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**REPEAT CAR THEFT ARRESTED FOR THIRD TIME IN
FIVE MONTHS**

For the third time in the past five months, the District Attorney's office filed felony charges for vehicle theft related crimes against Remijio Ray Andrada, 24, of Atwater, after he was found accessing a vehicle in Atwater that was reported stolen, said Chief Deputy District Attorney Hal Nutt.

Andrada was previously convicted of felony vehicle theft on November 15, 2017 and was afforded an opportunity to go to a drug rehabilitation program. He entered the program in early December, but left the program after four days. About a month later on December 28, 2017, officers of the Los Banos Police Department apprehended Andrada during a new investigation concerning a stolen vehicle. Andrada was charged with another felony vehicle theft and was convicted on February 14, 2018.

At his sentencing hearing on February 14, 2018 before a Merced County Judge, Deputy District Attorney Travis Colby argued for incarceration of Andrada by stating, "The People are gravely concerned that this defendant is not understanding the seriousness of these charges and will just walk away from this program, and we will be back here with another stolen car case and another victim." However, the judge allowed Andrada to return to the same program from which he previously walked away.

The judge released Andrada from jail and into the rehabilitation program on February 27, 2018. Andrada left the program the very next day.

Less than three weeks later, on March 18, 2018, officers of the Atwater Police Department received information that Andrada was in their town and in possession of a stolen car. The officers responded to a residence where they observed Andrada accessing the driver's door of a vehicle that had previously been reported stolen, and then watched him enter the residence. After a short period of time, officers were able to apprehend Andrada in the backyard of the residence hiding under a pile of clothing.

Andrada is facing felony stolen vehicle charges and is currently in custody of the Merced County Sheriff's Office. His case is set for a preliminary hearing on the latest charges at 1:30 p.m. on Wednesday, April 18, 2018 in Department 13 of the Merced County Superior Court.