



Humanitarian Award

Vincent M. Waite, MD '77, MPH&TM

Vincent M. Waite, MD '77, MPH&TM, is a family medicine physician who has devoted his career to providing health care to underserved and resource poor populations. He currently provides healthcare through a mobile van operated by the Greater Lawrence Health Center in Lawrence, Massachusetts, where he primarily serves homeless patients, many suffering with the dual diagnosis of significant mental illness and addiction, through visits at shelters and soup kitchens. He also works with residents in the Greater Lawrence Family Medicine Residency Program, who learn from his example that being a doctor can allow you to be an agent for social change.

Born in Staten Island, New York, Waite attended the University of Pennsylvania, where he was a member of the track team and active in the Roman Catholic Newman Center and other Christian groups. Learning about missionary work, Waite set a goal to become a doctor in a mission hospital in Africa. At Upstate Medical University, he became active with the Christian Medical Society and shadowed his advisor, Robert Hall, MD, who worked in resource-poor areas of Syracuse. He spent the final six

- BACHELOR'S IN BIOLOGY**
University of Pennsylvania
-
- RESIDENCY IN FAMILY MEDICINE**
SUNY Health Science Center, Buffalo
-
- RESIDENCY IN GENERAL SURGERY**
Medical Center of Central Georgia
-
- MASTER'S IN PUBLIC HEALTH AND TROPICAL MEDICINE**
Tulane School of Public Health
-
- FELLOWSHIP IN OSTEOPATHIC PRINCIPLES AND MANIPULATIVE MEDICINE**
Southeastern College of Osteopathic Medicine
-

weeks of medical school doing a clinical elective in Central Africa, where he worked with a surgeon who was the only doctor in a mission hospital in a remote town called Ippy.

With his aspirations confirmed, Waite completed a family medicine residency at the University of Buffalo, and during that time became affiliated with a Southern Baptist organization. After residency, he completed training at Golden Gate Baptist Seminary in San Francisco, a requirement for missionary placement, followed by two years of general surgery residency at the Medical Center of Central Georgia to prepare for practice in rural West Africa.

Waite spent 15 years working in Nalerigu, Ghana, working in four-year stints with a year off in between to refresh and update medical training. It was during those periods that Waite earned a master's in public health and tropical medicine and completed a fellowship in osteopathic manual manipulation. In Ghana, Waite worked 120-hour weeks, doing more than 100 surgical procedures a month, from skin grafts and prostatectomies to hernia repairs, treating patients who came from hundreds of miles around.



Dr. Waite (third from right) and friends

He also founded the non-profit organization Friends of West Africa to finance the procurement of prosthetics and prosthetic training for amputees in Northern Ghana. Established in the early 1990s, it continues to provide care today.

After returning to the United States full time in 1998, Waite worked as a family physician and in a public HIV clinic in Georgia before finding his current position in 2008, which allowed him to refashion his dreams to serve people with limited resources while also teaching residents, helping them to remove judgment

about people who are extremely resource poor and learn to integrate them into their practice. He returns to his hospital in Ghana for six weeks each year, bringing residents from the Greater Lawrence Family Residency Program to introduce them to a radically different culture and medical environment.

Waite has been honored with the Outstanding Clinician Award from the Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers, the Family Physician of the Year Award from the Massachusetts Academy of Family Physicians, the Family Medicine Education

Consortium Award, and a National Service Award from the Republic of Ghana, West Africa.

“Mother Theresa made the comment that very few of us get to do great things on earth, but we can all do small things with great love,” says Waite. “We are each called by life to develop our own meaning. For me, the answer lies in the life that’s lived in service to others, guided by right conduct, right action, and informed by love.”