

Tuesday, March 29, 2016 | 5:08 a.m.

Palm Beach Daily News

Subscribe | ePaper

the shiny sheet

Posted: 7:01 p.m. Monday, March 28, 2016



Judge appoints guardian for philanthropist Montgomery

By John Pacenti

Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

After a hearing closed to the public and the media, a judge on Monday appointed a professional guardian to oversee the care — as well as the millions of dollars — of Mary Montgomery, the Palm Beach socialite and widow of legal legend Robert Montgomery.

The guardianship of one of the county's most celebrated philanthropists comes the same month the Florida Legislature passed a bill to establish the state's first regulatory authority over professional guardians whose ranks have come under fire for gouging the life savings of incapacitated senior citizens through fees for themselves and their legion of attorneys.

The Palm Beach Post's series in January, Guardianships: A Broken Trust, explored cronyism in the county judiciary that allowed professional guardians to take fees without prior judicial approval and act without fear of reprisal. As a result, one judge was transferred from the guardianship division and reforms were instituted to address conflicts of interest.

The hearing Monday in front of Circuit Judge John Phillips pitted Montgomery's daughter, Courtnay, against her mother's long-time administrative aide Hilda Santana.

The Post reported on Sunday that Santana petitioned to become Montgomery's guardian, stating in court documents that the 85-year-old suffers from dementia. She cited Courtnay's arrest in Minnesota last October in which the daughter allegedly tried to bite a law enforcement officer checking on her mother's welfare. Santana said Courtnay was unfit to oversee her mother's case or her vast finances.

The resolution on Monday came after Montgomery's attorney Theo Kypreos asked Judge Phillips to close the hearing to the public, which is allowed under the guardianship statute. As a result, a Post reporter and photographer had to leave the courtroom after Phillips denied a hearing sought by The Post on First Amendment grounds.

Neither Montgomery nor Courtnay were present for the proceeding, but attorneys said the daughter agreed to veteran professional guardian John Cramer overseeing Montgomery's care. Cramer will be assisted by Montgomery's nephew John Neasen, who lives in Anchorage, Alaska.

Unlike in some guardianships, Montgomery will retain certain legal rights, but it was unknown late Monday which ones or how much her assets will be managed.

She receives \$1.5 million every four months stemming from her late husband's greatest legal triumph: a \$11.3 billion settlement with tobacco companies on behalf of the state of Florida. The Montgomerys have given reportedly \$100 million to various causes and the arts.

Ed Downey, attorney for Santana, said his client is satisfied with the resolution because it ensures the safety of Montgomery.

More News

Promoted Stories

You Might Also Like

- [Here's Why You Should Stop Googling Names](#) (BeenVerified.com)
- [Affordable Luxury: 10 SUVs We Love for Under \\$25,000](#) (Kelley Blue Book)
- [Donald Trump's insane wealth in 33 pictures.](#) (Filthy Rich Stars)
- [10 Vehicles That Give Awesome AWD for Less Than \\$25,000](#) (Kelley Blue Book)
- [8 Ways to Lose Belly Fat and Live a Healthier Life](#) (Johns Hopkins Medicine)
- [Travel Back in Time With These 9 Amazing Northern England Experiences](#) (Visit England)

- [Travels with Elizabeth Taylor](#)
- [Quartet boosts Young Friends symphony gathering](#)
- [Busy travel may last beyond holiday weekend](#)
- [On the Market: Parking lot now home to pair of luxury townhomes](#)
- [Letter to the Editor: Unkempt hedges causing traffic problems](#)
- [On the Market: Mizner home on Lagomar Road for sale at \\$16.95M](#)

Recommended by

Comments

Post comment



Post comment

□