

Journal North

A San Miguel County jury returned an 8.5 million dollar verdict in favor of the plaintiff in a wrongful death case that concluded Thursday in a Las Vegas courtroom. The case, tried before Judge Eugenio Mathis, involved the death of Santana Sanchez, a 10 year old from Raton New Mexico on June 25, 2002. Santana was the passenger in a truck being driven by Mark Montoya when Montoya lost control of and crashed the truck. Santana was thrown from the truck and died at the scene. Montoya was subsequently charged with and convicted of DWI and is currently serving a 12 year sentence in a Hobbs prison. Suit was brought by Santana's Estate and her mother Andrea Sanchez against Montoya and his employer and the owner of the truck Poole Chemical from Texline, Texas. Mr. Montoya was hired by Poole as a delivery driver. Montoya had a history of DWIs and at the time he was hired his license had been revoked. The claims brought against Poole Chemical were for negligently hiring Montoya and negligently entrusting him with a vehicle. The jury deliberated for approximately four hours before returning a unanimous verdict. The verdict included 4.5 million dollars for damages to Santana's Estate including her loss of life, 2 million dollars for Andrea Sanchez' loss of consortium and one million dollars for punitive damages against Montoya and one million in punitive damages against Poole Chemical. The jury found Poole Chemical 50 percent responsible and Montoya 50 percent responsible. The Plaintiffs were represented by Phil Gaddy of the Gaddy Law Firm from Albuquerque New Mexico.