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HOLLINGSWORTH & ZIVITZ ATTORNEY RAISES SERIOUS QUESTIONS OF SCHOOL SAFETY IN LIGHT OF CHANCE JACKSON SHOOTING

September 23, 2011 (CARMEL) -- The shooting of 15-year-old Chance Jackson on March 25th at Martinsville West Middle School could have been prevented, according to Jackson family attorney Catherine Michael.

On the day of the shooting, the doors to the school were unlocked. In a recent interview on WRTV (ABC) Channel 6, Indianapolis, Michael stressed that "Locking the doors is a simple measure. Schools need to be vigilant as who's coming in and out of their campus."

Ms. Michael is Chair of the Education Law Team at Hollingsworth & Zivitz, P.C., Carmel.

A complete transcript of the September 22 story reported by Joanna Masee of WRTV 6 follows.

INDIANAPOLIS -- A lawsuit filed by the mother of the Martinsville school shooting victim claiming the district failed to protect her son is raising larger questions about school safety.

Rebecca Jackson filed the lawsuit Tuesday in Morgan County Superior Court 1 on behalf of her 15-year-old son, Chance Jackson. The suit seeks unspecified damages.

Chance Jackson still is recuperating from the March 25 shooting, in which he was struck twice in the abdomen at Martinsville West Middle School.

Michael Phelps, 16, who had attended the school but had been banned from the property, was convicted of attempted murder and sentenced in August to 30 years in prison.

Jackson's attorneys claim simple safety measures by the school district could have prevented the tragedy, [6News' Joanna Masee](#) reported.

Catherine Michael, stressed that locking the doors at the middle school would not have been expensive. "Locking the doors is a simple measure," she said. "Schools need to be vigilant as who's coming in and out of their campus."

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"The doors to that school were left wide open, not locked," said Jackson's other attorney, Ron Frazier. "School security is something that needs to be in the forefront of all of our minds."

School safety consultant Chuck Hibbert said he believes the struggling economy has forced school districts to make tough choices about school safety.

"Those dollars do things to hire people, such as myself and others, but have become very much limited and are really putting schools in jeopardy," Hibbert said.

Martinsville Assistant Superintendent Randy Taylor declined to comment on the lawsuit and referred 6News to the district's attorney, Tom Wheeler. Wheeler did not respond to a request for comment Thursday.

In August, Taylor told 6News that changes had been implemented since the shooting. "We will have police on call and also on the clock while we're in session," he said.

State officials said they have seen more schools take part in the department of education's school safety program. The next training session is next month.

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