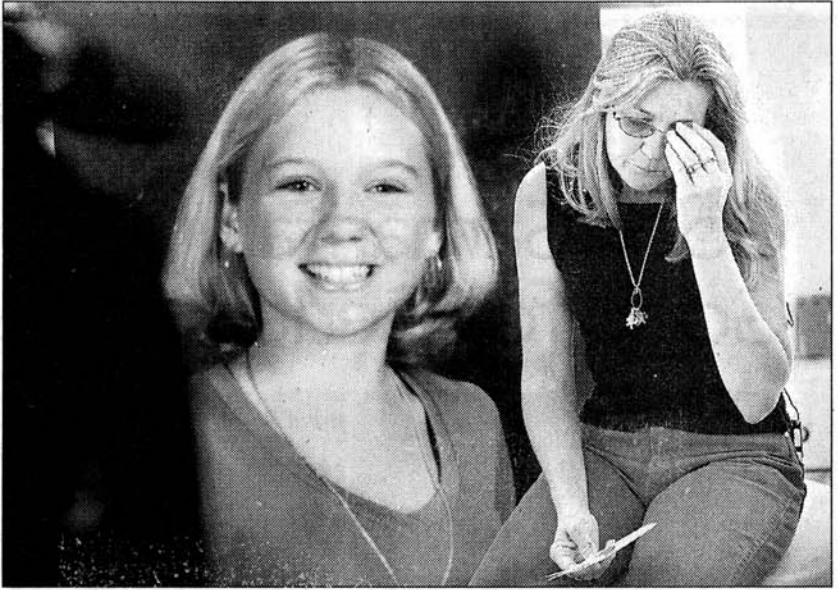


Jennifer Brennan, on Friday with her daughter Alicia's photo as a backdrop, said she hopes 'everyone involved in this can use this experience to do something positive.'

DAVID SPENCER
Staff Photographer



Family settles in fatal crash

In 2000, four kids riding with a 15-year-old driver died in Palm City.

By DAPHNE DURET
Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

STUART — Back at their home in Hastings, three hours away from Stuart, two sets of rosebushes frame the Brennan family's front yard.

The white ones are for a son Jennifer Brennan lost when he was a baby.

But the yellow and purple ones, those are for Alicia.

Alicia, Brennan's youngest daughter and one of four youths killed in a December 2000 car crash in Palm City, was all Brennan could think about during a news conference Friday announcing a multimillion-dollar settlement in her family's lawsuit against the parents of the 15-year-old who caused the crash.

The terms of the settlement are confidential, but the amount is in the millions, according to the Brennans' attorney, Gary Lesser.

"I know now that she's not coming back," Brennan said of Alicia. "But I hope that everyone involved in this can use this experience to do something positive with their lives."

That includes, Brennan said, the now-22-year-old man who crashed his parent's car seven years ago with Alicia and four other youths inside. Chad McComas was behind the wheel the night he and the other kids sneaked out. He lost control of the car and it hit a tree along Pine Tree Lane in Palm City.

Along with Alicia, 14, the crash killed Karen Victoria "Tori" Morris, 13; Josh Michaels, 12; and his 10-year-old brother, Sam Michaels. Another friend, Robert Marks,

who was 15 at the time, sustained serious injuries but recovered.

Chad McComas in 2001 pleaded no contest as a juvenile to four counts of vehicular homicide, car theft and driving without a license. He was sent to the Eckerd Youth Development Center in Okeechobee and released on probation when he turned 18.

Brennan said she and her husband, Ken, last saw McComas in December.

They talked about many things she said she wants to keep between the two of them, but she said she told him she forgave him for what happened and was able to offer some encouragement to the young man.

"It was like I was talking to one of my own kids," she said.

Two other families of children involved in the crash sued the McComas family as well and had previously settled their disputes.

A trial in the Brennans' case against McComas, his family and the leasing agent that owned the car was scheduled to begin months ago, but Lesser said the families began to work out a settlement before the trial began.

A separate \$5 million final judgment was issued in March against Chad McComas.

The December meeting was part of that settlement, Lesser said Friday.

Brennan, who has gone back to college and hopes one day to work as a counselor, said more than anything she wants parents to learn from Alicia's death and keep a closer eye on their children.

About Alicia, she said: "More than anything, I just wish I could have her back."

©daphne_duret@pbpost.com