

# Baylor nursing students meet life-and-death needs in Africa

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Patients wait to be seen at a tent clinic served by a team from Baylor University's Louise Herrington School of Nursing. (Baylor Photos)

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**By Rebekah Hardage & Matt Pene**

*Baylor University*

The six-hour journey from a remote Ethiopian village was not easy for a woman pregnant with twins and going into labor. Making matters more

difficult was her mode of transportation—being carried by several men.

The woman arrived at the medical clinic frightened and bleeding, but she was assisted by a group of students from Baylor University's Louise Herrington School of Nursing who were ready to help.



Michelle Sanders, a Baylor University alum, teaches a group of children from an orphanage in Uganda the “Sic ‘Em Bears” cheer.

The first twin to arrive was born healthy. However, the second twin was born with several life-threatening complications. The team of Baylor nurses worked through the night providing medical care to make sure the baby survived.

“I really view it as a child who was able to survive due to the Baylor team that assisted the mother,” said Lori Spies, a lecturer in nursing at Baylor who coordinated the mission trip.

“It was a matter of life or death, and the students used what they had learned to save the baby.”

The women who helped save the life of the child were five Baylor nursing students on a month-long medical mission trip to Ethiopia and Uganda.

## **Ethiopia and Uganda**

The trip was created to increase the capacity of nurses as health care providers and designed to enhance their education while serving the health needs in a developing country.

The trip began in Addis Abbaba in Ethiopia, where Spies and her students worked along side Kim Scheel, a graduate of Baylor's family nurse practitioner program.

The students worked in an established medical clinic in a predominantly Muslim area and treated a wide variety of tropical diseases like anthrax, trachoma, malaria, intestinal worms and amoebic infections. The students also provided prenatal care and assisted in labor and delivery, a first for the annual trip.

## **Inspiration for the trip**

After leaving Ethiopia, the group traveled to Uganda, where they toured the International Hospital and its associated nursing school. Rose Nanyonga, the hospital's nursing director, is a former student of Spies at Baylor who traveled with the group several years ago. Nanyonga was the inspiration for starting the annual trip to Uganda, Spies said.

"Rose could have held a powerful position in the hospital system in this country, yet she felt called by Christ to return to Uganda and work for the benefit of her people. I have tremendous respect for that," Spies said.

The Baylor students also worked in an orphanage in Uganda, providing medical care and health education to nearly 500 children, primarily orphaned because of the AIDS epidemic. They provided each child with one-on-one counseling and guidance on topics ranging from hand washing to staying in school.

“By returning each year we are working to create a sustainable outreach to improve the lives of some of the neediest people in God’s kingdom,” Spies said. “It is a blessing to serve the needs of some of the poorest people in the world. This trip just fits perfectly into Baylor’s mission.”

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