



COUNTY OF YOLO

Office of the County Administrator

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 3, 2008

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Annual County Memorial Service

(Woodland, CA) – Last Friday, 40 people gathered at the county’s Annual Memorial Service, held at the Knights Landing cemetery, to pay their respects to almost 90 individuals served this year by the Yolo County Public Guardian/Public Administrator’s office. The Public Guardian/Public Administrator manages the estate and/or affairs of persons who cannot care for themselves due to serious physical illness, mental illness or other disability. Public Administrator services include managing the indigent burial/cremation program and estates of those who die in Yolo County without a will, or without a relative in the state willing or able to act as administrator.

The program was opened by Yolo County’s Public Guardian/Public Administrator Cass Sylvia, who welcomed everyone saying she was “glad to live in a county that strives to practice doing right by their less advantaged people. This effort of doing right and maintaining compassion in our everyday service reflects a consciousness by our leaders. I appreciate this spirit. and personally, I wouldn’t have it any other way.”

The county memorial service is an annual celebration of the lives of residents who die alone, without any recognition of their passing. Sylvia explained that decedents being honored were either clients being served by the office, or people whose death and final affairs were handled by the office. Generally, those served through the Indigent Burial and Cremation program are very low income and often disenfranchised from their families. Sylvia added that, “the job of finishing up their personal affairs, contacting distant family, and arranging for their final resting place is challenging, but can be very rewarding.”

During the service the Reverend Norman Callaway officiated and opened with a story of growing up on his grandfather’s farm in the rural Midwest. He talked of life lessons and sang while strumming his xylophone. Next, local musicians including Yolo County Public Defender Barry Melton, Yolo County Assistant Chief Probation Officer Rob Gonzales, and Yolo County resident Clarence Van Hook sang gospel and old southern folk songs. Mr. Van Hook, a retired electrician, professional musician and now farmer in the Capay Valley, ‘let it rip’ with a few raucous cowboy songs of life and love. The audience sang along and even Yolo County Supervisor Yamada came up to sing an old gospel church hymn.

The reading of the decedent’s names was done by the staff of the Public Guardian/Public Administrator’s office and Yolo County Veteran Services Officer Ted Puntillo. Following the reading of names, comments and remembrances of those being recognized were shared by friends.

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