

Lawsuit claims cops lied about crash that killed 8-year-old

BY NATASHA KORECKI
Staff Reporter

Her voice cracking and tears running down her face, Vanilla Jones Simmons held up a picture of her 8-year-old son at a news conference Tuesday and said she wanted to tell everyone what kind of person he was.

"He always gave me a hug and a kiss and said, 'Mommy, I love you.' My son would make me hot dogs. He would make me noodles. He would make me ice water. He would do anything he could for anyone . . . to the best of his ability," Simmons said of her son, Gregory Jones, who died a day after he was struck by an unmarked police car on May 19.

The family filed a federal lawsuit Tuesday charging that police made up a story about chasing a man with a gun to explain why they were speeding through the Humboldt Park neighborhood. The suit also claims the police car was going 20 miles over the speed limit and at times drove on the wrong side of the road when it hit Gregory and 11-year-old Datondra Mitchell, who was injured in the crash.

In addition, the families of both children say the police car wouldn't



Vanilla Jones Simmons talks about her son, who was run over by police who said they were pursuing a gunman. —JEAN LACHAT/SUN-TIMES

have been allowed to give chase because it already had a prisoner in custody. They are seeking unspecified damages.

Police spokesman Dave Bayless said that while the May 19 crash is still under investigation, both wit-

ness and police accounts point to the kids running into traffic after a family friend waved them on from across the street. Bayless said the officers saw a man with a gun, then

flipped on sirens and lights to get a plate number and identification — they weren't necessarily chasing him, he said.

The family's attorney, Jon Lo-

evy, said the lawsuit was filed quickly in order to preserve radio transmissions he believes will show police claims of a gunman were false.