

books

'Raymond's Room' wants to free 'hidden citizens'

By **PETER GUINTA**

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St. Augustine resident Dale DiLeo, a disability therapist, advocate and consultant, believes that disabled individuals are routinely locked out from mainstream society by a system of institutions and group homes that have developed to treat them.

In his newly released book, "Raymond's Room: Ending the Segregation of People with Disabilities," published by Training Resources Network Inc., DiLeo gives high marks to the people who care for the disabled and he recognizes how far their treatment has come over time.

But he thinks the disabled are often shut away, devalued and taken out of the mainstream of life by the current system. His book is essentially a meditation — sometimes an indictment — for re-thinking how the disabled are treated.

But it's not a dry or tiresome polemic, and he approaches his argument with good humor and warmth. This book is also part memoir, filled with real stories and people met during his 30-year career, which began with a shock.

At his first job at a home

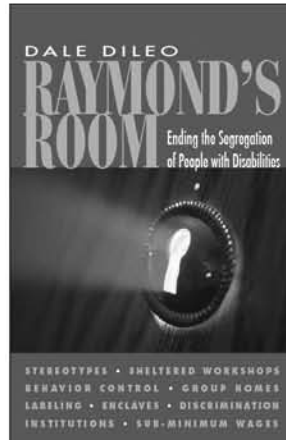
for children with autism in 1975, he was shown a tiny, hot and smelly bedroom that held the facility's most difficult patient. Locked from outside, the room contained only Raymond, who woke up every day to its grim, dirty condition and the loneliness that isolation brings.

"How I could let anyone sleep there haunts me to this day," DiLeo says in his honest and pointedly self-examining manner.

He said there are 3.2 million to 4.5 million people of all ages who have developmental disabilities in the United States. These include retardation and other diseases that take away mobility or cognitive function or the ability to speak or see or move at will. Many clients pos-

Book-signing

May 19: Dale DiLeo will hold the first book signing for "Raymond's Room" from noon to 3 p.m. at Barnes & Noble, St. Augustine. The book can also be obtained by visiting any of the following web sites: www.barnesandnoble.com, www.amazon.com and www.raymondsroom.com.



doing it this way?"

He then suggests an alternative that does not include isolating them from society. And finally, he asks that the disabled be given the same respect, privacy, rights and opportunities that anyone else would enjoy.

This is not a specialized text or a political screed, but a warm,

highly readable memoir and guide to unprejudiced vision. DiLeo book would interest both the disability professional logical and the general reader.

He takes a positive approach to moving people — disabled or not — closer together within their communities.

sess multiple disabilities.

DiLeo tries to blast away the stereotypes and the subtle but hurtful words and invisible discrimination that often attaches to those who are separated from society and looked upon as different.

Those kinds of perceptions lead people to organize their neighborhoods to keep out the disabled. Other things are less easy to pin down, such as attitudes or arrogance, meaning they are overlooked for jobs or as friends, and paid sub-minimum wages for their work.

In this book, one sees that DiLeo has thought about these people deeply and compassionately. At every issue regarding the disabled, he looks at the way they are treated and asks, 'Why are we