

Federal Express Driver Turns From Wrong Lane

Woman Suffers Severe Brain Injury After Collision

On June 15, 1999, at 10:30 a.m., Laura "Mac" McGrath, a 34-year-old single mother of two, was driving north on Congress Avenue in Delray Beach. She had just dropped off her son, Reece, at day care and was on her way home.

As she approached an intersection, the driver of a Federal Express delivery truck, waiting in a designated left turn lane, suddenly turned right. The Federal Express driver pulled directly in front of Ms. McGrath's vehicle, causing a catastrophic broadside collision. The impact was so severe that the front of Ms. McGrath's Isuzu Stylus was crushed and wedged underneath the Federal Express truck. Police, fire, and emergency medical personnel used the "jaws of life" to extricate Ms. McGrath from her car.

Ms. McGrath was rushed to Delray Medical Center. Her massive head and facial injuries were so severe that the police at the scene thought she would die at the hospital. She was placed on a ventilator. Family members rushed to the hospital, only to learn that Ms.



Laura "Mac" McGrath in 1992.

McGrath's prognosis was bleak. Although she stabilized, Ms. McGrath remained in critical condition and in a deep coma for several months. Doctors told Ms. McGrath's family that if she did survive, she would likely be in a vegetative state due to severe brain damage.

After weeks of little progress, the family was pressured by the hospital to agree to transfer Ms. McGrath to the County Home for custodial care. The family sought the assistance of attorneys Chris Searcy and David Kelley, who helped to place Ms. McGrath in the Coma Stimulation Program at St. Mary's Hospital in West Palm Beach.

Ms. McGrath made remarkable progress during the months which followed. She was weaned from the respirator and she regained consciousness. Little by little, she regained **Continued on page four**

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function sufficient to be transferred to the Florida Institute for Neurologic Rehabilitation in Wauchula, Fla. Over the next year, Ms. McGrath continued to make remarkable progress. Through extensive rehabilitative care and the support of her family and friends, Ms. McGrath progressed sufficiently to be moved to a highly specialized facility closer to her children.

Ms. McGrath's progress, despite terrible odds, is not surprising. Ms. McGrath has always been a fighter. As a teenager, she suffered from low self-esteem which led to alcohol abuse and eventually a failed marriage. However, Laura found strength and purpose in her life through raising her two children, Riley and Reece. As a single parent, she considered the raising of her kids to be her most important role in life. Balancing work and family, Ms. McGrath raised her children with patience, instruction, and love.

As a result of those difficult years, Ms. McGrath became a children's advocate and author. At first, she began speaking to small groups, but as her confidence and the significance of her message grew, it became her life's work. Using the power of positive thinking and realizing how a healthy attitude had made such a change in her own life, Ms. McGrath began speaking and publishing full-time. Her book,

I Am, is a simple yet sophisticated message for all. It is heartwarming and important reading, especially for young people. Her speeches to school children and their families were filled with messages of self-worth, openness, and love. But the brain that made Ms. McGrath a wonderfully unique person was severely damaged in this horrible collision.

Her book, I Am, is a simple, yet sophisticated message of self-worth, openness and love.

After a year of extensive rehabilitative care, Ms. McGrath was able to interact with her family and caregivers and participate in her own recovery. However, the cost associated with this type of care is astronomical, and Ms. McGrath will need constant care for the rest of her life. Mr. Searcy and Mr. Kelley filed suit on behalf of Ms. McGrath and her children against Federal Express Corporation and the driver. Prior to trial, the parties reached a confidential settlement which will be used for Ms. McGrath's continued lifetime care and for the care of her children. ■