

Coat of Many Colors Patch Program

Patch program created by Girl Scout Council of the Southern Appalachians in 2008 with permission of lifetime member, Dolly Parton .

Coat of Many Colors © Dolly Parton 1971



Background

Country music icon and Girl Scout member Dolly Parton may have come from humble beginnings, but what her family lacked in money they made up for in love. Dolly's song, *Coat of Many Colors*, touches our hearts because we can all relate to a little girl being proud of who she was and where she came from...no matter what the world told her to feel about herself.

Born January 19, 1946 into a family that would eventually include 12 children, Dolly Parton described herself as "dirt poor." Her family lived in a rustic, one-room cabin in Locust Ridge, a small community just north of Greenbrier in the Great Smoky Mountains outside Sevierville, Tennessee.

Dolly Parton learned early to escape the hardships of life through her vivid and far-ranging imagination. From the time she could first read and write, Dolly composed songs to sing. She would later joke that she sang her new songs "to the chickens" because they had to listen.

Later in her life, as a successful singer, actress, songwriter and entrepreneur, one of the biographical songs Dolly wrote about her hard scrabble childhood and a personal challenge is the "Coat of Many Colors." We would like to walk through this song with Dolly to see what we can learn from her about facing challenges.

Patch Requirements

This patch program is recommended for Brownie, Junior and Cadette Girl Scouts.

Simply complete all the following steps as directed. Patches for this program can be purchased from any of our Girl Scout council shops.

PART ONE:

Let's begin by walking through the first part of the song with Dolly.

*Back through the years
I go wonderin' once again
Back to the seasons of my youth
I recall a box of rags that someone gave us
And how my momma put the rags to use
There were rags of many colors
Every piece was small
And I didn't have a coat
And it was way down in the fall
Momma sewed the rags together
Sewin' every piece with love
She made my coat of many colors
That I was so proud of...*

1. Listen to or read this part of the song. What are some of the clues Dolly gives you in her lyrics to let you know her family did not have much money?
2. If a family doesn't have much money, it becomes very important to save to stretch resources. How did Dolly's mother use her resources wisely?

Today, our country's economy is slow. That can mean that things like groceries, clothing or gasoline cost families more money than in the past. Slow economic conditions make using resources wisely as important today as it was for Dolly's family when she was a child. Can you think of ways that your family stretches dollars and uses resources wisely? With your troop or group, make a list of ways that families can save cut expenses and save money. Share your money saving tips with others? You might even challenge other troops in your area to come up with suggestions also. Then combine the best tips from everyone's list and share it with families in your school or local community.

- In the song, someone gave Dolly's mother a box of "rags" or scraps of cloth. One of the ways we can use resources wisely is to allow some of our possessions to be re-used by others who need them. Just as the person did who gave the scraps of cloth to Dolly's mother. What are some examples of things that you might give to others who need them? Plan and organize a drop and swap event in your troop or service unit. At a drop and swap event, everyone brings gently used items (toys, books, clothes, dvds, games, etc..) and swaps them with other kids or families.
- Together with your Girl Scout troop, your family or your friends, make a list of resources you have that you could conserve and share with others who are needy. Pick one and follow through by giving the resources you've chosen to share to them. If you need some ideas, you can look for them at the end of this program in the resource section.

PART TWO:

*As she sewed, she told a story
From the bible, she had read
About a coat of many colors
Joseph wore and then she said
Perhaps this coat will bring you
Good luck and happiness
And I just couldn't wait to wear it
And momma blessed it with a kiss*

- Dolly's mother used a story to inspire her. Talk about what "inspiring" someone means.
- Are there stories that your parents or your grandparents tell to help inspire you? If so, share them with your Girl Scout troop or friends. How many different stories can everyone tell?

Are there differences in the stories you hear and what kind of differences. Are the differences cultural, religious or other?
- Think of ways you could help inspire a friend, your brother or sister, your classmates or your Girl Scout troop. Make a plan of how to put your inspirational act into action.

PART THREE:

*So with patches on my britches
Holes in both my shoes
In my coat of many colors
I hurried off to school
Just to find the others laughing
And making fun of me
In my coat of many colors
My momma made for me*

*And oh I couldn't understand it
For I felt I was rich
And I told them of the love
My momma sewed in every stitch
And I told em all the story
Momma told me while she sewed
And how my coat of many colors
Was worth more than all their clothes*

- Do you think Dolly was different from the other students? Name at least four ways you think she may have stood out in the crowd.
- Take some time and draw or collage Dolly's coat of many colors as you imagine it may have looked. Do you think it looked like a coat your mother would buy for you? Would you have been happy to wear it to school?
- Take time and talk about these questions with your Girl Scout troop, your family or your friends:
 - Think of a time when you saw someone who looked or dressed different. Why do you think that they looked or dressed that way? How did you feel about that? Did it make you uncomfortable? Why do you think you felt that way? What did you do or say?
 - Have you ever made fun of someone who dressed differently than you or looked differently than you? If you did, do you remember why you did it? How did you feel when you made fun of someone else? How do you think the other person felt? What do you think you might do if you meet someone different again?
 - Has anyone ever made fun of you for looking differently? Made fun of a new haircut, your glasses, a shirt, a skirt or pants you were wearing? How did it make you feel? Were you still able to be proud of your outfit while people teased you?
 - Could you be as strong as Dolly and still feel good about yourself even when others teased and laughed at you? With a friend or a group, think of ways that you can deal with being teased. What can you do to help stop the teasing and/or feel better about yourself? Practice on your friends.

4. In your real life, how hard is it to be friends with someone who is different from everyone else? What are some of the things that could make you stand out as “different” in your school?

Think of one of your friends that is the most different from you. Make a list of all the ways that they are different. Create something that tells others how they are different from you and why they are your friend. You can create a poem, song, scrapbook page, booklet, “mock advertisement or public service announcement” or other project of your own. Share your creation with others.

5. Imagine you are in school with Dolly that day and create a skit or puppet show with two scenes - one scene acting out what happened to Dolly and one scene showing the ways that you would be a better friend to her than the kids who teased her. Perform your skit or show for others in your service unit or community.

PART FOUR:

*But they didn't understand it
And I tried to make them see
That one is only poor
Only if they choose to be
Now I know we had no money
But I was rich as I could be
In my coat of many colors
My momma made for me*

1. Collect pictures of various people -- a schoolteacher, a homeless person, a garbage collector, a person sunbathing, a person from another country -- Spread the pictures out and take 30 seconds to write down everything you think you know about that person from their picture. Share the results.

Talk about the stereotypes that arise. Does this kind of judging happen at school? Has it happened to you? Did you have to convince the person judging you that you were really not the way you appeared? Was it hard to do?
2. Discuss the following questions with your Girl Scout troop, family or friends:
 - o What do you think Dolly meant when she wrote “one is only poor only if they choose to be?” What do you think she means by that? What does it mean to be rich or poor in spirit?
 - o Do you have to have money to be rich?
 - o If you are rich in spirit, how can you share that wealth with others?

3. Create your own “coat of many colors” to represent all the ways in which you are rich in spirit, what is special about you and all the gifts that you have to share with others. Your creation may be a drawing, painting, collage, textile or other art form. On each “scrap” part of the project, put a different word or picture that represents you. Share your work with others by displaying it in your home, school, or community by entering it in an art show or creating a show with your troop.

RESOURCES:

For service projects that benefit girls and their communities:

www.onewarmcoat.org

A drive for coats to shield people against the cold

www.missionofhope.org

Faith-based helper organization for rural Appalachian communities

www.imaginationlibrary.org

Dolly Parton's own project for bringing books to children

Reading Rocks at www.girlscoutcsa.org

GSCSA's book collection project to promote reading to children ages birth through teen.

www.feedingamerica.org

Formerly Second Harvest, a site to help you feed the hungry in your community. In your community, look for a service project called Feeding Our Neighbors.

www.dontlaugh.org

A resource to help children create caring and compassionate environments at school.

Take Action at www.girlscoutcsa.org

A council relational aggression patch program

www.campaignforrealbeauty.com

Dove's self-esteem site and programming for girls.

www.girlscouts.org

More programming for girls to experience on leadership and self-esteem

For additional information on Dolly Parton:

www.dollywood.com

Dolly's premier attraction in the Smokies featuring Smoky Mountain culture, music and crafts. Also includes Dolly's museum complete with music, photos, and memorabilia from all stages of her life and career.

www.dollyparton.com

Dolly's official website

