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HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY RECEIVES STATE AND FEDERAL AWARD

MERCED – This morning at the Board of Supervisors meeting, the Merced County Human Services Agency (HSA) received an award from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the California Department of Social Services for the exceptional administration of the Food Stamp Program. Merced County's accuracy rate for granting Food Stamp benefits in Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2007 was 98.72 percent, making it the most accurate county in California. This is the first year that the Human Services Agency has received the award for having the highest food stamp accuracy rate in California.

"Our success can be traced back to consistent application of policies and procedures, and staff's commitment and concern for the community," said Ana Pagan, Director of Merced County HSA. "We take a great deal of pride in best leveraging the resources granted to us to benefit the largest number of people possible."

Key policies and procedures include strong quality control safeguards; frequent and thorough staff training; and management commitment. Merced County also has an ongoing, integrated outreach program so that benefits reach as many needy people as possible.

Dennis Stewart, USDA Food Stamp Program Regional Director, noted at the award ceremony, "Merced County provided substantial savings beneficial to taxpayers and supplied low-income families with nutritious food on the table."

The Food Stamp Program enables low-income families to buy nutritious food with Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards. Food stamp recipients use their benefits to buy eligible food in authorized retail food stores. The Food Stamp Program provides crucial support to needy households and to those making the transition from welfare to work.

– 30 –

For more information regarding Merced County, please visit our website at www.co.merced.ca.us

Further information about the California Food Stamp Program is available at

<http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/foodstamps>.