

# Settlement reached in family drowning

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*The families of a mother and three children, who drowned when their minivan rolled into Bunnell's Pond on July 4, 2007, have settled a multi-million dollar lawsuit against the dealership that sold the woman the van. 39-year-old Michelle McIntosh, her 2-year-old son David Jr., her nephew, 6-year-old Jayden Wilson and 2-year-old Julia Boyd, the daughter of a family friend, died in the accident. Photo: File Photo/Tracy Deer, File Photo*

BRIDGEPORT -- The families of a mother and three children who drowned when their minivan rolled into Bunnell's Pond six years ago have settled a multi-million dollar lawsuit against the dealership that sold the woman the van.

What began as a family picnic on a warm July 4th afternoon for 39-year-old [Michelle McIntosh](#), her 2-year-old son David Jr., her nephew, 6-year-old [Jayden Wilson](#) and 2-year-old [Julia Boyd](#), the daughter of a family friend, turned into a traumatic event that shook the whole community.

"What happened was a terrible tragedy but the families agreed that the settlement was in their best interest and now hope to turn that page in their lives," said [William Bloss](#) of the Bridgeport law firm Koskoff, Koskoff and Bieder, which represented McIntosh's family.

As a condition of the settlement with the [Loman Auto Group of Woodbridge, N.J.](#), Bloss said all sides agreed to keep the terms of the settlement confidential.

"The families would now like to have some privacy," Bloss added.

[Peter Dreyer](#), who represented Boyd's family, declined comment. The lawyer for the auto dealership did not return calls for comment.

The settlement was reached as the case was about to go to trial before a [Superior Court](#) jury here. In court filing the plaintiffs had offered to settle the case for a total of \$15.5 million.

On the afternoon of July 4, 2007, McIntosh had parked her 1999 Plymouth Grand Voyager in a small parking lot above Bunnell's Pond and got out to talk with friends parked behind her about selecting a place for a holiday picnic.

While McIntosh was outside the van, it began to roll down the steep slope toward the pond with the three children inside.

McIntosh frantically chased after the van and managed to partially get back into the driver's seat, her foot dragged through the grass as the van careened towards the pond. Unable to stop it, she remained inside with the children as it plunged into the pond and quickly sank in about 20 feet of water.

A year after the incident, the city installed a rail barrier along the road above the pond in an attempt to prevent such tragedies in future.

A police investigation later determined that one of the children had shifted the van's automatic transmission into "drive."

Bloss said in 1999 most car companies had installed a safety device in their vehicle preventing them from being shifted into drive without the brake being depressed first however, McIntosh's van had not been sold with that device.

He said typically in a products liability case they would have pursued a lawsuit against the car company however, Plymouth had gone bankrupt.

"So we sued the dealership that sold the van," he said.

The families had initially sued the city and the [Connecticut Zoological Society](#), which owns the nearby zoo, with a different lawyer but later dropped that lawsuit.