



Zambelli
FIREWORKS

Doreen Ravenscroft
2006 IFEA/Zambelli Fireworks International
Volunteer of the Year Award
Nominated by Waco Cultural Arts Fest
Waco, Texas



Doreen Ravenscroft has dedicated decades of her life to the Central Texas and Waco community with a mission to raise awareness of the fine arts. Becoming involved first as an enthusiastic volunteer for the Waco Art Center and later as a board member and president, Doreen paved the way for countless free community art projects and exhibitions with a goal of bringing the world of art to the hardest to reach children and adults in the community.

After several years of leading the Waco Art Center and its art festival, Doreen found herself at a crossroads when the center decided to discontinue the festival because they felt they could no longer keep it free. Believing strongly in the festival's purpose, Doreen chose to step out of her role as an art center board member and re-established the event as the Waco Cultural Arts Fest. Her mission was to keep the arts appealing to the broadest populations of Waco and the surrounding communities by creating a free, high-quality, ethnically diverse event that incorporated visual art, dance, music and culinary art. Through her determination and enthusiasm that vision became a reality with a new, renamed festival that was up and running within six months.

Re-establishing the festival as a self-sustaining event wasn't the only tough challenge Doreen faced. During the 2005 hurricane season, she was forced to cancel the festival's original dates due to the effects of Hurricane Rita. The festival had secured a last-minute, indoor site to avoid being rained out, but at the last minute, that site was needed by FEMA for evacuees and Doreen had to finally come to the realization that the festival would need to be cancelled.

Despite her disappointment and the enormous task of contacting all of those who were planning to participate in the event, Doreen remained calm and collected and once again rallied those around her. By nightfall she was collecting and delivering blankets for the evacuees. The next morning, she was calling volunteers to help man an arts activity for the children moved once more by the natural disaster that had hit New Orleans and Houston. Her efforts led her to become affectionately known to the children of the evacuees as "The Art Lady".

That same dedication and contagious spirit also helped Doreen to have the festival up and running again within six weeks to the delight of sponsors, volunteers and the entire community. Her belief in a team approach where everyone has the opportunity to lead and have their ideas heard and often instigated brings out the best in those who work for her and with her.

It would take many people to replace Doreen Ravenscroft. Over the past three years, she has contributed more than 8000 volunteer hours to the Waco Cultural Arts Fest. Adding to that, Doreen's community outreach involves partnering with the McLennan County Youth Collaboration, The Community Race Relations Coalition and recently a special arts restoration project for Historic Waco.

Her extensive, multi-million dollar fundraising efforts have enabled the festival to also now include the Waco National Sculpture Exhibition, and a sister project called *Branding the Brazos*. The sculpture exhibition was Doreen's brainchild to provide a venue for professional and emerging sculptors, and to bring sculpture to downtown Waco at the same time. As a result, the downtown now has year-round outdoor sculpture. *Branding the Brazos* will bring permanent sculptures depicting the Chisholm Trail to the Brazos riverbank.

The void in the Waco community and surrounding areas would be apparent if Doreen Ravenscroft had not recognized the need for such an event. Her belief in a vision and determination in making a dream a reality have brought a stronger sense of unity and understanding to the community and new opportunities to make it even stronger.