

Order gives Mays, Twiggs dual custody of Kimberly

An Associated Press Report

SARASOTA — A judge's order has made it official: Kimberly Mays has three guardians.

Circuit Judge Stephen Dakan approved the settlement between the two families, who had battled in court over the girl since a mysterious hospital baby switch came to light in 1988.

The agreement announced a week ago preserves the parental rights of Bob Mays, the man who raised 15-year-old Kimberly, and also grants parental rights to Ernest and Regina Twiggs, her biological parents. All three are now her legal guardians.

Kimberly, who moved in with the Twiggs in March, will continue living in their Sebring home until she turns 18 or requests to leave. Mays will have what the agreement terms "reasonable visitation privileges."

If Kimberly decides she wants to leave the Twiggs home, or if any disagreements arise over Kimberly's upbringing, those issues will be settled by Mays and the Twiggs or, if necessary, with the help of a mediator.

Reached at home, Normia Twiggs, one of

the Twiggs' seven other children, said the family declined to comment.

Kimberly lived with Mays in Englewood until she ran away to a youth shelter. Those close to the family said she was experiencing adolescent difficulties and a "parent-teen" conflict.

Following her stay at the shelter, Mays agreed to allow her to live with the Twiggs.

The decision came less than a year after Kimberly had been in court asking to divorce the Twiggs, saying she never wanted to see them again. Her request was granted, and she was also adopted by Mays' third wife, Darlena. The adoption was nullified with Darlena Mays' consent as part of Friday's settlement.

The struggle for custody of Kimberly began after the Twiggs discovered the child they had raised, Arlena, was not their biological daughter. She died that year following surgery to repair a heart defect.

They learned Kimberly was the only other white baby girl born at Hardee Memorial Hospital during the same week in 1978. Testing later showed Kimberly was their daughter.