

Grieving mother distraught after conmen set up Facebook site asking for donations to help fund heart transplant for her dead toddler daughter

By Suzannah Hills

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A grieving mother has told how internet scammers set up a Facebook site asking for donations to help fund a heart transplant - for her dead daughter.

Julie Chambers, 37, was left distraught after discovering a Jamaican fraudster had set up a group in the name of her young daughter, Zoe, who died when she was just two years old after having a heart transplant.

The twisted fraudster even used a picture of Julie and Zoe, taken from her own Facebook site - and gave people the link to a counterfeit donation page, which was actually linked directly to his own paypal account.

The fake page had been viewed nearly 200,000 times and it's thought American users were tricked into donating thousands of pounds.

'I heard a very loud, shrill scream': Inquest hears of moment toddler was hit by fairground rollercoaster

But incredibly, police have told Julie they are powerless to act because she hasn't been defrauded of any cash.

Julie, from Hull, East Yorks, said: 'My daughter died three years ago and some sick person has tried to hijack the memories to make some cash. It's disgusting.

'Part of me is upset, but mostly I'm really angry.

'I can't believe someone would do something like this. It's sickening.'

The fraudster was asking Facebook users to 'share' a link, claiming that if 1,000 people do so, Zoe would get a free heart transplant.

Further links were placed in the captions, which directed users to a counterfeit donation page, and then the donations were routed to the false charity bank account via PayPal.

Julie said: 'Thankfully, all my friends have been on the case and we've really been pushing to get people to stop posting the links - but they have gone to more than 170,000 people so it's a really big job.

'I've tried getting help from Facebook but they have been useless. I've reported it to the police but they have said they cannot do anything as I have not been defrauded of any money.

'I was really worried for a time that people might think it was me behind the scam.'

Zoe was born in December 2005 with a narrow valve in her heart which did not allow blood to pass through.

At four months she developed cardiomyopathy, which is swelling and enlargement of the heart - and had six heart attacks before she was fast-tracked to the top of the European heart transplant list.

She underwent a 10-hour operation at the Newcastle Freeman Hospital in June 2007, but tragically, just over a year after the operation, Zoe collapsed and died in her mother's arms at the family home after a suspected virus attacked her heart.

Julie added: 'It would have been hard enough to handle if Zoe had been alive, but she isn't with us. She's dead and someone has used her picture to con people out of money.

'Thankfully, through a number of friends, the scam came back to me, so I started trying to find out what had happened.

'At first, I didn't understand why people would make donations because of the NHS, but when we realised it was being done in America it made more sense.

'It's a shame someone would do something like this.'" After Julie began the online fight-back, staff at a Australian website, hoax-slayer.com, began to help.'

Experts from across the globe started investigating the scam before eventually getting the false donation pages taken down.

Computer expert Steve Williamson, from Hoax Slayer, said: 'Some people do bizarre things online just to get hits, others take things further and start to try to make money from it.

'Our enquiries showed a man in Jamaica was taking donations from Americans who, albeit with good intentions, were blindly sending cash to a cause which was false.

'The money went into bank accounts which are privately held - and of course we know it was not for a transplant for Zoe as sadly she is no longer with us.'

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2088292/Conmen-set-Facebook-site-asking-donations-help-fund-heart-transplant-dead-toddler.html#ixzz1p5Iost66>