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Contact: Don Beehler 615.566.0776 / don@abcdcommunications.com

**True Love Waits International African summit
launches multi-country expansion**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (Sept. 17, 2007) — True Love Waits International recently held a historic three-day summit in Johannesburg, South Africa, with representatives from eight African countries. The summit was the official launch of a strategic initiative to expand True Love Waits throughout Africa. True Love Waits is a ministry of LifeWay Christian Resources.

Forty-three people, primarily nationals, attended the summit, where they were guided through a comprehensive True Love Waits International training manual with follow-up lessons. They also heard from leaders in Uganda and Kenya about how the abstinence-until-marriage message was successfully implemented there. Most of the work True Love Waits has done on the continent has been in these two countries.

“The participants came with a sense of expectancy that did not diminish throughout the week,” said Sharon Pumpelly, who serves as lead consultant for True Love Waits International. Sharon and her husband, Larry, introduced True Love Waits to Uganda in 1994 while serving with the International Mission Board.

“To illustrate the diversity of the group, there were medical doctors, pastors, denominational leaders, health organization leaders and abstinence leaders,” added True Love Waits co-founder Jimmy Hester, who attended the summit and was one of the speakers.

The common thread that brought the group together was the shared desire to see a movement of God among the youth of their countries through young people committing themselves to God’s plan for their sex lives, according to Hester.

“Many positive comments were shared that affirmed the summit successfully cast a vision for True Love Waits International,” he said.

A highlight of the summit was individual reports from each country. Leaders shared vital statistical information about their countries and what is currently taking place regarding sexual abstinence, and in particular True Love Waits.

One leader shared how his country is reaching military personnel with the True Love Waits challenge. Another shared how churches are being planted as a result of True Love

Waits presentations and follow-up work. Nearly every leader reported how True Love Waits has strengthened the ministry of churches.

Earlier this year, True Love Waits International received \$950,000 through major donations to LifeWay's *A Defining Moment* philanthropic campaign, created to help touch the nations for Jesus Christ. The donations enabled True Love Waits to begin expanding in six African countries and the summit was the first step in that process.

"A Defining Moment has given us resources to be more proactive and intentional in our work in Africa, rather than just responding to requests," said Hester.

Since its introduction in Uganda 13 years ago, True Love Waits has been a catalyst for bringing people together to address the AIDS problem and spread the message of biblical purity to schools, youth groups, communities and other places. In the years that followed, Uganda's HIV/AIDS prevalence rate (the percentage of people living with HIV/AIDS) – which in some areas was above 30 percent – dropped to the current rate of 6.7 percent of the country's 25 million people.

True Love Waits has been a part of mission strategy for the International Mission Board for many years. In addition to Uganda and Kenya, True Love Waits is being used in South Africa, Botswana, Zambia, Tanzania, Swaziland and Mozambique. The IMB has a number of missionaries directly involved in this ministry in these countries.

"The majority of those that attended the summit are young African leaders who know the significance of the True Love Waits commitment and how it can affect the future of their countries," Hester said. "When we gave them the True Love Waits manual, their reaction was, 'Wow! This is really special,'" he added.

Echoing Hester's sentiments, Tshepo Kgalaeng, a representative from Botswana, wrote in a follow-up e-mail, "I just want to say a special thank you for inviting me to the summit; [it] was an eye opener and spiritually reviving. I'm looking forward to working with you, because Botswana is one country that needs the True Love Waits message."

Hester indicated that he and the other True Love Waits International team members have a sense of excitement about what God is going to do next now that the summit has concluded.

"When Richard Ross and I first sketched out the concept for True Love Waits on a napkin, I never dreamed I'd be sitting in South Africa 14 years later," Hester said. "It's amazing to see how great God is and the magnitude of His plan."

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