

# Mount Loretto opening facility

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For a special group of 16 young people at the Mission of the Immaculate Virgin, Mount Loretto, a move three doors down will bring them one step closer to independence.

Thanks to almost \$1 million in funding from the New York State Office of Mental Retardation/Developmental Dis-

abilities, the mission is hurriedly putting the finishing touches on The Monsignor Kenny Memorial Intermediate Care Facility, a newly restored building informally called Cottage B.

The building and program are designed to increase the personal skills of the mission's adolescents with a dual diagnosis of severe mental retardation and physical or emotional disabilities who have "aged-out" of the city system by

reaching the age of 18.

Mount Loretto employees have struggled for six years to move the 16 adolescents into the state agency, which provides more appropriate supervision for more mature retarded individuals.

The facility will be dedicated tomorrow following a 10 a.m. mass celebrated by the Bishop Patrick V. Ahern, episcopal vicar of Staten Island.

"It's a milestone for the mission," said Jane Ernst, deputy executive director of operations at Mount Loretto and the workhorse behind the lengthy effort.

The pristine building, created by Mariner Industries Inc., the only Staten Island contractor to bid for the project, is cozier than the building the clients are moving from and provides a much less institutional setting.

"It will provide a home-like setting where the children will be more involved, more responsible," Ms. Ernst said.

Featuring single and double rooms, Cottage B offers the clients a bright, cheerful setting that has many of the comforts of home.

Oak modular furnishings fill spacious pastel-painted rooms which, Ms. Ernst says, she hopes will encourage good spirits and communication.

Though the facility still awaits Fire Department and state certification, the children are expected to move in shortly after the dedi-

cation.

Sister Marie Bernadette, the director of Mount Loretto, said she's pleased that they can provide a more appropriate agency to supervise the special needs of the children, many of whom require medical, psychological and social workers' care.

She said the clients will become more responsible in a progressive fashion.

"They've come a long way. The point of the program is to move them into a less supervised area," she said. "We're trying to make people self sufficient."

Both Sister Bernadette and Ms. Ernst agree that the clients are excited by the move.

"I'd say it's excitement and fear of the unknown," Sister Bernadette said.

Ms. Ernst said, though looking forward to the move, many had become accustomed to life in their former hospital-like setting.

"There are four single rooms and nobody wants them," she said with surprise.

Members of the clients' families shared the enthusiasm.

During a tour of the facility last week, relatives of the clients put any doubts Ms. Ernst may have had to rest.

"Do they have room for me? I'll move here. It's just like living in your own house," said Eleanor Stepnoski, the grandmother of one of the clients.

STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE ■ WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 7, 1988



Mount Loretto official Michael Green explains the use of the new building's recreation room to the parents of residents.

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2/10/1988