

Statement by  
San Diego Unified School District Board President  
**Marne Foster**

September 8, 2015

It is a tremendous honor to serve the residents and students of the San Diego Unified School District as a School Board Trustee. And I am deeply pained by the news reports about the 'Brothers 2 College' fundraiser that was held to help my two adult sons pay for their college tuition.

Many know that I am a single parent of four adult children, with three still in college. My children mean the world to me, and like any parent I want to see them succeed in achieving their dreams and making this world a better place.

However, I am also an elected official. My actions can be, and frequently are, parsed, analyzed and criticized. Although it may sound naïve, it never occurred to me that 'Marne the Mom', by supporting an effort to help my sons go to college, was stepping into territory occupied by 'Marne the Elected Official'. But obviously I was.

This was a Mistake of the Heart and I fully take responsibility for my mistakes.

Elected officials need to earn the public's trust and maintain that trust every day. To do so, they need to avoid even the appearance of impropriety. I've been assured by legal counsel that my actions were completely legal and proper. Nevertheless, I believe that more is required.

I believe in openness and transparency. I believe in accountability. And I believe that the public has the right to know all the details when elected officials are associated with fundraisers in circumstances such as these.

Accordingly, I have asked the event organizer for a complete accounting of all funds raised and expenses from the event and I am making the entire financial report public. In the interests of complete transparency, I will make public the names and amounts donated for every donor and the amount spent with corresponding vendor name for every expenditure, including the rent paid for the facility.

Any individual who works for or does business with the School District will have their contribution returned. In addition, a small number of contributions were made anonymously online. Since the identity of the donors of these funds is not known, this money will be donated to an independent non-profit, Heartbeat Music Academy, that provides mentoring and leadership development to youth in underserved communities through music education. At the event, raffle tickets were sold for cash. The raffle proceeds will be retained by C. Anthony Cole Repertory Dance Theatre (CACRDT), the nonprofit 501c (3) charitable organization, that organized the event.

This information will be filed with Cheryl Ward, the Clerk of the School District, so any member of the public can see the report for themselves.

Painful though it has been, this has been a learning experience for me.

In closing, I also want to reiterate my commitment to fighting for quality education for ALL our children. While my children have already graduated from this District I will continue to fight for the 130,000 students in San Diego Unified who count on our Board to put their needs first.