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SEAN PENN LEADS EXONEREES BACK TO BAKERSFIELD TO SHOWCASE THE DOCUMENTARY FILM “WITCH HUNT” AT THE FOX THEATRE ON TUESDAY, APRIL 28TH.

Non-Fiction Film Directed by Dana Nachman and Don Hardy
Executive Produced and Narrated by Sean Penn

April 23, 2009 – San Jose “WITCH HUNT” is coming to Bakersfield. Dozens of people wrongly convicted at the hands of the Bakersfield justice system are coming back to town with two-time Academy Award® winner Sean Penn to present their story to their hometown crowd. The award winning documentary film will be shown on the big screen in the historic Fox Theatre at 7:00pm on Tuesday, April 28th.

“This has always been part of the plan for us,” states co-director Don Hardy. “From our earliest conversations with Sean, we knew we had to show our film in Bakersfield.”

Tickets are now on sale at www.vallitix.com and at the Fox Theatre box office. Proceeds from all tickets sales will go to fund CLEAR - the Committee for Legislation Education And Reform. CLEAR is a newly formed grass roots organization led by Kern County residents dedicated to educating the public about the justice system and wrongful convictions.

In addition to the screening of the film, Nachman, Hardy and Penn will lead a rally near the Liberty Bell at the Kern County Courthouse (1415 Truxton Avenue) in downtown Bakersfield at 4:30pm on April 28th giving the exonerated men and women featured in the film a chance to speak, along with Mr. Penn and the filmmakers. Members of CLEAR will also address the public.

“WITCH HUNT” tells the story of eight parents in Bakersfield, CA in 1984 who were falsely accused and convicted of child molestation by an overzealous district attorney. The lives of these families, and many others implicated in the cases, were damaged forever. The children in the cases were coerced to lie about their parents. Subsequently, their parents served anywhere from six to twenty years in prison, with the last person acquitted in 2004.

All of the exonerated men and women featured in the film will be joining the filmmakers in Bakersfield for the screening including John Stoll, Rick and Marcella Pitts, Jeff Modahl, and Brenda and Scott Kniffen. For them this screening serves as vindication for what they went through. Marcella Pitts says, “Back when we were convicted, we were all alone. They didn't listen to our stories before they convicted us. Now, we have the chance to walk back into Bakersfield with our heads held high, united, and show the people in Kern County what really happened to us.”

Co-director Dana Nachman says, “It's important that the people in Bakersfield see what really happened to their neighbors back in the 80's and it's equally important for the powers that be in Bakersfield to see the human toll that wrongful convictions take on real people. The repercussions are felt for generations.”

Sean Penn adds, “The devastation that occurred in those investigations and trials in the 80's continues. It continues in the heroic actions of the victims – by that I mean the convicted – to rebuild lives that were shattered for the personal and professional gain of the District Attorney's Office and the Sheriff's Department in Kern County. Many of those corrupt officials still hold those positions today. There's a very current issue here.”