



Gold Award Girl Scouts: Caroline Dority

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Ventura, CA — Girl Scout Caroline Dority from Westlake Village wanted to bring companionship into the lives of the hospice patients she volunteered with. While brainstorming ideas for her Gold Award project, she found inspiration through the elderly community. Committing over 100 hours of her time, Caroline sewed and donated stuffed bears for hospice patients with the intention of improving their quality of life.

The Gold Award, the highest achievement a girl can earn, recognizes girls who demonstrate extraordinary leadership through remarkable Take Action projects that have sustainable impact in their communities and beyond. By bringing smiles to those who needed it most, Caroline was able to achieve just that.

“My project addressed the lack of companionship hospice patients have in their last few months of life,” says Caroline. “I have always loved to talk to the elderly and hear about their life. Although they were not physically in pain [while being cared for], I wanted to brighten their day by bringing them a teddy bear. Seeing them smile and hug the bear was very rewarding.”

While medications can suppress physical pain, Caroline was more concerned about the emotional pain that patients could be suffering from. Pain can often arise from nonphysical sources such as anxiety, fear, and isolation. By creating stuffed bears, she was able to bring a sense of companionship to patients that they may have been deprived of.

Caroline noticed that when patients were in a vulnerable state, especially those with Alzheimer's, they tended to regress and revert to childhood habits. She said that “the bears had a great impact on these patients as it initiated conversations between groups of people. Once they were shown the bear, they felt more comfortable and became more responsive to questions they were asked. They focused more on the situation at hand rather than thinking about something else.”

In addition to sewing the bears, Caroline also created a website to inform others on how they can participate. She included what hospice care is and why companionship is so important for patients' well-being, as well as detailed instructions on how to create a bear so that individuals with family or friends in similar care can brighten a loved one's day.

“Giving the bears I made to hospice patients ensure that they have something bright and colorful in their homes to make them smile. There are many people across the world who are suffering from terminal illness. Through my website, people can find a way to do something to



brighten these patients' days. Small acts that show compassion really brighten patient's days and help increase their comfort."

The teddy bears Caroline created prompted conversation, sparked responses, provided a change in patients' surroundings, and led to smiles. She hopes that the bears will comfort patients, allowing them to communicate more openly, establish healthier relationships with nurses, and overall improve their moods.

On completing her project, Caroline says "Communicating with adults has always been hard for me, but this project helped develop those skills. I was able to interact with the patients and learned to adapt to sudden changes in my surroundings. This project also made me value human life even more, and I learned to really appreciate the opportunities I am given. My leadership skills will continue to grow because I learned the necessity of showing regard and compassion for others who are working with me. The skills I learned throughout the course of this project will continue to grow as I move forward in life."

If you are interested in learning about the Gold Award, you can [find more information here!](#)

About GSCCC

Girl Scouts of California's Central Coast serves over 10,200 girls across six counties and is committed to making the Girl Scout Leadership Experience available to girls in ways that impact their lives both in the moment and into the future. Girls participate in troops, individual projects, council events, day camps, resident camps and more. A variety of leadership, outdoor skills, and Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math (STEAM) based programs and events provide girls with opportunities to learn and explore in fun and informative ways. To join or volunteer in Santa Cruz, San Benito, Monterey, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara or Ventura County, visit: <http://www.girlscoutscoc.org>.

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