

# SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE

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## PACIFIC BEACH

### Bar owner, parents of slain vet settle suit

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The parents of a slain Navy veteran who filed a wrongful death suit against the former owner of a Pacific Beach bar have settled the case for \$495,000.

The parents, Judith Lefler and Anthony Panella, were set to receive the check yesterday, about a month after the mediated settlement was reached with Sam Kholi Enterprises Inc.

Their son, Jonathan Lefler-Panella, 25, was stabbed to death following an altercation at Sam's by the Sea on Jan. 8, 2006.

Bar patron Michael Sullivan was convicted of second-degree murder and sentenced



Jonathan  
Lefler-Panella

to 16 years to life in prison in the case.

The suit, filed in 2008, claimed the bar owner failed to monitor and train his bouncers and was partly responsible for the death.

The bar on Ocean Boulevard has since been sold and now goes by the name PB Shore Club. An attorney for the former owner, Sam Kholi, argued in court documents that the business should not be held liable for the death because the stabbing occurred in a parking stall, not on the bar's property.

Neither Kholi, who owns a trucking company, nor his attorney could be reached for comment yesterday.

According to court testimony, Lefler-Panella was at the bar with his girlfriend when he was punched twice by Sullivan during an argument.

The suit alleged that bouncers did little to restrain Sullivan after the attack and then

kicked out Lefler-Panella and his girlfriend, failing to escort them to their car to ensure their safety or to prevent Sullivan from fighting again.

Shortly afterward, Sullivan confronted the couple at their car and stabbed Lefler-Panella 14 to 17 times.

"I hope it's a clear message to bar owners and the entertainment industry that they have some really clear, outlined responsibilities to protect their patrons," Judith Lefler, who lives in the Bay Area, said yesterday.

Attorney Thomas Penfield, who represented the parents, said the bouncers should have followed a standard security practice of escorting out those involved in a fight separately and making sure one has left the area before the other leaves.

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