

# Me As A Philanthropist

**F**OR MANY YEARS, I thought that all philanthropists had a lot of money – Oprah Winfrey and Bill and Melinda Gates come to mind. My opinion changed, however, when I became a philanthropist myself.

Though I'm not rich, I am a philanthropist, and I wear the title proudly

BY DORETHA WALKER – not because I have money but because it is important to give back and help others.

How did I become a philanthropist? The question really should be why I became one. I felt the need to do something. I wanted to provide an avenue for women to obtain their dreams. As a result, I am living my dream through The Walker Phenomenal Spirit Award.

A thought crept into my head one day during a six-mile run. I was contemplating going back to school but couldn't get a grant because none of the normal labels fit me: I wasn't unemployed, on welfare, abused, homeless, gay or a single parent. I put my plans to enhance my education on hold.

Then one day I received a generous bonus at work. I can't remember what I spent half the money on, but my decision on what to do with the rest changed my life. I bought a certificate of deposit and gave it to the Center for Women to fund the Walker Phenomenal Spirit Award.

After much thought and deliberation, I decided that the award would be limited to women at least

35 years old and working toward a dream. My goal would be to provide that last bit of money necessary to make that dream reality.

I cannot describe the dream, because it is different for every woman. No dream is too big or too small. The only reason not to apply is because you are not a woman, haven't reached your 35th birthday or simply don't have a dream. The award will provide up to \$1,000 to help fulfill your dream, but it won't pay for gas, child care or food.

So far, the award has helped five women. One woman's dream was to be a glass artist; she needed the money for a kiln. Another wanted to grow organic herbs to sell to restaurants and had to take a class on building a greenhouse. Still another wanted to compete internationally on a dragon boat team; she used the money to travel. Another winner dreamt of becoming certified so she could continue to provide services to the blind. Last year's winner bought a camera and is transforming her life.

I do not have any corporate sponsors, and I haven't done any annual fundraisers. Friends and family donate all the money. No contribution is too small. Some people give as little as \$10, which is appreciated because every little bit helps. For some women, as little as \$200 can



Doretha Walker

Photo by Darrin Todd Little

make the difference between attaining a dream and giving up.

I am proud that I have established the Walker Phenomenal Spirit Award, and one day I hope to have enough money to help more than one woman a year realize her dream. Eventually I will have a fundraiser; in the meantime, I will continue to hand out money to deserving women one at a time – because I am a philanthropist. If I can do it, so can you.

*You can apply, donate and see past winners at [http://lc4women.org/walker\\_award.html](http://lc4women.org/walker_award.html).*