

Apartment Inc. and the owners of the five apartments — Nathaniel Ratner, Herman Geiser and Stanley Ginsberg — are currently battling the matter in court.

Meanwhile, UCP has filed a complaint with the state Human Rights Division, claiming the eviction is based on discrimination against the handicapped. Keith Penman, regional director of UCP, says other apartments are subject, but the co-op wants to evict only UCP.

The situation infuriates the UCP staff, who maintain that people like Desterdick have as much right as any other Staten Islander to live where he wants. And they say the West Brighton apartment is the best place for him.

"All his needs are met here. It provides him with as much normalization as he can handle," Lopes said. "I wouldn't like to see him go anywhere else."

says with a grin, "Well, you're not my type."

As for Desterdick's future, there some are clouds on the horizon. Desterdick has outgrown his job at the workshop, but more skilled work for someone like Desterdick is not available. Sheltered workshops, which are subsidized by state funds, offer only the kind simplistic tasks Desterdick does now. And while UCP staffers says Desterdick could probably handle competitive employment — such as microfilming — corporations are reluctant to take a chance on someone both physically and mentally handicapped.

Desterdick and his roommates also face a challenge on the homefront. The co-op board at the Fountains, where they are living, wants the UCP clients evicted. UCP sublets five apartments there, and the co-op association maintains that it has the right to reject sublease agreements. Fountain Clove Road

breakfast and goes to work at a supervised workshop in New Brighton operated by UCP of New York City. His job — he puts plastic animals into plastic bags to be sold — can be boring, he says, but he likes earning money. At night, Desterdick likes talking on the phone with friends, visiting with neighbors, watching television. He enjoys games, and can beat the staff at Atari and backgammon. Twice a week, he attends special education classes at College of Staten Island.

He has blossomed in the group home atmosphere, according to the UCP staff. "He's learned to be more independent; he's telling time now, counting money — things that were not taught in the institution," says social worker Frank Lopes. He has also become less reserved, and has even cultivated a gentle wit. When a staffer chides Desterdick for not remembering the staffer's birthday, Desterdick

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