

Daily News

GOOD MORNING

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\$25.6 million award upheld for girl hurt in fall from Jeep

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VAN NUYS — A Superior Court judge refused Wednesday to order a new trial or reduce a jury's \$25.6 million award to a Canyon Country girl who was left brain damaged and paralyzed as the result of an accident five years ago in which she fell from a moving Jeep that had improperly designed doors.

Judge Keith Wisot told attorneys for Hemco Inc. of Independence, Mo., that they had failed to show grounds for a new trial or a reduced verdict in the case of Nichole Fortman, 8.

Hemco manufactured the molds from which the doors were produced, according to trial testimony.

The doors were not sold with the Jeep but were added later by a person who owned the vehicle before it was purchased by Fortman's parents, said Larry Grassini, the girl's attorney.

The jury returned the award on Oct. 15. It was the largest in state history for personal damages in a case in which punitive damages were not awarded.

The previously largest award for personal injuries was \$14.7 mil-



Nichole Fortman
Damage award upheld

lion given in November 1985 to an athlete rendered a paraplegic in a trampoline accident.

Nichole was riding in the front passenger seat and her mother was driving on Nov. 13, 1981, when she fell out on Roscoe Boulevard in Reseda. The girl was run over by another car.

During the trial, a doctor testified that the girl could live into her 70s if given proper medical care.