

Willowbrook director tipped cops

Drug dealings were quite open in relaxed atmosphere, cop says

By JEAN LEVINE

The director of the Staten Island Developmental Center in Willowbrook said yesterday she had been aware for "some time" of the growing drug distribution problem among some of its 1,800 employees.

Her comments came after police arrested 10 workers from the state-run institution for the mentally and physically handicapped and charged them with selling drugs.

"I knew of the problem for at least 18 months, and I informed my superiors who contacted police last January," explained Dr. Ella Curry, who heads the center, which has 789 resident clients.

"Undercover policemen came immediately to investigate, and they did a wonderful job. We can all breathe a little easier now that the suspects have been apprehended."

Mrs. Curry said it was the first time the center had such a large number of people arrested for drug dealings. "In the past we've had a few isolated instances, but never anything like this before," she explained.

Authorities said, however, that no patients suffered from loss of, or lack of care because of drug situation.

Police said the 10 — eight of them Staten Islanders — sold cocaine, heroin and LSD to fellow

employees and others who "knew of the availability of drugs on the property" and came to certain buildings on the institution's 383-acre campus to buy it. Authorities estimated the ring took in \$225,000 a year.

Islanders arrested were: Gordon James, 28, of 51 Arnold St., New Brighton, a mental health therapist and night supervisor of a resident building; Theodore Handy, 40, of 175 Trantor Pl., Elm Park, a mental health therapist; Ada "Cookie" Rodriguez, 25, of 195 Gordon St., Stapleton, a mental therapy aide; Jacob Givens, 35, of 50 N. Burgher Ave.,

(See DRUGS, Page A 4)

Page 4 of 2 pages