



Family of Megabus crash victim files suit in Chicago

CHICAGO TRIBUNE

CHICAGO — The family of Aditi Avhad, the 25-year-old University of Missouri graduate student killed in the Megabus crash in early August, filed a lawsuit yesterday in Cook County Circuit Court.

On Aug. 2, a Megabus heading south on Interstate 55 from Chicago crashed into a concrete pillar near Litchfield, south of Springfield. The double-decker bus was headed from Chicago to Kansas City, with stops planned in St. Louis and Columbia.

Aditi Avhad's parents, Raghunath Avhad and Vaishali Avhad, were aboard the bus that crashed and killed their daughter. They are suing for wrongful death of Aditi, among other allegations.

The suit names Megabus USA, LLC., Coach Leasing Inc., Coach USA Inc., and the driver, Preston Taylor, as defendants.

Attorney Larry Rogers from Chicago-based law firm Power Rogers & Smith is representing the Avhad family. Rogers said the Avhads were visiting from their home in India. They came to see Aditi, who had recently entered a master's program at MU, he said. Rogers said Aditi Avhad's mother suffered fractures to the leg and hip area and was released from the hospital earlier this month.

Megabus spokeswoman Amanda Byers said the incident is still under investigation by authorities. Megabus will "continue to lend full cooperation" in the investigation, she said.

"All of our staff at megabus.com are deeply saddened by the incident that took place in Litchfield, and our sincere thoughts and prayers go out to those involved," Byers wrote in a statement.

Several other lawsuits already have been filed in the crash.



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From left, Farah El-Jayyousi and Arwa Mohammad speak during a “Women in Islam” program Tuesday at the University of Missouri Women’s Center. They talked about basic principles of the religion and women’s role in Islam.

By [Janese Silvey](#)

Two University of Missouri students urged peers yesterday not to judge their religion based on what they might see on television and described the Muslim faith much like one might describe Christianity.

Muslims believe in one God, prayer, a holy text and prophets, including Abraham and Noah, said Arwa Mohammad, a medical student. And while Muslims are supposed to align everything they do with their submission to God, people aren't perfect and sometimes misinterpret the rules.

"Sometimes what you see might conflict with Islam," Mohammad said.

She and Farah El-Jayyousi, a sophomore, spent more than an hour explaining Islamic beliefs and answering questions during a forum hosted by the MU Women's Center and sponsored by the Muslim Speakers Bureau of Columbia. About 60 students attended and had a lot of questions about the fastest-growing religion in the world. Center coordinator Suzy Day had to cut off questions 30 minutes after the event was supposed to end.

Mohammad declined to opine about current events but did note that she believes recent eruptions of violence in the Middle East are about more than the making of an anti-Islamic film. She also explained, when asked, that images of the Prophet Muhammad offend Muslims because they do not believe in having physical representations of God or prophets.

El-Jayyousi and Mohammad also stressed that women in their religion are supposed to be equal and treated with respect, although that's not the reality in some societies with different cultures and customs than America. In Saudi Arabia, where Islam is the official religion, women can't drive and can't be employed without permission from a male guardian.

"Don't take one example and apply it in a broad stroke," Mohammad said.

And the hijab, or head scarf, they wear is not a sign of repression but rather an outward showing of faith, they said. If someone tried to force a woman to wear it, it would lose its religious significance, Mohammad said.

It's also a sign of respect for women, El-Jayyousi said. "Basically, we're forcing people to interact with women as people and not sexual objects."

But wearing it does sometimes attract negative attention. Mohammad, who is from Columbia, said the community is mostly respectful, but she has had derogatory terms hurled her way.

"Sometimes when there's heated rhetoric in the news, there's an uptick in hostility," she said.

Senior Rachel Doren said she was pleasantly surprised to hear that Muslim women wear the hijab willingly. Doren attended last night's event to get an introduction to the religion: She said she was already familiar with most mainstream religions and now wants to spend some time becoming more familiar with Islam.

"I'm eager to learn more," she said.

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Doctors aim for focused care at University Hospital's new Neurosciences Center

By Taylor Weatherby

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COLUMBIA — Pradeep Sahota walks down the hall of the Missouri Neurosciences Center with a smile on his face. The work he and N. Scott Litofsky have put into getting the center started at University Hospital has finally paid off.

For Sahota, chairman of the MU School of Medicine's Department of Neurology, neurological sciences are more than just an occupation. Sahota's father suffered a stroke when he was younger that left him paralyzed.

"I couldn't do a whole lot for my father," Sahota, a neurologist, said. "We are able to do much better with the expertise and the technology we have here."

Although Sahota doesn't like to talk in detail about that experience, he brims with obvious pride when he talks about the new 18,119-square-foot neurosciences center on the seventh floor of University Hospital. Opened Aug. 1, it's the only center in mid-Missouri providing comprehensive care for neurology patients of all types in one place.

Boone Hospital Center offers a 26-bed general neurology nursing care unit and a six-bed neuroscience intensive care unit for its patients, along with a Neurodiagnostics Services area. But, these are not located on the same floor, as the units are on the fifth and the services area is on the first.

The Truman Veterans Hospital treats neurology patients but doesn't have any rooms specific to neurology care; patients are admitted to a general medical inpatient unit.

Before the comprehensive care center was created at University Hospital, neurology patients were on one floor and neurosurgery was on another, said Litofsky, chief of the division of neurosurgery. That meant brain specialists weren't all in one place.

Having clinical and surgical needs all on one floor has made the center's staff aware of everything going on around the patient, resulting in greater awareness across the institution, Litofsky, a neurosurgeon, said. And that has improved the experience of patients, their families and caregivers.

The Missouri Neurosciences Center has a team of 16 neurologists and three neurosurgeons. Since the center opened, the neurosurgeons have performed about 100 neurosurgical procedures for brain aneurysms, trauma, brain tumors, spinal disorders and other illnesses. There are currently eight to 10 patients scheduled for future epilepsy-related surgeries, Sahota said.

The center includes 28 rooms, all equipped with "smart room" technology, which allows for the collection of a patient's vital signs and heart rate. The information is automatically recorded in the patient's electronic medical record, accessible to the appropriate caregivers. The rooms also utilize a bar code scanning system to ensure that a patient's medication is given correctly and at the right time.

Four of the 28 rooms are for epilepsy patients. The rooms have automatic response systems — including video and audio recording devices, and electroencephalography, or EEG — that alert caregivers when a patient suffers a seizure. They're also equipped with an alert button if a patient or family member notices signs of a seizure that might not be apparent on video.

Monitoring epilepsy patients on video makes it easier for doctors to pinpoint the specific spot in the brain that is affected, go in and place electrodes where the epilepsy is located.

Aside from the technology, Sahota and Litofsky stressed that the center is striving to provide complete care of the patient and his or her family.

"It's not the disease we treat, but the patient we treat," Sahota said.

Improvements have been made to patient rooms to include televisions that provide games and movies in addition to educational materials to help families better understand what their loved one is going through. Other additions include shelving specifically for patients and their families as well as a recliner in case a family member needs to stay overnight.

Separate cabinets for nurses are accessible from the hallway, so nurses can cater to a patient's needs without entering the room.

A significant number of the brain injuries the staff is likely to see are related to falls. Twenty percent to 30 percent of people who fall suffer moderate to severe injuries including head traumas, according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. In 2009, the CDC reported about 20,400 older adults – age 65 and older – died from unintentional fall injuries. The CDC also reports that falls are the leading cause of injury death and the most common cause of nonfatal injuries and hospital admissions for trauma for older adults.

Dixie Keener, 74, fell in early September. Her family had been unable to wake her the morning of Sept. 4, at her home in Linn, so they took her to Capital Region Medical Center in Jefferson City. But the doctors there told her they did not have the facilities to treat her. They suggested she go to University Hospital.

When Keener arrived at the hospital, she was told she'd suffered a subdural hematoma, bleeding on the surface of the brain and that she was going to be in the hospital for two weeks. She was transferred to the Missouri Neurosciences Center when physicians determined she wouldn't need surgery. There Keener received fresh frozen plasma to repair the bleeding part of her brain and reverse the negative effects of Coumadin, the blood thinner she had been taking that caused her brain to bleed easily after the injury.

She then worked with therapists to make sure she was able to eat and speak properly, two functions that were hindered by the bleeding.

Keener was discharged three days later on Sept. 7, and her family credits the constant monitoring and care she received.

"The facility deserves people's praise," said Stephen Keener, Dixie Keener's son. "You can tell the people here are passionate about their jobs."

It's been laborious but worth it, Litofsky said. "We've worked really hard, allowing us to move to the next level of patient care," he said.

Sahota uses the words "dream come true" often when talking about the facility. "It's beyond dreams, having something like this," he said.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

MU offers new undergraduate certificate in Digital Global Studies

By Ie'shia McDonald

September 26, 2012 | 5:42 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — The Center for the Digital Globe at MU is offering a new interdisciplinary undergraduate certificate in Digital Global Studies. The MU Global Connect certificate is designed to prepare students to adjust to the new global job market.

"This certificate will help students gain knowledge in globalization, world commerce and trade and just sense of other cultures," said Giorgi Topouria, a doctoral candidate at the Missouri School of Journalism who helps oversee the certificate. "It will allow them to appreciate diversity and the process of globalization."

The certificate structure was modeled after the Multicultural Certificate, another undergraduate certificate offered through the College of Arts and Science, Topouria said. Similarly, students must complete 15 credit hours that are specific to globalization. The courses include a core introductory seminar, two elective courses, experiential learning and a core-concluding seminar. The experiential learning component of the program can be a local internship or a study abroad program.

Monika Fischer, associate director of the Honors College and facilitator of the new program, said that when she thinks about how this certificate can help students, those in engineering quickly come to mind.

"As engineering students start to apply for jobs, they will realize that employers will be wondering what they know about the world because they attended school in Columbia, Mo.," Fischer said. "But through this certificate, they will gain the exposure needed to make them employable." Not only should this certificate engage prospective employers, but it will also enhance scholarship opportunities and graduate school admission, Topouria said.

"The MGC will be proof that they have been exposed to globalization issues," Topouria said, "and as the issue of globalization becomes more relevant, students will already be prepared."

Programs offered through the certificate will start in spring 2013.

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Musings on the role of state public information officers

18 hours ago •

BY VIRGINIA YOUNG • vyoung@post-dispatch.com > 573-635-6178

JEFFERSON CITY • Ted Farnen, the public information officer at the Missouri Department of Revenue, returns reporters' calls and emails fairly promptly.

But my dealings with him on a story today about taxes on motor vehicles reminded me why I miss the days when I could skip talking to the PIO and go right to the source.

A department chart showing how much St. Louis County could lose under a recent Missouri Supreme Court decision differed substantially from what county officials were predicting. Talking with the expert who prepared the chart could have cleared it up.

But that's not the way things work, especially under Gov. Jay Nixon's administration of tightly controlled and centralized information. So back and forth we go. Written responses to questions spur follow-up questions that have to be ferried to the person who knows the answer. I finally just used the county's number for the lost revenue.

This made me nostalgic for Duane Benton, who oversaw the revenue department for then-Gov. John Ashcroft from 1989 to 1991.

Benton, who is now a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 8th Circuit, took reporters' calls. If I had a question about a tax matter, he instantly got a three-way call going with a (sometimes surprised) departmental expert who knew the answer. This worked pretty well for everyone because a) Benton knew what reporters were writing about b) reporters got accurate information quickly.

I'm sure department directors don't have time to handle all media calls. And some PIOs, including Farnen — who, by the way, was my student long ago at the University of Missouri Journalism School — try to provide answers quickly. But there's no substitute for being able to interview the bureaucrat who actually knows the information.