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Jazz Fest board resigns, Felix back in charge

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Published: Wednesday, September 8, 2010 3:13 PM PDT

In another surprising turn of events, the entire board of the Healdsburg Jazz Festival resigned this week, handing operations back over to original founder Jessica Felix, who was terminated last month.

The board, stating they were responding to public support for Artistic Director Jessica Felix, voted unanimously to reinstate Felix to the board, elect her chairperson, then immediately resign.

"This is a gratifying turn of events," said Pat Templin, chairman of the current Board that, last month, suspended the 2011 festival and eliminated Felix's position due to financial shortfalls. "The board has worked long and hard to realize the level of economic support recently offered by the community. We are confident that Jessica and the new board will advance the festival which has been a signature event and valuable asset to Healdsburg."

Felix said she was heartened by the show of support for herself, the festival and jazz.

A lot of great people have really stepped up," Felix said. "It's been heartwarming, I am touched very deeply."

But, Felix acknowledged, this is just the start of a long road to ensure the solvency of the Healdsburg Jazz Festival.

"It's a wake up call for this festival and it's also a victory for jazz, because people really wanted to save this jazz festival," she said.

Felix said a new board will be created and fundraising efforts will kick into high gear, utilizing some of the support that arose after last month's announcement.

"It's a big victory, but only a small part of what needs to be done to save the festival," she said.

Felix is organizing the first-ever dedicated committee to fund-raising for the festival and will bring on new board members soon. A financial commitment of \$10,000 has already been made and Felix is confident the festival will be back next year.

The fate of the Healdsburg Jazz Festival was left in question last month when a surprise announcement was made by the board that the non-profit organization was \$30,000 in debt and had decided to suspend the festival for a year, as well as terminating Felix's position as a cost-saving measure.

After the decision became public, letters and comments from the Healdsburg community and jazz community flooded the jazz festival website and later a second website that was set up to receive additional comments.

"I think the board didn't judge the community support for the festival — not only Healdsburg, but also the jazz community," Felix said.

Felix said she is rounding up volunteers who are willing to help with fundraising or who just want to be involved in the festival.

"I am glad it's moving in this direction," she said. "I just want people to come and listen to this music, and take a chance."

For more information, go to www.healdsburgjazzfestival.org or email Felix at jessicafelix@ap.net.

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