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MERCED COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
CELEBRATES VICTIMS' RIGHTS WEEK

Los Banos Chief of Police Gary Brizzee will be the featured speaker at the Merced County District Attorney's annual Victims' Rights Week ceremony held at noon on Tuesday, April 10, at the Courthouse Park announced DA Larry D. Morse II.

Brizzee has served as Los Banos Police Chief since May of 2010. He has worked for the department since 1997. A graduate of Los Banos High School, Brizzee earned both a Bachelor's and Master's Degree in Criminal Justice from California State University. Prior to joining the Los Banos Police Department Brizzee worked as a special agent with the U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Narcotics Enforcement.

"Being victimized can happen to any one of us, at any time, and it is incumbent upon us in the criminal justice system to do all that we can to recognize and support victims," said Brizzee. "They need to know that there is an entire community to support them," he added.

Victims' Rights Week will be celebrated April 8-14. This year's theme "Expand the Circle, Reach All Victims," emphasizes the importance of inclusion in victim services and how community advocates can better ensure that every crime victim has access to services and support and how professionals, organizations, and communities can work in tandem to reach all victims, Morse said.

"For victims of crime, the court system is just one step in a healing process. Sadly, sometimes the crime is so horrific that healing never occurs. Those who have suffered the loss of loved ones through murder and other acts of violence often carry the weight for the rest of their lives," said Morse. "We need to continue to work with victims to provide any and every resource we can and let them know that they are never alone," Morse added.

Lisa DeSantis, Victim Witness Coordinator for the District Attorney's office, encouraged participants to bring a photo of their loved one so it can be displayed on easels set up for the event. There will also be a time for participants to write a special message to their loved ones and tie it to a tree that was planted in remembrance of victims.

"After the dust settles, victims and their families are often left to put their lives back together and in some cases that takes a lifetime to accomplish," Brizzee

said. "Occasions like this,' he added, "allow the community to stand shoulder to shoulder with victims and their families to remind them that they won't walk that path alone."

For more information on the Victims' Rights Week ceremony, please contact Lisa DeSantis at the District Attorney's Victim Witness Program at (209) 385-7385.