

"The mayor has asked all agencies to make spending reductions," Taylor stated. "All agencies have been asked to pare down to their core services."

The rally yesterday brought the group through a range of emotions as parents and clients spoke about what the threatened programs mean to them.

With tears streaming down his face, Jerry Cohen, a Tompkinsville resident, told the crowd how he has been able to find work and a supportive apartment through Island agencies. "Without these programs, I won't have nothing," he said.

Joe Lucerno, an On Your Mark participant who lives in a supportive apartment and has a part-time job, said, "If the mayor does cut the program, I will have nowhere to go."

Stapleton resident Anthony Musetti shared similar thoughts. "When I went into On Your Mark, I got a sense of achievement because I made friends who were just like me," he said, explaining that he had been the object of ridicule at public school and hence avoided going out of his home. "I will be back on that couch watching TV because there will be nothing for me. There's kids like us who really need this program."

Parents who worked to change the system from the days when the only programs were found at places like the former Willowbrook State School, a notorious facility whose neglect of patients was exposed in the early '70s, said they thought the need to justify these services was past.

"I've had to fight all my life for my son," said Lucy Buttermark of Graniteville. Mrs. Buttermark was one of the founding parents of Eden II, which serves autistic children. "My son, John, has grown in leaps and bounds through Eden and On Your Mark, and I refuse and you should refuse to have these programs close."

With a photo of her son, Joel, by her side, Rossville resident Irene Anzel read a letter she has sent to the mayor. "Do you have any idea what cutting these services will mean for these children and adults?" she read. "Their lives will be changed forever. Your cuts will destroy them."

Marla Moley, also a client at On Your Mark, read from her letter to Giuliani as well. "If the funding is cut, I will have lost two of the three jobs I have. If I lose my jobs, it will be harder for me to save up for college and I will sit around my apartment a lot."

Also speaking at the meeting were Assembly members Robert Straniere and Elizabeth Connelly, who reminded the group that this is the first proposal from the mayor on this round of budget cuts.

"I'm not certain the mayor understands the implications of what's being recommended here," Straniere said. "We can make the case and we're going to get a revision."

Mrs. Connelly said she believes the proposal is "cause for alarm."

"These services are always the ones that are easiest to hit because they feel there isn't a constituency," Mrs. Connelly said. "We've had these wars before. I believe that this can be turned around." She also wrote a letter to Giuliani criticizing the cuts.

South Shore City Councilman Vito Fossella Jr. said he and the rest of the Council's Republican delegation met with Deputy Mayor Peter Powers and spent a great deal of time talking about the cuts. "We're going to have to work together to see if there's a way to make restoration," he said. The mayor's office is "very willing and open to discussion to possibly restore the funding," he said.

"We as a council have to exam-

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