10-B—Sarasota Herald-Tribune Sunday, May 4, 1975

Revival Ways In Anti-Drug Fight

By CINDY ROSE

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) – For $750, The Seed says it will turn a drug-wracked child into an ideal teen.

"The Seed gave me back my son — it gave me back somebody I could love," says Joe Lyons, whose son Tim was on drugs.

But some say that the unusual drug rehabilitation program founded by an ex-alcoholic named Arthur Robert Baker, uses a form of brainwashing to take away a teen-ager's individuality.

"The Seed's methods are repugnant," says Dr. Raymond Killinger, a psychiatrist. "Seed graduates are like robots — they can't think creatively."

Dr. Killinger says that he and other psychiatrists have a dozen young people who have emerged from The Seed only to enter a psychiatric hospital.

Despite the criticism, Art Baker has convinced judges, civic groups and thousands of parents that his program can end drug addiction. A congressional subcommittee headed by Rep. Claude Pepper, D-Fla., once described The Seed as "imaginative, innovative and dynamic."

—AP Photo

Peer Pressure

. . . linked arms united young Seed participants

In Florida, there are Seeds in Fort Lauderdale and St. Petersburg. Another is to open in Orlando. If Baker has his way, outposts will spread into every major city in America. Plans are under way for Seeds in Lexington, Ky., Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio; Charlotte, N.C., and Dallas, Tex.

Most youths attending The Seed are under 17. Some are as young as 9, and many come from affluent families.

Baker, 51, claims The Seed has a success rate of 90 per cent. In less than four years, he says, his program has straightened out 4,780 teens while failing to help 582.

The state Office of Drug Abuse says the success rate is closer to 40 per cent. Judges who refer young people to The Seed say they statistics to either support or don't have statistics to either support or don't have the follow-up refute Baker's claim.

It is hard to pin down why The Seed has ended drug dependence for some. What it attempts, through behavior modification, is to put teenagers under intense pressure from their peers to change.

"Peer pressure put them on drugs, peer pressure will get them off," Baker says.

The Seed (the name symbolizes a new beginning) gets donations from parents and civic clubs and Baker has received laurels, including a Freedom Foundation award. It's a change from 1970, when Baker — struggling to make a living as a comedian in Miami Beach night spots — started The Seed in an abandoned house because of what he described as his interest in young people and his "special way" with kids.

The Seed's budget for the year ending Sept. 30, 1973, was $613,979. Figures for subsequent years have not been released because Baker says there is no reason to make them public. Some of the money comes from United Way and part from the $750 fee for each Seedling, as the young people involved in the program are called. City and county governments also have contributed and parents have donated such items as coffee, peanut butter, bread and toilet paper.

The National Institute of Drug Abuse put more than $200,000 into The Seed in 1973, but declined to invest an additional $700,000 unless Baker opened his books to federal inspectors. Baker declined, saying he doesn't want bureaucrats prying into his program.

Twice a week, some 700 parents take seats in a long, open room at the Fort Lauderdale Seed, cushioned for the long night with throw pillows from home.

Across the aisle are 500 teen-agers in jeans or weathered slacks

Each teen-ager in the first two to six weeks of the program is required to stay in a foster home with another Seedling and his family. The youngster sees his parents only at these sessions.

Songs, confessions and chants ring out: "The Seed indeed is all you need, to get off the junk and the pills and the weed," is sung to the tune of "Green Acres." Then comes "America, the Beautiful," and then, one by one, the teens stand for their testimonials.

"I did hash, pot and alcohol. I used to run away once in a while, but this time the police found out where I was staying and came and got me. I've been here seven days and I'm trying to learn about myself," says Rose, 15.

Penny, 14, knees shaking, "I used drugs, hash, THC, STP." Prompted, she continues: "I have to stand on my own feet. I can't rely on my friends. If I overdosed or something, my old friends would have just walked away and left me."

She looks furtively for her mother's face in the crowd. Finally, her eyes flicker in recognition. "I love you, Mom," comes the childlike voice.

"Luvya, Penny," the crowd roars.

(Continued on Page 11B)

Youth Drug Rehabilitation Uses Tent Revival Formula

(Continued from Page 10B)

Corky, Sam and Bruce confess almost the same list of sins.

Then parents take the microphone.

"Corky, Corky, you look real great," a mother says. "Everybody saying 'I love you,' I don't think I could ever mean it. But I see these unselfish people giving their time to help you; I can tell them I really love you all."

"Luvya, Corky's mother," the crowd chants.

Hank's mother stands. "I hope you keep trying, you usually don't." A man in the third row grimaces at the women's voice. "She'll change," he whispers.

"Jean?" a mother calls. "Mom, I'm coming home." Jean screams. And the room explodes, "Hurrah, we luvya, Jean."

Messages of hatred, misery or love leave many observers deeply touched.

"The parents have to be involved," says Baker. "You can't just dump a kid off and let somebody do the babysitting. If the parents don't come the kids can't stay. These kids have to know their parents are interested and love them. For some parents, it's the first time they've listened to their kids."

Testimonials that The Seed's methods work are frequent and fervent.

Lee — only first names are used at The Seed — graduated three years ago.

"I didn't want responsibility. I just kept running away. It got to the point where all I could think about was drugs.

"Then I came to The Seed and something hit me. It's been that way ever since. I'm going to college, I have goals. All I can say is that The Seed did it for me."

The Seed's 30 counselors are all ex-drug addicts whom Baker says can't be conned. He disdains professionals. "They can't do a damn thing with kids."

Kate says she tuned out everything for the first three days. "You get sore from sitting on those hard chairs for 12 hours; you get so mad you want to cry. It's the worst feeling I ever had in the world."

Then she started paying attention. "You have to, what else can you do?" she says. Baker says that's a typical reaction — he calls it the three-day miracle.

Kate followed the usual regimen. For two weeks she went to The Seed each day from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. At night, she stayed with another Seedling — the foster home — where her door was locked and the windows boarded. She wrote a confession nightly.

The third week she returned to her home and attended 12-hour sessions daily at The

Educator Claims Schools Do Too Much

URBANA, Ill. (AP) — Schools cost too much because they are trying to do too much, Michael Bakalis, former Illinois superintendent of public instruction, says.

Bakalis, now a visiting professor of education at North-

western University and the University of Illinois here, urges schools to concentrate on two goals. They are teaching children skills, such as reading and analytical thinking, needed for a lifetime of learning, and helping youngsters develop a positive self-concept.

He said that we have been throwing on to the schools the responsibility for being leaders in desegregating, sex education and drug education, "which I am not sure they are able to do."

"Perhaps other government agencies should have the job of trying to solve these problems."

But other teens compare The Seed program to an indeterminate jail sentence. Kate, 17, says she was taken screaming and scratching in her mother's car to the Fort Lauderdale Seed, a fortress-like building surrounded by a 12-foot fence.

Most teens are taken to The Seed by parents. One in 10 is sent by juvenile court judges.

According to Kate, she first was searched by the staff, her personal possessions confiscated and then she was made to stand before a large group and tell her story.

"You think that the less you Seed. The fourth week, she returned to school, and to The Seed three evenings a week, plus one full day each weekend. The $750 fee covered all sessions and food.

Hour after hour, Kate was forced to evaluate herself. "I learned about myself and I found out other people have feelings," she said. Other teen-agers said they had to agree with the group's morals in order to be allowed to go back home.

Seed rules prohibit teens from seeing their old friends. Baker refuses to discuss the rules. "They can be distorted," he says.