



**SOLIDARITY** with South Sudan

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## From Stritch School of Medicine at Loyola University in Chicago, USA to Catholic Health Training Institute in Wau, South Sudan

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Nathan Kittle travelled more than 11,000 km around the world to volunteer his skills training nurses and midwives. Here Nathan shares his impressions and experiences.



*Nathan Kittle is currently in his last year of medical school at Loyola University in Chicago, IL USA. In the beginning of 2013 Nathan spent 5 weeks with Solidarity with South Sudan in Wau at the Catholic Health Training Institute (CHTI) where he taught the senior nursing and midwifery students in the classroom as well as in the local hospitals. He has previously worked as a volunteer in Mexico, Nigeria, Guatemala, Ghana, Bolivia, Peru and throughout the USA. Nathan is graduating from Medical School in June, 2013 and will begin a residency in Family Medicine. He hopes his busy schedule for the next 3 years will allow him to return to CHTI. Nathan was recognized with the "Spirit of Martin Luther King Jr. Award" from Loyola University.*

I believe South Sudan is different from any other developing country I have visited. South Sudan is a nation developing with people who have largely had no formal education, are still licking the wounds of 20+ years of violence and who are hungry for a better life. This is why organizations like Solidarity with South Sudan need to be here!

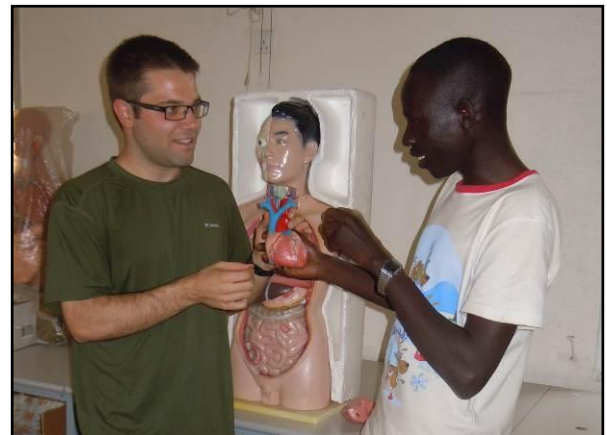
My experience at the *Solidarity* Catholic Health Training Institute (CHTI) in Wau was largely spent teaching nursing and midwifery students in the classroom, but also in the local hospitals. I learned how hard it is to prepare lessons and stand in front of a classroom of 20+ students. The challenges were ever-present but they made my time so worthwhile. I have never before been around a collective group of young adults who were so hungry and committed to taking full advantage of the opportunity CHTI offers.

The students I was able to talk with individually or in small groups expressed their desire to help their nation. They expressed frustration at the tribal fighting still taking place in their country and they understood the importance of their role as the next generation of South Sudanese leaders. Many

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students have aspirations of working in the Ministry of Health, for prominent NGOs or in their local parishes. They see and

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understand that they are being given an education that holds them to higher standards than they are used to and they are excited to use the skills they are learning inside and outside the classroom.

***CHTI teaches these students that a nurse is much more than a technician. A nurse is a healer, an advocate and a leader in the healthcare delivery system and the students are grateful for the challenge of this role.***

The students are also very grateful for the dedicated, loving, and patient staff of Solidarity With South Sudan



administrators, teachers, and tutors at CHTI. The quality of

the education the students are receiving is evident in the hospital setting. When I was on the wards at Wau Teaching Hospital it was the CHTI student who would explain diseases. The students from CHTI develop the technical skills that every nurse needs to possess, but their education differs from their colleagues in the depth of medical knowledge they possess and most importantly in their care of the patients. CHTI teaches these students that a nurse is much more than a technician. A nurse is a healer, an advocate and a leader in the healthcare delivery system and the students are grateful for the challenge of this role.

As I formulate a response to the question that I will inevitably answer multiple times over the course of first few weeks upon my return to Chicago: “How was South Sudan?” I will reflect on the lack of basic infrastructure like electricity, running water and paved roads; I will remember the hot, dusty, gritty environment of Wau; and finally I will tell stories of the people I met. I will share stories of students who struggled to survive during the war in their country who now find themselves with an opportunity for a better life. I will tell of the patience and compassion shown by the staff of CHTI who works tirelessly to pull together a “first-world” education in this country still struggling in its infancy. And I will close by telling others of an excitement and a hope I have for the people I met. The odds are against those teaching at CHTI and their students. However, the hunger of the students combined with the compassion and dedication of the staff I believe will translate into a bright future for Solidarity With South Sudan as well as the country of South Sudan.

