

Board 3 approves group home in Arden Heights for autistic

By DENISE RINALDO
Advance Staff Writer

After a two-year search for a group home site, Eden II, which runs a school for autistic children in Bayley Seton Hospital, got the go-ahead last night from Community Board 3 to build in Arden Heights.

At its meeting in Richmond Memorial Hospital, the board voted unanimously with one abstention to approve the location of a five-bedroom structure at 381 Carlton Blvd., the site selected by Eden II.

Building will begin on the house in April, and will take about six months to complete, according to Dr. Elia Feldman, director of Eden II. Dr. Feldman said his organization has met with "a warm response this year" from community groups.

In past years, Eden II's attempts to locate a group home in the Board 3 area were protested by neighborhood residents, for reasons ranging from inadequate septic tank facilities to a lack of access for emergency vehicles.

The state Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, which makes the final decision on group home locations, allows community boards 40 days from the time a proposal is announced to recommend or reject sites under consideration.

The home will house 10 autistic children and young adults, both male and female, who will be supervised by three to four staff members during the day and two at night. Eden II is a private not-for-profit agency. Its program at Bayley Seton Hospital serves 25 autistic students. The battle to find a location for the home was fought largely by the parents of children enrolled in the program.

The Arden Heights home will be Staten Island's first residential facility for the autistic. Dr. Feldman said that more than 10 of Eden II's students would be served by the home, and that he would like to see another building for the same purpose erected on the Island in the future.

In other business, the board

voted on its youth services planning committee's recommendation for the distribution of \$46,000 from the city Youth Bureau for programs to serve South Shore youths.

The board overturned a committee decision that would have given \$6,000 in youth development delinquency prevention (YDDP) money to Bethel United Methodist Church, Tottenville, for a job development program, with members objecting that the service is already provided by high schools and other community groups.

The \$6,000 that would have gone to Bethel will go to Camelot Counseling Services for a family therapy program that the committee had voted not to fund.

Also receiving YDDP money will be the YMCA Counseling Service, for a job-seeking skills program at the YMCA, South Shore branch; the South Richmond Youth Project, for its summer "movies in the park" program; the Society for Seamen's Children, for counseling sexually active teen-agers; Richmond Memorial Hospital, for its teen hotline, and United Activities Unlimited, for counseling, tutoring and recreation programs at Barnes Intermediate School, Great Kills; Totten Intermediate School, Tottenville, and PS 32, Great Kills.

The board also voted to request that Borough President Ralph Lamberti ask the Youth Bureau to provide Richmond Memorial with \$11,000 in discretionary funds to keep the hotline running at its current level.

Because of an increase in the number of groups requesting Youth Bureau money, Richmond Memorial expects to receive less this year than it did last year from each of Staten Island's three community boards.

The board also voted on the distribution of \$54,972 in Youth Bureau money for after-school programs for South Shore children, and on its order of preference for five agencies that are requesting matching grants from the Youth Bureau.

Also at the meeting, the resignation of Marilyn Haggerty, the board's youth coordinator, was announced, and Kathy Dodd was elected as third vice chairwoman. The board will be looking over resumes for the youth coordinator position, which is paid for by the Youth Bureau, and will make a hiring recommendation by Dec. 31, according to Maxine Spierer, board chairwoman.