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For Immediate Release
September 29, 2015

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The Gift of Music helps return band classes to APS elementary schools

(Atlanta, GA) The Gift of Music Foundation is proud to announce a new program that will once again give elementary children who attend some Atlanta Public Schools the chance to benefit from music education. The new program, the "APS Afterschool Music Enrichment Program" will be led by Arthur McClenton, a long-time music educator and performer as well as a former music teacher in Atlanta Public Schools.

This past summer, music education and band programs became the focus of media reports when several school principals decided to reduce or eliminate funding for band programs in their schools. More than a dozen teachers were affected, as well as hundreds of students. The Gift of Music Foundation Founder and CEO Chris Monroe says those decisions spoke directly to the mission of his organization. "With these kinds of cuts happening right in our own back yard and affecting so many students, we knew early on that this would be one of our first major projects as a Foundation," he said.

Initially, after-school band classes will take place at Bethune Elementary and West Manor Elementary. Bands will meet two days per week, with a goal of preparing the young musicians for public performances at the school and possible outside venues. The Gift of Music Foundation has plans to expand the reach of this program to other schools as soon as possible. McClenton is ready to get the classes started and return to the role he enjoys so much, with a direct effect on children and preparing them for life. He says "We are intent upon bringing forth the best in skills, and the best in the use of those skills and talents as we send them forth into the world."

Initial funding has come from the Foundation's general outreach fund. To build on the program, The Gift of Music has launched a new Crowdfunding campaign designed to focus attention on the loss of music in schools and to fund the program's growth and expansion. "Crowdfunding has become a vital tool for organizations like ours that enables us to do good things in our communities," says Scott Keefer, Director of Communications for The Gift of Music. "Through the reach of social media, people can see directly how much impact we can have on these kids. It's amazing to me how willing people are to support a great cause. It's just who we are as people... we help each other." Monroe added that the dollars that people contribute through the funding campaign will directly touch the children in the program. "Teaching young students how to play a musical instrument for the first time and coordinating a music ensemble takes specially qualified teachers and instructors." Monroe also noted that "while some of these will be volunteer positions, we will pay our Music Directors for running and coordinating their programs, and there are expenses of providing and maintaining instruments, purchasing music and

supplies, and other related items. None of these expenses are being covered by the Atlanta Public School system. In order for the program to both survive and thrive, we will rely completely on those individuals and companies willing to invest in Atlanta's public school students through generous financial support."

For McClenton, he's just glad the students that he cares so much about will have the access to music and all of its social and educational benefits. "Music builds confidence," says McClenton. "The scientific data is overwhelming concerning how music benefits the mind. But it also builds that esteem that says here's a child that believes they now they can do something that will bring a compliment, a smile, that will bring a good grade. It also brings that 'esprit-de-corps' where they are able to work together and build and be productive."

Added Monroe, "We know that music matters. Reinstating music programs for elementary students is a perfect example of why The Gift of Music Foundation was started, and a direct reflection of both our mission and vision. "

For more information about The Gift of Music Foundation and their programs

www.giftofmusic.org

To participate in the crowdfunding campaign to support this program

www.funding.giftofmusic.org/projects/help-bring-music-back-to-atlanta-schoolchildren/