



## BUTTE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY

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### PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

February 17, 2011

#### **District Attorney Bad Check Unit Reaches \$4 Million Collection Milestone**

The Butte County District Attorney's highly successful Bad Check Unit this month marked the collection of \$4 million in restitution to local area merchants. Since its formation in 1993, District Attorney Mike Ramsey said the unit has collected on "bad" checks passed to area merchants through a combination of diversion, education and prosecution.

In honor of the event, Ramsey presented the "\$4 millionth dollar" in a \$339.81 restitution check to Gridley Veterinary Hospital in an afternoon ceremony on February 17, 2011. Accepting for the long time Gridley business were owners Dr. Everett and Mary Colburn who praised the District Attorney's program for its collection efforts. "The collection of bad checks, particularly for the smaller merchant, can make the difference between a profit or loss," said Dr. Colburn. Gridley Veterinary Hospital has been a longtime participant in the District Attorney's Bad Check program. Their first bad checks were submitted in 1995, just over a year after the Butte County District Attorney developed the Bad Check Unit. Over those years, the Gridley Veterinary Hospital has received \$4,754.96 in restitution on bad checks passed at the business.

Since 1993, the DA's Bad Check Unit has acted as a clearing house for all bad checks written in Butte County. Merchants who participate in the unit's program, after exhausting their own collection attempts, refer the checks to the unit who then enters them into an internal computer tracking program. The unit first attempts collection through a series of three letters and a phone call for each new check. If the check writer responds and either pays the check(s) in full or sets up a payment plan, he or she is placed on a diversion program and avoids prosecution. There is also an educational element to the program which requires attendance at a four-hour Financial Management class. If the bad check writer ignores his or her responsibility, the unit then institutes prosecution efforts.

Ramsey noted the fees charged by the unit to the bad check writers fully supports the cost of the unit thereby incurring no cost to taxpayers. The beauty of the program is that the entire cost is borne by the people causing the problem, Ramsey said. The unit has also relieved local police agencies from the necessity of investigating bad checks, freeing up investigators to concentrate on more violent crimes.

The service is free and available to any merchant accepting a check in Butte County. No fees are withheld from the collected check(s). If collected, the full amount is returned to the merchant, including any bank fees.

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Ramsey warned those who may wish to take advantage of merchants in Butte County, that writing bad checks is theft and economic fraud is not taken lightly here. In 2010, forty (40) people were arrested on bad check warrants. Since the beginning of the year, thirty-eight (38) new criminal cases were filed in Butte County Superior Court of which twenty-two (24) were felonies and fourteen were (14) misdemeanors. Prosecutions in 2010 resulted in forty-five (45) convictions; nineteen (19) felonies and twenty-six (26) misdemeanors. Most offenders receive probation, but two, who either had extensive criminal history, or violated their probation, were sentenced to prison.

Ramsey also reminded merchants of the preventative measures they can take to avoid becoming a victim of this type of fraud. Such measures include verifying the identity of the person writing a check by asking to see a piece of valid identification, and noting the identification number on the check; ensure the name signed on the check matches the name imprinted on the face of the check; and, use caution when accepting third party checks, or those without a name imprinted on the face. Merchants should also request to see identification when a credit or debit card is presented.

The Butte County District Attorney's Bad Check Unit can be reached at 538-7089 or on the web at [www.buttecounty.net/da/checks](http://www.buttecounty.net/da/checks).

### **PRESS ALERT - PHOTO OPPORTUNITY**

The check passing ceremony will be **today** at:

**Gridley Veterinarian Hospital  
27 East Gridley Road, Suite A  
Gridley, Ca**

**Thursday, February 17, 2011  
@ 2:00 p.m.**