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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: February 24, 2017
Re: Bryan Dean Small
Voluntary Manslaughter conviction and
prison sentence

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Modesto, California -Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Bryan Dean Small, age 44, of Modesto, was convicted February 22 of voluntary manslaughter in the 2014 killing of Christina Cardoza. Deputy District Attorney Jeff Mangar prosecuted the case for the People.

On February 26, 2014, Small pulled into the northbound Highway 99 rest stop in Turlock and contacted a CalTrans worker asking for help. Small's girlfriend, Christina Cardoza, was also in the vehicle and non-responsive. Emergency medical personnel who responded to the scene pronounced the victim deceased.

Small told Stanislaus Sheriff's detectives that earlier in the day he and Cardoza had been arguing outside of her home in Merced. Both had ingested a substantial amount of methamphetamine. During the argument, Small said he elbowed the victim after she slapped him, which caused her to fall backward and hit her head on the cement driveway. He also claimed that he tried to perform CPR but said it did not work. He then put Cardoza into his car and drove around with her for several hours without seeking any medical attention.

Small was arrested and charged with murder since the victim may have died during the time he failed to get her medical treatment for her injuries. He was allowed to plead to voluntary manslaughter since the only evidence of what occurred was based upon his statement to detectives. The victim's cause of death was consistent with falling and hitting the back of her head on cement. No other witnesses saw the altercation and no physical evidence was found.

Upon the entry of his plea, Judge Nancy Ashley followed the recommendation of the prosecution and sentenced Small to the maximum of eleven years in state prison.

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