

*A. J. Ad...*

# Group homes continue to feel community pressure

By JULIE MACK  
Advance Staff Writer

Staten Island residents continue to be uneasy about the concept of group homes, officials say, even as the number of group homes on the Island has increased.

"The term 'group home' scares the hell out of people," according to John Powers, chairman of Community Board 3. "There is an attitude of 'Why does it have to be my neighbor? Why next door to me?'"

The concept of community residences for the mentally retarded, the mentally ill, the emotionally disturbed, the homeless or for troubled youths is one that is growing in popularity, at least among state officials and social services professionals.

That is particularly true in the case of the mentally retarded. Gov. Mario M. Cuomo said recently that he plans to completely close Staten Island Developmental Center in Willowbrook within three years, which means finding space in the community for 1,000 patients. About 100 of those patients are Island natives who will probably be placed in group homes on Staten Island.

To fill the demand for community beds, officials at the state Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD) hope to open 1,400 new beds statewide this year and another 1,400 beds next year.

There is also a growing de-

(See HOMES, Page A 10)

*Page 1  
of 4*