



# BCPO News



**LaChia L. Bradshaw, Prosecutor**  
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## **Defendant in \$402k GoFundMe Scam Sentenced in Superior Court** *Mark D'Amico received a five-year state prison term*

Burlington County Prosecutor LaChia L. Bradshaw announced that one of the defendants who conceived the fictitious GoFundMe “Paying it Forward” campaign was sentenced today to five years in New Jersey state prison for participating in the fraudulent scheme that misled donors into contributing more than \$402,000 to a fabricated cause.

Mark D'Amico, 43, of Florence, was sentenced in Superior Court in Mount Holly by the Hon. Christopher J. Garrenger, J.S.C., in accordance with a plea agreement negotiated by the Prosecutor's Office. He pled guilty in December 2019 to Misapplication of Entrusted Property (Second Degree).

At the time, it was the largest fraud perpetrated through the crowdfunding company. GoFundMe voluntarily reimbursed the donors.

“People genuinely wanted to believe it was true,” Prosecutor Bradshaw said. “But it was all a lie, and it was illegal. Our office is pleased to bring justice for the more than 14,000 kind-hearted people who thought they were helping someone who was living in a desperate situation.”

D'Amico was charged in late 2018 – along with his girlfriend at the time, Katelyn McClure of Bordentown, and Johnny Bobbitt of Philadelphia – with concocting the feel-good story that misled potential donors into believing the money would go to help Bobbitt, a homeless veteran living on the streets of Philadelphia.

Bobbitt pled guilty in March 2019 to Conspiracy to Commit Theft by Deception (Second Degree), and was admitted into the New Jersey Judiciary's Recovery Court program when sentenced in April 2019. The program allows those with addiction problems to seek treatment instead of being incarcerated. However, if Bobbitt fails to adhere to the tightly-structured regimen of treatment and recovery services, which includes frequent testing for drug use, he could be sentenced to five years in state prison.

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McClure admitted that she advanced the false narrative about Bobbitt, saying it was at D'Amico's direction, and pled guilty in April 2019 to Theft by Deception (Second Degree) in exchange for a four-year term in state prison. She is scheduled to be sentenced on September 9 in Superior Court in Mount Holly.

The cases against the trio in New Jersey Superior Court were put on hold while charges were pursued on the federal level by the U.S. Attorney's Office in the District of New Jersey.

D'Amico was sentenced in April to 27 months in federal prison. His state and federal sentences are running concurrently. McClure was sentenced last month in federal court to a term of one year and one day. They were ordered by the federal judge to make full restitution to GoFundMe.

Bobbitt is scheduled to be sentenced on August 23 in U.S. District Court in Camden.

The "Paying it Forward" GoFundMe campaign was created on November 10, 2017, soon after D'Amico took a picture of McClure and Bobbitt standing in front of the Girard Avenue exit ramp on Interstate 95 in Philadelphia. The fairy tale narrative that accompanied the photo indicated that McClure had run out of gas, and Bobbitt spent his last \$20 to help her get back on her way.

The campaign listed a goal of \$10,000 to provide Bobbitt with rent for an apartment, a reliable vehicle and six months of living expenses, among other things. But the incoming funds far exceeded their expectations, and were quickly spent by McClure and D'Amico on casino gambling and personal items such as a BMW, a New Year's trip to Las Vegas, a helicopter ride over the Grand Canyon and Louis Vuitton hand bags.

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.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant Prosecutor Andrew McDonnell, supervisor of the BCPO Insurance Fraud 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.

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