

INVESTIGATION



Breast Buy

ON A WEBSITE THAT ALLOWS MEN TO FOOT THE BILL FOR A WOMAN'S IMPLANTS, THE GUYS GET OFF, THE WOMEN GET D-CUPS, AND EVERYBODY'S HAPPY. OR ARE THEY? BY MEGAN DEEM

ive thousand dollars is a lot of scratch. It will pay for more than 8,475 Glow Sticks. Or buy two pairs of Manolo Blahnik Alligator Halter pumps (including tax!). Or cover three months' worth of emergency medical supplies for almost 20,500 people in Darfur, according to UNICEF.

It's also enough for a pretty decent set of breasts.

But what if a woman wants them—no, *needs* them—and doesn't have five grand lying around? What is she to do? Save, borrow, take food from her children's mouths, or, now, create a profile on MyFreeImplants.com. The less-than-subtly-named website is a "charity" started by two 29-year-old men to assist women who, yes, can't afford boob jobs. Women such as Karen Schafer, a "professional model"—bikini contests and boxing matches—who posted this plea: "I feel that I am at a disadvantage to the other [models] because they all have implants.... I

am not looking to go to a huge size.... I just want to have more to get an edge on the competition."

Hoping to stir up interest, Schafer, aka "Eye Candy," included a fetching photo of herself crouching, catlike, in frilly lingerie, and, like nearly all of the 1,500 implant-hopefuls who have joined the site since it began two years ago, she posted her vital statistics: age, measurements, and fundraising goal. "Support Karren!" her profile reads, like a parody of a "Save the Children" brochure.

Once their info is up, the real labor begins. Here's how the site works: Donors, or "benefactors," as they're known in free-implant land, pay \$1.20 to e-mail women whose plights, or bodies—even sorely unenhanced—move them. (The women get to hold on to \$1 of that; the site takes the rest, minus credit card processing fees.) The key for the bust-deprived is to keep the cyber-conversations going—some log as many as eight to

JUVÉDERM™ Injectable Gel Important Patient Risk Information

In the U.S., JUVÉDERM™ injectable gel is indicated for injection into the mid-to-deep dermis for correction of moderate to severe facial wrinkles and folds (such as nasolabial folds), and is generally well tolerated. The most commonly reported side effects are temporary injection site redness, swelling, pain/tenderness, firmness, lumps/bumps, and bruising. Exposure of the treated area to excessive sun and extreme cold weather should be minimized until any initial swelling and redness have resolved.

If laser treatment, chemical peel or any other procedure based on active dermal response is considered after treatment with JUVÉDERM™ injectable gel, there is a possible risk of an inflammatory reaction at the treatment site.

Patients who are using substances that can prolong bleeding, such as aspirin or ibuprofen, as with any injection, may experience increased bruising or bleeding at injection site. You should inform your physician before treatment if you are using these types of substances. As with all skin injection procedures there is a risk of infection.

JUVÉDERM™ injectable gel should be used with caution in patients on immunosuppressive therapy, or therapy used to decrease the body's immune response, as there may be an increased risk of infection. The safety of JUVÉDERM™ injectable gel in patients with a history of excessive scarring (e.g., hypertrophic scarring and keloid formations) and pigmentation disorders has not been studied. JUVÉDERM™ injectable gel should not be used in patients who have severe allergies marked by a history of anaphylaxis or history or presence of multiple severe allergies. JUVÉDERM™ injectable gel should not be used in patients with a history of allergies to gram-positive bacterial proteins. The safety of JUVÉDERM™ injectable gel for use during pregnancy, in breastfeeding females or in patients under 18 years has not been established. The safety and effectiveness of JUVÉDERM™ injectable gel for the treatment of areas other than facial wrinkles and folds (such as lips) have not been established in controlled clinical studies.

Please go to www.juvederm.com to see a complete summary of risks and complications.

ELLE BEAUTY INVESTIGATION

12 hours a day at their computers—because each time one of the 7,000 men registered on the site (nicknamed MFI) hits SEND, another dollar goes into his chosen charity case's account. "If you're not on there, you're not making money; the messages just dry up," says Schafer, 25, who is also an interior design student in Seattle. "It's like a full-time job. There's nothing 'free' about it."

Many of the women (who are called "models," a euphemism that certainly must boost the self-esteem of ladies and gentlemen alike) also try to cash in by sending benefactors private photos in exchange for flat-out donations—20 bucks here, 100 bucks there. (MFI's money men profit on those as well, taking 10 percent off the top, with another 5 percent going to the credit card companies.) Nude snaps are available too, in picture albums attached to some models' profiles.



As money accrues, it's deposited in a savings account until a woman reaches her goal. When that blessed day arrives, the fee is paid directly to a surgeon the patient selects. She never touches the money, and if a model drops out before reaching her target, donations are returned to the benefactors.

How in God's name did anybody come up with this scheme? Exactly the way you'd expect: High school friends Jay Moore and Jason Grunstra hatched the idea over drinks during a Vegas bachelor party in early February 2005. "We met two cocktail servers at PURE Nightclub, and one had implants," Moore says. "The one who didn't was complaining about the cost." Moore and his 10 buddies considered chipping in a total of \$750 toward her augmentation and felt certain that other guys would be equally generous. "It's a bit old-fashioned, but many men like being providers and helping women out financially," he says. "Also, many men have a fantasy of building the 'perfect woman.' It sounds science fiction-ish, but I think it holds true for some men."

The two former classmates never saw the object of their perverse-Pygmalion affections again. ("We have no idea who she is," Moore says.) To find out if a lark could be converted into a business model, Grunstra set up a MySpace page where his friend Natasha, who also craved implants

(and is currently the MFI spokesmodel), could collect cash via PayPal. "She reached her goal [\$5,500] in about four months," Moore says. Encouraged, the pair launched their concept on a larger platform—welcome, MyFreeImplants.com (Grunstra came up with the name). "This is the fourth web-based start-up Jason and I have done together," Moore says. "This is the first one associated with sex, and the first one that's successful. As they say, sex sells."

One beneficiary is Angel Moore (no relation to Jay), 36, a married mother of three in Ocean Springs, Mississippi. "I've always wanted implants," she says. "It was a matter of timing and money." Moore joined MFI in January of this year, reached her goal of \$3,465 three months later, and scheduled her surgery for mid-July, planning to go from a 32A to a "small" D. "When I was pregnant, I was

a D," she says, "but after I had the babies, my breasts just kind of shriveled up." Moore told her husband, a Navy chief who was stationed in Guam, about her plan. "He couldn't believe it," she says. "He said, 'They're going to pay for your implants?' But he checked out the site and saw that it was all fantasy; the guys didn't know my real name or where I lived."

Moore didn't trade naked images of herself ("only sexy pictures in my bra and underwear"), and neither does "Brittany" (her screen name), a 22-year-old computer-science major from Killeen, Texas. "I don't do nudes at all; I think my mother would shoot me," Brittany says. "And I'm not willing to sell my soul for implants."

She is willing, however, to make maintaining her benefactor relationships her No. 1 priority. Brittany joined the site in June with a \$5,000 target, enough to grow her 32AAs into "full Bs or small Cs. I'm hoping to have all the money by the end of July," she says. "Since I'm not in school or working right now, I'm on the site about eight hours a day; I'm really dedicated to it." Why not simply get a job during her three-month vacation and pay for the implants herself? "I don't think I can raise \$5,000 in a summer—that's, like, \$800 a week," she says. "Can you beat that? As a college student, no way."

One of Brittany's benefactors is Chris Radler, a 39-year-old Stockholm

resident who owns a grocery-import company. He became a site member in mid-September 2005, and keeps a spreadsheet tracking the amount he's spent on MFI. So far, he has doled out \$10,000 to 31 different women, or "enough for one procedure per year," he says. "I have a fetish for fake boobs." Indeed.

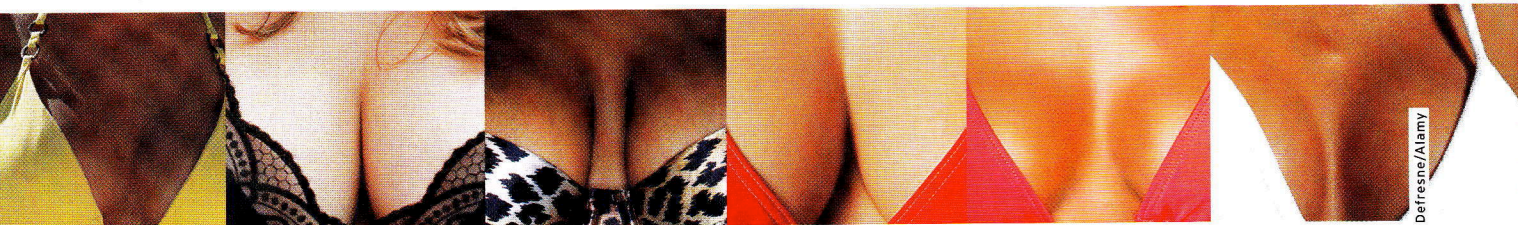
Even so, according to Radler, the community, not the body parts, is what drew him to MFI. "It's odd; why am I there? I could find lots of pictures on the Net for free of models that have fake boobs," he says. "For me, it's a social network." Which is sort of sad when you think about it—cringingly so if you view the photo Radler posted of himself at MyFreeImplants.com: He's stark naked, sitting alone in front of his computer.

Rita Freedman, PhD, a psychologist in Harrison, New York, and author of *Bodylove* (Gurze Books), isn't sympathetic toward men like Radler. "It's really nice for these men that they can relate to women as pieces," she says. "It conforms to their sense of their own masculinity, which is derived from seeing women as objects and something they can own." According to Freedman, that mind-set also explains why a man would let his wife or girlfriend join MFI: "He's happy for other men to see that he has this gorgeous object."

when the woman in the exam room says that the fee for her operation will be coming from MyFreeImplants.com. And their response so far has been negative. "We were horrified when we looked it up," says one doctor's receptionist, who didn't want to be named. "It's a bunch of hookers on that site," snarls her front-office colleague.

Of the eight doctors with MFI experience (out of 15 total) contacted by ELLE for comment, only one would come to the phone. "I really don't want to advocate the site, because it looks a little questionable," says Thomas Hagerty, MD, a plastic surgeon in Kingston, New York, who augmented the bust of a woman whose surgery came courtesy of MFI. "But the payment went through seamlessly, and we didn't have any problems in that respect. God only knows where patients get the money for their procedures. We only report it if it seems illegal."

The American Society of Plastic Surgeons hasn't taken an official position on the website, but the group's UK counterpart, the British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons, issued a press release condemning MFI: "The invitation for women to post suggestive photos, sell personal items and chat with strangers over the Internet in exchange for a breast



And it may be one reason why some men actively prefer fake-looking fake boobs to semi-realistic implants or the natural, God-given kind: It's easier to dissociate the chest from the woman it's on. And so on.

While Freedman's feminist critiques ring true, in matters of sex (and no, benefactors and models don't meet in person), the power balance between men and women can be hard to pin down. And the ladies often sound like the winners in this commerce-driven game. While benefactors usually cite "the community" when asked about their favorite part of MFI (though one has to wonder whether "community" is code for "porn bazaar"), the models fairly screamed, "Free boobs!" in response to the same question.

Lindsay Rink, 22, a professional body piercer in Columbus, Ohio, logged on to the site in late February and reached her goal of \$3,950 by June 4. About a week later, she got a tattoo (not her first) on her calf of a woman's head and chest and the words MY FREE IMPLANTS. At least three other women have also had the site's name permanently inked on their bodies. "This is my little homage to the site," Rink says with glee. Like Moore and Britany, she raked in the money without exposing herself. "I like to say that I got boobs for my personality," she says. "Because I never sold naked pictures." There were a few bumps along the way, however: "One guy was pushing to find out where I lived." But no matter. "Women have the upper hand," Rink says. "Men have to pay to contact them."

So far, the entrepreneurs who started the implants site say they haven't made it as big as they'd hoped. Moore is bartending in Santa Cruz, California, having just completed a master's degree in education, and Grunstra is a web developer in L.A. MFI nets only about \$2,000 a month, Moore says, adding that his dream is for board-certified doctors to buy ad space.

That may be a hard sell. Since the site allows models to choose their surgeons, the first time most MDs learn of MFI is

augmentation is just plain degrading."

Moore and Grunstra aren't impressed with the physicians' criticism. After all, they argue, isn't their website an improvement on what doctors are increasingly doing—financing cosmetic operations for women who can't pay for them all at once, and then charging interest? You almost buy the site's woman-loving righteousness, until you see its banner ads depicting a cartoon female, on her hands and knees as a hand drops coins into her back and her breasts grow, above the caption: "Create the Perfect Girl at MyFreeImplants.com!" Or until Moore sweetly offers that, while his business partner has dated women with implants ("I'm a perfectionist," Grunstra once said. "I love fake breasts because they're round, perfect, and symmetrical"), he has never gone that route: "Ironically, I'm more of an ass man."

On the flip side, while many of the women on the site seem like representatives of grrrl power, that supposedly butt-kicking breed of scantily clad American lass who knows what she wants and does what it takes to get it, other models' stories are disturbing. Some talk about saving on their own for implants and having to give up when the dog needs surgery, for example, or the mortgage has to be paid.

"I am a single mother of one child," posts "Metal Girl." "I work at a manufacturing company as a wire assembler full time. I may not be the best writer or blogger but I try." She goes on to say that she feels "less like a woman" because of her small breast size, and that she'd signed up before at MyFreeImplants.com, but "got discouraged when I only got \$5 in three and a half weeks."

In other words, the site can be a place where women revel in attaining what they consider to be their true selves, or one more area where they don't measure up. Not to mention the fact that no matter how much of a live-and-let-live type you are, you have to admit there's something off in our collective priorities if a man would spend his so-called charitable dollars on some stranger's boob job.

Left to right: Image Source/Getty Images; Corbis; Thinkstock Images/Jupiter; face to face Bildagentur GmbH/Alamy; Blend Images/Alamy; Eric Defresne/Alamy