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Claim of Scientology fraud nets Oregonian \$2 million

PORTLAND, Ore. — (AP) — A jury awarded more than \$2 million in damages Wednesday to a 22-year-old woman who claimed the Church of Scientology defrauded her by failing to fulfill promises of improving her life.

The jury deliberated 18 hours over two days before reaching its unanimous decision.

In her suit, Julie C. Titchbourne, 21, of Portland, alleged she suffered emotional distress as a result of her experience with the church in 1975-76.

She had sought \$2 million in punitive damages, \$500,000 for alleged anguish and suffering, and \$3,000 reimbursement for course fees.

AFTER the jury award, Mrs. Titchbourne said she planned to use part of the money to study engineering in college.

Named as defendants were the Church of Scientology of Portland; the Scientology Mission of Lavis in Portland; and the Delphian Foundation, an organization the church says is separate although staffed by scientologists.

The jury ruled the defendants committed fraud, awarding Mrs. Titchbourne punitive damages of \$1.9 million and compensatory damages of \$153,000.

Lawyers for the church said they would contact their clients to discuss a possible appeal.

In a statement, the church criticized the decision, saying: "this decision is a blow to all of those who cherish the right to practice their religion free from the harassment of psychiatrists and deprogrammers who have appointed themselves self-styled inquisitors."

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AP PHOTO

LAWSUIT WINNER — Julie C. Titchbourne (left) flashes a smile after a jury awarded her more than \$2 million in damages yesterday in Portland, Ore. She claimed the Church of Scientology defrauded her by failing to fulfill promises to help her with her college classwork, develop her creativity and raise her IQ test scores. She claims she suffers emotional distress as a result. The jury deliberated 18 hours over two days before reaching its unanimous decision.