



**Bedframes and a few old personal items are strewn about Building 76, a "pre-fab" structure at the Staten Island Developmental Center that has been abandoned for several years.**

**S.I. Advance Photo by Tony Dugal**

Besides, some parents of Willowbrook patients simply questioned the wisdom of pushing for change. Willowbrook had problems, no question about it, but it was the only resource available to parents and some were frightened about jeopardizing its future.

But the Benevolent Society leadership stuck to its guns and continued its battle cry. Meanwhile, politicians began promising investigations of the institution. Even more significantly, Robert Feldt of the Staten Island office of the Legal Aid Society and Bruce Ennis of the New York Civil Liberties Union began meeting with parents to discuss possible court action.

In March, a class action lawsuit was filed on behalf of Willowbrook patients in U.S. District Court in Brooklyn. It was the first step of history in the making.

*(This is the second in a six-part series on the Staten Island Developmental Center and what has happened since the consent decree was issued 10 years ago.)*