

Mother and man who killed toddler order to pay \$12M

■ BY BILL CRESENZO

bcrezenzo@nclawyersweekly.com



David
Teddy

A mother and the man who was convicted of first-degree murder in the brutal beating death of her three-year-old daughter have been ordered to pay \$12 million to the girl's father in a default judgment following a bench trial, his attorney reports.

David Teddy of Teddy, Meekins & Talbert in Shelby said that in 2016, William Joseph McCullen, who lived with Jaylene Dumont in Gaston County, lost his temper with Dumont's daughter, Jordyn Ann Dumont, and hit her in the stomach, causing her death.

"It was a brutal, brutal, assault," Teddy said. "He punched her in the stomach with enough force to lacerate her liver."

McCullen buried the girl in a shallow grave near her house and reported her missing. She was soon found, and McCullen was charged with first-degree murder. In June 2018, he was convicted and sentenced to life in prison.

The day after the conviction, Jordyn's father, Joshua Kinnett, who was living out of state when his daughter died, filed the lawsuit against McCullen and Dumont. Teddy said that Kinnett knew from the outset he would be unlikely to ever collect a judgment against them.

"You can't put a price on the life of a child, but when someone acts in the manner that McCullen acted, there needs to be some local accountability in Gaston County for the community," Teddy said. "When we brought the action, we knew the chances of collecting any money against McCullen or the mother was slim, but we felt like we needed to make a statement, and we did."

Jaylene Dumont was not charged in her daughter's death, but on Feb. 25 Judge W. Robert Bell found that her negligence had contributed to the death.

Kinnett has also settled a lawsuit against the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services for \$250,000. Teddy said that, a few weeks before Jordyn's death, the Gaston County Department of Social Services conducted an investigation into the dangerous living conditions at her home—including drugs, alcohol, and violence—but took no action.

Follow Bill Cresenzo on Twitter @bcrezenzonclw

VERDICT REPORT — WRONGFUL DEATH

Amount: \$12,000,000

Injuries alleged: Blunt force trauma

Case name: Joshua Kinnett, administrator of the Estate of Jordyn Ann Dumont vs. William Joseph McCullen and Jaylene Corrine Dumont

Court: Gaston County Superior Court

Case No.: 18-CVS-2955

Judge: W. Robert Bell

Date of verdict: Feb. 25

Attorney for plaintiff: David Teddy of Teddy, Meekins & Talbert in Shelby

Attorney for defendants: None

Has the plaintiff been successful in collecting the judgment?: No