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\$500K awarded for bouncers' 2013 beating of Essex student

By RAY LAMONT
STAFF WRITER

A former Essex resident has been awarded \$500,000 for injuries he sustained when beaten outside a New Hampshire bar more than two years ago through a legal settlement negotiated by a Gloucester law firm.

Marc Shields, who is now 23 and living in South Hamilton, was a student at the University of New Hampshire when he and a

companion were assaulted by bouncers outside what was then a nightclub called Drynk in Manchester, New Hampshire, the night of Dec. 11, 2013.

According to the complaint initially filed on his behalf by Joseph M. Orlando of Orlando & Associates, Shields "nearly died" in the assault, and sustained "severe internal injuries and a severe traumatic brain injury." He was taken first to Elliot Hospital in Manchester,

then transferred to Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston.

A 2011 graduate of Manchester Essex Regional High School, Shields has since had to undergo "multiple surgeries" to repair a number of internal injuries, Orlando said, and has been left with "significant scarring" from the ordeal.

The settlement — confirmed through a document

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signed by attorneys for both parties through the mediator who ultimately handled the case — grew from a civil complaint that Orlando had filed in U.S. District Court in Boston. The original complaint sought \$1 million in damages from the nightclub, which has since undergone a partial change of ownership and is now known as Whiskey's 20 at 20 Old Granite St. in downtown Manchester.

The case was then referred to mediation, and federal mediation talks broke down without a settlement, Orlando said. But he then took the case to Essex District Court, and the sides reached the settlement last week through the mediation services of attorney Brian Jerome, who is founder

and CEO of Massachusetts Dispute Resolution Services.

Shields could not be reached for comment Thursday, and calls to numbers listed for Whiskey's 20 and Drynk, which went to the same recorded message, were not returned.

Orlando's lawsuit did not name any specific bouncers involved in the assault, listing only the nightclub, its parent company Manchester Leisure Group LLC, and its insurance company — Hospitality Mutual — as defendants. There was also no record that either of the bouncers — noted in the initial complaint as a male and female — ever faced criminal charges.

The club, however, has been at the center of a number of incidents. It was the site of a fatal stabbing on May 9, when it was still operating as Drynk, and a melee in which police took down a patron with the use of a Taser last December after it had been converted to Whiskey's 20, according to news reports.

Orlando hailed the award and settlement Thursday.

"The bouncers at this nightclub brutally beat this young man," he said. "If this type of overreaction is to be avoided in the future, it was important that the club be held accountable for the conduct of its employees."

Orlando said that evidence and information on the club that he drew upon to achieve the settlement came in part from private investigation work that included Michael Lane, Gloucester's former chief of detectives and the city's interim police chief from 2009 through 2012.