Coats of Many Colors

Although we had no money I was rich as I could be in my coat of many colors My momma made for me—Dolly Parton, “Coat of Many Colors” (1971).

November 1, 2008

Staying warm in winter is something many of us take for granted, but for the homeless or poor, keeping toasty can be a matter of life and death. How can you help? By giving someone the coat off your back.

According to nonprofit volunteer organization New York Cares, 90 percent of homeless adults in the Big Apple need a new coat every winter (because they can’t store a coat during the summer). New York Cares and numerous other nonprofit groups and churches nationwide run annual coat drives with collection centers at their organization’s headquarters, churches or local thrift stores. Many national organizations such as Goodwill Industries provide boxes throughout the country into which you can drop a coat.

No one should be denied the basic human necessity of keeping warm. So, this winter, embrace the spirit of giving. Clean out your closet and donate a coat (or coats!). Helping others will make you feel good—and that generosity can benefit your health. About 3.5 million homeless people live in America. Just think, if the nearly 750,000 of us living with HIV in the United States who know our status gave away just one coat, we’d help a lot of folks weather a storm. Bring the heat.

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