

Deal will give \$15.7 million to boy paralyzed in car seat

TOWN OF NEWBURGH: *A record lawsuit settlement gives a paralyzed 7-year-old boy a chance for a better life.*

By Michael Levensohn
The Times Herald-Record
mblevens@th-record.com

Accident Reconstruction Expert: Mr. Richard Hermance
Seating Design Expert: Mr. Alan Cantor

Evenflo Juvenile Furniture Company has agreed to pay \$15.7 million to the family of a boy who was sitting in an Evenflo car seat when he was paralyzed in a 1993 car accident.

Jeremy Griffin was barely a year old on Sept. 30, 1993, when he was paralyzed in a head-on collision on Route 6 in State Hill. He was riding in the back seat, and when the shell of his car seat fractured, Jeremy hit his head on the front passenger seat, cracking a bone in his spine.

Jeremy's mother, Kathleen Griffin, sustained minor injuries in the accident. The driver of the other car died. His family sued both drivers in the accident, as well as Evenflo. The drivers' insurance companies are liable for \$35,000 between them, and Evenflo recently settled for \$15.7 million.

There was no admission of wrongdoing by the company.

It's the largest reportable pretrial personal injury settlement for a single plaintiff in New York State history, according to the Griffins' lawyer, Jerry Grogan of Grogan & Souto in Goshen. And because it's a settlement, it's final. There won't be any appeals, Grogan explained.

After six hard years, Jeremy's life figures to get a little bit easier. After the accident, he was paralyzed from the neck down, said his mother, who lives in Pond Eddy, Pa. Griffin shares custody of Jeremy with his father, George Stoner of the Town of Newburgh. Over time, Jeremy has regained limited use of his arms and hands. He's 7 now, and attends classes and goes through physical therapy at Orange County BOCES.

His parents are looking at private schools, where Jeremy can get more personal attention. Grogan said there are plans to build a handicapped-accessible home for Jeremy's father, and an addition to his mother's home. More immediate needs include an electric wheelchair and a van. Already, \$8 million has been used to create an annuity that figures to last a lifetime, and then some. Jeremy will have all the assistance that money can buy. The things money can't buy, he's taken care of for himself. "He's a great-spirited kid," his mother said yesterday. "He's completely content with his life."