

Staten Island

Willowbrook security hit

Suspect in murder of 12-year-old lived on facility's grounds

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Officials of the Staten Island Developmental Center at Willowbrook have come under fire from the local community for lack of security that allowed Andre Rand, a suspect in the slaying of 12-year-old Jennifer Schweiger, to live on the grounds.

The little girl's body was found last week in a shallow grave near the suspect's Willowbrook camp site.

Phil Scampas, the acting vice chairman of Community Board 2, said he would ask for "a reckoning from Willowbrook on why there wasn't better enforcement" at the next board meeting.

'Deserted'

In response, James Walsh, the executive director of the Staten Island Developmental Center, said, "Rand lived in an area of the facility which was deserted. One of the

roadways leading in front of his camp site was closed off due to steam leaks in the tunnel. We had closed it off to vehicle traffic because it was dangerous."

"As a result," Walsh said, "there were no vehicle patrols going up in that area."

Walsh noted that the other roadway perpendicular to the street that leads into the Institute for Basic Research was also closed off with a gate.

"We have been trying to secure the area as we moved away from that abandoned section."

No patrols

Walsh added, "With construction of new homes in the background and with weeds growing in that area, which made it difficult to patrol by foot, there were no such patrols in that area for the past six to seven months."

He said, "As we reduced our work force and consoli-

dated the buildings on the north side, we abandoned the south side with the exception of Executive Way."

Walsh said Rand's camp site was between Building 21 and 22 and right behind the perimeter of Building 27.

Therapy aide

Rand had been employed as a physical therapy aide some time in the mid-60's, according to the director.

"We knew him then as Frank Bruchette, and he just quit one day without giving any reason," he said.

Walsh noted that the man "had been seen on the grounds on occasion but was always asked to leave. But this was prior to the time of the kidnapping."

The director said it was virtually impossible to secure 380 acres of property without putting fences with barbed wire on it.

"It's not a prison. There is access to the facility from Willowbrook Park, from the

Institute for Basic Research, from Willowbrook Road, from Executive Way."

'Horrendous'

"There is also a public bus that brings people in and out all day," he said.

"It is used not only by our people but by day camps, soccer teams, and softball leagues. I would say more than 1,000 people a day come and go on the grounds."

Asked if there were any others living there like Rand, Walsh replied, "We only found one, a former client-employee living in one of the two-storied buildings in the rear, and we evicted him."

Walsh said, "It's really unfortunate that a person suffering from Down's Syndrome, a special child with a handicap, was involved in such a tragedy and that it was associated with a facility that had such an infamous past involving the mentally retarded. It makes it even more horrendous."