



# TWO HEARTS

Phil and Orianne Collins are doing their part to help disadvantaged children make the most of their talents

BY ALYSSA FISHER | PHOTO BY LA GUAPA PHOTOGRAPHY

**C**anes in hand, Phil and Orianne Collins take their places on the Faena Theater stage, undeterred. Each in physical recovery—the Grammy Award-winning musician from a foot injury, and his significant other, a philanthropist and jewelry designer, from paralysis after neck surgery—they move forward, embracing the mission they set for the Little Dreams Foundation: Never give up.

“It’s not a simple journey,” Orianne says. “It’s a long journey, and they have to do a lot in order to reach their goals. But we’re there to support them.”

“They” are the 200 children and teenagers of the foundation, an international organization the Collinses founded in 2000 for youngsters ages 6 to 16—singers, athletes and students of various artistic disciplines—lacking the financial means to fully commit to their dreams.

They work with mentors, or “godparents,” as Phil dubs them, who help the recipients nurture their talent. “There’s a lot of success stories of kids that have achieved what they didn’t think was possible,” Phil says. “We’re not God—we can’t promise anything; we just try our best.”

On the eve of the third annual Dreaming on the Beach Gala, the couple’s star-studded Dec. 9 event at the Fillmore Miami Beach that showcases the winners of this year’s audition and raises money for the foundation, they emphasize the importance of pursuing a passion verses searching for fame.

**ORIANNE ON GIVING CHILDREN A CHANCE:** One of our first Little Dreamers was in Morocco.

I was walking through the country club, and I saw this little kid playing against the wall with a beat-up stick and a ball. I say to him, “Don’t you want a racket?” Someone translated to him, and he said, “Yes, please.” And I said, “Don’t you want to learn how to play properly?” A few years later, he became No. 1 in Morocco, and today he’s the coach of the Little Dreamers. He has a proper job, he has an apartment. And, he just had a baby—the first [participant to start a family]. That’s what we are there for: to offer them a life.

## **PHIL ON HOW TIMES HAVE CHANGED SINCE HE ENTERED THE MUSIC INDUSTRY:**

Life was a little bit different when I was 5. I had a mother who enabled me to do what I wanted to do. Back then—that was 1956-57—if you had a drum kit and you learned how to play, you had a chance. Nowadays, there’s a lot of people who think they can sing, and a lot of people who can sing but get buried by the people that should just keep it as a hobby. I think that if we can help a few people with encouragement and resources, that’s a great opportunity to shine.

I say this every year, that Little Dreams cannot promise success just because I’m involved and have been lucky and successful. I think that to be given the opportunity to have lessons and to feel like you’ve had that opportunity is a wonderful thing, as opposed to going through your life saying, “What if?” In that respect, that’s success. But nobody should enter it thinking that it’s going to lead to fame because, today, music saturation is everywhere.

When I was a lad, there was no MTV. We had one television program every week in England that showed music, but that music was in the Top 20. Now, there’s a lot of exposure, but it makes it more difficult at the same time. [The Dreamers] are just thrilled to be given the chance to do what they love to do, and some of them are incredible. ... That’s really what we’re about.

**ORIANNE ON DEFYING THE ODDS:** We have a part of the foundation called No Difference, which is for handicapped children. They have the same talent, even more, and they have this power of believing that ... never give up. We don’t have an age limit with them. They do martial arts,

Spartan races—it's absolutely unbelievable to see a blind kid do the Spartan race. It's super difficult for anyone, and they do it with a huge smile on their faces. They give us such a huge lesson of life. I really admire them.

Three years ago, I had a huge accident. I was doing a boxing exhibition in Paris and cracked my neck. I found myself paralyzed from the head down from a surgery that turned bad—[the surgeons] touched my spinal cord. They said to me that I would never walk again. I thought my life was terminated. I was fighting in a rehabilitation center in Switzerland for four months. And one day, I felt my little toe moving. I said to myself, "If this one moves, I'm going to move everything else." I went into a war against myself. It's like a computer shut down—you have everything in the brain, but nothing works down [in the body]. They put me in the water, and I said, "Fantastic, I'm going to be able to swim." I [sank] like a stone.

So last year, I wanted to climb Matterhorn, one of the highest mountains in Switzerland. I took a flag of Little Dreams and said, "You have to believe in your dreams and never give up." I went to the top of the mountain and put down the flag. It was a lesson to teach [the No Difference participants] that if you believe in it, you can do it.

**PHIL ON RUMORS OF A FUTURE GENESIS TOUR:** No. No. [Laughs.] I don't know. There's no reason why Tony

[Banks], Mike [Rutherford] and myself [need to go out] together again, [except] people keep asking about it. If I can't play drums, it kind of knocks a little bit of the pleasure out for me.

I was kind of grateful that I had a reason for not doing it. [Editor's note: Collins suffers from a dropping of his forefoot, fallout from a 2015 back surgery, which is why he walks with a cane.] I just had enough, you know? I'm in a pretty good place with what I can do and what I can't do. I can't stand up for too long. It's OK, though. I can sit there and sing and people enjoy it. ... It never goes unnoticed by me. I can't ask for too much more than that.

## DREAMING ON THE BEACH GALA

**When:** Dec. 9

**Where:** Fillmore Miami Beach; 1700 Washington Ave.

**Lineup:** The black-tie event co-hosted by Phil Collins and wife Orianne includes a performance by the Little Dreamer artists, accompanied by a live, world-class band. Phil and Grammy Award-winning Italian artist Laura Pausini will end the night with a duet.

**Website:** littledreamsfoundation.org

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## ACCESS LIFESTYLE



### JA WORLD UNCORKED

Junior Achievement of South Florida's Circle of Wise Women are preparing for the eighth annual JA World Uncorked on Jan. 20, 2018 in Coconut Creek. Co-chaired by Katie Leibick, Summer Robertson and Dawn Stagliano—and presented by Breakthru Beverage Florida—the event includes gourmet bites, premier wines and Champagne, spirits, craft beers and indulgent desserts. The culinary affair raises funds for the educational programs of JA of South Florida. Individual tickets are \$175 per person. Visit [jaworlduncorked.com](http://jaworlduncorked.com) for ticket and sponsorship details.



### MS GALA LUNCHEON

The National Multiple Sclerosis Society will host its 35th annual MS Gala Luncheon on Jan. 12, 2018 at the Broward County Convention Center. The event—which will honor Rocco Mangel (above), partner at Rocco's Tacos & Tequila Bar—includes fashion from cutting-edge designer Julian Chang, along with an upscale silent auction. Money raised will fund research and provide services for more than 8,500 South Floridians living with multiple sclerosis. Visit our website at [nationalmssociety.org/chapters/FLS](http://nationalmssociety.org/chapters/FLS) for tickets and details.