

# Widow sues surgeon in death

• Doctor's negligence during oral surgery killed her husband, woman says

*Beacon Journal staff report*

The widow of Steven Kawczk, a 41-year-old Voris Elementary School custodian who died May 5 after dental surgery in Green, has sued the oral surgeon and an assistant, claiming negligence was responsible for her husband's death.

According to the suit, Kawczk "aspirated a foreign object which had been placed in his mouth" that then disrupted his breathing and led to "severe and irreversible brain damage and ultimately to his death."

Named as defendants in the suit, which was filed Thursday, was Dr. John N. Santin, an assistant, Lori McCauley, and the Akron Area Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Associates.

The suit seeks damages in excess of \$85,000 and demands a trial by jury.

Friends of the family said Kawczk, the father of three children, had undergone the dental work as part of an effort to improve his smile and get a better job.

According to a report Santin submitted to the Ohio Dental Board, Kawczk began to struggle while under general anesthesia, trying to get out of the dental chair.

Kawczk was calmed and the procedure continued until an hour later when Kawczk had another violent reaction requiring all of the operating room staff to subdue him.

At that point the oxygen level in Kawczk's blood began to drop and paramedics were summoned. Kawczk was taken to Akron City Hospital, where his heart stopped, Santin wrote in his report.

He was placed on life support but was pronounced dead the next day.

In September, Summit County Coroner William Cox ruled the death accidental, saying Kawczk died of asphyxiation after inhaling a piece of gauze. The widow, Sandra L. Kawczk of Akron, is represented in the suit by Timothy F. Scanlon and James L. Burdon.

The suit has been assigned to Judge James R. Williams.