



PIMA COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

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NATIONAL SHERIFF'S ASSOCIATION MEDAL OF VALOR

Deputy Sheriff Steven West

Pima County Sheriff's Department

Deputy Steven West has been awarded the National Sheriffs' Association Medal of Valor for an act of outstanding personal bravery, intelligently performed, in the line of duty at imminent personal hazard of life.

On Sunday, July 23, 2017 at approximately 5:30 p.m., members of the Pima County Sheriff's Department Search and Rescue Unit responded to the Tanque Verde Falls area for a report of a four-year-old child held by a man stranded on a rock in the center of the upper waterfalls. Tanque Verde Falls had just experienced an extreme flash flood, taking numerous hikers by surprise. The depth and the speed of the water in this flash flood was unlike any this area had experienced in many years.

The Pima County Sheriff's Department Helicopter, "Sheriff 1," flew overhead and quickly spotted those in peril. On-board Sheriff 1 was veteran Pilot Milt Kennedy, Crew Chief T.J. Price, and Rescue Deputy Steve West.

Deputy Steve West was lowered by cable to the only location he could effectively conduct the rescue. During this time, Pilot Milt Kennedy skillfully kept the helicopter in a steady hover position. Deputy West put the small child in a cinch collar, but he was concerned the device would not hold the child tightly and the child could slip out and be swept away by the rushing waters.

Deputy West grabbed the child and held him closely as they were hoisted up to Sheriff 1 by T.J. Price. After the child was secured in the helicopter, Deputy West and the helicopter crew conducted two more swift water rescues and an additional eight rescues of hikers who were stranded on the south side of the canyon.

During these extrications, Deputy West repeatedly put himself into extreme personal peril hanging by a cable inches above the rushing floodwaters. In total, seventeen hikers were rescued from the flash flooding at Tanque Verde Falls. This rescue mission was one of the largest and most successful missions in the history of the Pima County Sheriff's Department. The level of focus, skill, and fortitude needed during this dangerous rescue was paramount to its success.

Deputy Steven West was nominated for this prestigious national recognition and selected by committee from candidates from throughout the United States. His bravery, calmness, and actions in this life-or-death situation epitomize everything associated with the word courage. His efforts during this incident are a testament to his dedication and courage as a law enforcement professional. We are proud to present Deputy Steven West with the National Sheriff's Association Medal of Valor.