

DENVER AND THE WEST

Frat settles suit in 2004 alcohol death

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In 2004, University of Colorado student and Chi Psi pledge Lynn "Gordie" Bailey died of acute alcohol poisoning.

He had been taken to the mountains with 26 other pledges, blindfolded and told to drink large amounts of whiskey and wine.

Bailey later lost consciousness and before he died, fraternity members scrawled vulgar phrases and drawings on his body.

Bailey's mother, Leslie Lanahan, sued the fraternity.

This week, in settlement of the lawsuit, the fraternity gave what Lanahan and her husband Michael Lanahan had sought: the admission that Gordie had been hazed.

"The first thing we wanted them to acknowledge was that Gordie was hazed," said Bailey's stepfather, Michael Lanahan, on Tuesday. "The sad thing about it is we could have come to an agreement on these things four years ago and avoided all this. The only reason our family started any legal action was to get to the truth of what happened."

The monetary settlement the Lanahans reached with Chi Psi fraternity and the Alpha Psi Delta Corporation of Chi Psi, which owned the fraternity house in Boulder, is confidential.

But Lanahan said all the money will go to the Gordie Foundation to provide "young people with the skills to navigate the dangers of alcohol, binge drinking, peer pressure and hazing."

"This has never been about money for us," Lanahan said by phone from his home in Texas. "What we really wanted was for Chi Psi to make changes."

In the settlement, Chi Psi said it will prohibit alcohol from being served at any pledge events. Violators will be subject to discipline which may include expulsion. There will be an alumni presence at all formal activities; by 2012, all chapters are to have an adult live-in house director.

In addition, the fraternity said it will use Gordie's story to educate pledges and brothers about the dangers of peer pressure, hazing and alcohol poisoning.

Denver lawyer Bruce Jones, who represented Leslie Lanahan, noted juries are limited to determining liability and awarding damages. A settlement, on the other hand, can bring reform.

"This settlement will ultimately be of benefit to the fraternity and to the future members because it could well save lives," he said.

Lanahan said all officers of each chapter will sign an agreement stating they understand their

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