

Singing for the Children

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Taylor Hicks joins a local movement to benefit children around the world.
By Brenda Lange

Individuals can create the change they wish to see in the world, as Mahatma Gandhi advised. And when you combine two people with energy, conviction, talent and compassion intent on making a difference, change can be explosive and far-reaching.



Most of America is familiar with Taylor Hicks, the handsome and talented singer who won the top prize in American Idol's fifth season. With his soulful delivery of moving lyrics, he's gained a legion of fans calling themselves the "soul patrol."

One of his songs, "Do I Make You Proud," about reaching for goals and standing for something you believe in while encouraging others to join you, touched the heart of a local woman, singer/songwriter, Genevieve Rose of Bucks County.

"I was looking for a singer who had heart and soul," she remembers, "and I wrote this song called 'SOS' and recorded and sent it to him—all the time thinking it would be perfect for him to record."

Writing the song was a step on a journey Rose had started in the early '80s. After her musician husband, Buffalo, passed away, she left the music business, and fell onto some hard times. For a while, she relied on the kindness of strangers for food and shelter, and it was during this struggle that she encountered children suffering from similar circumstances.

“I can remember thinking that here I was, struggling as an adult, and asking myself who would help these kids,” she says.

It was shortly after getting back on her feet that she discovered the charity, SOS Children’s Villages that helps abandoned and orphaned children around the world.

Founded in 1949, SOS Children’s Villages (www.sos-usa.org) cares directly for about 80,000 children who have been left without parents and homes, and impacts more than one million through its outreach programs in 132 countries. Its mission is to build families for children in need; help them shape their futures; and share in community development.

“I read about it (SOS) and I wanted to give back, and it all came together for me that I could help raise awareness and money for these children through music,” she says.

The inspiration doesn’t end there. Rose then enlisted the help of a hot air balloon pilot, Ian Martin, of Flying Enterprises, UK, and designed a logo for the balloon symbolizing millions of children. Rainbow-colored shapes of kids superimposed on images of a map of the globe send the message of unanimity and love. “A hot-air balloon can travel around the world, gets high visibility, and can stop at all the SOS villages, being seen by millions as it flies, and can offer the most awareness,” she says.

Taylor says yes

“I was so excited the day I met Taylor at the Forge Recording Studio in Oreland,” she says. “I couldn’t believe this talented musician had come here to record ‘SOS’ to help end the misery of millions of children. He was enthusiastic and personable, and even offered to fly in the balloon too—so he’s talented and adventurous!”

Hicks continued to say ‘yes’ to Rose and the Children’s Village mission, by agreeing to perform in a benefit concert at Philadelphia’s Kimmel Center on June 17, where he will sing Rose’s song, “SOS.”

“This concert is the project kick-off, and the actual balloon journey begins in London sometime soon,” Rose says. Other concerts will follow in Japan, San Francisco, Los Angeles and more cities still being determined. Sponsorships are also being sold. “Imagine your logo painted on the side of a hot-air balloon floating around the world,” she adds.

Additional concerts are being planned to benefit SOS Children’s Villages organization, beginning with The South Rocks for SOS in Birmingham, AL, in September.

“Taylor has just been so generous, donating his time and talent like this,” Rose says.

Information for Taylor Hicks’ concert on June 17th.

Tickets can be purchased online at www.kimmelcenter.org or by calling Ticket Philadelphia at (215) 893-1999 or in person at the Kimmel Center Box Office, 300 South Broad St., Philadelphia, PA 19102.

Brenda Lange is an independent writer and editor (www.brendalange.com).