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Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

Escambia Sheriff's Captain and Mechanic Recognized with BTB Awards



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody today announced Back the Blue Awards for Escambia County Sheriff's Office Captain Jeremy Small and mechanic Chris Leverett for their efforts in rescuing nearly 120 people from dangerous flooding amid Hurricane Sally.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "Thank you, Captain Jeremy Small and Chris Leverett, for your courageous efforts, risking your own lives to save the lives of others. Capt. Small is a shining example of what it means to be a Florida law enforcement officer, putting service over self to protect your community. Mr. Leverett also showed true courage in the face of danger volunteering to assist on this dangerous job and backed the blue by supporting law enforcement in this rescue mission.

"I am incredibly proud of Capt. Small, Mr. Leverett and the good Samaritan who offered his boat to carry nearly 120 people to safety as Hurricane Sally ravaged the panhandle. This story has many heroes and is a testament to the strength, resiliency and sense of community shared among the people of this great state. No matter what challenges we may face, I know Floridians can weather any storm when we come together."

Escambia County Sheriff David Morgan said, "The Escambia County Sheriff's Office is honored that Attorney General Moody would recognize the heroic actions of Captain Jeremy Small and Chris Leverett. Their actions responding in the midst of Hurricane Sally are only indicative of the

courage of all the men and women at the Escambia County Sheriff's Office."

On Sept. 16, Capt. Small responded to an emergency early morning call as Hurricane Sally made landfall in the Florida panhandle. Capt. Small was the only deputy in the area as the call came in. Overhearing the call, ECSO mechanic Chris Leverett, who was onsite at the time, offered to help. Capt. Small and Leverett headed to the family in danger in a high-water rescue vehicle—the only means of transportation capable of making it through the rising water and rough currents in the neighborhood—as floodwater began to reach the tops of mailboxes.

As Capt. Small and Leverett continued through the neighborhood rescuing families, the water rose to such a level that the HRV became stuck. A man rescued by the duo volunteered his boat to continue rescuing citizens from the increasingly dangerous flooding. Capt. Small used the roofs of cars parked along the street to make way towards the boat while staying above the current. As Capt. Small approached the boat, it became clear the vessel was too far away to make it aboard from a car. Capt. Small made the difficult decision to swim several feet in a strong current to reach the boat.

Once aboard, Capt. Small operated the boat back to the HRV and began ferrying passengers from the HRV onto dry land outside of the flooded area. In total, Capt. Small and Leverett made more than 10 trips, with an average of 10 passengers on each trip, in order to ensure all neighbors made it safely out of a flooding local neighborhood.

Hurricane Sally made landfall in Florida in the middle of an extremely active hurricane season. As residents across the panhandle continue to recover and rebuild in the wake of the devastation left by Hurricane Sally, it is important to remember hurricane season is not yet over. It is more important than ever to have a plan set in place should disaster strike again.

In June, Attorney General Moody's Office released its 2020 Hurricane Preparedness Guide serving as a useful tool to help families prepare with helpful tips, resources and information. To view the 2020 Hurricane Preparedness Guide, click here.

To nominate a law enforcement officer, citizen or organization for a Back the Blue Award, or for more information about Attorney General Moody's Back the Blue campaign, click here.

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Attorney General Ashley Moody's Back the Blue campaign highlights law enforcement officers, citizens and organizations taking extraordinary steps to forge positive relationships between law enforcement and the communities they serve. Supporting law enforcement is a top priority for Attorney General Moody and the mission of Back the Blue is to commend Florida's brave law enforcement officers and Floridians who back them.