

My work with Washington AIDS International Teens (WAIT) in the United Kingdom

Marshal De Souza

July 11, 2017



Marshal De Souza [center] with members of the WAIT-UK team

Since my graduation from the [Unification Theological Seminary](#) (UTS) in 1989 I have held leadership positions in the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification-UK](#) (FFWPU-UK) and its [affiliate organizations for the past 28 years](#), as well as pursuing a career in [youth development](#). Of all the assignments I've had, and all the work I've been involved in, what I've been the most committed to is what I am working on now, [WAIT-UK!](#)

Ever since I met the [American WAIT team](#) in 2004 (on three separate occasions in 2004, in the Middle East, South Korea and Washington D.C.), I've been actively involved in developing WAIT-UK.

What is WAIT? The Washington AIDS International Teens (WAIT), began in 2002 as a small group in Washington, DC, but has since spread to 24 nations. WAIT advocates abstinence and faithfulness in marriage using music, dance and drama. It is effective in both traditional and industrialized urban cultures, teaching youth to make positive life choices and develop their talent.

The work in the United Kingdom (UK) began in September, 2005 when I invited a team from the United States to tour the UK for 10 days with a number of teenagers and their parents. WAIT-UK became a registered charity in 2008, and we have since started WAIT teams in Ireland, Uganda, the Czech Republic, Switzerland, South Africa, Zambia and Kenya.

Thousands of youth, aged 12-19, have been exposed to the WAIT message of abstinence before marriage/lifetime partnerships as the best way of preventing HIV/AIDS, and the development of the talents and education needed to lead a healthy lifestyle. In the UK, after years of volunteering, our WAIT interns have gone on to pursue careers in diverse areas like medicine, the performing arts, and the audio-visual field.

In July 2017 a small team of six WAIT members (2 trustees and 4 teenagers) are travelling to the Philippines to educate young people, especially girls between the ages of 10-18. The purpose is to build a

foundation to begin a WAIT Team to provide a platform of support to help youth thrive and overcome the dangers of social media and the debilitating effects of HIV/AIDS.



Shockingly, according to the latest data from the [Philippine Department of Health's Epidemiology Bureau](#), in just one month in July 2015 there were 682 new cases of HIV infections registered, 17% more than the same month in the previous year. Between January and July 2015, a total of 27,138 cases were reported. This number is rapidly growing, estimating that HIV infections in the country would reach 133,000 by 2022.

The WAIT Project Philippines has several aims:

- 1) To start a WAIT team in Manila, with a team leader and supported by a group of trustees;
- 2) To educate youth leaders about the [biology of the spread of HIV](#) and AIDS;
- 3) To grow awareness of the dangers of unprotected sex, and to offer a solution.
- 4) To combat the growth in online sex trafficking activity.

Our team will visit schools, orphanages and rescue shelters. Youth will experience the performing arts: singing, dance, drama and other creative channels as ways to explore their talents in order to build a healthy lifestyle. Our goal is to leave them feeling that they have support and can build a new life for themselves.

It is also our hope to connect to the Philippine Department of Health, to see what's being done to combat the growing number of HIV and AIDS victims, and to discuss how the new WAIT team can work alongside them in improving the situation.

The trip to the Philippines is from July 12-31, 2017 and a video of the WAIT Project Philippines will be forthcoming.

WAIT is a proactive and dynamic peer education project, aimed at preventing the spread of HIV through delaying sexual activity, and inspiring young people to live a healthy and ultimately satisfying lifestyle.”