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REGISTER-GUARD

Drug abuse hits home for politician

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) — "You're a politician, call somebody." Doris Baumgartner pleaded to her husband when their 15-year-old son came home overdosed on drugs.

State Rep. George Baumgartner made the call and as a result his son is back in school making A's and Florida has two new laws to help thousands of other young drug users.

"We were furious, crushed and confused," said Baumgartner, D-Miami, recalling the day last July when his son Pat admitted taking an overdose of methaqualone, an anti-

pat admitted taking an overdose of methaqualone, an animal tranquilizer.

After rushing Pat to the hospital to have his stomach pumped, Baumgartner telephoned a friend who advised that Pat be taken to "The Seed," a South Florida drug treatment center.

For the next 42 days Pat lived in a foster home and his only communication with his parents was two nights a week when all 800 patients at The Seed assembled in a huge warehouse.

PAT STEPPED to a microphone and told an audience of 1,200 parents: "My name is Pat. I'm 15 years old. I've done everything from pot to heroin for three and a half years."

It was the first time the Baumgartners had heard the whole truth.

"It was enough to knock you out of your chair. There was total disbelief, guilt, shame and a lot of tears," said Baumgartner.

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Baumgartner, 44, was then in the middle of his campaign for a third term in the Florida House of Representatives. He had to reduce his campaign schedule because of the twice-weekly parents' nights at The Seed, but he won re-election anyway.

"If it could happen to me, it could happen to anybody," said Baumgartner, a \$50,000-a-year contractor. "Friends who thought they had a good family unit too, were having the same problems. I felt I could do something about it as a legislator."

Baumgartner introduced two bills in the 1973 legislative session. One appropriated \$400,000 to help sustain licensed drug treatment centers like The Seed. The other modified a 1972 law which required school boards to expel students charged or convicted of a drug crime, giving the option of re-admitting the pupil if he completed treatment in a licensed rehabilitation center.

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BOTH BILLS passed the legislature last week.

Next year he plans to reintroduce a bill, killed this session, which would have required \$1 of each court fine paid in Florida to be funneled into a fund to assist drug treatment centers.

He notes the 50 licensed drug treatment centers in Florida are overloaded with nearly 100,000 patients.