

Willowbrook movie to premiere

ADVANCE STAFF REPORT

The 25th anniversary of the lawsuit which closed the former Willowbrook State School will be marked tomorrow night in Manhattan with the premiere of a film about several former residents and their families.

The black-tie event will be hosted by actor Danny Aiello, who also does an introduction in the film. The documentary is titled, "Unforgotten ... Twenty-five Years After Willowbrook." Willowbrook was crowded with as many as 6,000 people jammed into the understaffed and unsanitary institution in the 1970s.

Former Staten Island Advance reporter Jane Curtin was the first to break the story about the conditions at Willowbrook. Geraldo Rivera later developed the story for broadcast news as a young reporter when a doctor at the institution invited him in with a camera to see the conditions.

A class-action lawsuit filed in 1972 was decided in 1975, when a federal judge ordered the state to move Willowbrook residents into group homes. The state missed several deadlines, but in

March 1993, the last of the residents were relocated.

The state kept about 175 acres of the original 380. Now called the Richmond complex, it houses the Staten Island Developmental Disabilities Service Office (DDSO), the Institute for Basic Research (IBR) and the Elizabeth A. Connelly Community Resource Center.

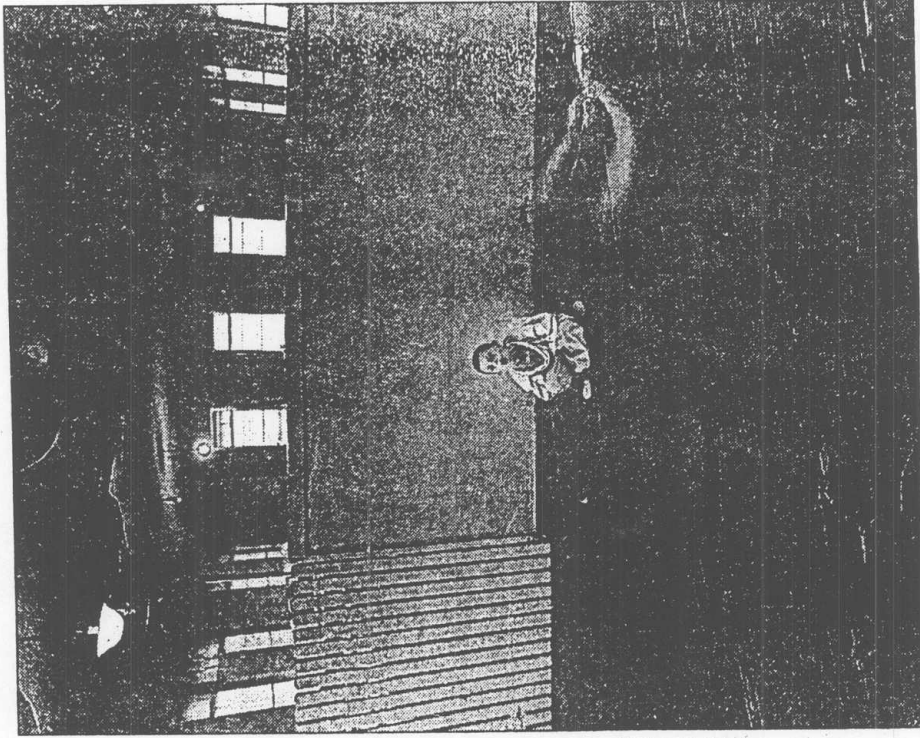
The remaining 200 acres became the new campus of the College of Staten Island (CSI).

After the showing at City Cinemas-Cinema 1 at Third Avenue and 60th Street, a reception will take place at The Chase Manhattan Bank at 270 Park Ave.

Celebrities like Geraldo Rivera, John Turturro, Tony LoBianco, Soupy Sales, Sylvia Miles, Burt Young, Richie Haven, artist Roy Lichtenstein, Diane Wiest, Linda Dano and TV producer Jill Farrow-Phelps are also expected.

French Connection detective-turned TV producer Sonny Grasso will also attend, as will Staten Island actor Clem Caserta.

The premiere and film were funded by HeartShare Human Services of New York and Chase Manhattan Bank.



A Willowbrook scene. As many as 6,000 people were housed in the understaffed and unsanitary institution in the 1970s.

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