

THE ISLAND

Community welcomes On Your Mark home

■ **6 developmentally disabled individuals will move into Dongan Hills townhouse on Monday**

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Dongan Hills is welcoming six new members to their community.

Their new white brick townhouse on Garretson Avenue — a residence run by On Your Mark — won't be ready until Monday, but Joseph Bilotti, Thomas Donovan, Lori Fischer, Elizabeth Fraidwitz, Matthew McCue and Michael Smith have already begun decorating their rooms.

The community last night got the chance to meet some of the people responsible for the home, and the residents themselves,

developmentally disabled individuals.

"It is very emotional for me," said Jim McCue, former chairman of On Your Mark and Matthew's father.

"I had my moments, but this is great, just phenomenal," he said, adding that this new residence is the first time Matthew will be away from home.

The townhouse, actually two homes joined in the center, were fabricated in a Pennsylvania factory and transported to Staten Island, according to Michael Pignataro of the Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, an agency which runs group homes and administers those run by private agencies such as On Your Mark.

"We just opened a home in Dongan Hills in April and, fortunately, we were able to get the funding for this one," he said. "The houses are really gorgeous."

The house will be fully staffed 24-hours a day by 12 workers who

will provide personal care, socialization skills, as well as integration and access to the community.

"I am looking forward to it a lot," said Marla Moley, a resident in a similar program who will be working one-on-one with two residents. "This is a big step for me."

On Your Mark received overwhelming support from the Ocean Breeze Civic Association, the agency explained.

"They were instrumental in helping to develop the house and in welcoming us into the community," said Ted Ericson, director of residential services for On Your Mark. "They paved the way for us."

Ericson presented Scott Mireau, president of the civic association, with a plaque in recognition of the group's support. Pignataro also received a plaque.

"I know On Your Mark is one of the best group homes on Staten Island and we welcome them with open arms," said Mireau.

#2
1



ADVANCE PHOTO ■ MICHAEL McWEENEY

Gathered at the new On Your Mark residence in Dongan Hills are, left to right, Bob Witkowsky and Michael Pignataro, of the Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities; Ted Ericson, director of residential services for On Your Mark; resident manager Kim Donnelly; Scott Mireau, of the Ocean Breeze Civic Association; Councilman John Fusco, and parent Jim McCue.