

### From the editor

The only thing I can say to people who don't want "those people" in their neighborhoods is, "look around." They're already there.

The expression we often use in my family is, "everybody has somebody," meaning almost all families have some form of disability somewhere in the family tree. Amazingly, many of those screaming "not in my neighborhood" have close relatives who need the same kind of care.

What do they think will happen to them?

Sunday's headline kicking off the Advance's four-part series on the mentally retarded and other developmentally disabled adults was troublesome for some.

We received a number of telephone calls from Staten Islanders upset over our use of the word "retarded" to describe the people who live in the community residences that have become a flash point in some communities.

Since Willowbrook, "we have worked 25 years to change all that," said one caller who works with the developmentally disabled. "We tell them they are special, not retarded," she said.

The decision to use "retarded" in the headline was not made glibly and the intent, certainly, was not to insult either the residents, their parents, or the staffs.

Rather, it was an attempt to clear confusion over exactly who will be living in the 40 community residences that local human services providers estimate the borough needs to comply with a new state law.

We intentionally avoided vague terms like "disabled" or "special" so readers would know up front exactly who we are talking about — the mentally retarded — because many are under the erroneous impression these residences will house the mentally ill or recovering drug addicts or troubled teens.

Even though "retarded" has taken on a derogatory connotation through misuse, it is still a valid diagnosis that many in the human services and medical fields continue to employ.