

Home for cerebral palsy patients opens in Oakwood

By DAN JANISON

Labor and financial crises briefly faded into the background yesterday as United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) leaders celebrated the opening of an Oakwood house for the disabled named after the wife of former Gov. Hugh L. Carey.

Evangeline Gouletas-Carey told about 40 guests in the facility, "This is not an ending, but a beginning — a reminder there should be more and more ... of our support" for the disabled.

The residence at 455 Medina St. is custom built for the wheelchair-bound. It has such special features as specially equipped doors, a "roll-in" bathroom, raised bathtub and waist-level light switches.

Now home to 10 supervised mentally and physically disabled persons, the structure opened in July and is operated by UCP under a permit with the state, which funded the construction at a reported cost of \$550,000.

"No one should be forced to live away from their families" because of a lack of community-based care, Mrs. Carey said.

Although no reference to it was made in the speeches, UCP last month filed for reorganization under Chapter 11 of the U.S. bankruptcy laws, citing an inability to pay more than \$8 million in past debts.

Robert Schonhorn, executive director of state UCP, said yesterday he did not foresee the legal move as a prelude to bankruptcy, or any problem in running the Gouletas-Carey residence or other facilities under state contract.



On the labor front, UCP officials reported that they met last week with union officials representing transportation employees who have been striking since Sept. 26, seeking increased pay and other contract changes.

Schonhorn and spokeswoman Cora Hoffman said members of Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 1181 were due this week to meet on proposals.

However, according to the officials, UCP has not offered any wage boost above 7 percent, a figure put forward before the strike.

The strike has affected some of the day programs offered by UCP to clients at the Karl D. Warner Center, located on the grounds of Staten Island Developmental Center in Willowbrook.

ATU officials were not immediately available for comment.

Also, a vote is scheduled for Nov. 9 among several hundred UCP therapy aides — about half of them working on the Island — to decide whether to organize under District 1199 of the Hospital and Health Care Employees Union.

In a brief address, James Introne, former commissioner of the state Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD), praised Carey, his former boss, who did not attend though he was expected.

"No governor in the history of this state did more for the developmentally disabled," Introne said. "New York State has a record unmatched throughout the United States" in providing such care, he added.

Introne also praised UCP and spoke of past "battles with people who thought the state ought to spend its money in other ways."

Carey, who did not make a public appearance on Staten Island through his last four-year term as governor, was "working very very hard," at the law firm with which he has been associated since leaving Albany, Mrs. Carey said.

formed under the sanction of the court.

He said they include Service Systems, a branch of RJ Reynolds Tobacco Corp., which provides UCP food services; Chase Manhattan Bank; Mutual of New York; Consolidated Business Planning, and a local firm, Villa Marin automotive parts in Mariners Harbor.

State lawyers had moved in court to involve themselves in the creditors' committee, a crucial legal mechanism often established in Chapter 11 cases, but that bid was rejected, Schonhorn said.

Schonhorn predicted that the court would serve as an "arena" to resolve long-running differences between UCP and the state over reimbursement funds.

Nina Eaton, a longtime leader of the organization and for whom another Island facility is named, noted progress made from the days of the human "warehouse" conditions in such places as the old Willowbrook State School.

Words of praise were also directed toward the architects Nicholas Voulgaris and Harvey Rothenberg, who designed an identical residence in Queens and another planned for Staten Island.

Three weeks ago, Commissioner Arthur Webb of the Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD) released a statement expressing surprise at the Chapter 11 move.

When asked about it yesterday, Schonhorn said that Webb had to have known about the situation from negotiations between UCP and the state over rates paid to the association for its services.

Schonhorn said that in the Chapter 11 case, an "amiable" committee of creditors had been