

A MOTHER SPEAKS OUT AGAINST COMMUNITY OPPOSITION



LAURA BRUNO ABOUT STATEN ISLAND

Elizabeth Caminiti couldn't quite keep up with the other kids trick-or-treating around their Great Kills block last Monday, but that didn't stop her huge brown eyes from beaming. Clutching her goody bag, the cherubic 5½-year-old in the black-and-white-spotted-cow costume smiled.

"How does the cow go?" prompted her mother Anne Marie.

"Mmmmm!!!"

"Right!" Mrs. Caminiti said, explaining, "That's how Lizzie says 'Moo.'"

Lizzie does a lot of things in her own special way. She is mentally retarded with orthopedic problems — categorizations that do not inhibit her shining personality. On Halloween in particular, she was just another kid, a precious child eliciting coo-

ing remarks from neighbors.

But when Elizabeth grows up, if she needs to live in a supervised group home for people with developmental disabilities, will she be so welcome in the neighborhood?

Mrs. Caminiti has reason to believe her daughter would be shunned, taunted, and blamed for reducing property values.

A few weeks ago, Mrs. Caminiti was busy with PTA responsibilities at her son Christopher's school, PS 34, the night that 100 Great Kills residents angrily protested a planned

group home for the community. They spoke out at a Community Board 3 committee meeting on the home proposed by the Staten Island Developmental Disabilities Services Office, the borough arm of the state Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities.

The Armstrong Avenue residence, which gained Board 3 approval, is to house eight developmentally disabled adults ages 21 to 40.

Though she hadn't attended the meeting, (See MOTHER, Page A 4)

"Where do teen-agers learn to make fun of retarded people? Ignorance breeds hatred and hatred breeds violence, and that's what's happening in this neighborhood."

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