

The Student Becomes the Trainer

Training thousands to make abortion unthinkable for millions...

Impact Report

JUSTICE FOR ALL

Nov. 2015

In this Impact Report, JFA trainer Joanna Wagner shares two stories from volunteer Keawe Bridges. Along the way, she shares some of the numbers that help illustrate JFA's impact in 2015.

Keawe's inclination to take what he had learned from JFA and help other pro-life advocates tells us something about his personality and his upbringing, but it also tells us about the encouragement and training he received through the Salt and Light program at his high school, Christian Heritage Academy (CHA). The Salt and Light team endeavors to "train American Christian leaders for every sphere of society," and we've been privileged to partner with CHA and its Salt and Light program since 2007. Salt and Light Director Aaron Ferguson has said, "JFA is the best thing we do as a school." We're gratified to hear that, because we think partnering with the CHA community to train world-changers like Keawe is one of the best things we do!

SmW - Steve Wagner, Executive Director

...one person at a time.

I looked into a crowd of 200 faces on October 1, as I prepared to deliver a chapel presentation to grades 7-12 at Christian Heritage Academy (CHA) in Oklahoma. In the eight years since I was a high school student sitting in a similar high school auditorium, I've talked with many friends and acquaintances facing unplanned pregnancies or struggling with past abortion decisions. I hoped that this morning I could inspire these teens to get equipped for similar interactions, knowing that they might make the difference for the little ones whose lives will be in the balance in their friends' wombs all too soon.

I was aware of the stakes, but because of the outstanding partnership we've had with CHA over the years, I was also aware of how much potential was present in the room. CHA alumnus Keawe Bridges is a good example. During his final JFA outreach event as a CHA student recently, he shared this story:

[When] I arrived at the University of Oklahoma (OU) campus...I was expecting to talk to a lot of pro-choice people right off the bat. I was all geared up and ready to play defense against any argument the pro-choice advocates could throw at me – and then the very first person I talked to was a pro-life advocate. Even though it wasn't what I had been expecting, it was good to know there were pro-life advocates on campus.

Then I remembered that the JFA staff had told us not to let people off the hook, so to speak, just because they said they were pro-life, as many people who claim to be pro-life still have doubts or consent to abortion in some cases. As a pro-life advocate myself who, before JFA training, couldn't present a decent rebuttal to any of the pro-choice arguments, I figured that I could impart some of my newfound knowledge to this fellow pro-life advocate. I started by telling him that I was a pro-life advocate as well, but that I wanted to test him by acting like a pro-choice advocate by using some of their arguments. Just as they had me, the arguments stumped him... I was then able to step outside that role of being the pro-choice advocate and explain to the college student how to dismantle the pro-choice arguments – which is how I had been taught [by JFA]. Thus I was not only able to have discussions with pro-choice advocates about abortion, but I was also able to teach pro-life advocates how to defend against [pro-choice] arguments... thanks to the JFA training I received!

Keawe's confidence to teach others what he had learned didn't come out of



2014



2015

Keawe shares the JFA Brochure during outreach events at the Univ. of North Texas (left) and the Univ. of Oklahoma (right).

JFA training staff made 65 presentations to 4,313 people in 2015.

nowhere. Keawe was part of an incredible community of Christians who were pouring into his life, including his parents and the faculty at CHA. In his freshman year at CHA, a JFA presentation helped convict him about the importance of being a voice for the unborn. As a member of CHA's Salt and Light Student Leadership Program, he participated in our mentor-guided Seat Work and Feet Work events, practicing the art of creating conversations that change minds. Most importantly, because of his repeated involvement, he gained the confidence to start training other pro-life advocates!

251 volunteers participated in a JFA "Feet Work" outreach event for the first time in 2015.

Not only did Keawe give this pro-life OU student ways to respond to pro-choice concerns, he even went a step further and began to step into the pro-choice role so that the pro-life student could get a chance to practice the conversation. Interactive practice is vital to JFA's educational philosophy, and Keawe had caught the vision.

He caught that vision so well, in fact, that the next day he was even able to help a few of his classmates to begin putting their thoughts into words when they were stumped in a conversation. Instead of jumping in and taking the conversation over for them, he helped them stay in the conversation and "learn by doing."

Two of my high school colleagues decided...to try the survey approach. One of the two was a bit shyer and had less experience, so I accompanied them just to help out in case they ran into any confusing conversations. At first I just sat on a nearby bench to watch... Once they had reached the end of the survey [with one woman], the two administering it hit a bit of a snag as they seemed unsure how to continue the conversation.

Seeing the unscheduled dramatic pause, I gingerly got up off the bench and walked over to join the conversation... Since I had been listening to the answers the woman had given during the survey, I readdressed one of the situations in which she had said she would be okay with abortion; however I didn't correct her... [Instead, I presented] her ideas in ways that my peers were able to recognize [those ideas] as common pro-choice arguments [so that my peers could offer a] rebuttal. By the end of the conversation, we were able to clear up any confusion the woman had had, and she agreed with us on all points.

When Keawe shared these stories, I was astonished by his ability to converse with pro-choice advocates, but I was even more astonished by how he had caught the vision for training others. This should not have surprised me, though, since JFA had given me the very same gift when I was Keawe's age. JFA training was what originally equipped me for dialogue, gave me opportunities to practice good conversations, and inspired me to take on the responsibility of training others. It's simply what JFA does.

This year, JFA trainers started this process with 4,313 people at 65 presentations and workshops, by convicting the hearts of young and old alike about the inhumanity of abortion and the need to create a different kind of conversation about abortion. We took that a step further with 728 participants at 32 seminars, equipping them for dialogue through hours of teaching and interactive practice. Finally, 251 people took the critical step of creating dialogue with pro-choice advocates at a JFA campus outreach event for the first time, and this prepared them to create conversations in their own spheres of influence. It's a joy to see that for Keawe the process came full circle as he began equipping others to make abortion unthinkable.

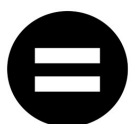


CHA students and JFA staff members pause after a day of outreach at the University of Oklahoma in March 2015. Keawe is in the first row, second from right.

JFA conducted 36 days of outreach on 15 college campuses in 2015.

Read More Stories of Young People Changing Hearts and Saving Lives:

www.jfaweb.org/stories



- Joanna Wagner, for the JFA Team