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[HOME](#)[ABOUT](#)[NEWS](#)[CAREERS](#)[VICTIM INFORMATION](#)[PROGRAMS](#)[EN ESPAÑOL](#)

[U.S. Attorneys](#) » [Eastern District of California](#) » [News](#)

Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

Eastern District of California

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **San Joaquin County District Attorney's Office Receives Award for Its Contribution to the Mission of the Department of Justice**

### **Sacramento Division's 2015 Outstanding Law Enforcement Agency Award for Its Investigation of an Online Auto Parts Fraud Scheme**

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — United States Attorney Benjamin B. Wagner is pleased to announce the 2015 winner of the Eastern District of California Outstanding Law Enforcement Agency Award for the Sacramento Division. This award is one of four awards presented annually to a law enforcement agency and an officer in each of the Sacramento and Fresno divisions of the Eastern District of California to recognize outstanding collaboration between federal, state and local law enforcement in addressing public safety issues in this region.

U.S. Attorney Wagner stated: "Our success was only possible because of the dedicated, hard-working staff of law enforcement agencies like Scott McDonald and Cheryl Mason. All successful prosecutions rely on good investigations. Without their professional attention to detail and dogged investigation, it would not have been possible to bring this defendant to justice. My office, the Eastern District, and San Joaquin County all owe a great debt to the District Attorney's Office and the many skilled and dedicated people who work there."

San Joaquin County District Attorney Tori Verber Salazar stated: "We are greatly appreciative of this award. It exemplifies the collaborative effort of our 220 employees with our law enforcement partners, like

the U.S. Attorney's Office, to make our communities safe.”

The 2015 Sacramento Division's Outstanding Law Enforcement Agency Award goes to the San Joaquin County District Attorney's Office for its work in the John Steven Keplinger case. Keplinger purported to sell used car engines online, took people's money, and often never sent the engines or sent defective engines from junkyards. Working out of his house in Stockton, he had over 300 victims nationwide.

Before federal law enforcement became involved, the San Joaquin DA's office, with Deputy District Attorney Scott McDonald and paralegal Cheryl Mason, did all they could to shut down the original website and find and shut down new websites he opened in order to continue his fraud. Their focus was always on the victims, many of whom were poor and were buying replacement engines because they could not afford a new car. When the FBI began investigating, McDonald and Mason connected them to the Bureau of Automotive Repair which had opened the investigation, and shared an extensive amount of victim complaint information collected from various agencies across the country. Throughout the time-consuming process, the San Joaquin County team of McDonald and Mason kept their focus on preventing Keplinger from committing further crimes. Eventually, he was sentenced to two years and three months in prison and a \$100,000 fine.

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