MISSION STATEMENT
PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE

The Public Relations Committee’s responsibility and mission is to work with the news media, community service groups, and public agencies to educate the public regarding the duties and obligations of the Grand Jury.

The following is a list of the Committee’s activities during the year:

• A new Grand Jury brochure was created and over 2,500 brochures were distributed throughout the County. Distribution methods included the library and all of its branches, the courts and all of its regional branches, including jury service rooms and public information docent centers at both the Superior Court Building and the County Administrative Building.

• A Countywide high school Art Contest was held to promote excellence in our schools. Drawings were submitted by 167 students from throughout the County. All participants received a Participation Award and all drawings were displayed in the Superior Court Building main floor showcase during the month of January. Twelve winners were selected and their drawings appear on the 2004-2005 Kern County Grand Jury Final Report Book section tabs. Three grand prize winners received cash awards of $100.00 for 1st place, $75.00 for 2nd place and $50.00 for 3rd place, along with a plaque recognizing their achievement. The winning drawings appear in the Public Relations Committee section of the Final Report Book.

• Plaques for excellence were awarded to four County newspaper publishers/editors for their outstanding coverage of Grand Jury reports throughout the year. The newspapers recognized were the Bakersfield Californian, Reed Publishers, Wasco Tribune and the Shafter Press. Over 100 grand jury news articles appeared in Kern County newspapers of which 50 were reported in full. This year’s Jury continued the previous year’s jury practice of issuing all of their Final Report as early releases to the public. This practice along with the cooperation of the news media greatly increased public awareness of the Grand Jury’s Final Reports subject content.

• In conjunction with Grand Jury Public Awareness Week, the Jury held its first public ceremony in front of the Superior Court Building. The ceremony included the Kern County Probation Color Guard presenting the colors and a Bakersfield College student singing our national anthem. Awards for the Art Contest were presented along with an award for excellence in private business to Scaled Composites, LLC and to the East Kern Airport District for excellence as a County Special District.

• Throughout the year the Jury invited 50 guest speakers to appear before the whole jury to inform the Jury as to their functions and responsibilities within the County. These guest speakers included County department heads, city mayors, County
supervisors and community leaders. All speakers graciously concluded their presentations with an open questions forum from the Jurors. These speakers greatly increased the knowledge of the Jurors relating to the internal operations of the County.

- The Public Relations Committee also participated in “Law Day 2005” which was sponsored by the Law Library. Law Day is a program that reaches out to the public with various workshops and speaking presentations.

- The Committee sent out over 200 letters to community leaders offering to give a Grand Jury presentation to their group or organization throughout the year. The letters, along with public notices in the news media, resulted in the Committee giving 25 public presentations. The goal of the presentations was to better explain to the public that every Grand Jury is an independent judicial body that is governed by the California Penal Code. The presentations also explained that the Grand Jury is allowed by law to do both Civil and Criminal investigations to ensure that taxpayers’ monies are spent appropriately and that governing bodies and/or individual elected officials serve in accordance to the law.

In summary the Public Relations Committee would like to express their thanks to all of the community leaders, the news media, educators, elected officials, department personnel and organizations that participated throughout the year to help make this a fruitful year for Public Awareness. We were warmly received by everyone.

In conclusion the Public Relations Committee would also like to express appreciation to all of the members of the 2004-2005 Grand Jury, who without their cooperation none of this could have been possible. Thank you.