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## In Southbury, Conn., A Community Cares

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To the Editor:

Elizabeth A. Connelly's letter (March 13) about Staten Island reminds us that the reaction of thousands of community residents regarding settlement of the retarded and disabled near them has been "Not here" and "Put them somewhere else."

Let me say something I hope will be revealing to such people, most of whom surely don't think of themselves as cruel, but simply as fearful. Here in Southbury, Conn., we have the Southbury Training School, a state-operated residence and school for retarded children and adults.

The school is in a residential neighborhood. The people of the town are glad the school is a good one, known for progressive methods in helping the retarded, and they show their sympathy by flocking to the spring fair on the school grounds; by donating to its thrift shop, and by volunteering time and energy to its committees and projects.

Southbury doesn't live in fear of the school. It doesn't exclaim, "Not in my neighborhood!" On the contrary, it lives safely and peacefully in an atmosphere of understanding mentally handicapped people and their needs, of extending a warm hand to fellow human beings.

Definitely, the people of Staten Island, where I was born and brought up, and of communities across the U.S. need to think hard about this: they can change their outlook. And where there are other "Willowbrooks," they might very proudly be in the forefront of those forces that struggle to change such horrors into decent and welcome group residences and schools for those people who have had such a particularly raw deal from life.

EDWARD LINDEMANN  
Southbury, Conn., March 13, 1985