

# Union General sets new record with 71 births in August



L-R: Nurse Marci Mize, Dr. Kevin Davis and Nurse Trudy Lockaby of Union General Hospital's Labor and Delivery unit. Photo by Mark Smith

By Mark Smith  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

BLAIRSVILLE – The Labor and Delivery section of the Women's Health Center inside Union General Hospital really earned its wings in August with a record 71 baby deliveries.

Dr. Kevin Davis serves as the hospital's Medical Director of Perinatal Services, and he said the previous record was set in 2008 with 49 deliveries.

"The (Great Recession) had a tremendous effect here – it was pretty devastating," said Davis. "People made smart decisions. They didn't expand their family and they moved elsewhere to get jobs."

Given the improved economy, people seem to be doing the things people do when not restrained by financial burdens and job concerns, and Davis said the hospital is on track to deliver about 500 babies this year.

And the future looks even brighter for area families, as Davis believes that he and his team will probably deliver about 600 babies next year, assuming the current upward trend.

"We now have four OB-

GYN providers, also a family practitioner, Dr. David Breedlove, and a midwife (Sheila Whitener), who all deliver babies here, which is a big expansion of our capabilities," said Davis.

"Dr. Kimberly Denton and Dr. Benjamin Harris were practicing in Fannin County and saw the attractive nature of this opportunity, including our great facilities, and (recently) came and joined us here," said Davis, adding that he and Dr. Cynthia Mercer are the other two OB-GYN providers.

Also a part of the team are Trudy Lockaby, Nursing Director of Perinatal Services, and Perinatal Nurse Marci Mize.

Lockaby said they now have five state-of-the-art labor and delivery rooms, one recovery room, one operating room suite, and one triage room, all secluded within an area gated by electronic security doors and monitored by remote cameras.

With an OR suite in labor and delivery, Lockaby said it's no longer necessary to rush a patient over to the surgical wing should that become necessary.

She was also excited to say that expectant mothers in this facility have the luxury of

a Bluetooth fetal monitoring system, so they're not required to stay in a bed. But should they require immediate attention, the mobile unit will alert the staff.

With this capability, she said, UGH is attracting mothers who might otherwise prefer a home delivery.

And Davis said the hospital employs the STANLEY Healthcare Hugs Infant Protection System to guard against infant abduction and mother/infant mismatching.

Changing gears, Davis said obstetrics facilities in rural areas, both nationally and regionally, have slowly been closing their doors over many years. He said the UGH obstetrics facility now serves nine counties: four in Georgia, four in North Carolina and one in Tennessee.

"I think people in communities should be loyal to their local hospital in order for them to keep their doors open and supportive when they hear initiatives like Union General Hospital offering new services," said Davis.

Added Lockaby: "You also get quality care in a smaller unit where it's more personal. It's more of a personal experience versus you're just here to

have a baby."

Of course, Davis would like people to know that patients of every stripe are getting the same high quality of care here that they would get in a larger facility.

"I think we will become a regional referral center, not just for obstetrics, but for other medical specialties also, which would be a huge thing for Blairsville – lots of jobs," said Davis. "What's unique about

(this) hospital, in terms of funding, is this hospital is not part of a corporate chain.

"It is still run locally by the Union County Hospital Authority, with board members in the local community."



Labor and Delivery at Union General Hospital is equipped with everything families need to feel comfortable having children in the mountains. Photo by Mark Smith

## Short...from Page 1A

he said started when the college president at that time invited him aboard.

"I agreed to do that, not really understanding how difficult and time-consuming it might be," said Short. "We started a program called 'Reflections on Georgia Politics.' And my duty was to lecture the class, which was composed of students as well as community.

"Everybody was welcome to come to talk about Georgia and its political history. Well, it suddenly occurred to me, since I had been involved in the process for so long, I shouldn't be lecturing on these – I call them 'shakers and movers.'

"Anyway, I invited the governor of the state to come to speak to my class, and he came. His name was Joe Frank Harris, and he spoke to those people, and it was such a growing, good thing that I decided, 'Well now, why should I get up there and try to lecture when I can get these people – these shakers and movers – to come and speak for themselves?'"

"So, we started a series that was picked up by the Russell Library at the University of Georgia. I'd have to say that we now have over 200 separate interviews of these shakers and movers that are available online

for everyone to see."

Just search online for "Reflections on Georgia Politics Oral History Collection" for free access to the interviews.

Switching gears, Short went on to describe how Georgia has risen from being a poor, backwater Southern state in 1942, "frowned upon by most of the country," to becoming the best state in the Union for business.

Zell Miller, he said, used the "Franklin D. Roosevelt" definition of the South in his addresses wherever he went. Short wasn't able to quote it word for word, but said it included "ignorant, poor and going nowhere."

"We had a governor at that time named Ellis B. Arnold – Ellis Arnold was governor of Georgia – who decided he was tired of the discriminatory freight rates between the North and the South," said Short.

Because of those and other discriminatory practices, Georgia wasn't able to attract any manufacturing, and Georgia farmers and ranchers lost money trying to ship their crops.

Governor Arnold sued the U.S. government and the railroads over the discriminatory freight rates, according to Short, and the case ended up before the U.S. Supreme Court, where

Arnold argued the case himself and won.

"And today, believe it or not, Georgia, for the first time in history, has been named the best state to do business in for five consecutive years," Short said, to a round of applause.

"Now, that didn't just happen, didn't fall out of the sky. It took a lot of work and a lot of time. So, over the years, the political leadership of Georgia has collectively brought us to the point where we're now the No. 1 business state in the Union."

Short briefly described the old "county unit system" that was used for years in Georgia and done away with in 1962.

"The state was divided into districts," said Short. "Each county was given 'units.' The Atlanta population I think at that time was 700,000, got six units. Rabun County, Towns County and Union County got two units each – that's six units.

"So, people in Towns and Union and Rabun could equal the vote of 700,000 people. The Supreme Court ruled that unconstitutional."

Short held the crowd's rapt attention for nearly an hour that day, offering up many true-life anecdotes on Georgia politics.

## Carter...from Page 1A

Office.

After dropping him off at Chatuge Regional Hospital, Carter left in Henderson's Chevrolet Tahoe, according to the Sheriff's Office.

The vehicle was discovered later that night, abandoned in the parking lot of the Marathon station on Georgia 75 North in Hiawassee, according to the Sheriff's

Office.

Detectives determined that Carter left the Marathon station in her own red Ford pickup, according to the Sheriff's Office.

Her truck was located on Sunday, Sept. 9, at a residence in Clay County, North Carolina, and investigators believe Carter is somewhere in the area of Hiawassee and Hayesville,

North Carolina, and now, maybe Athens, Georgia.

Henderson is currently recovering from his injuries, according to the Sheriff's Office.

Updates to this story will be published to TownsCountyHerald.net as they occur.