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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: August 23, 2012 **Contact:** Jonathan Raven, Chief Deputy District Attorney
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Woodland Gang Members Convicted of Brutal 2009 Attack

(Woodland, CA) – August 23, 2012 - District Attorney Jeff Reisig announced that on August 20, 2012, after a two week jury trial and one day of deliberations, a Yolo County jury convicted twenty-four-year-old Jose Rodolfo Rivas and twenty-two-year-old Aaron Anthony Valadez of aggravated mayhem with gang enhancements and additional felony charges for a robbery. The convictions were the result of an attack that occurred in the early morning hours of September 20, 2009. Both Rivas and Valadez are from Woodland.

Shortly after 12:00 a.m. on September 20, the victim drove an acquaintance to the AM/PM mini mart located near County Road 102 and I-5 in Woodland. As the victim waited for his acquaintance in the car, he saw several young men in the parking lot. Also in the parking lot were witnesses that were traveling through Woodland on their way to the State of Washington. As these witnesses watched, Rivas, Valadez, Matthew Martin, and at least two other individuals swarmed the victim's car and attacked the victim as he was seated inside. Martin was convicted at a jury trial held in July 2011.

A surveillance video from the AM/PM captured images of the brutal attack. The camera footage showed how the victim was repeatedly punched and kicked as he sat seated into the driver's seat of his car while Valadez held the driver's side door closed preventing the victim from escape. The attack ended after Rivas slid into the passenger side of the victim's car and slashed the victim's face leaving a gash that ran from his ear to his chin. When the victim testified almost three years after the attack, the jury could still see the visible scar that remains on his face. Defense attorneys argued that the acquaintance of the victim had caused this attack by making derogatory statements to females that accompanied the assailants.

During the trial the jurors heard from the witnesses that were passing through Woodland as well as from Woodland Police Department Officer Omer Flores who testified as an expert in the area of criminal street gangs. Both Officer Flores and Mark Harrison, a gang expert called by the defense, testified that the violent attack on the victim was the type of attack that is committed by Norteno gang members to enhance their reputation and promote criminal conduct by gang members.

Sentencing for Rivas and Valadez is set to take place on October 17th, at 8:30 a.m. in front of the Honorable Judge Stephen Mock. Both defendants are facing potential sentences of life in state prison.

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