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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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January Recognizes National Stalking Awareness Month

Yolo County District Attorney's Office Offers Stalking Awareness

(Woodland, CA) - January 26, 2012 - January has been National Stalking Awareness Month, a time to mobilize against a serious crime. Stalking can happen to anyone and it affects 3.4 million victims a year. And while January highlights awareness of the issue, it is a pervasive problem in our society that requires our focused attention and dedication all year long. This year's theme, "Stalking: Know It. Name It. Stop It." challenges the nation to fight this dangerous crime by learning more about it.

Stalking is a crime in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, yet many victims and criminal justice professionals underestimate its seriousness and impact. In one of five cases, stalkers use weapons to harm or threaten victims, and stalking is one of the significant risk factors for homicide of women in abusive relationships. Victims suffer anxiety, social dysfunction, and severe depression at much higher rates than the general population, and many lose time from work or have to move as a result of their victimization.

Stalking is difficult to recognize, investigate, and prosecute and three out of four stalking victims are stalked by someone they know. Unlike other crimes, stalking is not a single, easily identifiable crime but a series of acts, a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause that person fear. Stalking may take many forms, such as assaults, threats, vandalism, burglary, or animal abuse, as well as unwanted cards, calls, gifts, or visits. One out of four victims reports that the stalker uses technology, such as computers, global positioning system devices, or hidden cameras, to track the victim's daily activities. Stalkers fit no standard psychological profile, and many stalkers follow their victims from one jurisdiction to another, making it difficult for authorities to investigate and prosecute their crimes.

Communities that understand stalking, however, can support victims and combat the crime. "If more people learn to recognize stalking," said Jeff Reisig, Yolo County District Attorney, "we have a better chance to protect victims and prevent tragedies."

For more information, please contact the Victim Services Program at Yolo County District Attorney's Office at (530) 666-8187. For additional resources about National Stalking Awareness Month, please visit <http://stalkingawarenessmonth.org> and www.ovw.usdoj.gov.

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