

Disabled have special day

By WENDY GREENFIELD
Advance Staff Writer

More than 500 developmentally disabled athletes participated in an afternoon of fun and games at the 1984 Staten Island Special Olympics held yesterday at the Staten Island Developmental Center in Willowbrook.

Some ran the 50-meter dash and participated in the broad jump. Others entered the frisbee contest, the softball throw or the relay race. In between races, the athletes had their faces painted or created paper bag puppets in the arts and crafts tent.

In addition, there was break dancing, a merry-go-round and train rides.

As part of a special program, about 100 severely retarded people participated in a wheelchair race. This program began last year as the first of its kind in the country.

The Staten Island Special Olympics is the culmination of a yearlong program in which mentally retarded people from age 8 to 80 get a chance to show the public what they can do.

"It's to change the attitude of the public. And it has," said Richard Salinardi, coordinator of the Special Olympics and a special education teacher at the Richmond Occupational Training Center, Clifton. "Many people have the conception that mentally retarded people are the lowest form of a human being. But once they see their

physical ability, their attitudes change."

Salinardi hopes the changed attitude will help the retarded land jobs once they finish school.

During the school year, 13 training clubs across the Island meet once a week after school to prepare for the Island Olympic games. Forty Island athletes will participate in the statewide Special Olympics to be held next

month at the State University of New York at Albany.

Salinardi said yesterday's event, which began with a parade, went smoothly thanks to the 200 volunteers who helped pull it all together. Volunteers and their groups include the Richmond County American Legion, Order of the Al Hambra (Iberian Caravan 101), Sultanias

of the Al Hambra, Watkins Kellett-Post (40 and 8 Voiture 595), Robert Foster of the Knights of Columbus, Phyllis McKoy of the Deputy Imperial Commandress, Daughters of Isis, Brooklyn Union Gas and McDonald's, which provided 600 lunches.

The organizations helped raise \$20,000 from the community to pay for uniforms, equipment and transportation and lodging to competitions across the state. Salinardi said the Special Olympics program receives no money from the government.

"The key to this whole thing is that the people involved come from all parts of the community," Salinardi said.

When the Special Olympics began about 12 years ago, it started out with a handful of children who met once a year. Now there are about 500 people who meet once a week after school to train for the annual event.

"It's what happens after school and in the evenings that makes a difference to the handicapped," Salinardi said. All the athletes received medals, he added.

Speakers at the event included SIDC Director James Walsh, Deputy Borough President Ralph Lamberti, Rep. Guy V. Molinari, Assemblywoman Elizabeth A. Connelly, the Rev. Everett Wabst of Park Baptist Church, Port Richmond, Councilman Jerome X. O'Donovan and Miss McKoy of the Daughters of Isis.