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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: April 20, 2018
Re: Manuel Gonzalez
Vehicular Manslaughter

For More Information Contact:

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Modesto, California - Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Manuel Gonzalez, age 19 of Modesto, was convicted on April 6, 2018, of vehicular manslaughter with gross negligence and felon in possession of a firearm. Deputy District Attorney Bianca Yip prosecuted the case for the People.

On August 23, 2017, Gonzalez was driving a stolen Chevrolet Tahoe when he ran a red light at the intersection of L and 7th Streets in downtown Modesto and struck a Ford Mustang driven by Gloria Hawkins. Hawkins died as a result of her injuries from the crash. Gonzalez ran from the scene without identifying himself and failed to call 911. Modesto Police investigators used DNA evidence and surveillance videos to determine that Gonzalez was driving the stolen Chevrolet at the time of the collision.

In a separate incident, on September 1, 2017, Modesto Police officers responded to a "shots fired" call and upon arrival found a gunshot victim. Gonzalez was seen running from the scene and matched the description of the shooter. As Gonzalez fled, he dropped a loaded magazine containing eight .45 caliber rounds. When Modesto Police officers attempted to contact Gonzalez the next day, he ran again, throwing down a stolen firearm as he fled.

On April 6, 2018, Gonzalez pled no contest to the felony charge of vehicular manslaughter with gross negligence, admitted personally inflicting great bodily injury, and fleeing the scene after committing the vehicular manslaughter. He also pled to the felony charge of being a convicted felon in possession of a firearm. Gonzalez had two previous felony convictions from Merced County in 2017.

Sentencing is set for May 14, 2018, before Judge Ricardo Cordova where Gonzalez will be sentenced to an agreed upon term of six years in state prison. The great bodily injury enhancement to the vehicular manslaughter charge constitutes a "Strike" under California's Three Strikes Law that may be used to enhance any future felony convictions Gonzalez receives after being released from prison.

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