

YOUR OPINION

Residence for disabled will be a hardship on its neighbors

The following was sent to Borough President Guy Molinari regarding the group home for the developmentally disabled on End Place:

I received a flyer advising me of HeartShare proposing the purchase of the residence to house six mentally disabled young people. I want to first make it known that I advocate these causes. However, I was in total shock because my backyard and [this residence's] backyard are directly attached.

As I said, I [support] disabled people to the fullest, however, not in my own backyard. I am a 55-year-old disabled woman myself, caring for my own disabled daughter and three young grandchildren.

Where do my children go and play or swim? I have worked all my life and I bought this home because of the need for bigger quarters for my own family. Now it seems this dream has been killed. How can I send a child to swim in her own backyard and not know what to expect? . . .

If I have to face these dilemmas, can I request HeartShare to [pay] for a higher fence so that my grandchildren can have privacy? How will you accommodate my family and our needs now?

My daughter had a nerve severed in an accident and she does not have the use of one arm. For the past four years, we have had countless caretakers come in to help her with her disability. We have had caretakers in our own home come and steal from us.

So what is there to say for this group home? Sounds as if there is more salt being added to her wound.

. . . The Gingerbread School [in our neighborhood] is for autistic children. Have we not met our [quota for] having handicapped people in our neighborhood?

Should I also put my home up and sell out to just anyone and not consider the needs of a beautiful neighborhood?

We are a very private and residential area. How can these poor disabled people mingle with the outside world? How do they benefit from placing them in an isolated residential area? There are so many other places on Staten Island where it would not affect a residential environment such as this one. Is there no home nearer to the Arthur Kill Correctional Facility?

If HeartShare is so concerned about doing the right thing for these individuals, why not buy some land where it is more feasible for these disabled people to have a better environment?

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Community Board 3 should be ashamed of its group home decision

Once again, I find myself responding to discrimination and "downright" meanness in my own community. My husband and I are both native Staten Islanders. Our children go to public school and our family owns a small business.

Oh, and we are also the parents of an 11-year-old girl who was born with mental retardation. My Elizabeth will be going to I.S. 24 in September with all of the neighboring 11-year-olds. There will be only a slight difference in the way Elizabeth's education will be delivered in a self-contained classroom. Some of the children she will go to school with belong to the same church and some to the same swim club. These children know Elizabeth, wish her good morning and respond to her cheerfulness.

What a great opportunity for this community to welcome her into this school. When children, all children, learn side by side, it is a wonderful experience for everyone. When Elizabeth turns 21 and no longer will be attending school, it may be time for her to move out and be a little more independent. Of course, like most 21-year-olds, this is a normal process. In my daughter's case, she will need to be in a supervised group home. Will my community shun her like they did the Very Special Place site in Sunnyside, or the End Place site? Community Board 3 should be ashamed of itself.

I would like to know if these residents scrutinize every potential home-buyer. What makes you think residents of a group home are isolated? Are you?

Developmentally disabled adolescents and adults are quite charming. Why wouldn't you encourage your child to befriend them? To display kindness to someone less fortunate or different is a great gift — to oneself. These are not mentally ill, violent offenders; they are just young adults trying to live their lives.

What is the statement made that they have the wrong house, the wrong block and the wrong neighborhood? Who's to say that? This is our neighborhood, too.

I am suggesting that the City Councilman Steven Fiala and the borough president's office think about the type of people who are appointed to community boards.

We must beware of prejudice and bigotry. Not one of us is exempt from having a disabled child in our family. Thank God for the advocates at a Very Special Place, etc. They make Staten Island a very special place to raise our special children.

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