

Agencies, organizations serve mentally disabled

■ From group homes and schools to testing centers to support groups for families

ADVANCE STAFF REPORT

In stark contrast to the services provided more than two decades ago by the former Willowbrook State School, local agencies and organizations are taking every measure today to successfully meet the needs of the developmentally disabled.

Willowbrook, during the early 1970s, was inhabited by as many as 6,000 people crowded into the understaffed and unsanitary institution.

In 1975, as a result of a class-action suit filed three years earlier, a federal judge ordered the state to move Willowbrook residents into group homes. Deadlines through the years went unmet by the state, and the settlement terms were extended.

A final settlement between the state and the plaintiffs required that all former Willowbrook residents and those who were still living at the facility be placed in group homes by 1994. By March 1993, the last was out.

To continue to serve the mentally disabled, the state has retained about 175 acres of land from the old institution's 380-acre site. The site is now the headquarters of 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), the largest such campus in the state. Classes began there in the fall of 1994. The college has joined in a bid to improve the training of workers in the field of developmental disabilities.

The CSI/IBR Center for Developmental Neurosciences was established in 1987 to provide students with experience in the field by blending the academic resources of CSI with the research and training available at IBR. It also provides opportunities for study and research.

The Staten Island Developmental Disabilities Information Exchange, operated by the DDSO, is a good place for families who need information about Island services for the developmentally disabled. Call 982-1904 Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Here's a closer look at the services available on the Island for the mentally and developmentally disabled

■ **DDSO**, a state agency working under the umbrella of the Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, offers a number of services at 930 Willowbrook Rd., Building 12.G, 10314.

The DDSO offers residential services at its Willowbrook headquarters, community residences and at a handful of intermediate care facilities throughout the Island. DDSO also operates a multiple-disabilities unit on the grounds of South Beach Psychiatric Center, Building C. The DDSO operates a respite center that offers day, evening and overnight supervision. Parents can leave their children at the respite center for up to 30 days a year if they cannot be cared for at home (982-1904). The drop-in center operates from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. every day.

Respite, case management, referral services, crisis intervention and homemaker services are offered at 930 Willowbrook Rd., building 12G. For information, call 982-1904.

■ **Elizabeth A. Connelly Community Resource Center** provides space for programs and events sponsored by Island agencies who work with and care for individuals with developmental disabilities. The center has a therapeutic pool with a pneumatic bottom that rises or falls, according to setting. It is the only one of its kind on the Island. The center is open weekdays from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m., and has flexible hours on the weekend. For information on services, call 983-5415.

■ **The IBR (494-0600)** is the research component of the state Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities. IBR conducts laboratory and clinical research, offers clinical services and presents educational programs.

IBR contains the George A. Jervis Clinic, where patients are seen for diagnostic evaluations and other tests. The outpatient clinic serves all residents of New York state. The clinic also acts as a diagnostic research clinic for tertiary treatment of complex or intractable conditions. For information and referrals, call the social services division at 494-5126.

IBR also offers a Genetic Counseling Center, where Island residents can obtain tests for a variety of genetically transmitted disorders. The clinic offers prenatal screening, counseling and evaluation of possible genetic disorders. For information, call 494-5369.

The Consolidated Clinical Lab (CCL), a division of the IBR, provides specialty testing for genetic disorders and neurodegenerative disorders (494-5221).

Also affiliated with IBR is Staten Island Medical Imaging, Inc. — a multi-modality diagnostic imaging center opened to the general public as an outpatient facility. Services are provided to physicians and their patients, managed care organizations, state agencies and hospitals.

The Infant Development Program, a research program offered by IBR, tests infants and toddlers to identify those at risk for developmental disabilities. Its purpose is also to develop and implement methods to treat those children in need.

The Prevention Education Resource Center (PERC) provides the public with information about mental retardation and other developmental disabilities, and currently responds to approximately 350 inquiries per year.

IBR houses a number of support groups, including those for Down syndrome and autism.

Also housed at IBR are the New York City Parent Center (494-4872), which was created to help parents and professionals get appropriate services for children with developmental disabilities, and The Children's House (982-5005), a pre-school program for autistic children, jointly sponsored by IBR and the Association in Manhattan for Autistic Children, Inc.

■ **The Staten Island Special Olympics** is an all-volunteer organization whose primary purpose is to enhance the lives of mentally retarded and disabled children and adults — ages 8 to 80 — on Staten Island. Its goal is to improve the physical, social and psychological development of these special children and adults through the implementation of sports, sports training and competitive programs. Staten Island Special Olympics does this by providing experiences in both Olympic-style games and year-round training programs.

These programs and activities foster independence and individuality. Sports training helps Special Olympics athletes in all aspects of their daily living. They gain confidence and build a positive self-image associated with success which carries over into the classroom, home and job.

Staten Island Special Olympic's training clubs for various sports meet daily; however, the organization does not provide transportation to and from activities. The organization's office is located on the grounds of the Staten Island Developmental Center at 930 Willowbrook Rd., Building G., 10314. For more information, contact Elizabeth Fromkin at 983-5351.

■ **The Association for Children with Retarded Mental Development** at 930 Willowbrook Rd. offers a day habilitation program, a sheltered workshop and day training for mentally and developmentally disabled adults. The agency can be reached at 494-7542. Office hours are Monday to Friday, from 8:45 to 4:30 p.m.

■ **The Association for the Help of Retarded Children** operates two adult group homes at 55 Galloway Ave., Westerleigh (273-7555), and 200 Tysen St., New Brighton (448-1112).

It also has a respite center at 105 Houston St., Westerleigh, which provides a planned overnight respite for up to two weeks for individuals living with their parents or guardian. And it offers supportive apartments on Hamilton Avenue in St. George for higher-functioning individuals.

The association sponsors a siblings program and a children's recreation program at the Connelly Center, 930 Willowbrook Rd. Additionally, Sunday bowling takes place at Bowling On the Green, 55 Mill Rd., New Dorp, from 2 to 4 p.m. The cost is \$4.50 for two games and shoes. The association runs a parents' assistance committee and parent support group. The group also sponsors a weekend hotel recreation program for those 16 and older, and a two-week summer day program for ages 3 to 15. Applications are being accepted until the fall for the program. For information on all of the association's services, call Daniel Brewer at (212) 780-2584.

■ **A Very Special Place**, 1429 Hylan Blvd., Dongan Hills, operates day treatment programs that include clinical and support services for people age 21 and over, and a supported employment program for those 18 and older. It also has a community center that provides recreation and social activities for those 18 and older. Day treatment programs are offered at sites on Nelson Avenue in Great Kills and on New Dorp Lane in New Dorp.

A senior citizen program on Seaview Avenue, Dongan Hills, includes transportation for people 55 and older. A TeleRide service provides clients with transportation to functions at A Very Special Place and elsewhere on the Island.

A Very Special Place also offers supervised as well as semi-independent residential living to those over 18 at a number of locations throughout Staten Island. Call, 987-1234.

■ **The Catholic Guardian Society** operates a geriatric group home for developmentally disabled seniors at 46 Dresden Pl., Todt Hill. Phone: (212) 371-1000, ext. 2339.

■ **The Child Study Center of New York**, 285 Clove Rd., West Brighton, is a special-education facility for preschoolers (442-8588).

■ **Children at Play Early Intervention Center** at 40 Merrill Ave., Graniteville, offers a program for infants and toddlers with developmental needs from birth to 3 years. Evaluations, services and transportation are offered at no cost to the family. Ann Avino is the director of the early intervention center.

A preschool for children age 3 to 5 with special needs is also available at the center. The director is Analla Gerard.

Led by Stacey Briggs, the center's community services division provides special education in a community setting to pre-schoolers, as well as physical, occupational and speech therapy, plus counseling and nursing.

Psychological and support services are available for families and include parent workshops, support groups, counseling, and play therapy. For more information, call 370-7529 (PLAY).

■ **Committee on Special Education (CSE)**, is part of the Board of Education's office of Special Education Clinical Service. It offers evaluation and school placement for physically and mentally disabled children from kindergarten to age 21. The office is in New Dorp High School and also provides services, ranging from a full-day program, to occupational and physical therapy, for children from ages 3 to 5. Call, 351-3557.

■ **Eden II School for Autistic Children**, located at 150 Granite Ave., Elm Park, provides classroom instruction, adaptive physical education, speech therapy, psychological, social and residential services, parent training and adult training. There is a preschool program for those age 3 to 5 and a school program for those age 5 to 21; the adult program serves clients over 21 (816-1422).

■ **First Foot Forward**, at the Jewish Community Center, 475 Victory Blvd., Tompkinsville, sponsors a preschool program for children ages 3 to 5 with special needs. Half-day or full-day programs are available.

In addition to a nursery school, therapists work one-on-one with children on such abilities as speech, cognitive skills, socialization and movement. There is no fee for the service. Transportation and a membership to the JCC are included (727-8257).

■ **The Muscular Dystrophy Association** provides patient services through its Manhattan office, (212) 689-9040.

■ **North Richmond Community Mental Health Center's Community Treatment Clinic**, based at Bayley Seton Hospital in Clifton, addresses mental health needs of mentally, developmentally, and learning disabled people 16 and older. Clients are seen individually and in group sessions, and families are also offered support (354-5255).

■ **On Your Mark**, 645 Forest Ave., West Brighton, is community-based and provides therapeutic recreation, family support services, holiday trips and respite getaways, residential services, supportive employment and day habilitation (720-9233).

It serves persons with special needs, from preschoolers through adults. Activities are scheduled after school, evenings and on weekends at several sites on Staten Island.

The agency opened a day habilitation facility in July for those 18 and older at 120 Victory Blvd., Tompkinsville. Call 815-0768.

■ **Our P.L.A.C.E. School**, located at 329 Norway Ave., South Beach, is a preschool for speech-impaired, developmentally delayed and learning-disabled children, ages 2½ through 5. It also serves the hearing-impaired, mentally retarded and children with other disabilities through speech, occupational, physical, as well as creative dramatics. Full-day and half-day services are available. Call 987-4900.

■ **PS 37**, at 15 Fairfield St., Great Kills, serves autistic, developmentally disabled and emotionally disturbed children age 5 to 21, as well as those with multiple disabilities (984-9800).

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■ **The Hungerford School**, 155 Tompkins Ave., Clifton, under Board of Education auspices, provides secondary educational and occupational training for developmentally and physically disabled children ages 5 through 21 (273-8622).

■ **Seton Foundation for Learning**, 104 Gordon St., Stapleton, is a 10-month special-education program for developmentally disabled children ages 5 through 14 (447-1750). There is also a special-education 12-month program for those age 3 to 5 offered at the Joan Ann Kennedy Memorial Preschool, 26 Sharpe Ave., Port Richmond. (876-0939).

■ **Community Resources for the Developmentally Disabled**, formerly called Staten Island Aid for Retarded Children Inc., based at 1058 Forest Ave., West Brighton, sponsors a variety of programs for the developmentally disabled, all of which include psychological, social and vocational services, speech therapy and training in self-help skills. Call 447-5200.

Programs include a preschool for youngsters at 3854 Hylan Blvd., Great Kills, for children ages 2½ to 5 who are developmentally delayed. The group also operates seven group homes throughout Staten Island, a supportive apartment in Rossville, a day treatment center at 500 Seaview Ave., and a vocational training center at 215 Bay St.

■ **The R.E.A.C.H. Program**, under the auspices of the city Parks Department, provides recreation, athletics and creative arts to disabled persons ages 6½ and up. Programs for children are scheduled after school, on evenings and Saturdays, and during the summer. Programs for adults are offered on weeknights. The program is headquartered at the Faber Pool on Richmond Terrace in Port Richmond. Bill LaCurtis is the director of the program. For more information, call 816-5558 after 4:30 p.m.

■ **The Mary Campbell Ellis Vocational Training Center**, 215 Bay St., Tompkinsville, provides occupational training and sheltered workshops as well as support work programs for about 185 clients. For more information about these services, call 720-7117.

■ **The Staten Island Center for Independent Living**, at 470 Castleton Ave., Brighton Heights, is a non-residential resource center with free programs for disabled people of all ages.

Services include interpreters for the deaf, a program for hearing-impaired people, sign-language classes, advocacy, community education, transportation, financial management, housing assistance, independent-living skills, voter assistance and other kinds of counseling and recreation. A wheelchair repair and maintenance clinic also is available.

Many of the staff members are disabled themselves. For information, call 720-9016. For the deaf or hearing-impaired, call 720-9870.

■ **The Elizabeth W. Pouch Center for Special People** provides multi-disciplinary services to the developmentally disabled. Outpatient services include diagnosis and evaluation, family and group therapy, early-childhood programs — including a weekday nursery for children from 3 to age 5 — and early intervention services (home-based and center-based), which offers therapy through the team approach to children from birth to 3 years.

The center also offers T.I.P.S. (Training in Parenting Skills) to parents with developmental disabilities to provide them with basic parenting and family-living skills. In T.I.P.S., parents and children meet in group sessions with their peers. Education for Adulthood, another program the center offers, provides group therapy for developmentally disabled adults, and trains direct care staff to serve developmentally disabled adults. For information about the Pouch Center, call 448-9775.

■ **Staten Island Retardation and Disabilities Council** is a coalition of agencies, parents and interested individuals whose goal is to see that programs are made available to meet the needs of the developmentally disabled.

The council offers information, referrals and advocacy, and sponsors events to foster a better understanding of individuals with developmental disabilities. The Staten Island Council advises the city Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Alcoholism Services on needed services for the Island's developmentally disabled. Meetings are held the fourth Friday of each month at the Connolly Center. Call 983-5354 for information.

■ **TIPSE** (Toddler Infant Program for Special Education), located at Our P.L.A.C.E. School, South Beach, is a home- and center-based program serving infants and toddlers from birth to age 3 who have some type of developmental delay, including social or emotional concerns.

Speech therapists, occupational and physical therapists, developmental therapists as well as social workers and psychologists are available. Transitional language and learning, as well as parent-support groups, are also available. There are no costs to the family for evaluation and/or therapeutic intervention services. Phone: 987-9400 between 8:15 a.m. and 5 p.m.

■ **Tourette Syndrome Association**, Queens, is a national association that acts as an information and referral agency. For more information, call 224-2999.

■ **United Cerebral Palsy** of New York City provides infant stimulation, education, day treatment and vocational and home rehabilitation. It operates a group home on Staten Island for developmentally and physically disabled adults, located at 165 and 185 St. Mark's Place, St. George. For information, call 727-8666.

An adult and children's rehabilitation center is located at 281 Port Richmond Ave., Port Richmond. The children's

center offers programs for infants, preschool and school-age children. For information, call 442-6006.

The following parent-support groups also are available in addition to those affiliated with specific agencies:

■ **Prader-Willi New York Association Inc.**, a support group for parents with children with Prader-Willi Syndrome, an eating disorder. Call Rita Welch, executive director, at 767-6077.

■ **Staten Island Parents of Hearing Impaired**, a support group for parents of deaf and hearing-impaired children and youth. Networking and socializing opportunities are offered. Call Jané Milza at 447-5003.

■ **Volunteers of America Early Learning Center**, 10 Joline Lane, Tottenville, a preschool for developmentally delayed

children between ages 3 and 5. The full-day program provides special education, speech, occupational and physical therapy, psychological and counseling services, as well as evaluations and individual therapy services in the above areas. Marian Jaffe is the program coordinator; the phone number is 984-7900.

■ **The Special Education program of District 31**, located at 715 Ocean Terr., Building A, serves children 4 to 14 certified as disabled by the Board of Education's Committee on Special Education. Children ages 15 and above are served through local high schools. Elementary and intermediate-school instruction is provided for disabled children, as are counseling, occupational, physical and speech services. For information call 390-1662 or the child's school.



At a golf outing to benefit A Very Special Place are, from the left, Steve Callan, Gus DiLeo, Barbara and Marty Casey and Jody Graham.