

# North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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## Union General welcomes Baby Shepard as first of 2021

By Jarrett Whitener  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Weighing in at a healthy 9 pounds, 7 ounces, and measuring 21 inches long, Shepard Knight Sumrell earned the distinct honor of being Union General Health System's first baby of 2021.

Delivered Saturday, Jan. 2, at 1:14 p.m. by Dr. Kevin Davis, Baby Shepard is the child of Karli Bonner and Joshua Sumrell of Hayesville, North Carolina.

For Bonner, Shepard arrives less than a year after the birth of her other baby boy in January 2020. Having Irish twins, she said, came with the added benefit of allowing her to reuse toys, clothes and other items.

"I am prepared for another baby, and I have all the hand-me-downs from last

year," Bonner said. "They can share everything since they are only a year apart."

A few other families were in the running for the New Year Baby, though the other mothers had their babies on Christmas Eve, leaving a clear path for Shepard to take the title.

Bonner got the idea for Shepard's name after a 9-year-old girl she babysits suggested it, with the middle name of Knight being a reference to Mississippi Unionist Newton Knight.

Shepard was born a little earlier than his due date, but Bonner and the hospital worked together to deliver the baby safely and make sure he was healthy.

"It was nerve-wracking, and we had to get him out sooner than his due date because he was so big," Bonner said. "That was scary, but I am really proud

of Dr. Davis; he did the right thing and made the right call."

With 2020 generally having a negative connotation for most people due to COVID-19 and all the challenges and changes it brought to bear, Bonner and Sumrell said they are hoping for a more positive 2021.

"I hope he doesn't have to see everybody with masks on," Bonner said of Baby Shepard. "That is a big deal. Hopefully, it is the year for good weather and just a better year in general."

Of course, welcoming a new member of the family can cause anxiety for parents needing to learn the dos and don'ts of childrearing, but for Bonner, having had the experience now of raising a stepson and birthing two boys of her own has given her plenty of confidence moving



Proud parents Joshua Sumrell and Karli Bonner pose for one of their first family photos with son Shepard Knight Sumrell, born Jan. 2, 2021, at Union General. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

## UCSO verifies sex offender compliance with annual effort

### Mangifesta inherits CID reins from Williams

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
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The Union County Sheriff's Office Criminal Investigation Division has a new leader in Tom Mangifesta, who was promoted from lieutenant to captain on Dec. 31.

Mangifesta has taken over CID command from the now retired Capt. Pat Williams, for whom the Sheriff's Office held a farewell party Dec. 22.

"I can honestly say, in 36 years in law enforcement, Pat has been one of my favorite bosses," Mangifesta said. "She never micromanaged, she let you do your job, and if you ever needed anything, she was always there to lend a helping hand or get you the resources to do the job."

"She is very devoted to her family, her church, and to all of us in criminal investigations. (Sheriff Mack Mason) would often call on Pat



UCSO Capt. Pat Williams, Ret. for her thoughts and opinions on agency issues, not to mention she is a phenomenal cook. Her leadership will be missed by all of us at the Sheriff's Office."

Under his management, Mangifesta said CID investigators will continue promoting transparency with the community while redoubling certain efforts, like monitoring locally registered sex offenders whose past crimes range from



UCSO Capt. Tom Mangifesta child molestation to rape.

Once released from confinement, convicted sex offenders are subject to strict legal requirements governing where they can live, work and frequent. Such restrictions, like being prohibited from residing within 1,000 feet of a school, are designed to curtail opportunities for repeat offenses.

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## Beloved local WWII veteran Bud Johnson dies January 1st



Bud Johnson saluting in the 2012 Veterans Day Ceremony at the Towns County Veterans Park in Hiawassee. Photo by Libby Duncan

By Shawn Jarrard  
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Retired U.S. Navy Chief Quartermaster Clarence "Bud" Johnson of Hiawassee passed away on Friday, Jan. 1, following a brief illness.

Johnson, 98, was a true patriot who served his country honorably for more than three decades. He enlisted at the age of 17 in the leadup to World War II and later participated in the famed Battle of Iwo Jima.

He was a devout Christian and strong advocate for veterans,

lending tremendous support over the years to local veteran groups and causes. A lover of history, Johnson also compiled books on Pearl Harbor and Iwo Jima, and he spent much time working on his extensive autobiography.

The World War II veteran appeared recently at the 245th Birthday Party for the U.S. Marine Corps held at Daniel's Steakhouse Nov. 10, wherein he gifted the local Marine Corps League a book of his wartime experiences and a replica statue depicting the iconic Iwo Jima

flag-raising.

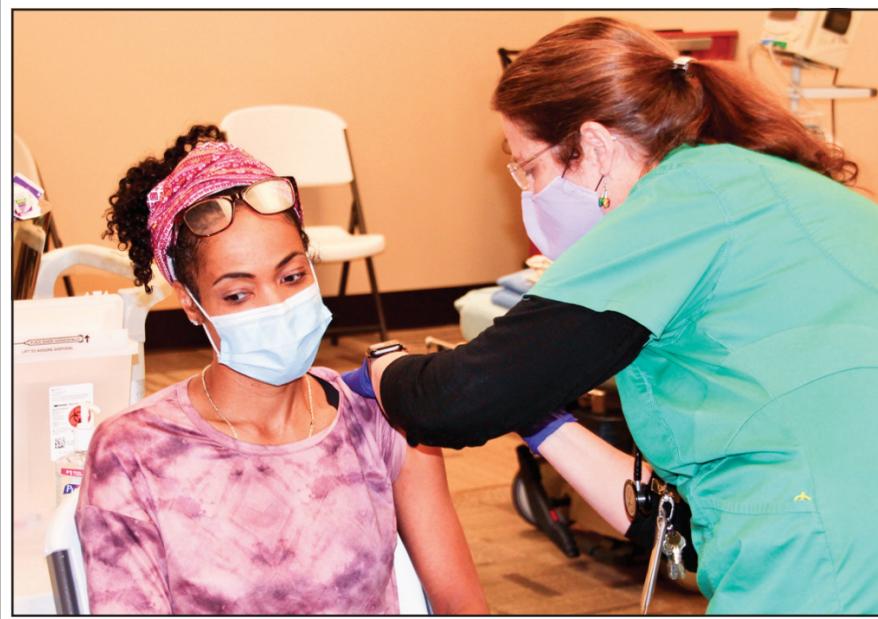
"I think the biggest honor I ever had in my life was making Chief Petty Officer in the United States Navy," Johnson said that evening. "I was 22 years old, the youngest chief in the Navy at the time."

"I have had the opportunity and many years to serve with Marines, not only in Iwo Jima and on my ship, and I was there, I witnessed it. I want to thank you for all you do as Marines. If I wasn't in the Navy, I would have been a Marine."

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## Vaccine eligibility to cover people 65 and up Jan. 11

### Access to vaccine subject to availability



Dr. Fatisha Gayton is an ER physician at Union General. She was among the first in line for local COVID vaccinations Dec. 23 and recommends everyone get the shot when it's more widely available. Pictured here with Julia Barnett. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

By Shawn Jarrard  
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Beginning Jan. 11, people aged 65 and older will become eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine based on availability, per the Georgia Department of Public Health.

Four in five Americans who have died with COVID-19 are 65 years or older, so an early vaccination effort prioritizing this demographic is likely to have the greatest impact on saving lives.

Specifics regarding vaccine rollout for this age

demographic were unavailable by press time, though District 2 Public Health has asked people to "please watch for announcements for instructions on where and how to get vaccinated."

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## Young Harris man commits suicide at county line, UCSO says

By Shawn Jarrard  
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A Young Harris man was discovered hanging by his belt on Monday, Jan. 4, next to the bridge crossing Brasstown Creek on US 76 near the Towns/Union County line, Union County Sheriff's Lt. Daren Osborn said.

Brandon Wise, 29, was reported missing by his family on Jan. 1, Osborn said, after which the young man apparently hung himself two days later, on Jan. 3.

Alcohol was located on Wise's person, and no foul play was suspected, Osborn said, noting the Sheriff's Office had learned that Wise had

attempted suicide before.

The person who found Wise was an artist who had stopped to take pictures of the creek before lunchtime Monday, spotting the young man lying on the ground above the creek with his belt connected to the Brasstown Creek signpost, Osborn said.

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## Community members hopeful for positive changes in 2021

By Jarrett Whitener  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Now that 2021 is finally here and the year of the pandemic and election can begin to take its proper place in the rearview, people in the community have started expressing more optimism about the future.

"We are looking forward to a new administration coming in," said Union County local Dayton Miller, who was enjoying the day at Meeks Park with his wife Martha on Jan 2. "We are looking forward to



Meeks Park is a great place for people to get some fresh air and exercise, two things that can help everybody in terms of mitigating COVID-19. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

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