

# North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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## Determined to succeed, Lassiter Windsor #00 returns to school

By Shawn Jarrard  
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When a car accident took the life of 10-year-old Lassiter Windsor on Sept. 20, 2018, the people of the North Georgia Mountains rallied behind him.

Through countless prayers, well wishes and unsolicited financial support, the community lifted Lassiter in his greatest hour of need, and for that, he and his family are extremely grateful.

"I want to thank everyone for everything that they did, all their prayers and how the community came together for him," said Heather Green, Lassiter's mother. "He's made such a big impression on so many people. Thank you for loving him so much."

every day, the people that come up to me. It doesn't matter where we go in town, people I don't even know and have never seen before, they know who Lassiter is and ask about him and say they've been praying for him. It's absolutely remarkable, and I praise God for saving my family."

To many people, Lassiter has become a symbol of hope, strength and what can happen when people of faith gather with shared purpose.

And now that he's back in school, having returned with his classmates after Winter Break ended in January, he has seemingly picked up right where he left off in September.

Of course, Lassiter has always been an exceptional student. He made Student of the Month at Union County Elementary School last August

and is generally known for being quick to throw up his hand in class to answer questions.

Unfortunately, he missed most of the first half of fifth grade due to the accident, though at the time, school was the least of his worries. After all, he had received a major head injury that resulted in dangerous swelling in his brain, and by all accounts, he was lucky to be alive.

Doctors treated him initially by putting him into a medically induced coma to combat the swelling. It was a harrowing time, but the family made it through those first days of touch and go, and once he finally woke up, nearly two weeks after his accident, Lassiter hit the ground running toward recovery.

As soon as he was  
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Lassiter Windsor, center, with family members Luka Windsor, Lordus Green, Liam Green, Heather Green and Kevin Fox. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

## Celebrate CHD Awareness Week with McKinley Majors starting Feb. 7

By Shawn Jarrard  
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Congenital Heart Disease Awareness Week runs Feb. 7 through Valentine's Day, and the national outreach initiative has a lovely little local ambassador in McKinley Majors.

McKinley will be a year old on Feb. 19, and already, she's had to deal with more personal adversity than most people will see in a lifetime.

She was diagnosed at just 23 weeks in the womb with a very serious congenital heart defect that her parents learned would require surgery in her first year of life.

Congenital heart defects are defects of the heart that are present at birth. Examples of CHDs include holes in the interior walls of the heart and leaky valves.

In more severe cases like McKinley's, entire chambers of the heart may even be missing.

A healthy human heart has four chambers - two ventricles and two atria - that work together to circulate oxygen-rich blood throughout the body.



McKinley Majors

McKinley's heart, however, has only one ventricle, meaning it has to work extra hard to supply her with the oxygen she needs to thrive.

Because of this, she

experienced extremely labored breathing from birth that made it impossible for her to suck, swallow and breathe at the same time.

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## Kelley retiring as Union General CEO; Bierschenk to start Feb. 25

By Shawn Jarrard  
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Union General Hospital, Inc. CEO Lewis Kelley is retiring, and his last day will be Friday, March 1.

Kelley has served in the top spot of the hospital since stepping up to fill a vacant leadership role in February 2016.

Prior to serving as chief executive officer, Kelley was the longtime administrator in charge of Chatuge Regional Hospital and Nursing Home, from which he retired in 2015.

He came partially out of retirement later in 2015 to help at the Nursing Home, and he

answered the call to become CEO when the hospital needed him in 2016.

Replacing Kelley as CEO will be Kevin L. Bierschenk, who has led Dodge County Hospital as CEO since 2007. Bierschenk's first day at Union General will be Feb. 25.

"Kevin has a lot of experience," said Kelley. "All my team is still here, and I'm sure Kevin will come in and work with this team to ensure that we continue on like we're doing."

"I think the future is bright, that Union General can continue to grow and develop and hopefully be a regional draw for people."



Lewis Kelley  
The Board of Directors for Union General Hospital initiated the search to find  
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## Lexi Davenport wins 'Design A Stamp Contest' at the Post Office



Union County third-grader Lexi Davenport, center, showcasing her winning stamp design at the Blairsville Post Office, pictured here with Michelle Allen, Rachel Martin, Ashley Davenport and Chris Davenport.

By Jarrett Whitener  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

For winning the first ever "Design A Stamp Contest" at the Blairsville Post Office, third-grader Lexi Davenport of Union County Elementary

School traveled with her parents and teacher to meet the Postmaster on Thursday, Jan. 31.

Davenport toured the Post Office and got her picture made for the newspaper.

The contest invited all Union County third-grade

students to participate by going home and drawing their best design for a stamp, and then turning it in before the contest deadline.

Following the deadline, the submitted stamp designs were put on display for the

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## NTSB releases preliminary crash report following government shutdown

By Shawn Jarrard  
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The Piper airplane that crashed on Dec. 19, 2018, off Kings Road in Blairsville, killing three of its four occupants, was flying "just too low," according to a witness statement provided to the National Transportation Safety Board.

This detail and others are contained within a recently published Aviation Accident Preliminary Report, available through NTSB.gov.

The NTSB is an independent federal agency tasked with investigating aviation accidents.

Initially, the Preliminary Report was set to be published within 10 business days of the crash, but the federal government shutdown that occurred just days after the accident brought the investigation to a standstill.

When the government re-opened more than a month later at the end of January, the investigation resumed, and the preliminary report that should have been published at the beginning of the month went live on Jan. 30.

Unfortunately, the report contains very little information

pertaining to the potential cause of the crash, other than the fact that the airplane was "substantially damaged when it collided with trees and terrain while on final approach to runway 8 at the Blairsville Airport."

However, the NTSB did publish some key remarks from an eyewitness in the incident.

"A witness stated she was on her front porch when she saw the lights of the airplane approaching the airport," according to the Preliminary Report. "The airplane's engine was running smoothly, but it sounded as if the airplane

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## When fire strikes, Chief Dyer thankful for volunteer firefighters



One of two house fires that occurred last week in Union County. Fortunately, no one was hurt in either blaze.

By Jarrett Whitener  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

The Union County Fire Department responded to two house fires last week, and fortunately, no one was hurt in either blaze.

Having two structure fires did not strike Fire Chief David Dyer as extremely unusual, but it did require the effort of the department's volunteers to effectively control each incident.

"A structure fire isn't a rare thing, but we don't have

many of them, and it's a pretty big deal," said Chief Dyer. "With cold weather, we expect an increase in fire because people are increasing their heat in some way, form or fashion."

Neither of the homes could be salvaged following last week's fires. And while loss of property can be tragic for families, loss of life is worse, and thankfully, none of the residents were home at the time of either fire.

"When the fire was called, it was already fully involved, and when we call

something fully involved, that means that there was fire in every room and through the roof," said Chief Dyer. "There's nothing we can really do with that besides keep everything around the house from burning and try to put the fire out, which takes a lot of manpower and a lot of water and work."

"The second fire was the exact same thing, someone called and informed us on the smoke coming from the house, and it was also fully involved when the first units made it to the scene. "Those are not the

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