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March 25, 2008

## **DA, CHIEF INVESTIGATOR HONORED BY MERCED COUNTY FOR HELP IN CAPITAL CASE**

Colusa County District Attorney John Poyner and Chief Investigator Dave Markss were honored Tuesday by the Merced County Board of Supervisors for their support and assistance in last year's capital murder trial of a Merced man charged with killing a Merced police officer. The trial was moved to Colusa County after a change of venue motion had been granted due to the extensive publicity the murder received in Merced County.

With slain Merced Police Officer Stephan Gray's widow and two children looking on, Poyner and Markss were presented plaques by the Board of Supervisors, and Merced District Attorney Larry D. Morse II spoke glowingly of the incredible contributions Poyner and Marks made to the successful outcome of the trial. A Colusa County jury found Cuitlahuac Tahua Rivera, guilty of first degree murder in May of last year, and subsequently sentenced him to death for the April 2004 slaying of Officer Gray during a routine traffic stop in Merced.

"John and his staff, especially chief investigator Dave Markss, helped in every conceivable way," Morse said. "John was a mentor, a host, a colleague, a strategist and a confidant throughout the entire ordeal. John and Dave saved Merced County literally tens of thousands of dollars in their generous support of this trial."

Morse also noted the incredible kindness he and his office received from the residents of Colusa during the trial. "They were profoundly good to all of us as we invaded their courthouse and their town. We were treated with unfailing hospitality and generosity at every turn," he said.

The murder of Officer Gray was the first in the more than one hundred year history of the Merced Police Department, and as Morse said, "stunned this community." According to Morse, Gray was a very popular officer who worked in the department's Gang Unit. Rivera was a member of a local gang called the Merced Gangster Crips and was on parole when he shot Officer Gray.

"Justice for Stephan Gray would not have been served without the assistance of District Attorney John Poyner, Dave Markss and the people of Colusa County," Morse said, adding, "We owe them more than we can say."