

# AKRON BEACON

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## \$7 million crash award believed to be record

• Lawyer says Summit jury decision will be reduced

BY ELIZABETH HALLOWELL  
Beacon Journal staff writer

A Summit County Common Pleas Court jury on Tuesday awarded an auto accident victim \$7.6 million — believed to be the largest personal injury award in the history of the county.

Mark Hilkert, the attorney for Karen Nichols of Hudson, said the award will be reduced by one-third because the jury determined that Nichols was partly responsible for the accident, which oc-

curred in July 1987 at Barlow Road and state Route 8 in Boston Heights.

Hilkert said Nichols, 22, was attempting to turn onto Route 8 when her vision was blocked by a parked tractor-trailer rig. The verdict was returned against the owner of that vehicle, Coast Distribution Systems, of Elkhart, Ind.

Nichols proceeded to make the turn and was struck by another

See AWARD, Page A8

## AWARD

• \$7.6 million decision will provide needed care

Continued from Page A1

tractor-trailer headed north on Route 8. The driver of that truck was named as a defendant but was dismissed before trial.

Hilkert said Nichols suffered brain damage and has difficulty walking. At the time of the accident, she had just graduated from Hudson High School and was to begin college at Miami University in Oxford.

Hilkert said the award, returned by the jury after a two-week trial, will compensate Nichols for her medical expenses and the special care and rehabilitation she will need.

"The biggest thing as far as satisfaction is that she's an extremely nice girl — very, very deserving," Hilkert said.

Paul Tustin, the general manager of Coast Distribution Systems, refused to accept a telephone call from a reporter.

The award is apparently the largest in Summit County history to be awarded to a single plaintiff in a personal injury suit, said Claudia Richardson, director of publication for Jury Verdict Research, a Solon-based company that tracks jury awards nationwide.

The second-largest award — \$5 million — was awarded by a Summit County jury in 1981 to a 17-year-old girl who was left a quadriplegic following an automobile accident caused by a pothole, Richardson said.