



True Love Waits® Takes the Town 2005 and Beyond

True Love Waits Takes the Town is a community-based strategy to equip teenagers with facts that will lead them to choose sexual abstinence until marriage. This approach will fight AIDS, other sexually transmitted diseases, teen pregnancies, as well as a number of emotional, social, psychological, and spiritual problems by helping teens to change their attitudes and behaviors related to sexual expression.

This project can best be accomplished in a community through the combined efforts of:

- local churches,
- the medical community,
- educational system,
- business community, and
- municipal government.

This project is a challenge to each segment of a community's leadership to work together to raise the standard for sexual abstinence until marriage for students.



True Love Waits Has Made a Difference

For more than 10 years, True Love Waits has given students the opportunity to express their commitment to sexual purity.

Students have responded to the call to save sexual intimacy for marriage. Hundreds of thousands of teenagers have signed the True Love Waits commitment.

The commitment reads:

Believing that True Love Waits, I make a commitment to God, myself, my family, my friends, my future mate, and my future children to a lifetime of purity including sexual abstinence from this day until the day I enter a biblical marriage relationship.

The results speak for themselves.

- There has been a noticeable decline in teen pregnancy.
- There has been a decline in the number of teenagers contracting sexually transmitted diseases.
- There has been a decline in the number of teenagers having abortions.
- Research clearly indicates that students who sign a pledge like the True Love Waits commitment do delay sexual involvement.

The media has attributed much of this to True Love Waits and other expressions within the sexual abstinence movement.

Why “Takes the Town”?

It is no longer deniable. A challenge to teenagers to be sexually abstinent until marriage is far more effective at shaping behavior and saving lives than other approaches that have been tried. True Love Waits is not a negative campaign. It is a positive message that gives students hope for healthy lives, self-respect, and a promise for the future.

The church is responsible for calling people to live their lives unto God. For Christian young people, the

most compelling reason to live a sexually pure life is because God has called them to do so. However, there are many other reasons to promote sexual abstinence.

From the medical point of view, premarital sex, especially early sexual involvement, can be very unhealthy. Consider three primary health issues. First, many sexually active students become pregnant. Beyond the social issues involved in teen pregnancy, there is an increased possibility of complication in young women, particularly under the age of 16. Second, there is a significant possibility of infection. Some venereal diseases may be completely unsystematic but can still be passed on to sexual partners. The more sexual contact, the more likely a student will contract an infection. Third, there is an increase in the likelihood of cervical cancer among young women who engage in early sexual activity.

Schools have a major interest in building character. Students who show sexual discipline and are able to delay sexual gratification display greater maturity and healthier character. Delaying sexual involvement is correlated with avoidance of other risky behavior such as the use of drugs and alcohol. Students who abstain from sex are also more likely to achieve academic success and meet educational goals.

For the business community, sexual purity is about healthier families, healthier employees, and a healthier community in which to do business. Most business leaders want to give back to the community. They want to be part of making their community a better place to live. Sexual promiscuity in a society leads to higher levels of depression, higher levels of divorce, bigger public health concerns, increased demand on the social welfare system, and a less reliable workforce.

City governments are concerned about public health and public safety. Most public officials are pragmatists; they want to do what will be most effective in making their communities healthy in the most cost-efficient way possible. For example, they recognize that a call to teenagers to remain sexually abstinent is a way to curb the health problems related to teen sex. Government leaders are anxious to support activities that are true community efforts.

Community Approach

With so many institutions in a community having a specific interest in teenagers choosing to abstain from sex, True Love Waits Takes the Town creates an atmosphere in which the community works together to call teenagers to this commitment.

True Love Waits Takes the Town unites students and leaders in a community to develop a message that the healthiest, best, and most godly approach to sexuality is to delay sexual activity until marriage.

True Love Waits Takes the Town involves drawing many people together to raise the banner of sexual purity. Takes the Town involves a joint effort from various facets of the community. Ideally, this includes church leaders from various denominations, key business leaders in the community, doctors and administrators from hospitals and the board of public health, school administrators and members of the board of education, and city officials. All areas of community life are desired (though not essential) to see the sexual abstinence message uplifted.

Step 1: Building a Coalition

Each community designs a coalition made up of various representatives of community life to begin the True Love Waits Takes the Town emphasis. The following actions are important to building a successful coalition.

- (a) *Define the territory.* In most cases, this will be the town. In some cases, however, a coalition may want to expand its influence to a metropolitan community or a county. In other cases, a specific township or smaller community in one city may be the focus.
- (b) *Locate a champion.* One person needs to be the driving voice who will commit the time, energy, and emotion to making True Love Waits Takes the Town happen. This person should be someone with the ability to speak with passion and grace to a wide variety of people.
- (c) *Draw area churches together.* Church leaders need to be willing to work with Christians of other denominations as well as those in their own denominational group for this effort to be successful.
- (d) *Begin to develop interest* by asking questions and gathering information like:
 - Who are the key leaders in our community?
 - Who in our community is working for sexual abstinence already?
 - What resources are available in our community to promote the message of abstinence?
 - What are the specific areas of need in our community?
 - What are the attitudes and behaviors regarding sexual involvement of teenagers in our community?
 - What are the health issues related to sexually transmitted diseases and teen pregnancy in our community?
- (e) *Invite a cross-section of people to begin a coalition* for sexual abstinence for teenagers in the community. The coalition may not include all aspects of the community, however every effort should be made to include representatives from every area. Include:
 - Doctors, health care providers, public health officials
 - Business leaders
 - Educators and educational administrators
 - Representatives from municipal government
 - True Love Waits alumni (that is, adults who made and kept the True Love Waits pledge as teenagers)
 - Students who are leaders in churches or schools
 - Persons in the media (e.g., local newspapers, radio, TV)

Step 2: Setting Goals

Once the sexual abstinence coalition is in place, begin to set some goals for the community. These goals should include the number of teenagers you hope to see take the True Love Waits pledge during the coming year. You may also set goals regarding changes in the health of students in your community, such as a certain percent reduction in the number of teen pregnancies that are reported during the year. Goals should be challenging, yet attainable; specific to the well being of students; and worthy of the time and energy invested in this project.

Step 3: Customize a One-year Emphasis for the Community

With goals set, the coalition begins developing the one-year True Love Waits Takes the Town emphasis. This emphasis should be customized to the individual community.

Consider three phases to the yearlong emphasis:

1. *The Community Kick-off Event:* Communities may want to plan this event near Valentine's Day 2006. This may take the form of a rally, a block party, a seminar, or a concert. The purpose is to raise awareness in the community of the sexual abstinence emphasis that is about to begin. This event should have a community feel and should not be solely focused on any one entity. A solid media plan for this event is essential. The True Love Waits Web site will offer suggestions to help with the development of the media plan. This community kick-off should not replace a Christian event that focuses on the commitment of teenagers to God. Churches can work together to plan a Christian rally, or individual churches can hold their own events. However, it is important that churches also are included in the community kick-off event.
2. *Project Calendar:* A one-year calendar should be developed that can be distributed at the community kick-off. The calendar should include activities the coalition plans to promote over the following year. Activities should involve many different community

groups doing things to raise awareness of the importance of sexual abstinence until marriage. The calendar might include, but should not be limited to:

- Churches challenging students to sign the True Love Waits commitment in their worship times.
- Churches providing training on the biblical teachings regarding human sexuality.
- Doctors distributing literature in their waiting rooms on the health benefits of sexual abstinence before marriage.
- Doctors leading health seminars at hospitals or schools regarding the health benefits of abstinence.
- Schools distributing literature in sex education and health classes about the benefits of sexual abstinence.
- Schools sponsoring sexual abstinence assemblies with special speakers.
- Schools displaying posters regarding the dangers of sexual promiscuity and the wisdom of waiting to have sex.
- Rotary Clubs or other civic clubs raising funds to get the abstinence message to members of the community and beyond for the prevention of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.
- Businesses putting up billboards encouraging students to wait until marriage to have sex.
- Businesses sponsoring public service announcements on TV or radio encouraging sexual abstinence outside of marriage.

Our goal is to have ideas to flesh out a one-year True Love Waits Takes the Town emphasis available on the True Love Waits Web site by early Spring '05. However, the best ideas will be those that grow out of the excitement of the coalition and the resources of the community.

3. *Celebration Event:* As a culmination of the yearlong abstinence emphasis, plan an event to celebrate all that has happened in the community. The coalition

can plan it for anytime that is workable for the community. Look for a location for the event that will fit the community nature of the event. For example, use the lawn at the city hall, the town square, a community park, a hotel ballroom, or the high school football stadium or gymnasium. The main goal for the event is to celebrate what has happened in the community due to the emphasis on sexual abstinence. This might include but is not limited to:

- Announcements of the number of True Love Waits commitments that have been signed and a display of those cards.
- Announcements of any measurable changes in the health of your community such as the reduction of teen pregnancies or teen STDs.
- Concert with a band that supports the abstinence movement.
- Concert by a local school choir, show choir, or a joint community choir of teenagers.
- Drama by professional drama teams, church drama teams, or school drama teams.
- Speakers who can inspire students and adults to lives of sexual purity.
- Personal statements by students who have taken the True Love Waits pledge.
- Testimonies by married adults who took the True Love Waits pledge and waited until marriage to have sex.

Include a media plan to get coverage of this event in local newspapers, radio and/or TV.

Step 4: Continuing the Challenge

After the celebration event, the coalition should not dissolve. This coalition continues to work into the future to promote sexual abstinence until marriage in your community. Some members of the coalition may not wish to continue to work after the yearlong emphasis. If possible, make sure that the coalition continues to include representatives from churches, the business community, the medical community, the education system, and local government. The ongoing work of the coalition should include the following tasks.

- Track measurable trends in health related to sexuality and report such findings to local news outlets and local schools.
- Look for opportunities to provide training for young people in health care centers, schools, and churches on the benefits of a sexually pure life.
- Plan periodic events that uplift the benefits of sexual abstinence before marriage.

Targeting the Takes the Town Message

The message of True Love Waits Takes the Town is focused on several groups of people. Coalitions must attempt to present the idea of sexual abstinence before marriage in the language that will be best understood in various factions of community life.

1. *Business Community Benefits:* Publicity for the business; positive economic impact on the community; opportunity to be a participant in a worthy cause; opportunity to support employees of the business who have an interest in the message of sexual abstinence; opportunity to make a impact on the health of the family; opportunity to create healthier workforce; opportunity to make a long-term impact on the community. *Why should I participate?* You will become an influence and a vital participant in the community. You have a responsibility to the community to attempt to make it a better place. You can do things that others in the community cannot do. *Activities:* Provide financial backing for the sexual abstinence coalition's ventures. Distribute information to employees and customers. Support or sponsor events that raise awareness of the benefits of a sexually pure lifestyle.
2. *Medical Community Benefits:* Opportunity to treat patients holistically; preventative medicine; encouragement to make the community healthier. *Why should I participate?* The medical perspective gives the abstinence message added credibility in the eyes of the community. Everybody doesn't go to church, but almost everyone goes to a doctor.

Activities: Seminars in school, church, or hospital. Literature distributed through the office. One-minute health tip on the local news. Co-sponsor a booth at the local health fair. Provide access to the hospital. Play a video loop in an office or hospital on the health advantages of sexual purity.

- Municipal Government Benefits:* Save tax dollars; improve public health; provide positive political exposure; generate community involvement. *Why should I participate?* You have the opportunity to influence the community. You will represent the interests of the people. You know the heartbeat of the community. You are involved in the schools. *Activities:* Be present at abstinence events. Provide written support through proclamations, news releases, and so forth. Provide public service announcements and ads for schools and churches. Obtain the use of public facilities.
- Education Community Benefits:* Provide the school with tools and support materials for character education. Materials will be provided at no cost to the schools; they are provided through the church or with funding from the business community. Excellent approach for involving the PTO/PTA. There might be the opportunity to use True Love Waits pins, stickers, and caps as fund-raising alternatives. No child should be left behind because of early sexual involvement. Communities may want to develop partnerships between a school and a business to aid the school in practical ways. *Why should I participate?* You have the opportunity to join a response to a community health issue organized by community leaders. This emphasis will support your work to help develop good citizens. *Activities:* Provide information at faculty meetings. Host assemblies. Provide a character blurb during morning announcements each day. Display posters on wise choices related to sexuality. Conduct an essay contest on the importance of sexual abstinence before marriage. Conduct a poster contest on the importance of sexual abstinence before marriage. Involve student council members. Announce the number

of students from your school who have signed True Love Waits commitments. Emphasize avoiding sexual activity on prom night.

- Church Benefits:* Brings students together into one force to make a difference regarding sexual attitudes and behaviors. True Love Waits builds bridges for families; this emphasis builds bridges between the church and the community. This emphasis builds community, helps fulfill the mandate to transform culture, opens the door for relationships that could help accomplish other things in your community, provides the church improved credibility in the community. *Why should I participate?* This is Kingdom business; it is bigger than any one church. The community is going to assist you in taking the message to your students. This is a simple approach to deal with a complicated issue. TLW Takes the Town benefits your students because they will get the message of sexual purity other places besides at church. *Activities:* Provide instruction regarding the morality of sex and the commandments of God related to sexuality. Challenge students to sign the True Love Waits pledge. Hold neighborhood block parties and round-table discussions. Host training for parents.



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