

Save sex, not safe sex

On tour

Challenge Team UK has just completed its first tour of this country. The concept of the Challenge Team began in Canada in the early 1990s. Teams of young adults toured schools speaking to students about sex. Instead of telling them how to do it safely, they told students why they had decided to save it – for marriage. Each team consisted of two young men and two young women who volunteered their time to go on tour for four or five weeks.

In November 2000 two Challenge Teams came to England following invitations from schools here. The first tour was successful and teams were invited back in 2001 and again at the end of 2002. For four weeks during February and March 2004 the first English team made a tour. This team consisted of second year students at Moorlands College near Bournemouth. Four Canadians who applied independently toured separately at the same time. The response was overwhelming.



The team start to construct a human pyramid during a presentation to Year 9 pupils.

Talking about sex

The Challenge Teams visited thirty schools and thirteen youth groups. In all, about 6,000 pupils, mostly in Years 9 and 10, heard the message.

Audiences listened attentively to the presentations. Following a short comedy sketch the team members introduced themselves. They then involved the audience in a discussion about the purposes of sex. All agreed that there were two long term purposes – to create babies and to create emotional bonds of love. A female team member told the audience that she wanted to be really excited when she got pregnant and phone her friends and family with the good news. She did not want to dread having to tell everyone. The message was clear: babies are wonderful but babies change your life.

Chastity challenge

Team members dispelled the myths that they were: anti-sex, ugly or sex-starved! Then a new word was introduced: chastity. A lifestyle of chastity was



presented as possible and desirable. In short, respecting your own sexuality, and that of others, is a great way to live. Freedom from sexually transmitted infections and/or the fear of contracting them; freedom from unwanted pregnancy; freedom to be friends with people of the opposite sex; the chance to plan for the future and look forward to meeting Mr or Miss Right one day and being able to say that their special gift of sexuality was saved just for them; and freedom from fear of rejection or meeting an 'ex' were all presented in simple, punchy ways.

Team members also presented a few salient facts about sexually transmitted infections and the damage they can cause; shared their personal stories; talked about the limitations of condoms – which can only reduce risk and not eliminate it; and dealt sensitively with issues of rape and abuse.

The schools which hosted teams were a mixture of state comprehensive, Roman Catholic, Independent and Church of England.

Further tours will be organised between 21 February and 14 March 2005. For more information please contact:

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Fantastic feedback from pupils

Before setting out on the road the team members set up a confidential email site for pupils to write in with comments or queries. Seven or eight messages were received every day. Some were rude or silly, others asked for personal help and others made comments such as the ones below.

Hi guys – I would like to keep in touch with u cuz when u came on 1st March u really inspired me and I want to learn more about chastity. I now know to save sex till when I'm happily married and know it is the right time to do it. YEAR 8 PUPIL

I'm 17 in a few days. Yesterday a team came to talk to my local youth group which I help out with and gave a short talk on their beliefs about chastity. Not normally someone to take this sort of thing seriously (I'm not religious), the team's message really appealed to me. Recently I've been thinking about the direction my relations with others have been going, and I'm no longer wholly content with where everything's headed. I'm interested in the lifestyle the team talked about.

...I just wanted 2 say how good it was because you tackled quite a sensitive subject with humour and facts and u didn't patronize us in any way! which is a great change from sum of the wayz we are taught. I've decided to practice chastity... YEAR 9 PUPIL



Fantastic feedback from adults

As the Challenge Teams toured the country positive emails from school staff began to whiz through cyberspace:

Very, very good. The staff assessment was 'excellent' and the young people got a lot out of it. The team were brilliant. As a Youth Worker I am very impressed and appreciative of the Challenge Team UK's work and ministry.

Many thanks for the presentation at my School today. It was brilliant and much needed. The message came over loud and clear and I felt privileged to be there. TEACHING ASSISTANT

Just emailing to say how much we appreciated the visit of the Challenge Team to our school today. Great fast-moving snapshots of drama, factual information and anecdotes. The presentation held the Year group's attention throughout. The team connected well with the students. HEAD OF PHSE

The team interacted very well with the kids and at the end coped very professionally with one or two awkward points. Personally I do not particularly agree with their message but it was put over in a very persuasive way without any 'geek' angle that the kids would have picked up on. If you could contact the school again next autumn we would like to book them again. YEAR 10 HEAD

It was really great to experience the power of your message last Monday. I was inspired to see how well the four of you could work together and how clearly committed you all are to getting the concept of chastity into the hearts and minds of British youth...

The presentation was very professional and put across a powerful message. MIDDLE SCHOOL DEPUTY HEAD

The team came today and gave an excellent presentation which was very well received. This service to schools offers a radical alternative to the current cultural assumptions. DEPUTY HEAD TEACHER