

## FREMONT

# Ex-pet store worker gets \$1.1 million

Suit settled for man who was hurt while helping out police

By Chris De Benedetti  
 cdebenedetti@  
 bayareanewsgroup.com

A 30-year-old former pet store employee will receive nearly \$1.1 million in a lawsuit settlement for brain injuries he suffered while assisting a Fremont police officer during a burglary investigation, his attorney said.

On Nov. 20, 2008, Omid Mehdavi, of Hayward, was working at Puppy Love Boutique at the Mowry East Shopping Center, 5200 Mowry Ave., when he fell 15 feet from the roof, said Lewis Van Blois, Mehdavi's attorney.

Mehdavi was assisting Officer Christine Leopardi, who was investigating the theft of

nearly 20 puppies from the store, Van Blois said.

Mehdavi was walking backward while taking a ladder to Leopardi, so she could climb to a higher part of the roof, when he fell through a skylight to the pavement below, Van Blois said.

Mehdavi suffered several major injuries, including a

skull fracture, brain trauma and a fractured clavicle in the fall. Van Blois said his client has permanent brain damage and must take anti-seizure medication for the rest of his life.

Mehdavi filed the lawsuit July 1, 2009, against Leopardi, the city of Fremont, the police department and the

shopping center owners.

The personal injury settlement of \$1.075 million was reached Monday, the day before the case was scheduled to go to trial in Alameda County Superior Court.

The city, which is admitting no wrongdoing, will pay \$700,000 to Mehdavi, and

the owners of the shopping center will pay \$375,000.

"The city certainly acknowledged the serious injuries of Mr. Mehdavi," said Harvey Levine, Fremont's city attorney. "However, we contested the liability and defended the case strongly and we believe the settlement is reasonable and fair, given the

situation."

Van Blois declined to say what percentage of the settlement will go to attorneys, adding that the information is part of a private attorney-client agreement.