

MIAMI-DADE COURTS

\$8.8 million awarded in driving death

■ The family of a woman killed in a 2008 Miami-Dade crash with a teen believed to be texting at the wheel was awarded \$8.8 million by a jury.

BY JON SILMAN
jsilman@MiamiHerald.com

A Miami-Dade County jury has awarded \$8.8 million to the family of a mother killed in a 2008 collision with a teenage driver who was believed to be texting, according to lawyers involved with the case.

Myriam del Socorro Lopez was a passenger in a car driven by her husband, traveling east on Bird Road, when Luis Cruz-Govin, 17 at the time, was speeding and weaving in and out of traffic in his father's Subaru. According to the complaint filed by lawyers, Cruz-Govin slammed into Lopez's vehicle. Lopez died at the scene, and her husband, Wilson Torres, suffered internal injuries, including

substantial abdominal bleeding, and a large cut from his chest to his stomach, from the impact.

The couple had two young children, who were not in the car at the time.

"This case should bring an awareness to Florida of the problems that texting and driving have done, and will continue to do," said Alan Goldfarb, Torres' lawyer. "It has to stop. It's a tragic situation that kills."

Goldfarb said police at the scene charged Cruz-Govin with speeding and reckless driving, but not vehicular homicide. He was given a \$2,000 fine, and his license was suspended for six months. In

•TURN TO AWARD, 4B

Date: Dec 21, 2011; Section: Local, State & Business; Page: 4B

MIAMI-DADE COURTS

\$8.8 million awarded in mom's crash death

AWARD, FROM 1B

addition, he had to complete a court-ordered advanced driving course.

According to evidence presented in the case, Cruz-Govin was driving between 61 and 69 mph in a 40-mph zone. Records showed an outgoing text at 8:19 p.m. Paramedics were notified at 8:21.

David Strayer, a professor of psychology at the University of Utah, testified at the trial on the effects of texting and driving. Strayer, a renowned texting-and-driving expert, published a study called "Driven To Distraction," as well as various other studies on the subject.

According to the complaint, there was marijuana and cocaine in the Sub-

'The [defendant] was clearly a chronic texter.'

— Alan Goldfarb, attorney

aru, and a partially consumed bottle of Delsym cough syrup.

The National Transportation Safety Board recently recommended that the federal government ban the use of all cell-phone and texting devices during driving.

"The [defendant] was clearly a chronic texter," Goldfarb said, citing the 127 texts Cruz-Govin sent on the day of the accident.

According to Goldfarb, drivers are eight times more likely to get involved in an accident while texting than when not.