



AthFest Educates

PO Box 327 - Athens, GA 30603

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www.athfesteducates.org

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Statement from Jill Helme, AthFest Educates Executive Director

After eight amazing years, my time with AthFest Educates is coming to a close. While my family is relocating out-of-state, Athens will forever hold a special place in my heart. As I reflect on my time here, I am beyond grateful for all that we have accomplished together and all that I have learned in the process. I am a better professional and a better human because of the work you have allowed me to do with AthFest Educates.

It's been such an honor to work with the past and present Board of Directors to build and strengthen this amazing organization that has such an important impact on the Athens community and Athens youth. Because of our joint commitment to sustain and grow we weathered unexpected twists and enjoyed surprising turns that have made us stronger. Some call it teamwork, but to me it always felt more like grit, respect, and love.

Words can't express my gratitude to the seemingly tireless AthFest and AthHalf Planning Committee members who move mountains to make sure our events go off smoothly each year and are the joy-filled experiences our community has come to love. To our incredible donors and event sponsors, I reach for something beyond "thank you" as those words cannot adequately express what your belief in our mission means to us as an organization and to the community we all love. To the thousands and thousands of you who have volunteered at AthFest and AthHalf over my eight years – you have my heartfelt appreciation; we simply couldn't do what we do without you. And to the AthFest Educates grantees who show me every day what it means to inspire creativity in young people. The best part of my job has always been supporting your commitment to Athens and our youth.

I am so grateful to have had the chance to dedicate eight years of my professional career to bringing music and the arts to young people. It has been an amazing honor. Those who know me well know that when it comes to advocating for children, more specifically advocating for their opportunities to grow and learn, I can be a bit, oh, let's say "relentless." It's a trait I've long held, and I am so thankful to the incredibly supportive Board members who chose to see that trait as the more positively worded "persistence." The Board worked with me to shape AthFest Educates into an organization that will continue to support music and arts learning for youth for decades and decades to come. I truly believe AthFest Educates has been blessed with the most amazing Board of Directors, past and present, and I'm excited to watch as they shape the next chapter in this organization's bright future.

AthFest Educates advances high-quality music and arts education for local youth and the Athens community through direct support of school and community-based programs and events, including an annual music and arts festival.



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Tens of thousands of people in Athens have their own unique AthFest and AthHalf memories, thousands and thousands of Athens youth have shared in inspirational music and arts education programs funded by AthFest Educates, and I'm truly honored to have been able to play a very small part in their experiences.

As I think about leaving, I'm filled not with sadness, but with deep gratitude for all those who have guided and supported me and AthFest Educates on this journey. Together we surpassed the \$500,000 milestone with our grantmaking, and I look forward to cheering the organization on as it passes the \$1 million mark in the not-to-distant future. I leave here nothing short of proud.

Rock on, Athens!

Jill

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