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**JANUARY 2016 TO BE DECLARED
HUMAN TRAFFICKING AWARENESS MONTH
IN SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY**

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SAN LUIS OBISPO, CA, January 11, 2016 — On Tuesday afternoon, January 12th, at 1:30 p.m., District Attorney Dan Dow will ask the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors to proclaim the month of January 2016 as Human Trafficking Awareness Month.

Since June 2014, the District Attorney's office has filed charges against five separate defendants for the crime of human trafficking in San Luis Obispo County. In November 2015, the first of these cases was successfully prosecuted by jury trial. The jury found defendant Richard Scott Brooks guilty of numerous felony counts of sexual crimes and human trafficking against a victim who was under the age of 18. Last week, Honorable Judge Rita Federman sentenced Mr. Brooks to 61 years and 8 months-to-life in state prison.

It has been one year since District Attorney Dan Dow first announced the formation and implementation of the San Luis Obispo County Human Trafficking Task Force comprised of various county departments, federal, state and local law enforcement agencies and community-based organizations. The mission of the task force is to:

- prevent and combat human trafficking through education;
- protect and assist victims with full respect for their human rights through identification;
- promote cooperation among law enforcement and community organizations by allocating resources to meet these objectives.

California has been identified by the FBI as one of the primary transit and destination states for human trafficking and its victims. San Luis Obispo County is a natural corridor for human trafficking activities between Los Angeles and San Francisco and has also been the scene of

human trafficking activities originating in the California Central Valley. The crime of human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation has continued to grow and evolve significantly over the past several years. The 2012 report by California's Attorney General Kamala Harris, *The State of Human Trafficking in California*, details the extent this modern day slavery has infected our communities.

Officers from local law enforcement agencies, Deputy District Attorneys, and victim advocates have received specialized training to identify the signs of human trafficking. Last year, a countywide community education and awareness campaign began as the San Luis Obispo County Human Trafficking Task Force contacted businesses and provided posters that include hotline numbers to seek help or report unlawful activity. If you are interested in displaying a human trafficking poster please contact Diana McPartlan, Assistant Director, Victim & Witness Assistance Center, at (805)781-5821.

To receive assistance or report a suspected instance of human trafficking, call the National Human Trafficking Resource Center at 1-888-373-7888 or text BeFree (233733). You may also contact your local law enforcement, call Crime Stoppers at 544-STOP, or text SLOTIPS plus your message to Crimes (274637).

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