

Statement from Joe Luginbill:

1/31/20

I feel it is important to make a statement to the media at this time. I know that my absence has led many to ask questions, and I regret how it has left people in the dark.

The truth is that for a period of several months I have been completely overwhelmed - I held on to unrealistic hopes of a "Hail Mary" that would support the success of two daunting projects, the State Theatre and the Smile House (as well as other programs and initiatives). I worked on these projects and others without receiving any salary and without employees. Despite this and despite public support and encouragement, the level of donations simply did not keep up with the costs associated with operations.

More than anything, I was in denial. I was in denial to believe that I would be able to see the success of these projects on my own. I was in denial as bills added up and as more and more responsibilities were shifted to me. It is hard to cope with the fact that this had led people and causes I care deeply about to be disappointed and hurt.

I want to apologize for retreating during this time of challenge and for not being in communication with the people I work closely with. In many ways, I kept people in the dark about the difficulties I had been going through. In the coming weeks and months I will work to make amends with the programs which I care about so dearly. Because I no longer am equipped to manage these programs myself, I will be passing them on to other entities and organizations that can see them through. For that reason I am in the process of dissolving my foundation.

At this time, I am also pursuing treatment for mental illness. In many ways, my mental illness has been debilitating for me. It has been a root cause for the challenges I am currently facing. I have put off seeking such treatment for a very long time and feel it is vital that I receive it now.

I want to thank those who have sent messages of love and support during this time. Their understanding means so much to me, as does the support of my family and loved ones.

I have lived in the public eye since I was 18 years old, and I have devoted my entire adult life to public service. I have always tried to do what I feel is in the best interest of the causes and programs I support. For the same reason, at this time I am retreating from the public life which I have cultivated to this point.

Through everything, I am holding onto my belief that there is a power greater than me and greater than any of us. I trust that force to guide me forward into the future. This will be my only statement at this time.