

Son's plight leaves mother frustrated

By JULIE MACK
Advance Staff Writer

Gloria DeLillo told television reporters last summer she was ready to kill herself and her son, Joseph.

Mrs. DeLillo, a New Dorp resident, never acted on the threat. "My husband said it would be a silly, cowardly thing to do, and he's right," she said. "But I meant what I said at the time. I was just so frustrated."

It is a frustration which has fermented for 20 years, ever since Mrs. DeLillo learned that her son, Joey, was mentally retarded. In 1979, the DeLillos also learned that Joey suffered from a rare syndrome, Prader-Willi, that causes both behavior disorders and physical handicaps requiring constant supervision.

While Mrs. DeLillo's death wish has passed, the frustration still seethes. Her dramatic statement last July brought state and local officials running, but her attempts to find adequate care for Joey remain unresolved.

Her story illustrates the problems in obtaining a proper diagnosis, finding proper care, and negotiating a complicated system of services.

And Mrs. DeLillo would not describe herself as a sophisticated woman. She is an ordinary housewife and mother, married for 37 years to her
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Joey DeLillo