



BCPO News



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Third Defendant in \$402k GoFundMe Scam Sentenced in Superior Court

Katelyn McClure received a three-year state prison term

Burlington County Prosecutor LaChia L. Bradshaw announced that the third and final defendant who conceived the fictitious GoFundMe “Paying it Forward” campaign was sentenced today to three 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.

Katelyn McClure, 32, of Burlington Township, was not present in the Mount Holly courtroom when the Hon. Christopher J. Garrenger, J.S.C., handed down the sentence because she is a serving a 12-months and one-day term in a federal prison in Connecticut for her role in the scam. The New Jersey sentence will run concurrent to the federal one.

Judge Garrenger also ruled that McClure, a former state Department of Transportation worker, is permanently barred from ever holding another position as a public employee.

McClure was charged in late 2018 – along with her boyfriend at the time, Mark D’Amico, of Florence, 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 who was living on the streets of Kensington in Philadelphia.

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

D’Amico, 43, was sentenced in August 2022 to five years in New Jersey State Prison. He pled guilty in December 2019 to Misapplication of Entrusted Property (Second Degree).

D’Amico is also serving federal time, in Pennsylvania, having been sentenced in April 2022 to 27 months behind bars. His state and federal sentences are running concurrently. He and McClure were ordered by the federal judge to make full restitution to GoFundMe.

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 New Jersey Superior Court in April 2019 to Theft by Deception (Second Degree).

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.

Bobbitt was sentenced federally in October 2022 in U.S. District Court in Camden to three years of probation and ordered to pay \$25,000 in restitution.

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 – rising above \$400,000 – 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.

"This sentencing brings to a close a case that defrauded more than 14,000 people whose decency and compassion for others elicited a tremendously heartwarming response to assist someone they believed was truly in need," Prosecutor Bradshaw said. "With the new year comes new hope for a better world, and our wish is that prosecutions like this will serve to deter criminals from such deceitful actions, but not discourage individuals from caring about those who are in crisis as a result of a tragedy, or simply need a helping hand after experiencing a hardship or setback."

The case was 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.

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