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## the BULL RUN OBSERVER

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## MAILBAG: Patriot HS senior delivers a thank you and report on his fact-finding visit to Sudan and South Sudan

To the Editor:

Thank you so much for writing and publishing past articles about my adventures in the U.S. Senate and Africa.

South Sudan's and Sudan's people face terrible hardship from violence and war, while kids in these countries are senselessly dying from Type-1 Diabetes. Thanks to you and the Bull Run Observer, thousands of people are now more aware of these problems. Thank you again for helping me spread this information to others.

Last September and October, I spent four weeks in South Sudan and a week in Sudan.

First, I checked on the Malakia and Guref diabetic clinics. Kyle's Campaigns for Change (KCC) provides supplies and financially support both clinics.

Second, I wanted to follow up with the Senate Pages' "South Sudan Federalism project." I presented this in-person to the Minister of Federal Affairs and the First-Vice-President of South Sudan.

Third, I wanted to visit a new diabetes clinic in Hasaheesa, Sudan.

I achieved these goals. I learned the two Juba, South Sudan diabetes clinics had saved an additional 15 Type-1 diabetics (T1D) because of the more than \$1 million of supplies provided since I last visited in August 2019.

I also had a two-hour interview with the First Vice-President of South Sudan, his Excellency Dr. Riek Machar.

I presented the South Sudan-Senate Page Federalism project, discussed diabetes in South Sudan and my work with KCC.

During our meeting, I gave him a Stetson hat with a U.S. Senate pin attached, commemorating the project's sponsorship.

I gave him this particular gift, because President Salva Kiir Mayardit, South Sudan's president, got a similar one from President George Bush ten years ago. Now, Dr. Machar can say that he has a hat from the U.S. Senate.

In Juba, I also attended the 2020 Sudan peace talks where Sudan and the Nuba Mountains agreed to stop hostilities.

The Nuba Mountains are a contested region between Sudan and South Sudan, that legally belong to Sudan.

My understanding is that among an estimated crowd of 10,000, I was one of only three Americans, along with my Dad, and the U.S. Special Envoy to Sudan, attending, and the only teenager.

They reserved a special seat for me with a name tag and VIP pass. I felt honored and privileged to be there among diplomats and politicians from Europe, Asia, and Africa. Seven Presidents from other countries attended, too.

In South Sudan, I met with three other Ministers, a Governor, a Major General, and two members of the Council of States.

In Sudan, I met with the Director-General of International Health as well as the Minister of Welfare and Social Reform.

These meetings were to help advocate the problems with Type-1 and Type-2 diabetes and discuss a new organization I am helping called Spread Your Wings (SYW).

SWY empowers young South Sudanese and Sudanese women

(12-18 yrs. old) who drop out of school because of forced marriages and an oppressive culture.

Three Spring-2020 Senate Pages, friends of mine, formed SYW: Mallory Slucher (Senator McConnell; R-Kentucky), Phoebe McChesney (Senator Duckworth; D-Illinois), and Ally Cobery (Senator Shaheen; D-New Hampshire). Mallory and Phoebe were also part of the Federalism Project team. Their website is <https://SYW-Impact.org>.

I help, however possible, and KCC supports their fundraising.

I also visited Khartoum and Hasaheesa, Sudan, where I met over 30 T1D children attending the Hasaheesa Clinic, supported by KCC.

Hasaheesa is rarely visited by foreigners. I felt like a celebrity, since the kids' parents, friends, and staff took about 1,000 photos, though it was also awkward, since poverty was so prevalent.

I attended Patriot High School online during this time. It was challenging, since I had meetings all day and attended school until nearly midnight.

The conditions in South Sudan were harsh and a bit scary. Fighting continued outside the city, and we heard gunshots at night.

In Khartoum, Sudan, the people are distraught over the transitional government, so there was rioting in the streets one day, with some people killed. I stayed inside this day.

Khartoum is a big city with several million people, so it's not as bad as you might think. I walked and talked to anybody I saw. Everybody was super friendly. There was



Kyle Thaller, left, with First Vice-President of South Sudan, his Excellency Dr. Riek Machar, who is shown wearing a gift from Kyle, a Stetson hat with a U.S. Senate pin attached, commemorating the country's sponsorship of diabetic clinics KCC sponsors.

no real issue other than the Internet, where severe gas shortages made the Internet in Sudan very unreliable.

We lost power for about four hours each day. It was slow in both countries, since 5 PM in South Sudan is 10 AM in Virginia.

I attended a local high school for a day in Kator, a borough of Juba, South Sudan.

It was an enlightening experience. They had a wrecked-up chalkboard, no power, no light, no calculators and no running water.

Classes I attended included European History, Calculus, and Accounting. Everyone in the school must pass a calculus course to graduate. Calculus is not a U.S.

graduation requirement, which is why I am not currently taking it.

In history, they talked about Metternich, the Congress of Vienna, and Napoleon. The teacher and students were impressed with my knowledge. U.S. education is superior in most ways, but South Sudan is exceptional in at least a few areas, which was surprising and humbling.

I will never forget this incredible adventure. I'm very proud of what I am trying to do, but I am also very thankful for what we have and often take for granted here in the United States.

Thanks again, to Mr. Davis (Bull Run Observer Writer) and everybody at the Bull Run Observer, for all of your help and support. Have a great holiday.

*Kyle Thaller*

Spring-2020 Senate Page  
(Senator Warner; D-Virginia)