

# Arriba malpractice jury awards record \$750,000 after cancer death

## JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

A Rio Arriba County jury in a medical malpractice case late last week awarded \$750,000 to the estate of an Alcalde woman who died just weeks ago of cancer.

Lawyer Dan Shapiro and partner Carl Bettinger of Albuquerque represented Mary Lou Tafoya against the estate of Dr. Philip Albrecht, an Española doctor now deceased.

Shapiro said Friday that the jury awarded Tafoya's estate \$750,000, of

which \$140,000 is earmarked to cover medical expenses. He said two insurance companies would foot the bill.

Shapiro said Tafoya, 39, died Aug. 30 this year of rectal cancer. He said she had gone to Albrecht for treatment of bleeding in 1987. Shapiro said the doctor failed to detect cancer.

Before she died, Tafoya, who left two young daughters, made a videotaped deposition that was shown to the jury, Shapiro said.

"I think they saw Mary Lou and they

realized that she was a courageous, warm, person and they saw her suffering and misery," Shapiro said. "They saw her worry and concern about her children, and they realized that she didn't have to go through this."

The trial started Monday, and the jury began deliberating on the case Thursday, Shapiro said. He said he had heard the award was a record for Rio Arriba County.

The defense lawyer in the case couldn't be reached for comment.