

# LOCAL & REGIONAL NEWS

EVANSVILLE

## Dealership sued for sex harassment

By **BYRON ROHRIG**

Courier & Press staff writer

464-7426 or blrohrig@evansville.net

### Former employee says her complaints got her fired from job at JD Byrider

A former saleswoman at a North Side used-car dealership has filed a federal lawsuit, alleging two managers sexually harassed her.

Abbi Ellenstein also accused one of the managers of firing her in retaliation for her complaints about the harassment, and claimed a district supervisor and a personnel official for JD Byrider's parent company ignored her complaints.

The actual defendant in the suit is Central Indiana Credit and Automotive Inc., parent company of JD Byrider.

Scott Reiners, identified as supervisor of the Evansville branch of JD Byrider at 2116 N. First Ave., did not return a phone message Friday. Reiners was named in the lawsuit as one who harassed Ellenstein and then dismissed her for complaining.

Ellenstein, who was hired in October

2001, said in her complaint that she, "because of her sex, was harassed and discriminated against" by Reiners and by Scott Ramsey. Ramsey was identified as the JD Byrider finance manager in Evansville.

In her lawsuit, Ellenstein charged the harassment was "unwelcome," and "was severe and pervasive."

The suit alleged that "Reiners and Ramsey would on a daily basis make sexual remarks and comments" to Ellenstein, and that "Reiners inquired about (Ellenstein's) sex life."

According to the complaint filed in U.S. District Court, both Reiners and Ramsey "made inappropriate and sexually explicit comments" to Ellenstein, and

"would only laugh when (Ellenstein) asked them to stop."

Ellenstein claimed in the suit that she reported "on several occasions" the alleged harassment to District Manager Mike Bolin and to Stephanie Potter, human resources manager.

But after following the company's procedure for reporting sexual harassment, "the sexual harassment became even more personal and progressively got worse," the complaint said.

"Reiners and Ramsey laughed at (Ellenstein), told her nobody would stand by her and then terminated her employment in retaliation for her complaints," according to the suit.

Ellenstein claimed the harassment

"unreasonably interfered" with her work performance and "created an intimidating, hostile and offensive" workplace.

The suit contends Ellenstein suffered damages because of harassment, her dismissal and the company's negligent supervision of Reiners and Ramsey and retaining them as employees. The action also alleges Ellenstein suffered emotional distress.

The suit, filed on Ellenstein's behalf by Lane C. Siesky, seeks compensatory damages for "emotional anguish and humiliation and other pain and suffering," back pay and all costs of the legal action.

The suit also asks that the company be enjoined from fostering "a work environment which is sexually abusive."

Ellenstein filed a charge of sexual harassment and retaliatory discharge last year with the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. The agency reviewed the case and issued a notice of right to sue.