

Letter to the Editor Published in the Rivereast 10-1-10

Hello,

Thank you to all of you who are supporting my campaign for Probate Judge by putting up lawn signs!

One of the issues closest to my heart when talking about my probate law experience is a case where I was appointed conservator to care for an elderly woman who had no family close-by. This wonderful lady had been independent all of her life, until her mental health had deteriorated so that she could no longer make rational decisions.

I have served as conservator many times, but what makes this case stand out is that she was targeted by scam artists. After researching her bank accounts, I discovered that she was losing hundreds of dollars each month, being direct-debited by a gambling organization called "Wheel-O-Winners", based in Florida. The elderly woman was convinced that she was going to win a car or other big prize and had agreed to the withdrawals. She told me the scam artists were her "friends" and they called her often.

Of course, I stopped the direct-debits and reported the scam artists to the authorities right away. And I helped the woman find a living arrangement where she could have some real "friends" to talk to each day.

The point I am trying to make is that we all need to look out for our neighbors. The authorities told me that these types of scams happen all the time. So if you have an elderly friend who has no family close-by, I encourage you to stop by for a friendly visit. I have seen many examples in my practice of neighbors helping neighbors and it is truly heartwarming.

Let's protect our most vulnerable neighbors from the scam artists!

Sincerely,

Jennifer Berkenstock, Candidate for Judge of Probate for District #14 (East Hampton, Portland, Marlborough and East Haddam)