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NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Re: **VARGAS 1069713**

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MODESTO, CALIFORNIA – Stanislaus County District Attorney James Brazelton announced today that Natasha Lavene Vargas, age 30, of Stockton, was sentenced by the Honorable Judge Ricardo Cordova to the California Department of Corrections for four years and four months after a sentencing hearing held on June 10th. Deputy District Attorney Shawn D. Bessey appeared at the hearing for the People.

The case arose out of events which occurred on December 7th, 2003, in the city of Turlock, California. Vargas, while driving under the influence of alcohol, became disoriented and drove her vehicle the wrong way down highway 99. Officers from the California Highway Patrol did everything they could to get the driver, Vargas, to pull over. Oblivious to the Officers' efforts, she continued to drive in the wrong direction, causing a six car collision. The crash resulted in five people sustaining injuries ranging from moderate to life threatening. Three of the victims required hospitalization and emergency surgery. A blood test taken over 2 hours and a half hours after the crash showed Ms. Vargas to have a .13% Blood Alcohol Content, well above the legal limit.

At the sentencing hearing, defense counsel, argued for probation and presented testimony from friends and family as to Vargas' good character. The defendant herself admitted wrong doing, apologized to the victims and asked for their forgiveness. The victims and their families also addressed the court telling of the physical and emotional scars left upon them by this six car collision. The victims spoke of their continuing struggle to cope with this crime on a daily basis, dealing with the physical pain, the hospital bills and being apprehensive and nervous every time they get in a car. They said they will pray for Ms. Vargas and hope that someday they could forgive her.