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PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Contact:

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Date: February 16, 2010

Assistant District Attorney

Re: Joel Adam Marcelja

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Auto Thief Sentenced to
3 Years Prison

Modesto, California – Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Joel Adam Marcelja, age 29, of Stockton, was convicted of auto theft and admitted having a prior auto theft conviction from April 2009. Deputy District Attorney Jeff Mangar prosecuted the case for the People.

On January 21, 2010 at approximately 4:20 a.m., in the area of Second Street in Empire, officers from the Stanislaus County Auto-Theft Task Force (StanCATT) observed a recently driven but abandoned 2000 black Honda Civic in an alleyway. Acting on a tip that Marcelja was the driver, the officers located Marcelja hiding in tall grass in front of his friend's house a block away. The registered owner of the vehicle had just parked her car in her driveway in Modesto before retiring for the night and did not know her car was taken until contacted by StanCATT officers.

Upon entry of the plea, the Honorable Nancy Ashley sentenced Marcelja to three years in state prison.

Stanislaus County residents can report suspected vehicle theft activity to their local law enforcement agency or contact the Stanislaus County Auto-Theft Task Force (STANCATT) at: (209) 545-7316.

IF YOU OBSERVE A THEFT IN PROGRESS, DIAL 911

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