

Ex-Lake Bluff resident sues over Chicago crash

NEWS-SUN STAFF REPORT

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CHICAGO — A Lake Bluff native is suing the city of Chicago for injuries he received when he was struck May 21 by a Streets and Sanitation vehicle.

Stephen Dewart, 27, and his wife filed the suit Monday in Cook County Circuit Court, according to his attorney, Steven Levin.

Dewart was one of eight people struck by city worker Dwight Washington's vehicle near the corner of Rush and Cedar streets. Washington, 61, tested over the legal blood-alcohol limit and Chicago police found an open bottle of brandy in his truck.

Dewart, who lives in Chicago and grew up in Lake Bluff, was participating in a wedding photo shoot for his wife's company when Washington lost control of the city-owned vehicle and struck Dewart and the others.

"Stephen suffered several spinal fractures, a broken fibula and a broken tibia, and was hospitalized for six days. He had a rod surgically placed in his left lower leg and is presently wheelchair bound," said Levin. "He is home now, but will require a lengthy and arduous period of physical therapy and rehabilitation."

The lawsuit names Washington and the city of Chicago as defendants.

The suit claims Washington was driving under the influence of alcohol at high speeds and failed to yield to pedestrians or slow his vehicle to prevent a collision. It also claims that the city is responsible for the actions of its employees. Additionally, the lawsuit claims loss of consortium for Dewart's wife.

"Stephen was supposed to start law school last week, but had to defer his admission for a year in order to recover from his injuries," said Levin. "Unfortunately, Mr. Washington's carelessness and the city's failure to supervise its employees have severely impacted this young family's future."

"We hope that this lawsuit will bring them fair and reasonable compensation," he added. "We also hope that it will prompt the city to create more effective drug and alcohol screening processes for employees, especially those operating large vehicles and heavy machinery."