Comment: The following news stories about adult guardianship or conservatorship are being circulated by the Disability and Guardianship Project of Spectrum Institute to persons interested in guardianship and conservatorship reform. Many thanks to Debra J. Stemmler for her assistance.
– Thomas F. Coleman, Legal Director

Guardianship Advocates Host Town Hall, Addressing Grievances, Steps Forward” - Now, a growing number of people are coming forward about the issues they’ve experienced with Florida's guardianship programs. Many came together in Orlando Monday for a town hall conducted by Americans Against Abusive Probate Guardianship. The town hall was an opportunity for those to share their stories about the guardianship program and try to come up with ways to improve it. – Spectrum News – November 5, 2019 – (Florida) – https://is.gd/faJOh5

“Woman at Center of Macomb County Guardianship Case Passes Away” - The family of Barbara Delbridge report the 71-year-old passed away Sunday. Delbridge, and her husband Robert Mitchell, were placed under guardianship last November with the company Caring Hearts Michigan Inc., against the wishes of family members who had priority under the law. In May, family members said they were prevented from seeing Barb and Bob after Caring Hearts installed a six-foot tall privacy fence around their Utica home. The 7 Investigators exposed how Caring Hearts Michigan hired a company called Executive Care and brought in multiple caregivers to stay in Barb and Bob’s home 24 hours a day. Both companies were owned by Catherine Kirk, who as guardian and conservator, billed Barb and Bob’s estate that’s worth about $2.7 million for all that care. –WXYZ Detroit – November 4, 2019 – (Michigan) – https://is.gd/vEDW71

“County Court System teams up with VA for First-in-Nation Guardianship Program” - The partnership between Lebanon VAMC and the Lebanon County Court Administrator creates a process to improve guardianship for certain veterans, and it’s the first of its kind in the country. Guardianship is a process used
when an individual is determined to be unable to care for themselves or their property. Generally, a veteran’s family or friends will step forward to become the veteran’s guardian. However, according to Sarah Primak, a licensed clinical social worker at the VAMC, there are several cases each year when a veteran has no family options. When that happens, the VAMC must go through the court system to have a guardian appointed. – Leb Town – November 6, 2019 – (Pennsylvania) - https://is.gd/8FLhhm

“Detroit Grandma Just Wanted a Wheelchair Ramp, but Ended up Being put Under Guardianship” - After a fall in her home, 78-year-old Bessie Owens said she just needed some help getting a wheelchair ramp installed. Instead, the long-time Detroit resident ended up being put under guardianship in the probate courts – where she was declared legally incapacitated. When you’re put under guardianship and conservatorship, you can no longer make any legal, medical or financial decisions. – WXYZ – November 12, 2019 – (Michigan) - https://is.gd/IIDT9G

“Amid Guardianship Scrutiny, DeSantis Wants $6.4M to Boost Oversight” ov. Ron DeSantis unveiled his $91.4 billion budget request Monday, including a plea for more money to help expand oversight of the state's professional guardians. DeSantis's budget proposal includes $6.4 million for state guardian office. Guardianship program has been under fire after death of Brevard man. Agency says it is anticipating more complaints, increase in legal costs. Spectrum News 13 – Florida – November 18, 2019 – click here

“VCU says Times-Dispatch series on guardianship process is ‘out-of-context’” VCU Health System sent out a news release and email to employees Sunday on the recent Richmond Times-Dispatch series about the health system’s guardianship practice, saying the article lacks “context, balance, and journalistic ethics.” The Richmond Times-Dispatch released the first of a series of articles on guardianship — the legal process of removing an adult’s right to make life decisions — and said the university and other health providers used the process to disadvantage poor patients. The Commonwealth Times – Virginia – Nov. 19, 2019 – click here

“Pinellas guardian accused of exploitation removed from all cases” Traci Hudson had served as guardian overseeing the affairs of 26 people until her arrest on a charge of exploitation of the elderly. Her handling of those cases will be reviewed. Tampa Bay Times – Florida – November 20, 2019 – click here
“Attorney General Ashley Moody fires back at embattled former Florida guardian” Florida’s Attorney General is firing back against a former Central Florida guardian under criminal investigation for how she treated patients. Last month, Rebecca Fierle’s attorney filed appeals saying an Orange County circuit judge had no right to remove Fierle from her guardianship cases and didn’t give her notice to respond to the allegations. Attorney General Ashley Moody says Fierle’s claims of innocence have no merit and should be dismissed. Clickorlando.com – Florida – November 22, 2019 – click here

“Court appointed guardianship could cost Macomb County family $376,000” The six-month guardianship of a Macomb County couple has racked up a total cost of $376,000. Now the couple's family members want the court to deny those fees because they say the guardianship never should have happened in the first place. WXYZ-TV News – Michigan – Nov. 25, 2019 – click here

“Unguarded: A three-part series on how Richmond’s guardianship process leaves vulnerable people unprotected” Guardianship, the legal process of taking away an adult’s rights to make life decisions, is intended to protect vulnerable people from neglect and abuse. In Richmond, VCU Health System and other health care providers have used the process to remove poor patients from hospital beds, sometimes against the wishes of family members, with the help of a local law firm. A year-long Richmond Times-Dispatch investigation has found that what happens to the patients after they’re discharged is left up to a system that fails to provide the one justification for the power it wields – protection. Richmond Times-Dispatch – Virginia – November 30, 2019 – click here