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| **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** | **CONTACT:** |
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**DBHDD Commissioner Kevin Tanner Honors Rockdale County Deputies After Saving Man’s Life From Overdose**

ATLANTA – Today, the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD), led by Commissioner Kevin Tanner, bestowed its Commissioner’s Champion Award upon two Rockdale County deputies for saving the life of a local man who was experiencing an overdose. Commissioner Tanner presented Deputy Nathaniel Peterson and Deputy Johnny Verdell with the awards in a ceremony at the Rockdale County Sheriff’s Office.

In July, the deputies responded to a distress call on Sherbrooke Dr., where they found a man in a life-threatening condition. The deputies administered naloxone while waiting for Rockdale County Fire and Rescue to arrive. Later at the hospital, it was confirmed that the man was experiencing an overdose.

“Their quick thinking and unwavering actions embodied the core values and mission of the DBHDD, shedding light on the pivotal role of law enforcement officers in safeguarding our community,” said Commissioner Tanner. “Thanks to their heroism, this individual received a second chance at life.”

After arriving on the scene, Deputy Verdell prepared his AED while Deputy Peterson swiftly initiated sternum rubs to stimulate the patient. The situation grew dire as they noticed shallow breathing and a weak pulse, indicative of a life-threatening condition. Deputy Verdell administered Narcan, but there was no immediate improvement. Deputy Peterson rushed for more Narcan and administered a second dose. The deputies continued to collaborate with first responders before the man was taken to the hospital for further treatment.

“In our mission to support vulnerable Georgians, the collaboration with law enforcement in changing the culture of how we address overdose and crisis calls has been paramount,” Commissioner Tanner added. “Law enforcement is a crucial partner in our department's work, and their dedication is truly commendable.”

DBHDD has expanded its outreach to local law enforcement agencies to educate and support officers in their response to possible overdose and other behavioral health crisis calls. In September, the agency held a statewide conference bringing together law enforcement agencies and behavioral health experts and clinicians.

**About DBHDD**

The Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) and its network of community providers offer treatment and support services to help people with behavioral health challenges achieve recovery by focusing on their strengths. Through uniquely tailored support and services, we help people with intellectual and developmental disabilities attain independence and lead meaningful and fulfilling lives. <https://dbhdd.georgia.gov/>

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