-reliance as possible."



Elizabeth Connelly

FOR A LONG TIME Connelly has been actively involved in upgrading the level of care at the center and at facilities throughout the state.

"In the past I've had to look critically at the Staten Island Developmental Center and other institutions," she said. "The Willowbrook Consent Decree stipulated that an institutional setting is not conducive to the greatest personal development of a disabled person. Therefore, my scrutiny and the scrutiny of others have been essential and will continue to be essential.

"I view this new center as a result of our scrutiny. It's simply another step in the fight to bring dignity to the lives of the disabled," she said.

—Mary Engels