

The business operated by acquiring a relatively large inventory of merchandise and selling the inventory through online auctions. This is distinct from the consignment auction format where the auctioneer acts as an intermediary on behalf of the owner of the sales property and holds the property in a bailment; instead, Priceless Discoveries actually owned the merchandise it sold.

Priceless Discoveries maintained no separate bidder profiles or client database, nor did Priceless Discoveries accept consignments or bailments from third parties. Further Priceless Discoveries did not adjudicate or engage in the practice of recognizing the prevailing bidder, at its auctions. In order to access an on-line customer base, manage customer files, establish its presence as an internet-based business, and adjudicate its auctions, Priceless Discoveries contracted with another on-line auction firm, Capital City Online Auctions (CCOA). CCOA, in turn, contracted with a third-party auction “platform”, Maxanet, to provide auction adjudications on behalf of itself and its clients. Nonetheless, Priceless Discoveries was advertised as the auction firm in its auctions.

Individuals at Priceless Discoveries began to use a bidder profile associated with the identifying information of Frank Eck to bid on 543 items. “Frank Eck” was never the winning bidder on any of the items he bid on; in 250 instances, Eck was the “back bidder” or second place bidder. The real Frank Eck is 55 years old, does not possess a checking account, and was unaware of ever establishing a bidder profile or having ever bid at an auction.

While speaking with a co-worker, Klein made obvious references to engaging in the practice of shill bidding and referenced a door that was to be sold at auction and commented that she would never let the item go for less than a specified price. Klein discussed the use of fictitious bidder profiles to establish a minimum sale price for items to be sold at auction. References throughout the recorded conversation were linked directly to bids submitted through a bidder

profile identified with "Karen Gotschall." The Gotschall bidder profile contained the personal identifying information of Karen Gotschall and was created by Karen Gotschall. However the profile was accessed and used by Klein to submit bids without Karen Gotschall's permission, knowledge, or authorization.

From July 26, 2022 to January 19, 2023, Leslie further accessed a bidder profile associated with the identity of Rhonda Kelley to submit 386 bids on 213 items. The Rhonda Kelley bidder profile was associated with Klein's mother (Jill Ronda Klein a/k/a Rhonda Kelley). In numerous instances, Kelley and the defendant's bids appeared on the same item, creating the impression that both were competing for the same item. In each instance, bids made from the Rhonda Kelley profile were made from the same location as internet bids made from the defendant's account. Both Klein and Kelley acknowledged that throughout this time period Klein controlled both accounts and submitted the bids on these items.

Priceless Discoveries and Lindsay Klein and others used Frank Eck's stolen personal identifying information to submit shill bids on 543 items from July 2022 through March 2023, artificially inflating auction closing prices by a total of \$5,954 (approximately \$10 on each item sold at auction). Priceless Discoveries, Lindsay Klein and others further used a bidder profile associated with Karen Gotschall to submit shill bids on 14 items from July 2022 through March 2023, artificially inflating auction closing prices by an additional \$234.49 (averaging an increase of \$60 on each item in which the Gotschall profile was used to create artificial demand). During the same period Lindsay Klein and others used the bidder profile of Rhonda Kelley to bid on 213 items, artificially inflating auction closing prices by an additional \$3,679 (averaging an increase of \$17 on each item in which the Kelly profile was used to create artificial demand).

INDICTMENT

The Jurors of the Grand Jury of the State of Ohio, in the year 2025, within and for the body of the County of **Franklin**, on their oaths, IN THE NAME OF AND BY THE AUTHORITY OF THE STATE OF OHIO, do find and present that:

COUNT 1

Between July 1, 2022 and March 31, 2023, Lindsay Klein a/k/a Lindsay Leslie and other individuals at Priceless Discoveries Auction, within Franklin County, did engage in and/or did carry out the purposes of an illegal trust, defined in R.C. 1331.01(C)(1), through combining acts with each other and others in order to restrict trade or commerce and/or control or fix at a standard the price an article of merchandise is offered for public sale and/or agree to not sell merchandise below a fixed value and preclude free and unrestricted competition among consumers in violation of R.C. 1331.04, a felony of the 5th degree.

COUNT 2

Between July 1, 2022 and March 31, 2023, Lindsay Klein a/k/a Lindsay Leslie and other individuals at Priceless Discoveries Auctions, within Franklin County, did conspire with each other and others, to increase or decrease the number or amount of bids offered at auction, thereby engaging in bid rigging in violation of R.C. 4707.151, a felony of the 5th degree.

COUNT 3

Between July 1, 2022 and March 31, 2023, Lindsay Klein a/k/a Lindsay Leslie and others, within Franklin County, did, without the consent of the other person, Frank Eck, use, obtain, or possess, the personal identifying information of Frank Eck with the intention of holding the defendant out to be Frank Eck and/or representing Frank Eck's personal identifying information,

including his name, address, driver's license number, to be the defendant's own personal identifying information in a series of transactions involving property or legal obligations exceeding \$1,000 but less than \$7,500, in violation of R.C. 2913.49, a felony of the 4th degree.

COUNT 4

Between July 1, 2022 and March 31, 2023, Lindsay Klein a/k/a Lindsay Leslie and others, within Franklin County, did, without the consent of the other person, Karen Gotschall, use, obtain, or possess, the personal identifying information of Karen Gotschall with the intention of holding the defendant out to be Karen Gotschall and/or representing Karen Gotschall's personal identifying information, including her name, address, driver's license number, to be the defendant's own personal identifying information in violation of R.C. 2913.49, a felony of the 5th degree.

COUNT 5

Between July 1, 2022 and March 31, 2023, Lindsay Klein a/k/a Lindsay Leslie and others, within Franklin County, did, having devised a scheme to defraud, knowingly transmitted or caused to be transmitted, by means of telecommunication, telecommunications device, and/or telecommunications service, a writing and/or data with purpose to execute or otherwise further the scheme to defraud in which the value of the benefit obtained by the offender or the value of the detriment to victims of the fraud exceeded seven thousand five hundred but not one hundred fifty thousand dollars, in violation of Revised Code section 2913.05, a felony of the 3rd degree.

Contrary to the statute in such case made and provided and against the peace and dignity of the State of Ohio.

DAVE YOST (0056290)
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A TRUE BILL



Foreperson



Thomas W. Allen (0068992)
Senior Assistant Attorney General

Lindsay Klein (AKA Lindsay Leslie)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Sex: Female

Race: Caucasian

Address: 1780 Scottsdale Ave, Columbus, Ohio 43235