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Judge's wife wanted fees paid from stroke victim's trust, IRA

[John Pacenti](#)Updated May 23, 2016 Filed in [bnblogs](#), [newsfeed](#), [Public Health](#).

Carla Simmonds, a Delray Beach nursing administrator and mother of two, decided two years ago to get in shape by attending a "boot camp workout."

But after a vigorous session in February 2014, Simmonds suffered a life-shattering stroke caused by a leak in her carotid artery that triggered a massive blood clot in her frontal lobe. Doctors were forced to temporarily remove half of the 47-year-old's skull to contain swelling so her brain did not dislodge from her spinal cord.

Simmonds was left unable to speak and with the mental capacity of a 4-year-old. All she could do was cry. Years of recovery awaited.

Daniel Schmidt, a former boyfriend and retired Merrill Lynch financial planner from Boca Raton, stepped up, taking her into his home and guiding her on a remarkable recovery.

But the court system also ended up putting the stroke victim in the hands of professional guardian Elizabeth "Betsy" Savitt, the wife of embattled Palm Beach County Circuit Judge Martin Colin.

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Dan Schmidt and Carla Simmonds stand outside their Boca Raton home. Schmidt has been caring for Simmonds since her stroke and fighting professional guardian, Elizabeth "Betsy" Savitt, the wife of embattled Circuit Judge Martin Colin.

The judicial power couple were the subject of a series of reforms handed down this year by the chief judge after The Palm Beach Post's series, *Guardianships: A Broken Trust*. The newspaper's investigation showed how Savitt took tens of thousands of dollars in fees without prior court permission from seniors in her guardianships and compiled a litany of complaints from families of her wards.

All of Savitt's guardianship cases were moved to the north county courthouse to avoid any appearance of favoritism toward the judge's wife.

Savitt, though, is still drawing complaints about her fees in the handful of guardianship cases she has left. When families ask her to resign, she has demanded fees upfront for her and her attorney Ellen Morris. The judge's wife insists they also agree not to sue or pursue litigation against her.

In the Simmonds case, Savitt, a former tennis pro, attempted to draw fees from the stroke victim's \$640,000 trust, which wasn't part of the guardianship money, and then wanted to drain her \$46,000 IRA to pay fees for about one-quarter of its worth.

But Schmidt stood in Savitt's way. Simmonds before her stroke had given him her power of attorney.

To read the whole story on The Post's website, click [here](#).

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