

## SCHENECTADY

# Woman took deceased mother's

**BY STEVEN COOK***Gazette Reporter*

A Schenectady woman admitted Monday to taking more than \$20,000 worth of her dead mother's Social Security benefits, which continued to be paid to her after she died, authorities said.

Deneice Brown, 48, admitted in Schenectady County Court to taking the money from her mother's account from December 2009 to December 2011.

Brown, who has no criminal record, pleaded guilty to one count of fourth-degree grand larceny, a felony. She is to receive five years' probation at her sentencing in July, and be ordered to repay the money she took.

Brown's mother died in December 2009

at a home in Massachusetts, prosecutor Katie McCutcheon said. The mother had her Social Security benefits deposited directly into her bank account, which was solely in her name.

After her mother's passing, Brown started using her mother's account and in some cases even signed her mother's name to checks, McCutcheon said.

Over the two-year period, she was accused of taking just under \$21,000 in benefits that should have stopped with her mother's death.

Brown said she tried to notify the Social Security Administration of her mother's passing shortly after the death, McCutcheon said, but there was no record of that being done. Brown also claimed to have notified another company, but that com-

pany also had no record of her having done so, McCutcheon said.

Regardless of whether she tried to stop the payments, McCutcheon said, Brown continued to take the money over the next two years. "Even if she notified them, that's all the more reason she was aware that those benefits should have been stopping," she added.

Eventually, the benefits were stopped through an agency investigation, though McCutcheon was not sure what triggered the probe. Brown was charged a year later, in December 2012.

McCutcheon also noted there was an incorrect number on the mother's death certificate, which may have complicated efforts to connect the death with the benefits by other means.