

## suits & deals

### \$550,000 for Traffic Accident

**D**emetropoulos v. Scarlett: A Cedar Grove woman who suffers from multiple sclerosis accepted \$550,000 on Oct. 3 to settle her claim that a car accident aggravated her condition.

On Oct. 16, 1998, about three months after she was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, Christina Demetropoulos was driving north on Upper Mountain Avenue in Upper Montclair when another car turned from Bellevue Avenue and struck her car on the driver's side, says her attorney, **John Voynick Jr.**, a partner with Cedar Grove's **Renda & Voynick**.

The other driver, Linda Scarlett of New York, told police that glare prevented her from seeing Demetropoulos' white car, which was then pushed to the right against the far curb and then rebounded into the southbound lane.

Voynick says his client suffered blunt trauma injury to both legs, especially the left, with immediate pain and extensive bruises. She refused treatment at the scene but about a month later, awoke one day with double vision and no feeling below the waist. Steroids have improved her

condition somewhat but her overall condition has deteriorated. Now 36, she walks with a cane and has problems with her motor skills, especially balance, gait and coordination, Voynick says.

Demetropoulos sued Scarlett and the owner of the car, WorldScape Inc. of Philadelphia, in Essex County.

At the time of the accident, Demetropoulos had been working as a part-time secretary while pursuing a degree full time at Montclair State University. She stopped working except for some student teaching and continued her studies part time, graduating in 2001. She is now attending Montclair part time for a master's degree in biology.

In the opinion of her treating psychiatrist, Howard Rudominer of Livingston, who saw her before the accident and has treated others with multiple sclerosis, Demetropoulos might have been in remission but for the accident and the resulting emotional stress that probably worsened the multiple sclerosis, Voynick says.

The defense contended that her symptoms resulted from the normal progression of her illness, says



John Voynick Jr.

Voynick.

Trial before Judge **James Rothschild** was set for Oct. 15. The parties agreed to settle at a private voluntary mediation with retired Judge **Edward Seaman**.

WorldScape is insured under a \$1 million policy with Harford Mutual Insurance based in Bel Air, Md.

The defense lawyer, **Kenneth Forman**, an associate with **Robinson, Burns & McCarthy** in Somerville, did not return a call seeking comment.

— By **Mary P. Gallagher**