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NDIS participant Donna Corlett says some of her earliest memories were watching other kids run and play, and wanting to join them.

Donna has cerebral palsy and when she started going to a specialist disability school, staff told her she would never walk.

Her experiences at school were a stark contrast to the advice her doting grandmother gave.

“Thanks to my Nan my life motto is ‘never give up because the sky is the limit’, and I want to make sure other people know that too.”

It’s been a 10-year journey to make her walking dream come true.

“I started exercising at a gym to build up my strength and muscles to help me walk and taking my old walking frame to walk around the basketball courts. But the frame was hard to use.

“Because of some changes, where I practiced to walk also changed. I started walking out on the street near my house but that was hard. Then in 2017 I got a walker tailor made for me and that was when everything changed.”

Now 49, Donna uses her NDIS funding to help practice her walking and live how she wants.

“Having cerebral palsy means it’s hard for me to swallow and speak. I use a wheelchair, have mobility issues and sometimes uncontrollable movements,” Donna said.

“But I think and feel just like everyone else. I have dreams and passions and they shouldn’t matter less because of my disability. I still get sad about people telling me I would never walk, well look at me now!

“I use my NDIS plan to have one-on-one support to do things I enjoy and to help practice my walking like having my support worker Michelle to help me twice a week.

We have known each other for 15 years, she was with me each time I took part in the Melbourne Marathon.

“In 2019 I used my wheelchair for most of the marathon but walked the last 200m across the finishing line myself. This year, I want to walk further!

“The NDIS has been great. It helps me to do things I love, like singing. I joined a choir over Zoom because I just love music. I hope to meet the choir in person soon and become better friends.”

Michelle is in awe of Donna’s determination.

“Donna is such a kind and caring person. She’s always thinking of others. Donna nominated me for Disability Support Worker of the year for 2020 by Scope Australia and I have actually won,” Michelle said.

Donna’s thoughtfulness and strength is why her next goal is to be a motivational speaker or a mentor to others.

“A lot has happened to me but I’ve come out the other side a better person,” Donna said.

“It means a lot to me to share my story, to show you can do things even if people say you can’t. I want to encourage anyone to not to give up on their dreams, no matter what.

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