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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 22, 2016**

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Daniel and Diana Cohen Found Guilty of Murder

District Attorney Jeffrey S. Rosell announced today that Diana and Daniel Cohen, mother and son, were found guilty of first degree murder in the death of Gordon Smith. The defendants were tenants in a property managed by Smith. On November 8, 2013, the defendants took a car for a test drive from a dealership so that it would not be associated with them. They retrieved Diana Cohen's gun and then lay in wait for Smith in the parking lot where he worked for over an hour until they were satisfied that he was alone. Daniel Cohen fired four shots, including two to Smith's head.

A thorough investigation conducted by the Capitola Police Department with the aid of the District Attorney's Office, the Sheriff's Office, Watsonville and Santa Cruz Police Departments and the California Department of Justice led to a swift arrest of the Cohens for Mr. Smith's murder. The trial commenced in November, 2015. In January 22, 2016, The Cohens were found guilty of first degree murder, with the special allegation of lying in wait. They will be sentenced to life without the possibility of parole on April 21, 2016 by Judge John Salazar who presided over the trial.

Assistant District Attorney Celia Rowland, who prosecuted the case, said, "These verdicts came as the result of hard work by the Capitola Police Department, the District Attorney's Office as well as representatives of almost every law enforcement agency in the county. It is an extraordinary example of team work at its best. We are also grateful for the efforts and dedication of the jury members throughout the trial." District Attorney Rosell said, "After this senseless murder it is my hope that these verdicts can provide closure to those close to Gordon Smith as well as the Santa Cruz Community as a whole."