

100 UCP drivers, monitors strike; 700 stranded

By JULIE MACK

Predicting a long strike, about 100 drivers and bus monitors for the United Cerebral Palsy Association of New York State (UCP) refused to report to work yesterday, leaving 700 handicapped patients without their regular transportation.

The walkout by the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1181-1061 forced the relocation of training classes and cancellation of non-emergency medical appointments. In other boroughs, staff escorted patients on mass transit.

Staten Island was most affected by the strike, because about half the patients reside here, including 300 at the Karl D. Warner Center on the grounds of the Staten Island Developmental Center and 50 at the Nina Eaton Center at South Beach Psychiatric Center.

UCP, the state's largest private provider of services to the disabled, also operates 71 apartments for the handicapped throughout the city, included five apartments on Staten Island and a group home in Great Kills.

The walkout disrupted the daily schedule of Warner and Eaton patients, who are normally transported to the Community Training Center in Mariners Harbor for day programming.

As a result of the strike, in-

structors and therapists were brought to the centers to conduct classes there. "But we have no class space and no equipment," said Cora Hoffman, assistant executive director for UCP. "We are doing the job, but it is much more difficult."

Off Staten Island, UCP staff members are using mass transportation — including buses and subways — to take patients to day training classes, said Mrs. Hoffman.

"It can be quite difficult for the staff to do this because some of the patients have ambulatory problems and are in wheelchairs," she added.

Using other forms of transportation is not feasible on Staten Island, because it is here that the picket lines are established, she said.

The strike also resulted in canceled appointments at the Warner Center clinic, which handles the patients' periodic physical and psychological evaluations.

"All of our patients are being affected by the strike," said Mrs. Hoffman.

There appears to little chance of settling the strike this week. No bargaining sessions have been scheduled and spokespersons from both sides said the other must make the first move toward a settlement.

Salary is the basic issue at stake, according to Ziyad Shakoor, shop steward for the union workers. He said that the transportation employees are de-

manding a higher wage with a more consistent pay scale.

Currently, the bus drivers and monitors receive an annual salary between \$9,500 to \$12,000 a year, he said. The union is asking for a minimum wage of \$14,000.

UCP offered a 7 percent increase, and Robert Schonhorn, UCP executive director, has said that the agency cannot afford to pay more because of its recent financial difficulties.

But Shakoor says the workers think UCP's financial situation is not as bad as management claims. "We believe there is money to be found," said Shakoor.

"It's up to management now," he added. "I don't see a short strike. But we have to fight for what we believe."

Shakoor also said it was "very important" to note that the strikers are not attempting to interfere with the daily care of the UCP patients, although Mrs. Hoffman said she had heard complaints that the strikers were blocking roads around the center, making it difficult for other UCP workers to park.

"We just wanted to keep the way clear for picketing," said Shakoor. "We are not trying to stop the aides from coming here to work. We're not stopping food deliveries or anything like that."

In fact, he said, the majority of the UCP employees are supportive of the strikers. "They are underpaid too," said Shakoor. "The management is just hard-hearted."

Ray



Strikers outside the Staten Island Developmental Center stop a van delivering wheelchairs. After police officers talked to the strikers, they let the van through. S.I. Advance Photo by Tony Carannante.

Strike strands disabled patients

More than 700 handicapped and mentally retarded patients on Staten Island were without bus service for a second day today.

About 100 bus drivers who work for the United Cerebral Palsy Association of New York State went on strike yesterday. They would like to get a raise in their salaries.

The strike, however, means the handicapped have no way of getting to special training classes offered by United Cerebral Palsy. UCP offers special programs at the Karl D. Warner Center on the grounds of the Staten Island Developmental Center in Willowbrook, and the Nina Eaton Center, on the grounds of the South Beach Psychiatric Center in Ocean Breeze.

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