



NEW YORK POST

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Six®

FRIDAY, JANUARY 1, 2010 / Showers, 45 / Weather, P. 24

METRO EDITION

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Cash for SI ferry crash

We should all suffer so much. A starving artist injured on the 2003 Staten Island Ferry crash cashed in on her back, shoulder and arm injuries — landing over \$800,000 in a civil judgment against the city for her pain and suffering.

Annamarie Trombetta, 46, of Staten Island, never made more than \$11,000 in one year from her art. But she claimed in a lawsuit filed in Brooklyn federal court that her life as painter was finished because of the crash.

She went through four lawyers, who all encouraged her to settle. "I know they call me the Liz Taylor for lawyers," she said.

"But I finally found the right one."

Although Trombetta didn't go to the hospital until several days after the crash, she was adamant that her injuries were genuine, and the judge agreed.

"I've suffered irreparable harm to my body and my career," she said.

The city never offered to settle the case, but wished her well with her windfall.

"We hope that this award allows Ms. Trombetta to move forward with her life," said Kenneth Sasmor, who represented the city.

Janon Fisher

Cloudy, 42/28. Friday, January 1, 2010

CITY PULSE

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DAILY NEWS

She'll get \$813G for surviving ferry crash

BY JOHN MARZULLI
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

MAYBE MONEY does grow on trees, after all.

A federal judge yesterday awarded \$813,480 to a painter who likens herself to a tree for injuries she suffered in the Staten Island ferry crash six years ago.

Annamarie Trombetta became a money tree after Judge Tucker Melancon awarded her damages for injuries to her back, arm, neck and shoulder as well as pain and suffering.

The city's lawyers, who had offered Trombetta a \$100,000 settlement on the eve of trial in Brooklyn Federal Court, appeared stunned by the judge's decision.

"We hope that this award allows Ms. Trombetta to move forward with her life," said city lawyer Kenneth Sasmor.

"The plaintiff has established that she has suffered a real loss of ability to enjoy the pleasures of life as a result of the crash," said Melancon, who presided over the five-day bench trial this month.

Since most of the money was for medical bills and surgeries, he apparently didn't buy Trombetta's claim that she sustained brain damage.

He also refused to speculate how much she has lost in income as an artist as a result of her injuries. She had never earned more than \$11,000 in a year from her artwork.

Trombetta, 46, who ran through four previous lawyers since the ferry accident, said she felt vindicated but was uncertain about her future.



Annamarie Trombetta

"I've suffered irreparable damage to my body and my career," she said. "I'm going to have to figure out what to do with the rest of my life. Everything is just up in the air."

Trombetta testified she had tried many alternative treatments for her chronic pain, including "Brazilian energy healers."

The city has already paid \$67 million to 162 victims of the Andrew J. Barberi crash that occurred when the captain lost consciousness, causing the runaway vessel to plow into a concrete pier.

Eleven passengers were killed in the disaster.

There are four remaining personal injury claims scheduled for trial. The lawyer for a fifth person is trying to locate his client.

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