

# Aid agency flourishes with spacious new building

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After four years of planning and renovations, Staten Island Aid showed off its new day-treatment center for the mentally retarded yesterday with tours, food and musical entertainment at the South Beach facility.

Through a \$300,000 grant from the state Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, Staten Island Aid designed the new Stephen Ohalek Day Treatment Center to fit its programs. The building at 500 Seaview Ave. is equipped to help 75 severely and profoundly retarded clients in learning daily living skills.

The new building will allow the center to serve more clients with a wider range of disabilities than it could at its former site in Stapleton.

"We were on two floors with no elevator," explained Ron Dumarest, program director. "We're all on one floor here. It's easier to walk around, monitor programs, respond if there's an emergency, hold meetings. And it's easier for the clients to get around."

The hallways, rooms and bathrooms are all wheelchair accessible. A lunch room that also serves as a recreation room is surrounded by staff office rooms for art and other activities, and a staff lounge.

Two rooms, a kitchen and a combined living room-bedroom,

serve as the "housekeeping unit," where clients learn to prepare lunch, make a bed, use a washer and dryer and other tasks.

Two personal grooming areas provide semi-private cubicles with mirrors and baskets to store brushes and personal items.

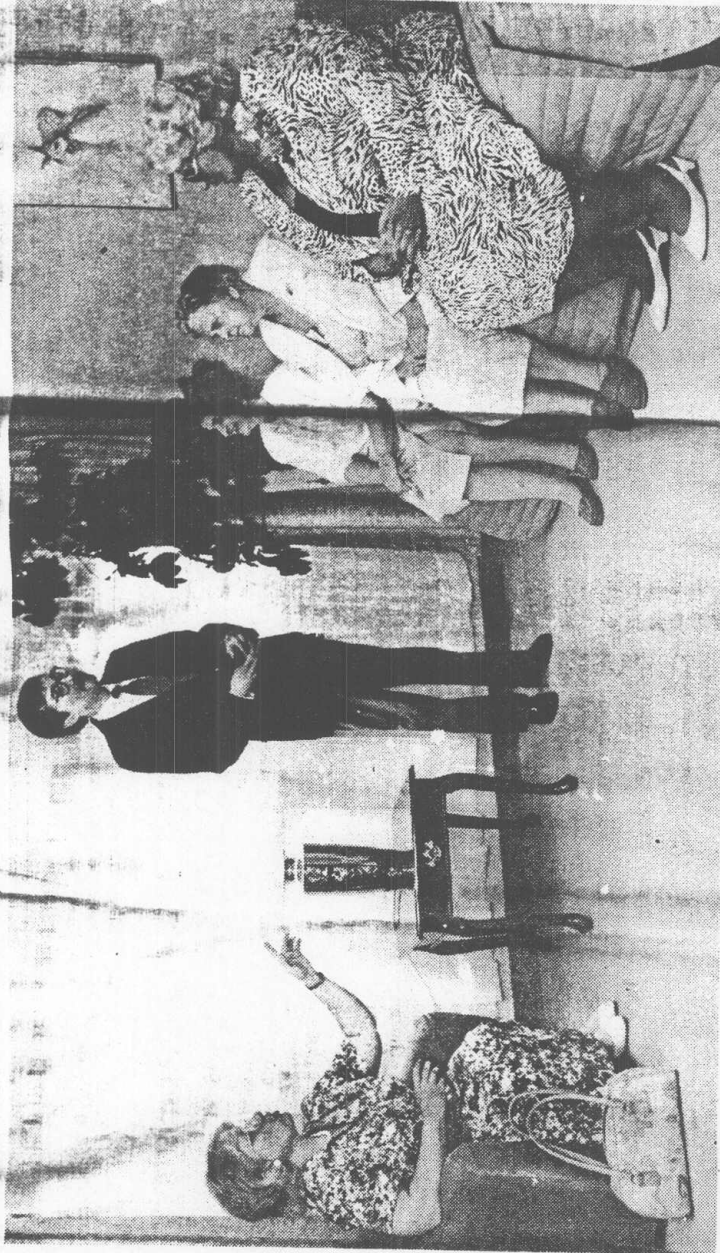
"This is one of the luxuries, I think, of designing our own space," said Executive Director Joan Hodum. "This is the first time that we've been in a new building. For the first time I think our clients are in the facilities they deserve. We're very pleased with it."

The interior of the modern, bunker-like building is freshly decorated with new furniture bought through a direct grant obtained by Borough President Ralph Lamberti. A few rooms remain empty in anticipation of expanding the number of clients from the 50 now served.

According to Mrs. Hodum, Staten Island Aid has informed its referral sources of its expansion, and is confident of growth. Individuals can inquire about the program by calling Dumarest at 979-4802.

Staff and clients have been using the building since February as finishing touches were added and final glitches worked out.

Pointing to the new, creamy beige paint on the walls, Mrs. Hodum noted, "The one thing we found is that it's not washable.



Shown at the new center, from left, are Eleanor Ohalek, Ron Dumarest, Claire Ohalek, Mary Chalek and Joan Hodum, executive director.

We're going to have to have it repainted." "We're still fine tuning the affairs.

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