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Innocence Project Honors District Attorney's Post Conviction Review Section

Houston, TX – The Innocence Project of Texas will present its 2010 Honesty and Integrity in Prosecution award Thursday to the Harris County District Attorney's Office, for the work by the Post Conviction Review Section in freeing inmates who had been wrongfully convicted.

Harris County District Attorney Patricia Lykos, who established the special unit when she took office in January 2009, and Section members will attend the organization's award ceremonies in Dallas. "This honor reflects what this office is all about – integrity and honesty," Lykos said. "All of us in the District Attorney's Office are proud of our honorees' accomplishments and commitment to justice."

The Post Conviction Review honorees are Section Chief Baldwin Chin, Assistant District Attorney Alicia O'Neill, and District Attorney's Investigators J.J. Freeze and Donald Cohn.

One of the first official actions by Lykos was to create the section to investigate credible claims of innocence from inmates who had exhausted their regular avenues of appeal. She explained that convicting innocent people is a "triple tragedy" that sends the wrong person to prison, denies real justice to victims and leaves the actual criminal free to strike again.

The Section gained the release of two innocent inmates within a two-week period in late July. It also identified the criminals who committed the heinous offenses.

An extensive DA's investigation and DNA tests confirmed that Michael Anthony Green had not committed a 1983 aggravated sexual assault. He had served 27 years of a 75-year prison term for that crime.

Allen Wayne Porter was released after 19 years of a life prison sentence for his wrongful conviction for sexual assault in 1990. His freedom followed the section's work in obtaining statements from some of those involved in that crime, and tracing previously unidentified fingerprints found at the scene.

The award will be presented at the Innocence Project's state conference. The Lubbock-based non-profit organization relies on attorneys, law students and other volunteers to investigate claims of innocence. (end)

