



BCPO News

Scott A. Coffina, Prosecutor

Philip S. Aronow
First Assistant Prosecutor

Darren N. Anderson
Chief of Detectives



Joel Bewley
BCPO Public Information Officer
Desk: 609-265-5777
Cell: 609-820-4407
jbewley@co.burlington.nj.us

March 8, 2019

GoFundMe Defendant Pleads Guilty to Conspiracy, is Accepted into Burlington County Drug Court

Burlington County Prosecutor Scott Coffina announced that one of three defendants charged in the GoFundMe campaign that misled donors with a fictitious story pled guilty today in Superior Court and was accepted into the Burlington County vicinage's drug court program.

Johnny Bobbitt Jr., 36, of Philadelphia, entered the plea before the Hon. Christopher J. Garrenger to Conspiracy to Commit Theft by Deception (Second Degree). At sentencing on April 12, he will be placed on special probation for a period of up to five years while he fulfills the requirements of the program.

He will receive an alternate sentence of five years in New Jersey state prison if he fails to comply with the conditions imposed in drug court.

New Jersey's drug court program is for non-violent offenders with moderate to severe substance abuse problems, and provides treatment instead of prison time for those who are eligible.

Drug court participants must meet all of the requirements and goals of the program in order to graduate. These include obtaining employment, satisfying any court-ordered payment obligations and remaining drug-free for a year.

(For more information, visit <https://njcourts.gov/courts/criminal/drugcourtfaq.html>)

Bobbitt was charged late last year, along with co-defendants Katelyn McClure of Bordentown and Mark D'Amico of Florence, with concocting a feel-good story that compelled kind-hearted individuals ultimately to contribute more than \$400,000 to their cause.

Their "Paying it Forward" GoFundMe campaign was created on November 10, 2017, soon after D'Amico, who was then McClure's boyfriend, took a picture of McClure and Bobbitt standing in front of the Girard Avenue exit ramp on Interstate 95 in Philadelphia.

The campaign listed a target goal of \$10,000 to provide Bobbitt, who was homeless, with rent for an apartment, a reliable vehicle, and up to six months of living expenses, among other things.

more...

During the two weeks following its creation, as the GoFundMe campaign gained momentum, Bobbitt, D'Amico and McClure undertook a media blitz repeating their fake story to print, radio, television and internet outlets – local, national and international – to perpetuate the myth and encourage additional donors to contribute.

D'Amico, 39, and McClure, 28, are facing charges of Theft by Deception (Second Degree) and Conspiracy to Commit Theft by Deception (Second Degree). Their cases are pending presentation to a Burlington County Grand Jury for possible indictment. As such, the Prosecutor's Office will have no further comment on today's proceeding.

The evidence developed over the course of the investigation revealed that D'Amico and McClure had known Bobbitt for at least a month prior to the date of the GoFundMe campaign's launch, as they had become acquainted with him during their frequent trips to a local gambling casino.

In total, more than 14,000 donors contributed nearly \$403,000 during the 2017 holiday season to help Bobbitt. Bobbitt acknowledged in court today that both D'Amico and McClure used the donated money for personal expenses, including gambling, and also provided him with money and transportation to purchase illicit drugs.

The investigation, which involved the review of more than 60,000 text messages and thousands of pages of subpoenaed financial documents, revealed that D'Amico and McClure spent the money on a BMW, a New Year's trip to Las Vegas, a helicopter ride over the Grand Canyon and Louis Vuitton hand bags, among other items. A breakdown of the cash withdrawals indicated that \$85,363 was withdrawn at, or in the immediate vicinity of, casinos located in Atlantic City, Bensalem, Philadelphia and Las Vegas.

Within a few months of the campaign's creation, all of the donated funds had been spent. Once he realized the money had been squandered, Bobbitt took civil action against D'Amico and McClure. He alleged in August 2018 through his attorneys that he had only received approximately \$75,000 of the funds raised on his behalf, including an \$18,350 trailer purchased for him and parked at the home of D'Amico and McClure. The title was placed in McClure's name and was sold after Bobbitt left the residence.

McClure and D'Amico publicly stated that approximately \$200,000 was turned over to Bobbitt, and maintained that they had not spent any of the money on themselves. But the investigation indicated otherwise.

An analysis of data derived from McClure's primary bank account revealed the campaign generated a net total of more than \$367,000 that was deposited into McClure's account from November of 2017 through December of 2017.

From November 30, 2017 through March 26, 2018, there was \$189,375 transferred from the primary bank account into other bank accounts owned by McClure, and cash withdrawals totaling \$89,623.41.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant Prosecutor Andrew McDonnell, supervisor of the BCPO Financial Crimes Unit. The investigation was conducted by the Prosecutor's Office Financial Crimes Unit and High-Tech Crimes Unit, with assistance from the Florence Township Police Department.

All persons are considered innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

END