

Judge orders property held as collateral

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Brentwood – A Rockingham County Superior Court Judge has ordered that \$5 million of Jane and Alex Matson's property be held as collateral for damages, pending the outcome of a lawsuit that alleges the Derry mother and son's negligence caused a teenager's death last November.

Dexter Hodgeman, of Heritage Lane in Derry, filed a suit in June alleging the Matsons hosted a number of underage drinking parties, including a Nov. 4 party that led to a car accident that killed his 17-year-old son Steven.

After Jane Matson was contacted by Dexter Hodgeman's lawyers in February, she took out a new mortgage on her Rockingham Road property and then sold the home, according to court papers filed by Hodgeman's lawyer Joseph McDowell.

McDowell said the move was an attempt to disguise her financial assets from the court. The mother and son have since moved to Arizona, he said.

Judge Robert Morrill's order requires Jane Matson to account for all proceeds she received from re-mortgaging her home and to disclose the location of all real estate she owns.

Jane Matson's lawyer, Gordon Rehnborg, argued the court could not place a lien on her property because Hodgeman could not prove that Matson was liable for the accident. She was not at home during the time of the alleged party, Rehnborg said.

"Carl Burke was responsible," he said.

Burke, the 17-year-old driving the car Steven Hodgeman was riding in, was killed in the Nov. 4 accident. Both allegedly had been drinking at the Matsons' home earlier that night.

Charges against Jane Matson for hosting other underage drinking parties were dismissed by a Derry District Court Judge in May.

McDowell said he would use a Derry police report, in which witnesses said Jane Matson had been at home during the Nov. 4 party, to prove she was responsible for the accident .

In June, Alex Matson pleaded no contest to charges that he facilitated underage drinking parties on Oct. 1 and Nov. 4, 2005. A lawyer representing Alex Matson has not filed objections to Hodgeman's

suit in court.

Morrill set a jury trial for Dexter Hodgeman's suit for Nov. 2007. If the suit reaches trial, a jury will choose the amount -- if any -- of settlement money Hodgeman is awarded, McDowell said.

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