

## Jury awards plaintiff in trucking accident

*Woman alleged tractor-trailer ran her off highway*

A woman who allegedly was knocked off the highway by a tractor-trailer received a \$57,600 verdict from a St. Louis jury.

Amanda Wicks was 17 when her car spun out of control on westbound Interstate 70 near the Gateway Arch in downtown St. Louis. She claimed she was hit by a tractor-trailer. A witness' description of the tractor-trailer enabled police to pull over the driver in St. Louis County. Paint that matched Wicks' car was found on the truck's front bumper, but the officer at the scene declined to issue the trucker a ticket.

"The police thought, 'Hey, he had no clue,'" said plaintiff attorney Craig Schlappizzi, of The Schlappizzi Law Firm in St. Louis.

The parties argued at trial over who

caused the accident and where the accident occurred. The defendants alleged the crash happened at the merge point of highways 55 and 70. Wicks lost control of her car while merging, hit the tractor-trailer, then lost control again, they claimed. They also claimed the trucker had no idea he had hit anything, which is why he didn't stop, Schlappizzi said.

The plaintiff alleged the crash happened about 1,000 feet west of the Arch, where I-70 crosses Market Street. A police officer testified in agreement with that location, Schlappizzi said. Wicks also claimed she never attempted to merge but that the tractor-trailer driver had started to merge when he hit her.

The defendants' attorney, Paul

### ■ \$57,600 jury verdict

#### MOTOR VEHICLE COLLISION

■ **Court:** St. Louis Circuit Court

■ **Case Number/Date:** 0822-CC-2087/Aug. 12, 2010

■ **Judge:** David C. Mason

■ **Plaintiff's Experts:** Dr. Naseem Shekhami, St. Louis (physical medicine and rehabilitation, pain management); Dr. Nadim Nasrallah, St. Louis (chiropractics)

■ **Insurer:** Empire Fire and Marine

■ **Caption:** Amanda Wicks v. White Farms Trucking, Triple C Transportation and Matthew Benusches

■ **Plaintiff's Attorney:** Craig Anthony Schlappizzi, The Schlappizzi Law Firm, St. Louis

■ **Defendants' Attorney:** Paul Rauschenbach, Hahn, Enright & Hansen, St. Louis

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Rauschenbach, of Hahn, Enright & Hansen, did not respond to a request for comment.

Wicks claimed \$7,600 in medical bills for her soft-tissue injuries, which included a bulging disk at L5-S1.

The trial lasted three days, and the jury delivered the exact amount Schlappizzi

asked for in closing arguments, he said. There was no comparative fault.

Schlappizzi said he spoke with one of the jurors after the trial.

"He just said that once it was obvious contact was made, they all felt it was his fault."

— Anna Vitale