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PRESS RELEASE

THE MINERVA QUILTS **Quilts created by teenage girls at Alameda County Juvenile Justice Center** Presented at the Alameda County Administration Building March 18 – April 22, 2009

The Minerva Quilts, colorful textile art pieces created by teenage girls detained at the Alameda County Juvenile Justice Center, are the focus of an uplifting art exhibition in the 5th Floor lobby of the Alameda County Administration Building, 1221 Oak Street, Oakland.

The six artistic quilts on display feature the girls' interpretations of Minerva, the Roman goddess whose image adorns the California state seal. They were created as part of an innovative Arts Education Program at the Juvenile Justice Center that brings working artists to the San Leandro facility to work with youths detained there. The quilt project was inspired by California First Lady Maria Shriver, and many of the quilts were featured last year at the Governor and First Lady's Conference on Women in Sacramento.

Forty girls at the Juvenile Justice Center participated in the project, with the guidance of teaching artist Marion Coleman. Each girl designed her own quilt, selecting fabric pieces for the background and choosing the major shapes to reflect their individual styles and personalities. Similar to the collaborative process of a traditional quilting bee, the girls created the top layer of each quilt, while Coleman completed the sewing. The artwork focuses on the Roman goddess' qualities of courage, strength and wisdom, and the project encouraged the teens to think about these traits in themselves when creating their quilts. The Minerva Quilts is an example of the potential for arts programs to help young people find the courage, strength, and wisdom to make positive changes in their lives, and to be leaders in their families and communities.

"The Minerva Quilts project is a great example of the efforts Alameda County is making to help at-risk youth find positive role models, develop new skills and move their lives in positive directions," said Susan S. Muranishi, Alameda County Administrator. Added California's First Lady, Maria Shriver: "I believe that each woman is the artist of her own life. My hope is that young girls will be inspired by the Minerva Quilts to develop qualities they wish to see in themselves."

Five of the quilts are featured on a new set of note cards produced as part of Alameda County's NEW BEGINNINGS PROGRAM; the note cards are available for purchase at the Fresh Start Café within the Clerk-Recorder's Building located at 1106 Madison Street, Oakland. Proceeds from the sale of the cards are used to support the New Beginnings Program. The Minerva Quilts will also be featured at the Alameda County 16th Annual Women's Hall of Fame Awards Luncheon on April 25. For more information, please call 510-272-6984.

To learn more about the Alameda County Arts Education Program and the Alameda County Arts Commission, please contact Rachel Osajima through the website www.acgov.org/arts or by phone 510-271-5162.