

Group home opens door to introduce facility to neighbors

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Representatives from the Association for Children with Retarded Mental Development were on hand yesterday at the organization's newest group home to field questions from their new neighbors.

The association, a Manhattan-based, not-for-profit agency, held an open house at its fourth group home on Staten Island, located at 107 Jumel St., Great Kills.

The home will accommodate 10 adults with severe mental and physical disabilities, many of whom used to live at the former Staten Island Developmental Center in Willowbrook.

The residents, whose ages range from the mid 20s to the late 40s, are expected to move in Monday. All 10 are Staten Islanders.

The home has been planned since 1990, but the association had to receive approval to operate it from the state office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities after Community Board 3 voted down the proposal in 1992 because of community opposition.

The five-bedroom ranch home includes a living room, kitchen, dining area, specialized bath-

rooms, and a recreation room for physical therapy.

"Some people in the community may be skeptical," said Tom McAlvanah, director of resident services. "We want the neighbors to see that we are not a major health care facility. We are just another home on Jumel Street."

McAlvanah added, "We want to establish open dialogue with the neighbors. If they have an issue they can come to us and talk."

People who attended the open house said they appreciated the openness and sensitivity the association displayed towards the community.

"In the beginning I didn't know what to expect, but after talking to the the staff, I have no problems with the home," said Jimmy Fiorello, a resident of Jumel Street. "They didn't hold back from answering my questions."

Another street resident, Faye Corvino, said all of her concerns were addressed.

"They [the mentally and physically disabled] need a place to live also," she said.

Gone are the days of the huge institutions; today fewer than 5,000 people live in them statewide. Arthur Roza, associate executive director of the associa-

tion, said, "We are integrating the mentally and physically disabled back into the community, where

they belong."

Linda Anemojanis, discharge planning assessment specialist at

Coler Memorial Hospital, Roosevelt Island, said she was glad the association did not build a 15-

story warehouse for the disabled.

"You keep clothing in warehouses," she said. "Not people."

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