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**DA'S OFFICE LOCATES CRIME VICTIMS WHO ARE
OWED THOUSANDS**

Collaboration between the Merced County District Attorney's Office and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) has resulted in 139 previously unidentified crime victims receiving nearly \$70,000 in unpaid restitution, District Attorney Larry D. Morse II announced today.

State law confers certain rights on crime victims, including restitution for losses suffered as a result of criminal activity. However, in many cases victims are unaware that they are owed money as part of a sentencing agreement, Morse said.

"Our responsibility as prosecutors is not just to incarcerate those who commit crimes, but to do everything in our power to ensure that victims of crime are compensated for the financial losses that they've suffered as well," Morse said.

Three years ago, recognizing a significant sum of money had not been distributed to crime victims, CDCR created the Unknown Victims Unit to try to identify victims who were entitled to restitution, according to Katherine Ghahramany, District Attorney Criminal Restitution Specialist.

The Unknown Victims Unit, comprised of four analysts, works with Ghahramany and other restitution specialists in counties throughout the state to track down those victims for whom money has been collected but not paid. CDCR collects about \$1.7 million in restitution every month with 48 percent of the overall collections being applied to victim restitution orders. To date, the Unknown Victim Unit has disbursed approximately \$3.3 million to victims statewide.

In Merced, Ghahramany works with Michael Rogowski, a restitution specialist with CDCR's Office of Victim Services, in researching cases and obtaining information about victims who haven't received their restitution. Rogowski said many victims "either don't know or forget that they were awarded money for their losses."

In addition to the nearly \$70,000 already paid to Merced County victims, Ghahramany says another \$49,000 is in a trust fund waiting until the 122 unknown crime victims to whom it is owed are located. She attributes the success of this program to her partnership with Rogowski and the Merced County Superior Court clerks who work to locate old criminal case files so that victims can be located and contacted.

"We will continue to use every resource at our disposal to find those crime victims to whom restitution is owed. Our goal is to make sure restitution is ordered in every case in which a crime victim suffers a loss and that those victims receive the money

they are due,” Ghahramany said. “All monetary payment, monies and property collected by our collection partners, such as CDCR and Merced County Revenue and Reimbursement, from any person ordered to make restitution shall first be applied to pay victims,” she added.

Ghahramany encouraged any victim of crime who has questions regarding restitution to contact her at the District Attorney’s office at (209) 385-7381 or check the District Attorney’s website www.co.merced.ca.us/da