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HAL TAYLOR
SECRETARY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ALEA Troopers, Special Agents and Driver License Examiners Receive Distinguished Service Awards

MONTGOMERY – The Alabama Law Enforcement Agency’s (ALEA) Secretary Hal Taylor is pleased to announce the recipients of the Agency’s Lifesaving, Purple Heart and other Distinguished Service Awards for heroic acts, outstanding performance and committed service to the citizens of and visitors to the state of Alabama.

Secretary Taylor said, “Our employees continuously display a servant’s heart through the acts of their sacrifice and selfless service; Troopers, Special Agents, as well as our non-sworn personnel, truly epitomize our Agency’s creed and mission. We have a duty to protect and serve the most vulnerable, especially during their times of greatest need, ensuring everyone receives the assistance no matter the situation.”

During a ceremony at ALEA Headquarters in Montgomery, Secretary Taylor presented awards to 12 individuals, four with ALEA’s Highway Patrol Division, two from the Driver License Division, five with ALEA’s State Bureau of Investigation (SBI) and one with ALEA’s Aviation Unit within the Protective Services Division. The remarkable stories were shared by Director of ALEA’s Department of Public Safety (DPS) Colonel Jimmy Helms, SBI Director Chris Inabinett and Chief Stephen Tidwell, who is over the Protective Services Division.

Director of ALEA’s DPS, Colonel Jimmy Helms said, “It was my privilege to recognize and honor those who went above and beyond to assist Alabama citizens in their darkest hour. Keeping people safe is our job, and I am truly grateful we were able to assist in saving the lives of these individuals.”

On May 21, Senior Trooper Ryan Heacox was on patrol in Walker County when he overheard Walker County 911 dispatch an ambulance to a nearby residence for an unresponsive patient who was not breathing. Sr. Trooper Heacox proceeded to the location, where he observed a female performing CPR on a male. Sr. Trooper Heacox grabbed his Automated External Defibrillator (AED) and ran to the patient, where he determined the patient may have been overdosing from illegal narcotics. Sr. Trooper Heacox gave the patient one dose of Narcan and continued CPR. After a few moments, the patient began breathing on his own. The patient then became alert and responsive, thanks to the quick actions of Sr. Trooper Heacox.

On Aug. 16, at 5:58 p.m., Senior Trooper Hunter Odom arrived on the scene of a serious injury crash on I-65 in Butler County. The driver of a 2020 Chevrolet Tahoe, which collided with a tractor-trailer involved in a previous crash, was ejected from the driver-side door. The driver sustained serious injuries to his left leg. Sr. Trooper Odom immediately secured his tourniquet and applied it to prevent further bleeding. Although doctors later had to amputate the driver’s leg, the driver survived due to the actions of Sr. Trooper Odom.

On April 29, at approximately 1:30 a.m., Senior Trooper Kenneth Powell was patrolling Highway 69 and monitoring Walker County Fire radio traffic when he heard the tone set off for McCollum Fire Department for an unresponsive patient with a possible overdose. Sr. Trooper Powell realized he was close to that address and responded. Sr. Trooper Powell arrived on the scene, grabbed his medical bag and entered the residence, where he found a 41-year-old female lying on the couch. Sr. Trooper Powell checked the patient for a pulse and looked at her pupils. Sr. Trooper Powell administered one canister of Narcan. Within approximately two minutes, the patient began to speak. Shortly after, Regional Paramedical Services arrived on the scene and took over care of the individual.

Trooper Charles May with ALEA's Opelika Highway Patrol Post was instrumental in the rescue effort of a missing hunter on Saturday, Jan. 22.

When Trooper May received a request from the Bullock County Sheriff's Office for assistance, he immediately took the initiative to contact his supervisor and gain authorization to wear appropriate attire which was necessary for the severe cold weather and conditions. He then contacted an individual with a boat and went into the woods to search for the missing hunter who had been swept away when a beaver dam broke. Trooper May arrived at the scene off of Bullock County 13, where he gathered all pertinent and relative information concerning the man's last known location and the fact that he had been missing since the day before.

Being familiar with the area, Trooper May began searching on the opposite side of the beaver dam near Bullock County 141. While still searching for the man, Trooper May moved on to an area along Bullock County 156, where he began to hear a faint cry for help. It was there, Trooper May located the missing man lying on the ground and took action to assess his overall mental and physical condition. The man told Trooper May he could not feel his legs, leading Trooper May to believe the man was suffering from hypothermia. Trooper May quickly removed the hunter's wet clothes before removing his own to place on the individual. He then carried the hunter approximately 100 yards out of the woods, placed him in his patrol vehicle, and contacted Sgt. Chad Faulkner with Bullock County's Sheriff's Office to have an ambulance meet them at a nearby intersection.

Following an examination, paramedics confirmed the hunter was suffering from severe hypothermia and would have likely not survived had he been out in the conditions another hour. They then rushed the man to a nearby medical facility for treatment.

In addition to the awards received by ALEA Troopers, Driver License Examiners Cherica Watts and Philbert Martial were presented with Certificates of Recognition for their calm, caring, compassionate and professional response to a medical emergency while representing the Agency's Driver License Division in the Mobile Office.

Following ALEA's DPS Awards, SBI Director Chris Inabinett presented several awards to Special Agents and SWAT Team Members within SBI, stating, "The individuals who received these awards today are heroes, as well as warriors, for their courageous actions, which speaks volumes about their character, resolve and commitment to serve."

On April 4, at approximately 12:30 p.m., Special Agent Senior (SAS) Don Carter stopped to refuel his state vehicle at a Liberty Gas Station located in Phenix City. SAS Carter exited the station and noticed an individual with a strong odor of marijuana coming from the subject. SAS Carter approached the individual and identified himself as a SBI Special Agent. SAS Carter asked the subject if he had marijuana in his possession and asked for his identification (ID). The subject then produced his ID and handed it to SAS Carter, after which the subject pulled out a knife and stabbed SAS Carter multiple times before SAS Carter could grab the subject and take him to the ground. A citizen nearby assisted SAS

Carter in placing the subject in custody. For his brave actions and wounds received on duty, SAS Carter was awarded with the Agency's Purple Heart Award.

In 2016, Special Agent (SA) Mark Whitaker took on a 10-year-old cold case with no body, developed a team, built a case, and help send Rick Ennis to prison for life. SA Whitaker put in countless hours and was relentless in his search for the truth concerning the murder of Lori Ann Slesinski. Ultimately, SA Whitaker put all of the puzzle pieces together and was able to solve the case, ensuring justice prevailed for the Slesinski family. For his relentless pursuit of the truth and for bringing closure to a number of loved ones, SA Whitaker was awarded the Agency's Certificate of Commendation.

On Aug. 24, the Marengo County Sheriff's Office requested that the ALEA SWAT team respond to a scene where a suspect had barricaded himself inside a residence. By the time responding units arrived, the suspect had already shot two individuals, one of whom was already deceased. Upon arrival, negotiators with ALEA's SWAT attempted to contact the suspect and establish conversation.

After several hours, ALEA SWAT attempted entry, and the suspect fired two shots at team members through the window and exterior wall. A SWAT team member was hit by shattered glass, causing cuts to his hand. SWAT team members moved to cover and continued to command the suspect to surrender. Team members continued to deploy gas until the suspect came down the hallway to the front door. The suspect dropped his weapon, and SWAT team members took the individual into custody without further incident. For these heroic acts that safely resolved a dangerous situation, three SWAT Team members were awarded the Agency's Certificate of Commendation.

Protective Services Division Chief Stephen Tidwell stated, "The events and acts of bravery mentioned during this morning ceremony occur daily across this Agency, and I am thankful to have the opportunity to serve alongside both the men and women who faithfully serve the citizens of this great state."

On Sept. 22, the Alabama Department of Conservation Natural Resources' (ADCNR) Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division and the Crenshaw County Sheriff's Office requested assistance from the ALEA Aviation Unit to help locate a 79-year-old male who was reported missing.

The victim traveled from his home in Crestview, Fla., to Crenshaw County to do some work. After not checking in with his wife at a pre-arranged time and failing to return home at dark, his family drove from Crestview to Crenshaw County and located his vehicle and empty trailer on the property. The family contacted law enforcement for assistance. ALEA Pilot Dave Williams and Tactical Flight Officer Wayne Barlow received the call from the ADCNR. Shortly before Williams and Barlow arrived on scene, the victim's ATV was located abandoned in the woods, and members of ADCNR directed them to the location of the ATV. Once the helicopter was within the search area, Barlow located the victim laying in thick brush approximately 700 yards from his ATV. Williams and Barlow were able to direct the ground team to the victim's location, where he was found unable to walk and barely responsive. The victim was later transported by ground ambulance to the hospital in Andalusia, where he was treated for dehydration and hypothermia. It is believed that the victim may have been incapacitated for as long as 12 hours. Members of the ADCNR stated that without the help of ALEA Aviation, the outcome would not have been favorable for the victim or his family.

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