

慈濟

Tzu Chi

Buddhism in Action

Welcome to the
REAL AFRICA

March 2019

Bring Light to the World

Translated by Teresa Chang

Abegail Cetyiwe cares for a sick needy woman. Cetyiwe was a dedicated Tzu Chi volunteer who passed away in January 2019.



WIM-TIA OWISH

Different karmic affinities bring us to this world, but it is up to us whether we create more positive affinities and sow more blessings during our sojourn on Earth. If we can make the best of our abilities to benefit the world, we will be like a lighthouse that triumphs over darkness and guides lost vessels to shore.

Late January this year saw the passing of Eka Tjipta Widjaja, the founder of the Sinar Mas Group in Indonesia. Mr. Widjaja was a man of great wealth and benevolence. Instead of seeking solely to expand his businesses, he believed in contributing to the welfare of people and society through his enterprise. He educated his children with the same conviction.

I still remember that when anti-Chinese riots erupted in Indonesia in 1998, leading to social unrest, Widjaja asked me what to do. My reply was: "Only love can quell disasters and heal wounds." My words prompted him to use resources from his business conglomerate to help the underprivileged in Indonesia. He even introduced the philanthropic ideals and work of Tzu Chi to other business people to motivate them to do good together.

Four years later, in 2002, Jakarta was hit by severe flooding. One of the worst-hit districts was Kapuk Muara, on the Angke River. The village, consisting of many illegally built ramshackle houses, was submerged in floodwaters for over a month. If the area were not quickly cleaned and an epidemic broke out, the consequences would have been unthinkable. I asked Widjaja at the time to lead a cleanup effort, and he readily agreed. He was already in his 80s at that time, yet he personally participated in the cleanup, shoveling garbage and sludge. His dedication was truly admirable. Thinking back now, he motivated many people to work harmoniously together to do philanthropic work. He really contributed a lot to Indonesian society.

He was an elder I held in high esteem, and he gave me a lot of support in things I wanted to do. Tzu Chi missions in Indonesia have won a lot of support from the Indonesian government and military due to the foundation he laid with his personal

example. Thanks to him, many local entrepreneurs have worked in unity to help the needy.

On the same day Widjaja passed away, Abegail Cetyiwe, a volunteer in South Africa, also departed from this world. Cetyiwe was a devoted disciple of mine. Wise and loving, she often said she would love all people that I love, and she lived out her words. She couldn't move around as easily as most people, but she didn't let that prevent her from visiting the needy. Difficult terrain couldn't daunt her, and she even traveled to other African countries to do Tzu Chi work. She volunteered even when she was under the weather. She was a living bodhisattva with a steadfast dedication to doing good.

Giving herself completely to the service of the underprivileged, she inspired many younger people to join Tzu Chi. She also helped many indigent people become spiritually rich by bringing out the love in their hearts. Though she was just in her 60s when she passed, she had earned the respect of many who lovingly called her "grandma."

She took seriously ill at the end of last year. Her condition was so critical she was close to death, but she regained her stamina after she dreamed of me putting a set of prayer beads on her wrist. Though she had obtained a set of prayer beads when she came to Taiwan to receive her volunteer certification from me, she had lost them on a trip outside of South Africa to do Tzu Chi work. The dream filled her with such joy she experienced a burst of energy. She even felt well enough to volunteer for several more days before peacefully passing away. She had indeed upheld her pledge to walk the Bodhisattva Path until her last breath.

None of us knows how long we will live, but regardless of the length of our lives, if we can head in the right direction and make good use of our time by doing good and creating a better life for others, we will be at peace when our time comes. Let us endeavor to bring light to the world. We'll live a life of great value if we can light up the dark corners of society with our love and actions, just like a candle dispelling the darkness in a room. ❀

Tzu Chi

Bimonthly

March 2019



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Address: No. 2, Lide Road, Beitou District, Taipei City 11259, Taiwan.
Telephone: 886-2-2898-9000 ext 2001
Fax: 886-2-2898-9994
E-mail: chris_wu@tzuchi.org.tw

Tzu Chi Bimonthly

Publisher
Shih Cheng Yen
Managing Editor
Wu Hsiao-ting

Staff
Teresa Chang
Lin Sen-shou
Liu King-pong
Douglas Shaw
Tang Yau-yang
Steven Turner

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Syrian Refugees in Turkey

By Chen Xiu-ling

Translated by Tang Yau-yang

Photos by Yu Zi-cheng

Millions of Syrian refugees live in Turkey. Their children have been able to attend schools with Turkish students, but the instruction is in Turkish. In 2015, Tzu Chi volunteers started El Menahil school, in which instruction is in Arabic, for Syrian refugee children. Volunteers have also established a free clinic, which is open seven days a week, and they regularly distribute aid to Syrian families.

The Tzu Chi Turkey branch started providing care for Syrian refugees in 2014. Now the branch distributes aid to more than 6,000 families every month. Each home receiving assistance has been previously visited by volunteers to ascertain that they are indeed in need. The volunteers interview the families, record their assessments, and perform other administrative work. Only after such efforts have been expended can a refugee family be placed on the distribution roster.

Students at El Menahil form hearts with their hands to greet Tzu Chi volunteers.

MOHAMMED AL JAMAL





Prompted by text messages sent to their cell phones, Syrian refugees report to a distribution venue, where volunteers scan their Tzu Chi cards. The card scans trigger printouts, which further tell recipients which window to visit to receive their aid. This computerized system greatly speeds up the distribution process.

Volunteers have also set up a free clinic, which serves more than 8,000 patient visits a month, some of which result in referrals to local hospitals.

El Menahil, a school established by Tzu Chi and the government of the Sultangazi district of Istanbul, enrolls more than 3,000 students from elementary to high school. On weekends the school offers adult literacy classes and classes for learning Turkish and Arabic languages. Classes on the Quran are also offered.

There are three certified Tzu Chi volunteers in Turkey: Faisal Hu (胡光中), the head of Tzu Chi Turkey, his wife, Nadya Chou (周如意), and Yu Zi-cheng (余自成). Without their efforts, the services for the refugees—the monthly aid distributions, the free clinic, and El Menahil school—would not exist. By themselves, each service is a major undertaking. The three volunteers alone could not possibly handle the vast amount of work needed to support all three. But behind the three volunteers is the support of the Tzu Chi Foundation headquarters in Hualien, Taiwan, and more than 200 Syrian refugees who serve as volunteer helpers.

When Tzu Chi started in Taiwan, it was 30 housewives who donated to and supported the foundation. Most Tzu Chi volunteers in other countries are females, too. In stark contrast to this are the Syrian volunteers in Turkey, who are almost entirely men between 20 and 40 years of age, many of whom are teachers or staffers at El Menahil.

I work at the Religious Culture and Humanitarian Aid Department, at the Tzu Chi Foundation headquarters, in Taiwan. In late 2018, I was part of a Tzu Chi delegation from Taiwan that visited Tzu Chi Turkey to help with some distributions. We arrived in Turkey at six in the morning on November 24 and stayed until late at night on the 27th. Syrian volunteers accompanied our delegation every day through the entirety of our visit.

Computerized system

Tzu Chi Turkey currently sponsors more than 6,000 families. The monthly distributions held for them used to take place in a small facility, which limited each distribution to less than 200 recipient families. As a result, volunteers had to conduct distributions for the major part of a month. By the time they finished distributing aid to all 6,000 families, it was about time for them to start the next month's distribution.

However, in recent years the distributions have been taking place at El Menahil. With more space available, volunteers have been able to

process 650 families in every distribution. Because they can quickly and smoothly handle many more people in a much shorter time, they need to do fewer distributions a month. Such efficiency is possible only because they are using a powerful software system. During our visit, Faisal Hu asked Basel Khalil, 29, the developer of the system, to explain to us how the system works. Khalil is from Damascus, the national capital of Syria.

This system assigns each recipient to a designated distribution on a specific date. It sends information about the upcoming distribution in advance via a text message to the cell phone of each recipient. When recipients report to their designated distribution, their Tzu Chi cards are read with a barcode scanner, which triggers a printout for each card holder. The printout tells the recipient which window to visit to receive his aid, and which page of the distribution roster to place his fingerprint on to indicate that he has come to receive the aid. After the aid is handed over to the recipient, a volunteer tears up the printout. This computerized system has made speedy distributions possible.

Khalil has also developed a medical records system for the Tzu Chi free clinic, and a time and attendance system for the teachers at El Menahil school. Gao Da-zheng (高大众), a member of our delegation, pointed out that Taiwanese businesses usually contract out the development of systems like these to outside contractors as the work usually entails team efforts. Gao was awed when he learned that Khalil alone had designed and developed those systems.

Khalil explained modestly that the systems had been the result of much trial and error. He had studied along the way and spent a lot of time perfecting the systems until they were good to go.

One time, a company offered Khalil a high salary in an attempt to snatch him away from Tzu Chi, but he declined. He preferred to stay put. He said that he worked so he could live comfortably and be at peace with himself. "Now I work for Tzu Chi. This is, for me, the best life," he said.

Our souls met thousands of years ago

El Menahil was the venue for most of the activities that our delegation was involved with during our trip to Turkey.

The school had just experienced a scare: A change in government policy almost shut it down two months before we arrived. Through a lot of effort on the part of volunteers—and



All Tzu Chi distributions for Syrians in Turkey start with a recitation of the Quran.

maybe something of a miracle—the school survived. It has been accredited by AdvancED, an American accrediting agency. With that accreditation, the school’s students can now continue attending the school and they are also eligible to apply for admission to schools in other countries when they graduate.

When we were helping with distributions at El Menahil, we often came across school employees or students sweeping or mopping the floors. Several times I saw schoolteachers walking before me abruptly stop and bend down to pick up trash from the floor. Such small acts reveal their love of the school. They take care of the school like their own home.

At El Menahil, we were always able to get help quickly, whenever we needed it. One day my colleague Chen Ying-zhi (陳瑩芝) and I walked around the school looking for a spot suitable for our delegation to hold a video conference with our headquarters in Taiwan the next day. When we had decided on the spot, we then

needed to find a projector, some tables and chairs, and extension cords. We saw a man standing nearby, so we approached him and asked for help. Though he wasn’t responsible for those things, he didn’t decline our request—he simply agreed to help and delivered what we needed in short order. He even served us tea when we were testing our setup. Similar scenarios happened time and again.

We received enthusiastic help again the day before we were to hold a ceremony to celebrate the school’s accreditation by AdvancED. We were planning to unveil a new sign bearing the school’s new name, El Menahil International School, during the ceremony. Unveiling a sign was a foreign concept to the Syrian refugees, so we explained our requirements. We told them that we wanted a large red cloth to cover the sign. (Red is an auspicious color in Chinese culture.) Faisal Hu pointed out that it was a Sunday, so some stores might not be open. He inquired about the possibility of substituting a blue table cloth for a red cloth should that become necessary. We told him that would be acceptable. We said that sign unveiling was just a symbolic

act—a way for us to give our best wishes to the school, and if it was too much trouble, we did not have to stick to the form down to the last letter. Hu said that it was no trouble at all for him because he had a good team of volunteers that would figure out a way to deliver.

On the very day we made the request for the red cloth, we were holding distributions at the school. By the time the five consecutive distributions finally concluded, it was well past seven in the evening. While our delegation went back to our hotel, the local volunteer team started to prepare for the unveiling ceremony the following morning. When we returned to the school after eight the next morning, the school sign was already veiled with a red gauze cloth.

It seems that there is no problem that Hu and his cohort of volunteers cannot solve.

Besides Syrian volunteers, Turkish volunteers have also played key roles in helping Tzu Chi carry out its work in the country.

Professor Cuma Serya, left, greets recipients during a distribution. Over the years, the professor has worked with Tzu Chi volunteers in Turkey to aid his fellow Syrian refugees.

Ali Uslanmaz, deputy governor of Kayseri Province, Turkey, has been a stalwart Tzu Chi supporter. He took a red-eye flight from Kayseri to Istanbul at 2:00 a.m. on November 24, and he waited until 6:00 a.m. in the airport to greet our delegation. Together, we went to El Menahil school to help with distributions.

The deputy governor was with us through our entire trip. He was there during every distribution, during the school sign unveiling ceremony, and during our visit to the Tzu Chi free clinic. I learned later that he did not understand a word of Arabic, which was used all throughout those days when things were translated for us into or from the Chinese language. The deputy governor had no idea what was being said the entire time, and yet still he patiently accompanied us through all those activities.

We were impressed by his gracious hospitality. After all, he is a high-ranking officer of a province. We realized that he must have a high regard for Master Cheng Yen and a very warm affinity with Tzu Chi volunteers. As he said: “Our souls must have met hundreds or even thousands of years ago, so despite the language barrier, our souls communicate.”



Bringing hope

Zhang Ming-huang (張明煌) was a member of our delegation. He serves as a volunteer leader back in Taiwan. During our trip, he shared with us that as a leader he realizes how difficult it is to lead people and to get them to take on work. For this reason, he readily gives Faisal Hu a big thumbs up.

Hu has indeed assembled a large cohort of devoted Syrian volunteers. They are good workers who make the distributions to 6,000 families happen every month. I recall hearing one Syrian volunteer say that he had seen the virtues that the Quran extols displayed or practiced by Tzu Chi volunteers—virtues that are practiced by and transcend all religions and ethnicities. Maybe it is because of this that Faisal Hu and Tzu Chi have won the hearts of the Syrians.

Volunteers or otherwise, the Syrian refugees that we met in Turkey were all sincere and warm. One day during a distribution, a Syrian woman came up on stage while we were singing a song accompanied with hand gestures, and she gave

Ali Uslanmaz (middle), deputy governor of Kayseri Province, and Tzu Chi volunteers unveil the sign of El Menahil International School.



Nadya Chou, one of the three cadre volunteers in Turkey, a big tight hug. Chou couldn't help crying, notwithstanding the fact that she had worked in many distributions and had cried with refugees many times previously. Everyone present was deeply moved by the scene. Such touching moments abounded in the distributions.

At another distribution, another Syrian stepped on stage to share his thoughts. He said that in times of peace, Syria had taken in and helped refugees from such countries as Lebanon, Palestine, Iraq, and Yemen. However, now that Syria was consumed by a civil war, those nations had not reciprocated the favor. Instead, it was a charity foundation based in Taiwan, 5,000 miles away, that had extended aid to them and brought them hope.

Syrian refugees have expressed their appreciation for Tzu Chi not only through words but actions as well. This time, for example, our delegation brought with us 32 large coin banks in which refugees could deposit their donations during distributions. The Syrians responded generously. Donations poured in, and by the morning of the second day, the banks had already filled up.

A young man even insisted that we accept his donation of a watch. His wife had given it to him for Valentine's Day one year, and it was the most



Students at El Menahil put on a performance for the Taiwanese Tzu Chi delegation.

valuable thing he owned. He felt that only this prized possession of his could help him convey his gratitude to Tzu Chi.

Harmony among religions

I was impressed during this trip by how deeply ingrained Islam is in the everyday lives of the Syrian refugees and local people. The call for prayers, the *adhan*, sounded regularly five times each day, calling Muslims to stop and pray. Even a time and place during our distributions were set aside for participants to pray. We also visited the homes of some aid recipients and at the end of their talks with us, they always said to us something like "May Allah bless you" or "Allah will help us through all this."

We met a six-year-old during one of our home visits. She goes to El Menahil, so we invited her to show us an example of what she had learned at school, something like a song or a dance. She chose instead to recite from the Quran. She had hardly started reciting when her brother, age 4, joined her. Together, they recited a passage without missing a beat or making a mistake.

Many refugee children, though attending Turkish schools, come to El Menahil on weekends to learn Arabic. They explained that the Quran is written in Arabic and they must not forget their own country and religion.

Devoted Muslims from Syria and Buddhists from Taiwan intermingled in perfect harmony during our mission to Turkey. This seemed to echo what Master Cheng Yen says: "Religions are largely similar; they differ only in minor points. If you have a large heart, you see similarities, while small-mindedness leads you to perceive only the differences."

During our trip, our delegation couldn't really help much—the local volunteer team could have just as easily carried out the distributions had we not been there. However, our presence there sent the refugees a message of love from Taiwan and from Tzu Chi volunteers all over the world and let them know that we care about them.

Now that we are back in Taiwan, we can help the refugees by playing the role of a bridge, by letting more people on the outside learn about their quandary and opening their hearts to help them too.

This School Nurtures Love, Gives Love



Narrated by Muhammad Aburas (right)

By Guo Su-fang
Translated by Tang Yau-yang
Photo by Yu Zi-cheng



I'm 31. I've taught at El Menahil for four years. Professor Cuma is like a father to me and Faisal Hu like a brother. I consider them my family.

Together they founded this school. Every morning Professor Cuma arrives an hour ahead of time to open the school for the day, and he stays two hours after school. Some people establish schools to make money, but El Menahil was established to nurture and give love. It is no wonder that every Syrian child here blooms beautifully like a flower.

I am very fortunate. My entire extended family of more than 50 people moved to Turkey in 2012. I am grateful to this country. It is full of goodwill

and willing to take in citizens of other countries. Turkey is my second home.

Aside from teaching at El Menahil, I volunteer in every distribution held at the school. I have also visited more than 60 refugee homes with other volunteers. We gave them blankets and furniture, and we established aid files for the families. When refugees become ill, I help refer them to the Tzu Chi free clinic.

Professor Cuma and Faisal Hu have made me feel that Tzu Chi will always be with us, that Tzu Chi will always stand by us. This is our school. If we don't volunteer here, who else will?

Working for Hope



Narrated by Asaad Alnnayer

Text and Photo by Guo Su-fang
Translated by Tang Yau-yang



When I saw an ad placed by El Menahil school for teachers, I jumped at it. It seemed like a great opportunity to serve my own people. I have taught at the school ever since.

I teach English at El Menahil. Professor Cuma and Faisal Hu are like fathers to us there. The family-like atmosphere is why I like the school. Suppose it was you who had escaped war, felt heartbroken and helpless, and faced fierce competition for jobs in a foreign country. If, after all these challenges, someone trusted you unconditionally and helped you, wouldn't you feel deeply moved? The two of them are like our spiritual pillars.

When I first came to Turkey, I thought that I would return to Syria in a few months. Little could I have imagined that I would still be here four years later. My son is now six years old. I hope that he will be able to attend El Menahil one day, and I also hope that the school's students can go to study in Taiwan. I like Tzu Chi, so I like Taiwan too.

To be honest, many people have asked me whether Tzu Chi established El Menahil in order to spread Buddhism. My reply to such questioners has always been: "No. Tzu Chi volunteers are a bunch of nice folks sharing their love with us. They don't have any ulterior motives."

Working elsewhere might be just for making a living, but here at El Menahil I feel I'm working for hope. I have received much care here. How can I ever pay it back? I will do the same to help others, in the way that Tzu Chi has helped me. From Faisal Hu and Professor Cuma, I've learned how to help others from the bottom of my heart. ❦

I am 35 years old and from Syria. This is the fourth year I've lived in Turkey.

Most people know very little, just fragments actually, about the situation in my home country. The reality there is much more serious than what has been reported in the mass media. I spent two years of my life in the midst of a civil war. Syria was like a sinking ship.

In 2015, my wife, my 2-year-old son, and I traveled by car to the Syrian border with Turkey. From there we trekked into Turkey. It took us four hours, carrying our son on our backs, to traverse the ten kilometers (6.2 miles) of mountainous road to get into the country. It was the only nation that would accept us at the time. It issued us visas. I will never forget this kindness.

I was a teacher in Syria. I could teach any subject matter; I was enthusiastic about education. I also liked to volunteer. I volunteered for the Red Cross in Syria.

Welcome to the REAL AFRICA

By Cai Ya-chun, Lin Wei-yang,
Lu Qiu-xia, and Cao Cong-xian

Compiled and translated by Wu Hsiao-ting



In late October 2018, a Tzu Chi delegation from Taiwan visited South Africa and Mozambique to extend care to local volunteers and see how they were carrying out Tzu Chi missions in their respective countries. We were part of that delegation. Twenty hours after we set off from Taiwan—20 hours of waiting for flights, flying, and transferring planes—we finally arrived in South Africa. I expected to see vast expanses of savannah as our plane touched down at the airport in Durban. However, as soon as we left the airport, we were greeted by well-built roads, commercial buildings, shopping centers, and endless streams of traffic. I was amazed, and I wondered to myself: “Is this the suffering Africa I had come to see?”

My question was answered when we were led by local volunteers to a suburb of Durban, an hour away. There we saw another side of South Africa: squat brick houses, open-air markets covered with plastic tarpaulins held up by bamboo poles, children in shabby clothes, and small grocery stores housed in converted shipping containers. We saw mostly older people and small children as we walked into the community. This suburban area stood in sharp contrast to the thriving city scenes we had just seen when we drove away from the airport.

In late October 2018, over 200 cadre volunteers from eight African countries gathered in South Africa for a training camp.

LIN DAI-RONG





“Welcome to the real Africa,” said volunteer Yuan Ya-qi (袁亞祺), who had lived in South Africa for 13 years. She told us that a wide gap existed between rich and poor in the nation. Even though apartheid ended in 1994, when Nelson Mandela became South Africa’s first black president, the effects of decades of discriminatory policies are still felt to this day. The scars left by history take time to heal. Most of the country’s black people, who make up the majority of the population, still live in poverty.

When we walked into the community of Nsimbini, we saw a community center built by Tzu Chi. The 355-square-foot building is furnished simply inside. Though small, it is an important base for local Tzu Chi volunteers and residents. Meetings are held there, food cooked for orphans, and rice from Taiwan is stored there too. (The Taiwanese government provides rice every year for government agencies and private aid organizations to distribute to needy people in other countries.) The center can even serve as sleeping quarters when there is a transnational Tzu Chi camp in the area.

The center also acts as a place where local Zulu volunteers can sew clothes, bags, and accessories, the proceeds of which are used to support community philanthropic work. The plot of land on which the center stands was originally intended for the construction of a church. But a Christian pastor, moved by the Great Love spirit of Master Cheng Yen, decided to donate the land for Tzu Chi to build a community center.

We next visited volunteer Beatrice Sibisi, 75, in Mkhazini. She was cooking outdoors for about 50 orphans and older people living nearby.

Beatrice has volunteered for Tzu Chi for nearly 20 years. For a long time now, she has used her own kitchen to prepare meals for the needy. Other volunteers regularly deliver rice donated by the Taiwan government to her hot food station, and based on the amount of the rice, she calculates the portions for every meal. When there is not enough rice to go around, she makes “steam bread” to supplement it. She also cultivates a vegetable patch beside her hot food station to enrich the meals. Though she has undergone two surgeries for some injuries she sustained before, she is still very enthusiastic to help others.

Nearly 200 Tzu Chi hot food stations are spread across the suburbs of Durban, with each station supplying meals from one day to three days per week. The stations feed about 5,000 people every month. There are just 15 ethnic Chinese Tzu Chi volunteers in Durban—the huge meal preparation work is undertaken by native volunteers.

Besides providing meals, volunteers in Durban visit the homes of needy people every month. Nhlakanipho Mchunu and Samkeliso Magwaza are two major cadre members among the native volunteers. They are responsible for planning the routes of the home visits. They are both in their 20s, but their devotion to Tzu Chi work was inspired by the commitment of many older volunteers. They have seen how those senior volunteers wholeheartedly carry out Tzu Chi missions despite their limited mobility. Even though it is a challenge for them to cross the mountainous terrain in the countryside when they conduct home visits, they remain undaunted and keep going. Seeing their dedication, Nhlakanipho and



Many impoverished families live across the hilly outskirts of Durban, South Africa. Local Tzu Chi volunteers visit them every month to extend care. A delegation from Taiwan joined such a visit when they went to South Africa in late October 2018. Together they distributed rice to the needy.

LIN WEI-YANG

Samkeliso were inspired to organize some local young people to join them and drive older volunteers every month to visit the needy. When they have to visit a place unreachable by car, they walk. The number of families in Durban receiving care from Tzu Chi has now exceeded 2,000.

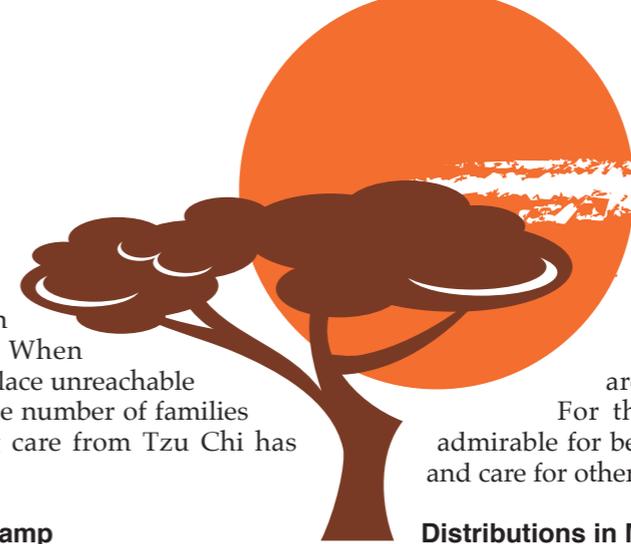
A Tzu Chi training camp

The Tzu Chi training center located next to the Lanseria Airport in Johannesburg is the foundation’s new base in the city. It was provided to Tzu Chi to use for free by volunteer Li Qing-long (李慶隆).

During our visit this time, an annual training camp was being held there for cadre volunteers from eight African countries: South Africa, Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Eswatini (also known as Swaziland), Mozambique, Botswana, Namibia, and Malawi. The camp lasted three days. A lot of care and work went into the preparation for the event. To accommodate sleeping arrangements for the 240 participants, volunteers obtained wooden pallets to serve as bed frames. They placed pieces of plywood across the top and added bedsheets on top of that to transform them into functional beds.

Ethnic Chinese and native volunteers worked together to cook meals for the participants. Native volunteers also set up audiovisual equipment, prepared needed daily supplies, and kept the environment clean so that the courses could go smoothly. Participants listened attentively in classes, making good use of the time to learn Tzu Chi ideals, missions, and etiquette. Everyone said that when they returned home, they would try to inspire more people in their communities to work together to serve the needy.

At the camp we met four volunteers from Namibia that we had previously met in Durban. They told us that they had almost missed the camp because they couldn’t afford the bus fare. Although Tzu Chi paid for them to travel from Namibia to South Africa, they did not have enough money to travel from their homes to the bus station. Because of this, they had originally decided not to attend the event, but volunteer Yuan Ya-qi kept encouraging them not to give up. With her encouragement, they successfully raised money for the fare. With further help from local Chinese volunteers, who footed the



bill for their meals during the journey, they were able to make the trip. After traveling three days by bus, they arrived in South Africa.

Local native volunteers are generally impoverished.

For that, they are all the more admirable for being willing to join Tzu Chi and care for other disadvantaged people.

Distributions in Mozambique

After saying goodbye to South Africa, our delegation flew to our last stop for this trip: Maputo, the capital of Mozambique. We were led by Denise Tsai (蔡岱霖), a volunteer in that country. As we stepped out of the airport, we were struck by the sound of singing: About 40 local volunteers had formed a welcome party to greet us at the airport, and they were singing and dancing for us. We hugged one another when we met, and our visit to Mozambique began with very warm feelings and good cheer.

Denise Tsai is from Taiwan, but she was the first person to join Tzu Chi in Mozambique. Largely due to her work, this African nation now boasts 3,150 native Tzu Chi volunteers. During our stay in this country, we took part in two rice distributions, one in Mahubo and the other in Hulele.

Mahubo is about 90 minutes by car from the city center of Maputo. We arrived at our destination after driving on asphalt, then gravel, then dirt. When we arrived, aid recipients were already seated in neat rows in the shade of trees, greeting us with cheers and songs. In the distributions we had participated in before, the volunteers usually stood in place and aid recipients approached them one by one to receive their goods. But here in Mozambique, aid recipients sat on the ground while volunteers bowed and handed goods to them. This was an impressive gesture of respect towards the recipients. Before the distribution kicked off, a pastor led everyone in a prayer. Thus spiritual as well as material needs of the recipients were both tended to at the event.

The other distribution was also heartwarming. Hulele is located just ten minutes by car from the Maputo





Mozambican volunteers attend a training course at the Tzu Chi Home in Mahotas, Maputo.

LIN WEI-YANG

International Airport. Though it's just a short drive from the center of the city, it is a stark contrast to the magnificent beach houses not far away. At the distribution, volunteers explained the meaning of a Tzu Chi coin bank—how the foundation had started in Taiwan with 30 housewives each saving a little money each day in bamboo coin banks to help the needy. After hearing the explanations, almost every aid recipient took money out of their pockets and dropped it into the coin banks held out by volunteers. We were amazed. Despite their poverty, despite their own need, they all wanted to contribute what they could to help others in need.

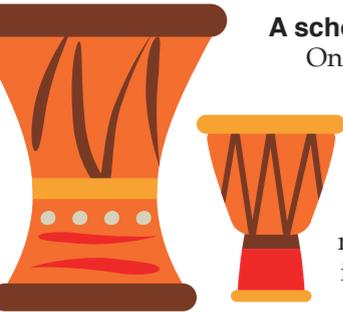
ry education in Mozambique lasts seven years, students in public schools attend class in three shifts a day due to a shortage of classrooms and teachers. Each shift lasts three to four hours.

A tour of the school helped us realize the problem of the severe lack of space. Every classroom we visited was jam-packed with students. The classrooms were so full that the only space left was in front of the blackboard, which allowed the teacher to move around. The children who sat on the ground around the podium had to constantly keep an eye out so their feet didn't trip the teacher. Though the learning environment was far from satisfactory, we could sense the students' thirst for knowledge from their focused expressions as they listened to their teacher.

When we walked outside the classrooms, we saw several blackboards propped up every few meters against the outer back wall of the building. Students sat on the ground in front of the blackboards, absorbed in class. Our presence didn't seem to bother them in the least. We counted a total of three classes in session.

Volunteers at a distribution in Mozambique sing as they carry rice through the orderly rows of seated recipients.

SU BO-JIA



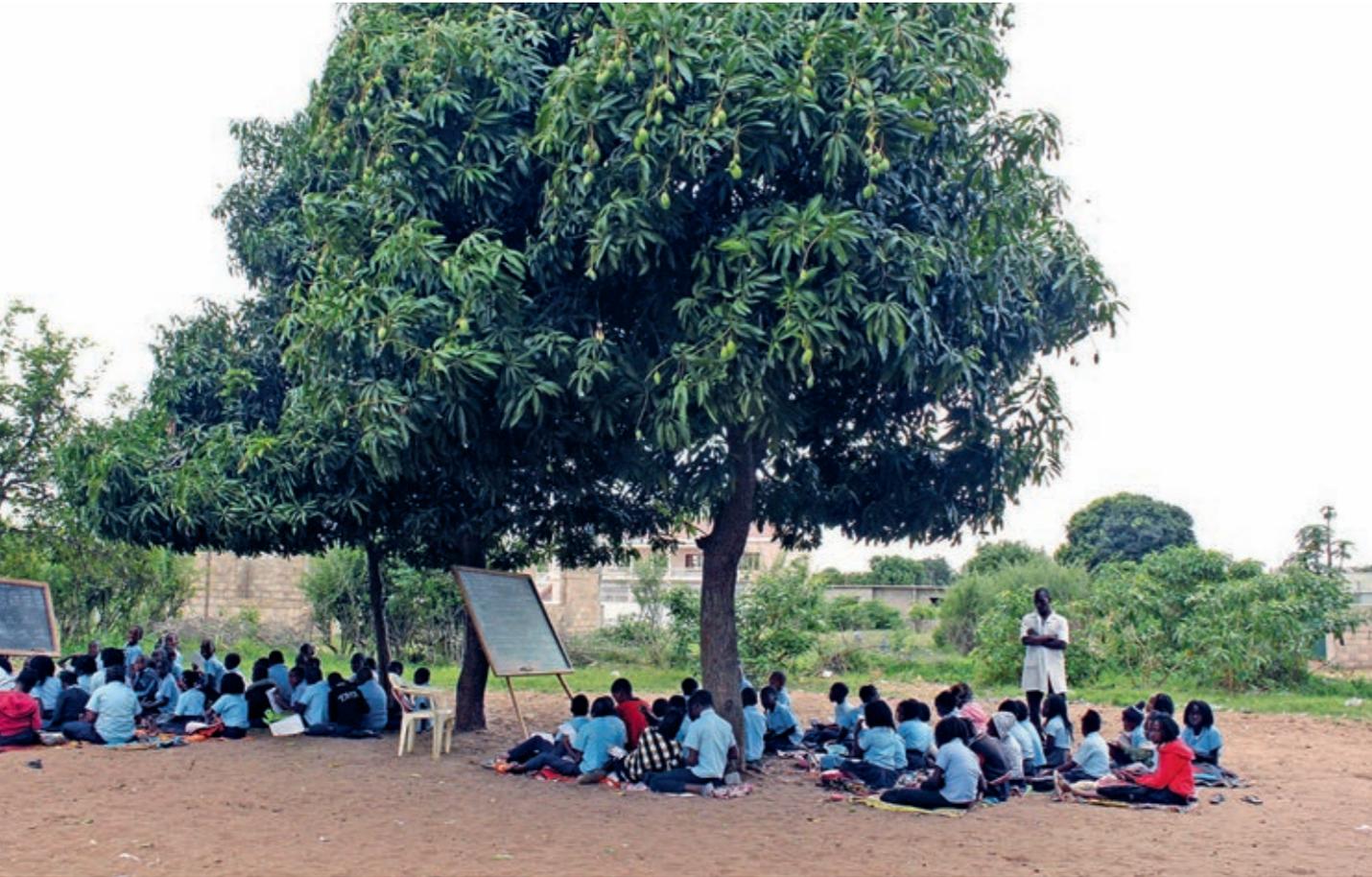
A school

On October 30, some members of our delegation visited Ndlavela Primary School in Matola. Tzu Chi was going to build classrooms for this school, which was sorely in need of space to accommodate its 6,000 students. We were told that although compulso-

What Makes Us Human

Text and photo by Hsiao Yiu-hwa

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting



Public schools in Mozambique generally suffer from a shortage of classrooms and teachers. SU BO-JIA

Some distance away, under a few large trees, sat more groups of students. We thought that they were in the middle of some outdoor activities, but we soon found out that they too were in class.

Mozambique is one of the poorest countries in the world. In 1975 the nation gained independence from over 400 years of Portuguese rule, but after only two years of independence, it descended into an intense and long-drawn-out civil war, which lasted from 1977 to 1992. The economy collapsed as a result. We could see the lingering effects of the war and the financial difficulties the nation faced in the makeshift learning environment at the school. Hopefully, with the help of Tzu Chi, the school's students will soon have a better environment in which to receive an education.

Though I'm poor, I'm happy

The trip to Africa left us with many cherished memories. What impressed us most of all was

the willingness of the local volunteers to give to others despite their own poverty. They do not have much, but they do their best to help others. The aid recipients we met at the distributions also left a deep impression on us. They live in poverty, but they look content and happy. Their eyes told us: "Though I'm poor, I'm happy." Local volunteers told us that after the recipients returned home, many of them shared the rice they had received with their neighbors. We found that astonishing. They had barely enough to eat, and yet they still shared what little they had with others.

Looking at them, we can't help reflecting on our own lives. We live in a rich, technologically advanced society, but despite our abundance, we constantly think about how to earn more money or get more stuff. In the rat race of life, we continually compare ourselves with others, thus becoming more and more unhappy. Maybe we can learn from the Africans we met. They showed us that a contented mind is truly a well-spring of happiness. ❀

In July 2018, I traveled from Taiwan to Jordan with a Tzu Chi delegation. Our mission was to conduct some free clinics there; my duty as a photojournalist was to photograph the events. That's where I met Wang Dan (real name withdrawn on request). Originally from Shandong, China, she married a Jordanian man and so has lived in Jordan for many years. She served as an interpreter at the free clinics. She didn't know much about Tzu Chi, only that it was an organization based in Taiwan, and that its volunteers had come to Jordan to provide free medical services for local Syrian refugees and needy people.

After working together for a couple of days, we came to know each other better. Chatting one day while we had a few free moments, I told her a little bit about Tzu Chi. I mentioned that all the medical professionals and support volunteers that participated in the free clinics had traveled to Jordan on their own time and money, that they had flown over ten hours to this Middle Eastern country and paid every dime for their own transportation and lodging to serve the needy. I also mentioned that, aside from Taiwan, there were also volunteers from the United States and Malaysia. Together they worked with dozens of local volunteers to pull off this humanitarian mission.

After hearing what I said, Wang Dan opened her eyes wide in disbelief at what she felt was a most amazing thing.

I wasn't surprised at her response. I would've been like her if I hadn't had the opportunity to work with volunteers from the Tzu Chi Foundation on many occasions previously in my role as a photojournalist.

It's hard to imagine that in this day and age, people are willing to do such "silly things" as Tzu Chi volunteers. They use their own time, money, and energy to do others some good. Why do they do it? What do they get from it? I am not them, so



Tzu Chi held five free clinics for Syrian refugees and needy people in Jordan in July 2018, benefiting 2,400 people.

I can't speak for them. But I feel that when others are in need and you reach out to them, the responses from the people you help make all your efforts worthwhile. This may sound abstract, and unless you've had similar experiences before, it may be hard to understand. But when you get right down to it, it all comes down to what makes us human. When others struggle in pain, how can you just stand by and watch? Sharing in others' suffering and extending a helping hand, that's what people do.

I didn't tell Wang that day during our chat that not everyone who is willing to pay for their trip can join an international mission like ours. There is a long line of people waiting to give of themselves on occasions like this. This is no secret in the group. Everyone knows it; they just don't think it is worth talking about. But as I wrote this article, I couldn't stop my pen from putting in a word about this. I want my readers to know that in this world, there are many endearing humanitarians who, consciously or not, use their own actions to blur the intricate lines between races, religions, political affiliations, and ideologies. ❀

PENGHU GARBAGE



Penghu County is an archipelago of islands and islets located off the southwestern coast of Taiwan. We went there for this article on the garbage problem and Tzu Chi volunteers' recycling work there.

Penghu is known for its beautiful blue sea and white sandy beaches. People flock to this tourist destination from all over. However, when we stood at the Hongluo waste transfer station on Magong, the largest island in the archipelago, the stench of garbage imbued the briny air. The huge net pictured here is supposed to keep garbage confined to the premises of the transfer station, but gaping holes in the net seem symbolic of the challenge this offshore island group faces in the disposal of its trash. In Penghu, no net seems strong enough to stop the invasion of an "army of garbage."

By Huang Xiao-zhe and Cai Yu-xuan
Translated by Tang Yau-yang
Photos by Huang Xiao-zhe

THE UNITED NATIONS OF GARBAGE

Penghu volunteer Deng Bao-zhu (鄧寶珠) led the way as we drove along the eastern shore of Huxi Township, Magong. Coasting along the shoreline, we could see white windmills standing tall in the distance.

When we got near the white sandy beach, however, we saw that the beautiful ocean vistas were greatly marred by garbage that had washed ashore. The sight of the beach blanketed in trash was alarming and disturbing.

Garbage of all types has polluted oceans across the globe. Winds and currents carry the rubbish to beaches around the Earth. The trash that lands on the beaches of Penghu comes largely from China, Korea, Japan, and Southeastern Asian countries. It comes from so many nations that it's like the "United Nations of Garbage." Plastics comprise the largest volume of the waste, followed by things thrown overboard from fishing boats, like fishing gear, nets, buoys, and light bulbs.

One day we joined some Penghu volunteers to pick up garbage at a beach in Guoye, Huxi. Guoye is best known for its sunrise. As we worked on the beach, the sun burst through the clouds and sparkled on the beautiful ocean and the volunteers. We were not in the mood to appreciate the scenic view though. Our hearts ached when we saw the garbage scattered all around. "Why are there so many light bulbs and other kinds of waste?" a volunteer exclaimed. "How can people just throw all this stuff into the ocean?" Before long, the volunteers had filled yet another big plastic bag with trash.

A local volunteer told us that during the winter, marine litter tends to gather on Penghu's northeastern shores as a result of the northeast monsoon. In the summer, the Kuroshio Current carries garbage to Penghu's southern shores. Many government agencies and private organizations have launched cleanup events for the beaches, but such efforts will prove fruitless until people stop dumping garbage into the ocean or creating more plastic waste without restraint.

A quick visit to the beach makes this inconvenient truth clear: Throwing garbage out of sight merely transfers it to another location—and that location is still on this earth.





THE COST OF TOURISM

Marine debris washing ashore is not the only garbage problem faced by Penghu—a booming tourist industry also contributes to the issue. The island group attracts hundreds of thousands of tourists annually, especially during the Ocean Fireworks Festival, from April to June. The festival was started by the local government in 2003 to revive the local tourist industry, which had been hit by a severe air crash that happened near the Penghu islands in 2002. The move has been more successful than expected. Tourists flocking to the area enhance the local economy—however, they also create a prodigious amount of garbage. The trash created every year during the festival exceeds 1,000 metric tons per month.

There is no garbage incinerator anywhere in Penghu County, so, funds permitting, all garbage must be boated from outlying islands and islets to the largest island of Magong, and then to an incinerator in Kaohsiung, southern Taiwan. The cost of this garbage disposal is high. It is already a burden to process the garbage produced by local residents, and the throngs of visitors just exacerbates the problem. If that were not bad enough, Penghu also has to ship out the trash that the ocean brings to its shores from elsewhere in the world.

As it turns out, garbage is unfriendly to not just the environment but also the pocketbook. However, it is not as if nothing could be done about this. For example, if tourists could bring their own reusable cups and shopping bags, everyone's efforts combined would make quite a dent on the amount of garbage produced.



PILE IT UP OR BURY IT

Accompanied by local volunteers, we visited some of the outlying islands of Penghu: Jibei, Niaoyu, Wangan, and Qimei. We learned that due to an inadequate budget, not all garbage produced on the outlying islands is shipped to the waste transfer station in Magong. Some garbage is disposed of locally, either buried or piled up in open air.

On this day, we visited a site where piles of discarded furniture, fishing gear, and everyday items had ended up. Among the garbage was even stuff that had been recycled by people.

Although people on the smaller islands recycle, there are no outlets to absorb the recycled goods. Thus, recyclables usually end up with the real garbage. Large amounts of ocean rubbish from beach cleanups end up the same way too.

Even though the garbage can be buried in the ground, this is not really a good way to dispose of it. Garbage does not always decompose easily underground. Archeologists have found newspapers that, after being buried in a landfill for 30 years, were still clearly legible. If ordinary paper can survive for such a long time, how long can plastic—all but indestructible—last? Hundreds of years? Thousands? With land available for the disposal of garbage limited and the output of garbage seemingly unlimited, burying trash in the ground is far from ideal. Locals will have to bear the consequences when all the sites available for the disposal or burial of garbage have reached their capacity.





BEHIND THE SCENES

Penghu produces about 40 metric tons of garbage each day. That number can increase to over 50 metric tons during the height of tourist season. Recycled items are not included in these figures.

A fire in April 2018 took the Kaohsiung incinerator out of commission and forced it to stop accepting garbage from Penghu. Penghu was caught in a horrible crisis: New garbage piled up at a rate of dozens of tons a day at the Hongluo waste transfer station, day after day. We visited the station one day to see the impact for ourselves.

We were confronted with the huge amount of garbage that had accumulated in the station. Workers there had carefully compacted some of the garbage into smaller bales and wrapped them with plastic film to reduce the odor. Off to one side, a group of workers was picking out recyclable items from more garbage to decrease the amount of waste requiring disposal.

We felt for the people who had to work in the midst of the garbage and its stench, day in and day out. Let's salute them and thank them for their hard work.





RETURNING TO HER BELOVED BEACH

Tzu Chi volunteers in Penghu took up recycling more than 20 years ago to help keep their communities cleaner and protect the local environment. Volunteers work as guardians of the Earth from the north of the Penghu archipelago to the south. Over the years, they have stuck by their commitments, even as their burden has grown heavier as a result of the flourishing tourist industry and the ever increasing amount of marine litter.

Volunteer Chen Yang Zhuan (陳揚專), almost 80 years old, visits the northern shore of Xiyu, Penghu's second largest island, every day to pick up garbage.

Large amounts of ocean-borne garbage are deposited on Xiyu's northern shore during winter. It has long been a nightmare for residents there. Chen acts to deal with the problem. She has lived here all her life, so this shore is dear to her and contains a lot of memories—though some of the memories are sad.

Chen and her husband were both fishermen. The sea provided their livelihoods. Sadly, the sea that nourished them also took his life—he died when his boat capsized at sea. Chen was so heartbroken that she refused to go anywhere near the shore. That only changed one day when she met some Tzu Chi volunteers. They extended care to her and encouraged her not to be trapped in the sad memory of her husband's passing. "There are lots of resources on the beach," they said to her. "You can collect recyclables there to help reduce the amount of garbage and help others in need."

With that, Chen took up recycling. This meaningful work helped her rediscover her life's purpose. Now she goes to the beach every day, picking up garbage that has washed ashore and keeping her hometown cleaner. In this way, she channels her longing for her husband and honors his memory.





A SKIPPER WHO RECYCLES

We visited another recycling volunteer, Shi Long-er (石龍耳), who lives on the isle of Niaoyu. He was the only fishing boat captain we recorded for our article. Our visit happened to coincide with the season for silver-stripe round herring. During this time, Shi takes his boat out to sea every evening to fish, and he comes back to shore early in the morning. This goes on for several months.

It is common knowledge that space is scarce on fishing boats. It is therefore commonplace for fishermen to throw their garbage overboard, something that Captain Shi has asked his crew to refrain from doing. Being involved with recycling has helped him realize the severity of the marine garbage problem. He doesn't want his boat to add to the pollution of the ocean. He has also asked his crew to be sure to recycle.

On days when he doesn't go out to sea, he takes time out of his schedule to sort out the recyclables he has accumulated and that people have brought to him. Everyone knows everyone else on this small islet, and they all know that Captain Shi does recycling for Tzu Chi. They take their recyclables to his home, and they help him with sorting when there is too much garbage for him to handle alone.

When Shi has amassed enough sorted recyclables, he loads them onto his boat and takes them to Magong, where a Tzu Chi recycling station will receive them and eventually ship them to the main island of Taiwan. If not for Shi, a lot of recyclable resources on this islet would become garbage. It's our sincerest wish that more fishermen in Penghu will become, like the captain, guardians of the Earth.



KEEP A GOOD THING GOING

It was barely dawn, but the Beichen Market in Magong was already bustling. Vegetables, fruits, meats, and all sorts of other things were on display as vendors touted their wares. Garbage, like cardboard boxes and packaging materials, is invariably produced in abundance in the market as merchants unpack things for sale. People here save their recyclables for Tzu Chi volunteers, who are well known to the merchants in the market. Volunteers have collected recyclable garbage in the market for some time now.

It is no easy work to do recycling there. Cardboard boxes for shipping heavy items, such as fruit, are thick and sturdy. They are hard to break down, so volunteers need to exert extra effort to flatten them. Some boxes contain discarded vegetable leaves, so volunteers have to pick those out before recycling the boxes. Even when they finish all of that, they make a point of cleaning up after themselves.

This pattern of service was established by Xue Pei-qi (薛珮麒) and his wife. After retiring from the military with the rank of major, Xue sold vegetables in this market. He and his wife started doing recycling there for Tzu Chi when he was more than 70 years old. They did it for more than a decade, establishing the collection routine with vendors there.

Xue was humble and outgoing. He was so dedicated to recycling, which he did year-round, that he earned the respect of many people. Sadly, he was killed in an automobile accident three years before our visit.

Even though Xue is no longer there, the routine of collecting recyclables in the market has survived. The good thing that he and his wife started is alive and well. Local volunteers make sure of that.





BRINGING A FAMILY CLOSER

Shanshui Beach in Magong is a hot spot for tourists to play in the water and take photos. Just a short distance away is a Tzu Chi recycling point, which was built up with recycled materials on a plot of land provided by volunteer Weng Shun-an (翁順安, below, first from left). Though nothing fancy, this facility provides a space for reusable garbage to be sorted and stored. It has also, unexpectedly, brought Weng and his siblings closer.

Besides sorting recyclables there, Weng drives a truck to pick up recyclables from homes in the community. His brother, Weng Wu-ji (翁武吉, below, sitting), is a great helper to him. Twenty-four years older than Shun-an, Wu-ji can often be seen working at the recycling point. He is almost like both a father and a brother to his younger brother. Thanks to Shun-an, Wu-ji has found joy in recycling.

Weng's day job actually keeps him busy, so when there are lots of recyclables to process, his siblings come in to help. They have become closer as a result. Their giving has motivated friends to join the good cause too. As resources are reclaimed, bonds are forged at the recycling point.



A WISH

Before we concluded our visit to Penghu, we took a stroll around the isle of Niaoyu. As our eyes took in the fishing boats lined up in the harbor, our ears were regaled by crisp sounds of laughter and merriment. It looked like some local kids were having a ball dive-bombing into the water. Despite the bright afternoon sun, the water in the harbor was cool and served as the perfect swimming pool for the children, who had first learned to swim there. Nearby a woman was sun-drying fish, squid, and other seafood. When night came, local women would continue to work sorting dried silver-stripe round herring by the pale light of a streetlamp—this was the current season's important work. Fishing provides a main source of income for the locals.

We didn't have the heart to tell the women that the fish they were sorting might contain many plastic particles, just as we couldn't muster enough courage to tell the swimming boys that the sea might become so loaded with plastic particles in the future as to be unsafe for their posterity to swim in.

We pray sincerely that the happy, peaceful scenes we saw there will not become a swan song, but instead a cherished memory for countless generations to come. ❁





Free Clinics for Foreign Migrant Workers in Taiwan

Foreign workers, primarily from Southeast Asian countries, have for years comprised an indispensable sector of the blue-collar workforce in Taiwan. They work mostly as domestic caretakers and industrial laborers. They suffer loneliness from being separated from their families, and pressure from work and life on their own. It is the ability to send money home to support their families that keeps them going when times get hard. Tzu Chi does what it can for these people, providing free clinics to help them live healthier and happier lives in a foreign land.

By Huang Shen Ying-fang
Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Over 256,000 foreign migrant workers work as caregivers in Taiwan. They can often be seen at parks pushing elderly men or women in their wheelchairs. While they care for others, their own health needs looking after too.

HSIAO YIU-HWA



Groups of young people, some of them clad in clothing representative of their culture or religion, sat on the checkered floor one Sunday in the lobby of Taipei Main Station. Some were talking and gesticulating cheerfully; some were playing the guitar and singing popular tunes from their homelands; others, gathered around a birthday cake, were celebrating a birthday among friends. The train station is a popular gathering place for foreign migrant workers in Taipei, most of them from Southeast Asian countries such as Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, and the Philippines. Passersby, catching snatches of their conversations in unfamiliar languages and seeing their special clothing, cast curious looks at them.

A group of foreign-looking people in volunteer vests walked through the clusters of people sitting on the floor. "A Tzu Chi free clinic is taking place over there. You're welcome to go get a checkup," they said in Indonesian and English, inviting those sitting on the floor to an open space in the left side of the lobby where a mini hospital had been set up.

Volunteers invite foreign migrant workers gathered at Taipei Main Station to an on-site Tzu Chi free clinic to have their health checked or their illnesses treated. This medical service has entered its 15th year.

CHEN LI SHAO-MIN

Some people got up and followed the volunteers to the free clinic, where they were immediately welcomed. "Please register here first," a volunteer said. "First-timers need to fill in some forms and then someone will take you to have your height, weight, and blood pressure measured."

Once every two months on Sunday afternoons at Taipei Main Station, the Northern Taiwan Chapter of the Tzu Chi International Medical Association (TIMA) holds a free clinic which specifically provides services for foreign migrant workers. People start arriving after noon to take advantage of this free service. Guided by Tzu Chi volunteers, the workers are given routine checkups, and then they visit the specialty clinic for which they have come.

Yuli, from Indonesia, has worked in Taiwan as a live-in domestic care provider for seven years. She has visited the free clinic many times, usually to have her eyes and teeth examined. She said in a thick accent, "All alone in a foreign country, we especially appreciate the care and attention we receive here. The doctors and volunteers are all very nice. They make us feel so warm at heart."

Aside from seeing the doctor, Yuli volunteers as an interpreter at the clinic. Many patients here are also from Indonesia. Most of them, like Yuli, are live-in helpers and provide care for elderly people. When the older people they care for wake up in the middle of the night, they must get up too and attend to their needs. As a result, such live-in helpers often get tired easily because they do not have the luxury of uninterrupted sleep. When they feel unwell, they usually try to relieve their discomfort by giving themselves little massages here and there. "I feel especially homesick at times like those," said Yuli.

Falar is currently between jobs. She's from Surabaya, Indonesia's second largest city. She has come to Taiwan for a better-paying job so that she can give her children a better life. During previous visits to the Tzu Chi free clinic, she saw several doctors in different specialties for a variety of ailments. Her skin problem improved after she took the medicine that a doctor prescribed, and her stomach condition got better after she listened to a doctor at the clinic and stopped skipping breakfast and drinking only coffee.

Falar declared that she rarely sought medical help for minor ailments when she was back in her home country, because it was expensive to see a doctor there. In Taiwan, it's hard to see a doctor too, but not because of the cost. She explained that most clinics and hospitals are closed on weekends when live-in helpers like her have their time off, and so seeing a doctor at a regular medical facility is difficult to schedule. A free clinic held on a Sunday like the ones provided by Tzu Chi makes things a lot easier for her. She expressed her gratitude to the Taiwanese doctors, nurses, and support volunteers who serve them at the Taipei station: "I believe Tzu

Chi conducts the free clinics on Sundays to accommodate our schedules. I'm really thankful!"

It has been over two decades since Taiwan opened its job market to Southeast Asian blue-collar workers. By November 2014, the number of migrant workers in Taiwan—around 545,000—had surpassed that of indigenous people. The number exceeded 700,000 by the end of 2018, meaning that one in every 34 people in Taiwan was a migrant worker. Of that foreign workforce, about 446,800 were employed in various industries and 256,400 by the social sector, including domestic and institutional care-giving. These foreign workers have become a labor force to be reckoned with in Taiwan.

To help look after the health of the migrant workers so that they could have happier and healthier lives in a foreign land, TIMA started holding free clinics for them in 2004 on an irregular basis at 228 Peace Memorial Park and St. Christopher's Catholic Church. Both venues were in Taipei and were popular gathering places for migrant workers. In 2005, these services were moved to Taipei Main Station. With help from the Taipei City Government Department of Labor and the National Health Insurance Administration, and with radio stations helping to spread the word, Tzu Chi has been offering free medical treatments once every two months at the station. This service has now entered its 15th year.

In addition to the free clinics at the Taipei station, TIMA offers similar services in New Taipei City, Taoyuan City, Nantou County, Kaohsiung City, and Pingtung County. Of these places, the New Taipei City Government, working with TIMA, provides four free clinics every year at the New Taipei City Plaza. The free clinics coincide with important Indonesian, Thai, Vietnamese, and Filipino festivals. In Pingtung and Kaohsiung, TIMA holds free clinics and provides health education for migrant workers employed in the fishing industry.

These healthcare events are like mobile mini-hospitals, providing treatment in specialties including dentistry, ophthalmology, orthopedics, traditional Chinese medicine, and family medicine. Checkups of blood pressure, height, and weight are also conducted at the events. In order to care for the physical and mental health of migrant workers, Tzu Chi medical volunteers give of themselves mindfully. By looking after their health, medical volunteers hope to bring some warmth to the foreign workers who contribute so much to Taiwanese society with their labor.

A Sunday Hospital at a Train Station

By Huang Shen Ying-fang
Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

A mobile hospital opens once every two months at Taipei Main Station for foreign migrant workers. These free events, held on Sundays, have been going on for 15 years. Doctors in various specialties staff the hospital, and there are no limits on the number of doctors that patients can visit. Interpreters are even on hand to help patients communicate with the medical professionals.

Foreign migrant workers wait to see doctors at a Tzu Chi free clinic at Taipei Main Station.

CHEN LI SHAO-MIN



I've been doing my best to take care of Ah-ma [a respectful Taiwanese way of addressing an older woman], but she still scolds me a lot and accuses me of taking her stuff," said Shi, a foreign migrant worker. She was speaking to Dr. Lee Jia-fu (李嘉富), a specialist in psychosomatic medicine, at a free clinic Tzu Chi held at Taipei Main Station for foreign migrant workers. Shi works as a live-in care provider in Taiwan. She doesn't sleep well and often feels depressed. She went on to say to the doctor, "I wonder what I have done wrong to make Ah-ma unhappy."

"Ah-ma is sick, and that's why she needs your care," said Dr. Lee. He explained to Shi that the elderly woman suffered from memory loss and that she probably misplaced stuff herself but didn't real-

A well-equipped dental clinic is always the busiest area at the Taipei Main Station free clinic. Hsiao Yiu-hwa

ize it. "You're her main caretaker. That's why she thinks you take her stuff and gets mad at you."

Most foreign workers who seek Lee's help in the psychosomatic clinic at Taipei Main Station complain of work pressure. Lee listens closely as every patient explains what is troubling them, then he talks with them to help them release their pressure. He also uses simple diagnostic instruments to help them better understand their psychosomatic condition.

Lee works at Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital, but he has volunteered for over a decade at Tzu Chi free clinics for foreign migrant workers. In 2001, he and his wife, Chen Jia-qi (陳嘉琦), who taught at the National Defense Medical Center in Taipei, went to the United States to pursue further studies. The experience helped him realize how challenging it is to live in a foreign, unfamiliar place. When he returned to Taiwan and



Dr. Lee Jia-fu, right, sees a patient at a free clinic for foreign migrant workers. The clinic is held jointly by the New Taipei City Government and Tzu Chi. Lee has participated in such Tzu Chi free clinics for migrant workers for 15 years. ZHANG CHANG-E

problems arise as a result, it is society as a whole that will carry the burden. Therefore, it is everyone's responsibility to make these workers feel at home in Taiwan.

In the free clinic at Taipei Main Station, Lee teaches migrant workers how to de-stress and relax. He also invites local Tzu Chi volunteers who work as in-home helpers to share their work experience

with the foreign workers. The volunteers have all been formally trained and have had rich experiences in providing care for elderly people. They know better than most the likes and dislikes of older people in Taiwan. Their experiences come in handy to help foreign workers interact better with the seniors they care for. Lee is very thoughtful to make this arrangement on behalf of the migrant workers—some have even been moved to tears by his considerate gesture.

Empathy

Having cared for migrant workers for a long time now, Lee realizes more than many others the challenges this group of people face. Many of the foreign workers are employed as live-in care providers for older people or patients. This kind of work is physically demanding. Aside from the pressure of such work, foreign workers have to deal with problems resulting from cultural differences and language barriers. The stress they are under is beyond the imagination of people who haven't had similar experiences. When they come to the psychosomatic clinic to see a doctor, they aren't necessarily seeking medical help; sometimes they just need a sympathetic listener, one who shows genuine concern for them and allows them to release their pent-up emotions.

"They work cautiously every day," Dr. Lee said, "fearful of making mistakes and losing their jobs as a result. But in fact, it is because of them that many older people in Taiwan receive such good care. If we look at things this way and show our appreciation for them by caring for them as they have cared for our families, I believe they will work even harder at looking after our seniors." Lee believes that if foreign migrant workers fail to receive good care in Taiwan and

Traditional Chinese medicine

In the traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) clinic, Dr. Qiu Wei-yuan (邱偉源) was giving a male patient acupuncture treatment. It was the first time the patient had tried this kind of therapy, so he was understandably nervous. As the doctor inserted needles into the man, he soothed him by saying, "It won't hurt. It won't hurt... There. Wasn't I right? It was painless, right?" The volunteer interpreter off to one side also helped calm the patient.

The TCM clinic at the Tzu Chi free clinic is popular with many patients because acupuncture, *tui na* massage, and Chinese herbal patches work well in relieving muscle and bone aches. Chen Xiu-luan (陳秀鑾), another doctor at the clinic, said, "Some foreign workers are unable to come to the clinic every time because of their work schedules. But every time I administer acupuncture to them, their condition shows instant improvement. I often witness their surprised



reactions when they receive my care. Moments like that really make my day.”

Chen has taken part in the free clinic at the Taipei station since traditional Chinese medicine was first offered there. She has noticed that the majority of migrant workers that gather at the station come from Indonesia and work as live-in care providers, but there are also some from the Philippines, Vietnam, and Thailand. Those who have worked in Taiwan for many years can usually speak some Chinese and have no problems communicating directly with the Taiwanese doctors and volunteers, but even if the foreign workers can't speak Chinese, there are interpreters around to help them.

Chen lives in Tucheng, some distance from the Taipei station. She drives a scooter to and from the venue each time there is a free clinic at the station. She takes her services there very seriously. She

Although most foreign migrant workers in Taiwan aren't familiar with acupuncture, they are willing to try it again after they find it effective in relieving their conditions.

CHEN LI SHAO-MIN

said, “It is a win-win situation if, after receiving care from us, the foreign workers are better able to provide quality care to the people they serve.”

Dentistry

The dental service at the free clinic boasts the largest number of medical professionals. It also always has the longest line of waiting patients. You Chun-mei (游春美), a dental assistant, pointed out that at least five dentists have to be on duty for every event, and that they treat about 70 patients each time. The dentists work nonstop, which means the dental assistants rarely have time to rest either—they bustle around preparing

instruments and medical supplies and giving the dentists whatever assistance they need.

In addition to cleaning teeth, filling cavities, extracting teeth, and fixing other dental problems, the dentists at the free clinic provide instruction on dental care too. “You have a bad case of tooth decay and tartar buildup,” a dentist said to a patient, as he urged him to take better care of his teeth. When the dentist finished his treatment, he handed over a small mirror to the patient, who broke into a smile after seeing his now much cleaner teeth.

You Chun-mei said that the dentists at the clinic not only see patients for free but also help provide needed medical supplies. They contribute their energy, time, and money to help make the free clinic possible. They serve every patient with care—they don't skimp on their services just because they are rendered for free.

You, a homemaker, is very dedicated to her volunteer work for Tzu Chi. A lot of Tzu Chi work waits for her every day. Even though volunteering keeps her busy and demands a lot of energy, she is never tired mentally.

You explained why she is so dedicated to Tzu Chi. She said that once she took part in a free clinic overseas, and such a huge crowd came for the services that many people still waited to see the doctors when it was time for them to close. Seeing the number of people still needing help, a doctor said to You in a choked voice, “I wish I could stay for a couple more months to help them. But even if I could stay a couple more months, there would still be no way for me to finish seeing all of them.” The physician's compassion deeply moved You, and it has helped keep her going on her path as a volunteer. As a result of this experience, she never complains about being tired but is instead thankful for every opportunity to give of herself.

Zhang Yong-sui (張永隨), a retired nurse, walked from one area of the free clinic to the next, checking on how things were going and filling in wherever she was needed. She joined TIMA when she was still working at National Taiwan University Hospital in Taipei, and has volunteered at Tzu Chi free clinics for migrant workers for eight years. After her retirement, she began serving as a contact person for the volunteer nursing staff at the free clinic at Taipei Main Station. In that capacity, she helps find people to serve at the events. Since nursing is a profession that requires a diverse skill set, and different medical specialties require different nursing spe-

cialties, it is not always easy to find an adequate number of suitable people to help. There is a lot of pressure on Zhang as a result, and she once thought of quitting. But then she thought of the people they were helping and decided to persist in this meaningful work. She found that all it took was a shift of mindset. Instead of succumbing to the pressure, “I told myself I should be grateful to the migrant workers for giving me this opportunity to give,” she said.

Zhang indicated with an earnest expression that she now takes great pleasure in inviting others to do good, and she is even happier when she sees how their services have helped the migrant workers. She appreciates the fact that even at her age, she is able to put her abilities to good use, which helps her stay mentally active and wards off cognitive decline.

Gynecology

Since Southeast Asian societies are arguably more conservative, the gynecology service at the free clinic generally sees a smaller number of people coming to seek help compared with the other specialties. Even so, Dr. Lai Ying-ming (賴英明) has dutifully served at the clinic for years. He has been like a fixture there over the years, helping women with gynecological troubles and providing them with health information.

Lai always advises his patients to be sure to take Pap tests. Such a test helps detect cervical cancer early, before symptoms appear. The earlier cancer is detected, the better one's chance of survival. If there are signs of inflammation, topical medicine or suppositories can be administered to treat the condition.

To better serve his patients, Lai found multiple language translations for common medical terms and conditions and wrote them in a notebook. When he sees patients at the free clinic, he uses the list to help determine what is troubling them. A few years earlier, Lai's mother fell ill and he hired a foreign migrant worker to help care for her at home. That experience allowed him to better appreciate the hard work involved in that line of work. It pushed him to do his best to use his expertise to help that group of people.

“When you work in a foreign country and fall ill,” said Lai, “you undoubtedly long to receive care from others. As a doctor, I have the duty to care for people in need, regardless of what country they are from. I believe that even if all you do is offer some words of comfort, it will warm the hearts of those needing care.”



Because the free clinic venue at the Taipei station is an open space and because there is no equipment there to conduct gynecological tests, patients are sent to the clinic run by Dr. Xue Jun-fu (third from right) for further examination.

CHEN LI SHAO-MIN

After visiting Dr. Lai at his clinic, several female patients got into a car driven by a Tzu Chi volunteer heading for Yonghe District, about 15 minutes by car from Taipei Main Station. The car stopped at a gynecology clinic on Chenggong Road. Inside the clinic were already a few female migrant workers from the Philippines, Vietnam, and Indonesia.

Because there are no facilities at the Tzu Chi free clinic at Taipei Main Station to conduct Pap smears and other gynecological tests, patients are sent to this clinic run by Dr. Xue Jun-fu (薛俊福) for further examination after being seen by Dr. Lai at the station. Dr. Xue pointed out that female foreign workers might easily suffer from conditions such as irregular menstrual cycles because they are unacclimated to the local environment, unused to the food here, or are feeling stressed living and working in an unfamiliar foreign country.

After running tests on a patient, Xue asked her to take out her cell phone and scan the QR code on a desk. "This way it will be easier for us to contact you if there is any problem," he said to her. He then told her that he had provided a Pap smear for her on this day, and he reminded her to use the suppositories correctly.

While seeing Xue, a patient told him that the elderly woman she helped care for had given her a ring as a present and she wondered if it was genuine. Xue said to her, "Cherish the present whether it is genuine or not because it betokens the warm feelings the old woman has for you."

Xue said later, "These migrant workers left behind their families in their home countries and came to Taiwan to take care of our families. We should put ourselves in their shoes and treat them with care and respect. I believe that if we are good to them, they will treat us even nicer in return."

After the foreign workers were done at Xue's clinic, volunteers took them back to Taipei Main Station. By the time they had returned, the event had concluded and people were packing up to leave. With warm hearts, everyone said goodbye to each other and called out that they would see each other in two months. ❀

Kids Grow Up and Leave, But Life Goes On

By Li Qiu-yue, Tzu Chi Teachers Association

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting



YE JIN-HONG

Fourteen years ago, my older son left home for college. I was happy and sad at the same time. I was happy because he was continuing his studies at an institution of higher learning and embarking on a new phase of life. I was sad because our beloved son was leaving us. His place at the dining table would soon be empty.

My heart was in a tug-of-war—I was torn between wanting to hold on to my son and having to let go of him. When he arrived at college and called home to let us know how he was doing, I was so overcome with emotion that the phone trembled in my hand and tears ran uncontrollably down my face.

Four years later, the same thing happened with my younger son. I thought that since I had been through this before, I would do fine this time. However, when he called home for the first time after he had left for college, I was still so choked up with emotion I couldn't speak. It wasn't easy to let go. It really wasn't.

To release the emotions I was feeling, I wrote an article and submitted it to a newspaper. Part of the article read:

Life is like a big circle. Years ago, I left home to attend college. The image of my mom standing before the front door of our home watching me go away is etched in my mind to this day. Now it was me who watched my son go off to college. How much will he remember of the scene where we said goodbye?

Although I knew this day was coming, that it was meant to happen, I can't help feeling a deep sense of loss—it is a feeling hard for people to understand if they haven't experienced it themselves.

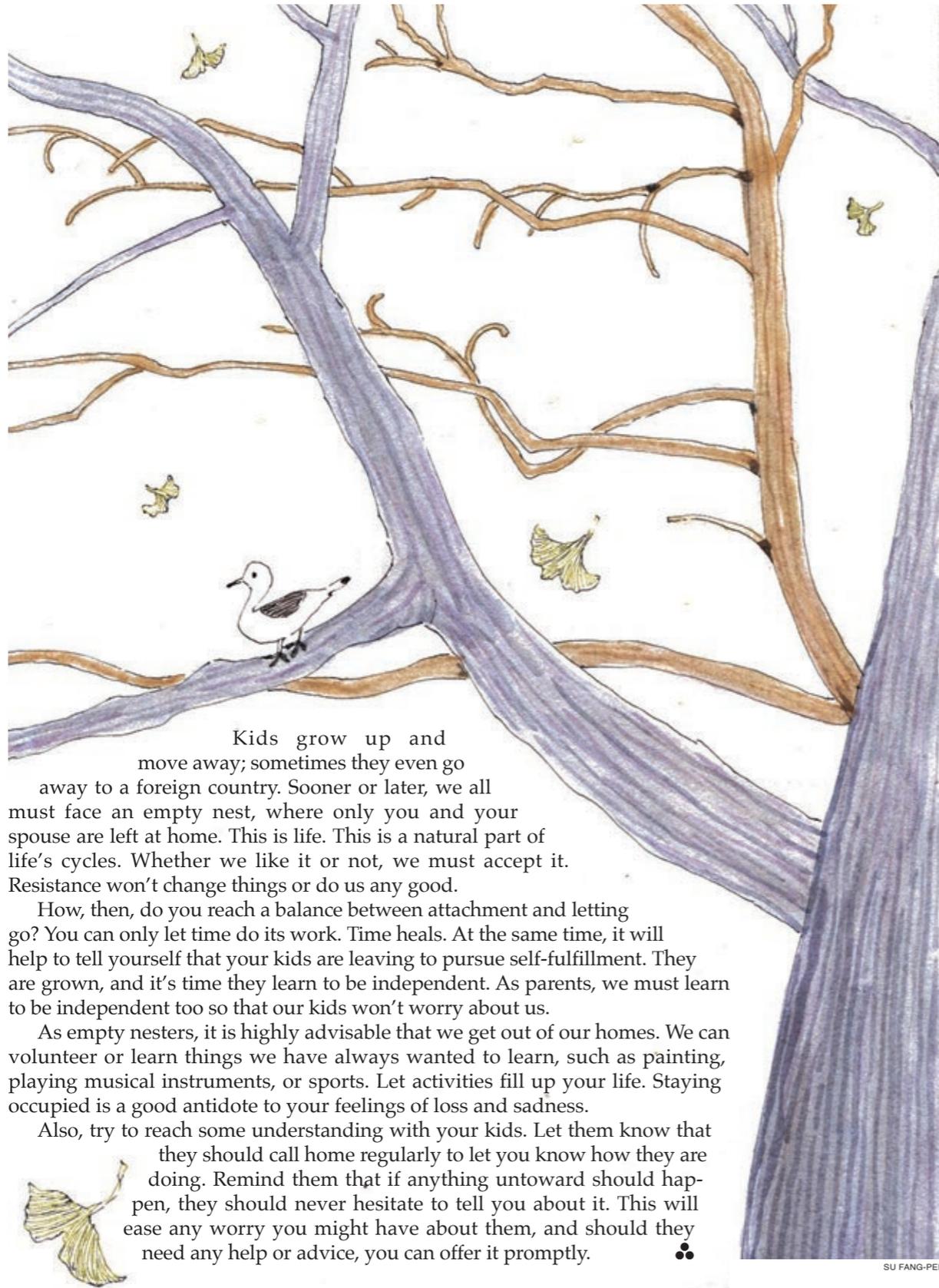
When the objects in my son's room gradually disappeared into one cardboard box after another to go away with him, the desk and bed that used to be a mess became so clean and tidy. It looked like a magic wand had been waved over the room. However, as his room became emptier and tidier, it also meant that the time for us to part was drawing closer.

Eventually, the shipping company came to take his stuff away. His belongings were carried out of the house, box by box. As much as I didn't want to face it, the time had come to say goodbye.

I drove my son to the train station, our car laden with the sadness of imminent separation. When we arrived, I hugged him again, and we told each other to take care. Then he walked straight into the station without even once looking back. He must have felt that it would make things easier on us this way.

When I returned home, I looked at his empty bedroom and study. My heart felt as if it had been gnawed hollow by termites.

Then he called to let us know he had safely arrived in Taipei. Through the phone I could hear his schoolmates' laughter and merry voices in the background—my son was clearly settling well into his new environment. No one knew how much he was going to miss us. Did he know how much we were going to miss him?



Kids grow up and move away; sometimes they even go away to a foreign country. Sooner or later, we all must face an empty nest, where only you and your spouse are left at home. This is life. This is a natural part of life's cycles. Whether we like it or not, we must accept it. Resistance won't change things or do us any good.

How, then, do you reach a balance between attachment and letting go? You can only let time do its work. Time heals. At the same time, it will help to tell yourself that your kids are leaving to pursue self-fulfillment. They are grown, and it's time they learn to be independent. As parents, we must learn to be independent too so that our kids won't worry about us.

As empty nesters, it is highly advisable that we get out of our homes. We can volunteer or learn things we have always wanted to learn, such as painting, playing musical instruments, or sports. Let activities fill up your life. Staying occupied is a good antidote to your feelings of loss and sadness.

Also, try to reach some understanding with your kids. Let them know that they should call home regularly to let you know how they are doing. Remind them that if anything untoward should happen, they should never hesitate to tell you about it. This will ease any worry you might have about them, and should they need any help or advice, you can offer it promptly. ❁

SU FANG-PEI

Chin Up Through Life's Challenges

By He Li-hua, Wei Yu-xian, and Zhang Li-yun

Compiled and translated by Wu Hsiao-ting
Photos by Shi Long-wen

Lin Mei-yun has cancer in various parts of her body. Even so, she doesn't look at herself as a patient, but as a mother and a wife. She does her best to care for her husband, a stroke patient, and she encourages her three daughters to work hard to have a good future instead of relying on others for help.

“Thank...you, Mei...yun.” Yang Fang-xing (楊芳興) uttered those words with difficulty, his left hand holding a walking aid and his eyes intent on his wife, Lin Mei-yun (林美雲). He was thanking her for taking good care of him after he had experienced a stroke.

Except for the sofa set and the TV cabinet, the most prominent thing in the Yang family's 180-square-foot living room was a single bed behind the sofa. Though the bed was covered in thin blankets, one could still see that it had sunken in, a sure sign of heavy use. Mei-yun said, “We've been sleeping in the living room since my husband's stroke. I've almost forgotten what our room upstairs looks like!”

I can't let my daughters become orphans

Fang-xing used to be a newspaper carrier until a stroke laid him low on January 31, 2015. He was in a coma for half a year. His parents and three daughters urged Mei-yun to let him go, but she insisted on saving him. She said that she herself was seriously ill and could leave this world at any time. She didn't want her three children to become orphans.



Lin Mei-yun and Yang Fang-xing accompanied their youngest daughter, Wen-lan, to a Tzu Chi scholarship award ceremony. Wen-lan donated her savings in a coin bank to Tzu Chi that day too. HE ZI-HUA

About ten years earlier, in 2004, Mei-yun, then 36, was diagnosed with breast cancer. The disease was already in an advanced stage when detected, and it had spread to her lungs, liver, lymph nodes, and bones. Her doctor said that she had only half a year left. “Half a year!” It was a huge blow—after all, she was just in her mid-30s, and her youngest daughter, Wen-lan (雯嵐), was just in first grade.

Despite the grim prognosis, Mei-yun refused to give up hope. She decided to undergo all prescribed treatments. One of her breasts was removed, then she began receiving alternating chemotherapy and radiation therapy. The treatment regimen lasted four years. That was the toughest period of her life. The chemotherapy injections were so strong they would knock her unconscious. The doctors would give her first aid, admit her to the hospital, and discharge her when she had got-



Mei-yun on a newspaper delivery round

ten better. Despite the ordeal of the treatments, she continued her maternal duties as usual—household chores, tending to her kids' needs, you name it—just as if she hadn't fallen ill at all.

Having contracted cancer at a young age, she was stigmatized by others. People murmured: "Did she do something bad? Why else would she have fallen victim to the disease?" But she couldn't afford to let such unkind conjecture and speculation get her down. She had to be strong for her children. After countless rounds of treatments at the hospital, being knocked unconscious by the strong medicine, and being revived by the doctors, she finally finished her treatments. However, that wasn't the end of it all. She would need to be on medication—anti-cancer drugs, painkillers, etc.—for the rest of her life.

"I'm prepared for the worst," said Mei-yun. "I've even purchased a niche in a columbarium for my ashes." She lifted her blouse, revealing a morphine patch on her abdomen. Despite her worrisome condition and uncertain future, she is upbeat and positive. She says that she is in a cheerful mood when she wakes up every morning because she has lived to see another day. She lives every day as if it were her last. She feels that every day that she lives is another day gained.

Mei-yun's husband miraculously woke up half a year after his stroke. She took him home after he had been in and out of hospital for eight months and began caring for him herself. Thus began another challenging chapter of her life.

There are people worse off than us

Since her husband, partially paralyzed, was no longer fit to work, Mei-yun took over his newspaper carrier job. She set out in darkness every morning around two in a van for her delivery rounds. By the time she finished delivering all the newspapers and returned home, dawn had already broken. She'd take three sleeping pills and lie down by her husband to catch up on some sleep. When he woke up, she got up again too. She fixed breakfast and then helped him with his rehab exercises.

Their three daughters seemed to have grown up overnight. The older two, in college, and the youngest, in high school, all began working part-time to help with their family's finances. "They have been my biggest comfort since my husband had his stroke," Mei-yun said.

When the youngest daughter's homeroom teacher learned of the misfortune that had befallen the family, she contacted Tzu Chi for help. Volunteers visited the family to determine if they needed assistance from the foundation. They

learned that though Fang-xing had woken from the coma, his mobility and speech were severely affected. In fact, he qualified for government subsidies for physically challenged people. After evaluation, the volunteers decided to give the family monthly financial aid too, to supplement their living expenses.

When they told Mei-yun about their decision to provide the family financial aid, she politely declined their offer. She said to them, "It would be enough for me if you could come to my home regularly to chat with me and allow me to release my emotions." Respecting her decision, the volunteers began visiting the family regularly to extend care to them.

Mei-yun explained her decision to her daughters. "With the volunteers' visits, we'll be getting a lot of emotional support—that is what we really need. There are many families worse off than us, and they are the ones that need help. You three are all earning money, and I have a steady income as a newspaper carrier. We can get by without the aid from Tzu Chi. Besides, we'll feel less of a burden spending money we make ourselves, and we'll spend it with more care."

The youngest daughter, Wen-lan, couldn't quite accept her mother's decision at first. She often saw her friends' social media posts about their happy outings with their families during vacations and holidays, while she herself often had to work to help support her family. When her father was hospitalized, she had to take turns with her mother and sisters caring for him at the hospital. She felt that what had happened to her family was unfair. "Why did I have to be born into a family like this?" she thought in deep frustration. "Why is it me who has to experience all this? I go to school by day and do odd jobs by night. Sometimes I even have to help Mom deliver newspapers in the middle of the night. Others are sleeping while I work!"

Her attitude only began to change when her two sisters were awarded scholarships by Tzu Chi in October 2015 due to their excellent performance at school. Their entire family attended the award ceremony at the Tzu Chi Taichung branch office in central Taiwan. During the ceremony, a documentary about Tzu Chi's aid to needy families was shown to attendees. Watching it, Wen-lan came to realize that there were really many people worse off than her. Some, for example, were orphaned early in life and raised by their grandparents. "I'm lucky," she said. "I still have both my parents around me."

Wen-lan is now in college. During weekends or on mornings when she doesn't have classes, she gets up extra early and accompanies her mother on her newspaper delivery rounds. She works odd jobs too. Her parents used to run a breakfast shop, and at that time she was given large allowances and could buy pretty much anything she wanted. Now she gives some of her earnings to her mom to help pay for her family's expenses and leaves some to herself. "I've come to understand that giving to my family is what I should do because other people have been helping and giving to my family too."

Perseverance

Mei-yun believes that stroke patients stand a good chance of returning to a normal life if they work hard on physical therapy. Therefore, she diligently helps her husband do rehab exercises, and she trains him to attend to his own daily needs as much as possible. Instead of feeding him, she lets him feed himself with his still usable left hand; instead of twisting open a water bottle or flask for him, she lets him do it himself. She also trains him to use the bathroom independently by steadying himself with one hand on the wall.

Even though Fang-xing has made slow progress and Mei-yun often has to pick up after him, she is tireless in helping him become independent. She knows she is doing him good by giving him chances to practice. "When he first had the stroke and I began training him to use the bathroom, I had to wash our bedsheets almost every day, but I never uttered a word of complaint."

Mei-yun's two older daughters have now both graduated from college, and the youngest one is doing well in school, so Mei-yun can breathe easier. However, her life is far from being worry-free. She has been on medication for her cancer for over 14 years. The tumor in her liver has become smaller, so she has stopped taking medicine for that, but the other tumors are still very much alive and a dire threat to her health. She was hospitalized for over ten days in March 2017 to treat a swollen lymph node. Her attending physician said to her, "All the doctors are giving you the highest doses of anti-inflammatory medicine that they can. You are so brave. You take it all without so much as a frown."

Mei-yun has to rely on morphine patches to reduce her cancer-induced pain, but she still tries her best to live a normal life. "I know I can die at any time," she said, "so I need to train my husband until he can take care of himself. That way, I can feel at ease handing him over to my three daughters."



Mei-yun helps her husband do rehab exercises.

She never avoids the topic of death in front of her children, and she talks to them about how to take care of their mobility-limited father in the future.

Mei-yun has now lived with her cancer for 14 years. Her doctors are all amazed at what a normal life she has led. They admire her for her strong will and perseverance in dealing with her illness. Ruan Xiu-juan (阮秀娟), one of the Tzu Chi volunteers who regularly visits Mei-yun and her family, lauds her for her strength and upbeat spirit. Ruan knows that she is often in pain—even those morphine patches do not bring her full relief. Sometimes the pain is beyond what the patches can alleviate. In addition, she takes so many medications for the cancer in the various parts of her body that Ruan feels dizzy just looking at them.

Even though Mei-yun is so ill, she rises early every morning to deliver newspapers, and she takes good care of her husband. Every time Ruan asks her how she is doing and if she needs any help, she says she is doing good. She doesn't think her life is hard. On the contrary, she feels that she is better off than many others. Ruan feels that Mei-yun's body is full of "positive cells." She is very good at focusing on the bright side in life. Even though there is cancer in her liver, Mei-yun comforts herself with positive affirmations: "The medicine is working; the tumor has become smaller!" Ruan has learned a lot from her about how to face life's challenges with courage and resilience.

Mei-yun, on the other hand, is grateful for the support and care of Tzu Chi volunteers. Her husband doesn't like to go out, so she rarely has opportunities to chat with others. For that reason, she especially welcomes the volunteers' visits. She finds an outlet for the pressure on her in talking with them. It makes her feel less alone. Their visits have other benefits, too. Their conversations with her husband stimulate his brain, and with their encouragement, he is more willing to do rehab exercises.

Besides their regular visits, volunteers deliver gifts to the Yang family on major holidays, and when there is a sudden change in the weather, they phone Mei-yun to check on her and her husband. "Be sure to let us know if you need any help," the volunteers say. All of this makes Mei-yun feel very warm. "I'm very grateful to Master Cheng Yen," she said. "Because of her, many people who live in the dark corners of society are able to receive care and feel respected and loved. I thank Tzu Chi volunteers for inspiring goodness in us too. They often encourage us to do what we can to help others."

Mei-yun often tells her daughters that their futures lie in their own hands. "It's up to you what kind of life you want to live. The work you put in shapes your future."

God helps those who help themselves. Mei-yun is certainly a stellar example of that. In the process of helping the Yangs, Tzu Chi volunteers feel they have learned a precious life lesson. ❀

A Way Out

By Cheah Lee Hwa

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Graphic by Su Fang-pei

An old woman was hospitalized for a few days. When she had recovered and was about to go home, she realized that she had lost her bus pass. A student of mine happened to be volunteering at the hospital. He looked everywhere for her pass but couldn't find it. Though he was worried about her, the woman didn't seem to be bothered by it. She told my student, "Don't worry. I'll figure a way out."

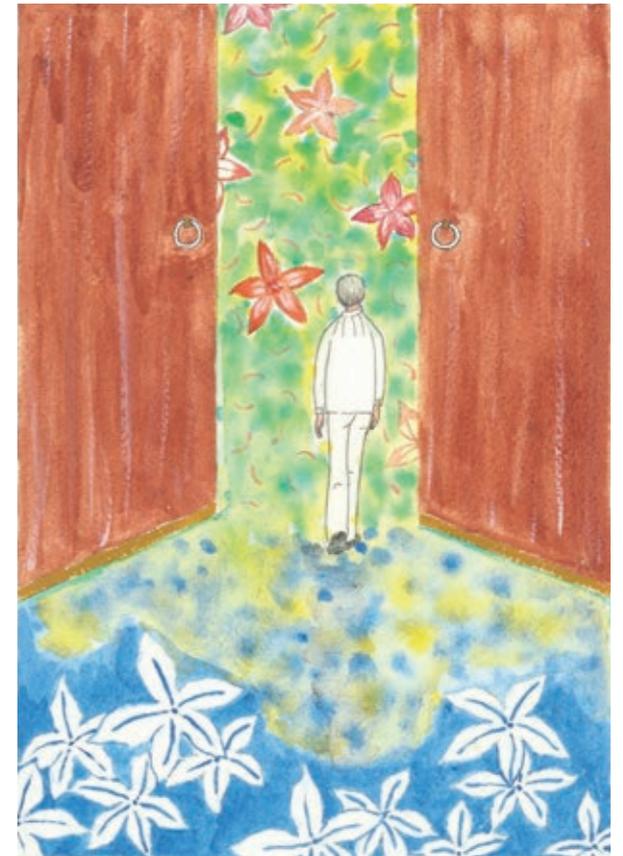
My student asked naively, "What way out can you think of?"

"Well, I can walk home. It just takes 30 minutes," she answered.

My student, used to a life of convenience, didn't think her solution was a good way out at all. For him, 30 minutes was a long way to walk!

After he shared this story with me, I in turn shared it with my other students in class. I told them that it would do us good to learn from the woman's sanguine attitude. Her way of thinking—"I'll figure a way out"—was admirable. She demonstrated to us that when we encounter a problem, we shouldn't just throw up our hands in defeat and expect others to help us. Every problem has a way out. We just need to be positive and have the courage to work it out.

This episode brought to mind the story of a Tzu Chi recycling volunteer and her family. The volunteer's son had lost part of his arm in a work accident. Her older daughter suffered from a mental disorder brought on by a traumatic event. Her younger daughter, though appearing healthy, was deaf, and she talked with slurred speech as a result. You couldn't help feeling sorry for the family; they had every reason to wallow in self-pity and complain about their bad lot in life. However, when the younger daughter was interviewed by Da Ai TV, she said that although her family first took the setbacks hard, they soon realized that they had to move on and leave the past behind. "If you want to move forward, you can't keep looking back, or else you will trip and fall."



That statement is full of truth and wisdom. It is just as Master Cheng Yen says: "When we put the front foot down, we lift the back foot up. We let yesterday go and focus on today." Lingering on the past won't help things; only when we let go can we be free to face the future. Through their setbacks in life, that younger daughter taught us that dwelling on what cannot be undone will just hinder us from creating a better life for ourselves.

A positive attitude makes life's challenges easier to handle. Both the older woman and the younger daughter make that obvious. I wonder if my students, belonging to that younger generation who generally have had a cushy life, understand this. I wonder if my students can be positive when life throws a curveball at them. I give them my best wishes. I hope they all develop the kind of wisdom and positive attitude which will help them to find a way through the challenges of life, instead of finding excuses and evading problems. It might be helpful to bear in mind this quote by the American author Ann Brashares: "Your problem isn't the problem, it's your attitude about the problem." ❀

The Illustrated JING SI A PHORISMS

The Buddha says:
The buddhas only point out the way. It is up to you to walk on it.



There are three types of Buddhists: those who learn from the Buddha, those who worship the Buddha, and those who believe in the Buddha. Only those who learn from the Buddha are proper Buddhists. We must learn from the Buddha's perseverance, courage, and great spirit of self-sacrifice.



A lot of medical students only think of how much money they can make when they choose what to study and where to work. This is why there is such fierce competition in the medical field. How should we deal with this problem?

Master Cheng Yen replied: If they realize that the point of practicing medicine is to save lives, their own lives will be more grounded and at peace. If they only think of money, then they will be nothing more than medical technicians, and that will be a very sad life.

Translated by E E Ho and W.L. Rathje; drawings by Tsai Chih-chung; coloring by May E. Gu

Tzu Chi Events Around the World



CHEN SHOU-YONG

Brazil

Tzu Chi volunteers in Brazil held a free clinic in Itaquaquecetuba, São Paulo, on January 20. This was the sixth time the foundation had provided free medical services at the E.E. Vereador Durval Evaristo dos Santos school in Itaquaquecetuba. It was summer break, but many teachers at the school sacrificed some of their vacation time to volunteer at the event.

People seeking medical attention formed long lines along the street outside the school. The weather was very warm, but the school had thoughtfully put up canopies at the entrance for people to take shelter from the hot sun.

Volunteer Solange was the coordinator of the event. She explained to the patients that registration was taking a longer time on this day because volunteers were screening to prevent people from receiving prescription eyeglasses from Tzu

Volunteers help fit a young woman for prescription glasses at a free clinic conducted by Tzu Chi in Itaquaquecetuba, Brazil, in January 2019.

Chi more than once in two years. The precaution was taken to ensure that more needy people could get help. She apologized to the crowd for keeping them waiting.

One teacher from Colégio Técnico Paulista brought 12 nursing students to the clinic to serve. Volunteer Nelson Vasconcelos demonstrated to the students how to measure a patient's blood pressure and blood sugar level. The students were happy to join the event and apply what they had learned at school to serve people in the community.

Services in cardiology, ophthalmology, dentistry, internal medicine, OB/GYN, dermatology, and traditional Chinese medicine were offered at the

event. Thirteen doctors and 150 other volunteers together served 917 patient visits.

Xiao Zhu Rei-zhen (蕭朱蕊珍), 91, is a Catholic who has volunteered for Tzu Chi for 20 years. She can often be seen at Tzu Chi events. She is thankful for every chance to give of herself, which helps her learn and grow. "You stay healthy by staying active," she said of her volunteering. "To give is to receive."

Dentist Chen Wen-de (陳文德) has lived in Brazil for 56 years. He participates actively in Tzu Chi free clinics. He said that his family was very poor when he was little, and they had received help from others as a result. The experience led him to pledge that he would pay back to society by helping the underprivileged when he grew up. "I've been a Tzu Chi volunteer for 16 years," he said. "Tzu Chi free clinics are where I fulfill my wish to help the needy. I'll uphold my initial aspiration and do my best to help others."

It wasn't just medical professionals that were able to help others at the event. A beautician teacher from Instituto Casa Aberta brought eight hairdressers to serve the public at the event. People were delighted to be groomed by professionals.

Tzu Chi volunteers help out at the Surrey Food Bank in Surrey, BC, Canada.

Volunteer Cai Jin-long (蔡金龍) helped transport medical equipment, so he was the first to show up for the event and the last to leave. There was a lot of equipment to move, some of which was very heavy. He was often drenched in sweat, but he didn't mind the heavy labor. He was just glad to be a small cog that helped a big machine run smoothly.

Canada

Since 2003, Tzu Chi volunteers in Surrey, British Columbia, have been volunteering at the Surrey Food Bank. Every Wednesday from nine in the morning to one in the afternoon, volunteers assist underprivileged families in packaging and picking up food. Just as important, volunteers extend warmth and care to recipients. In addition to this regular service, the Tzu Chi Surrey office supports the food bank's Tiny Bundles program with an annual donation of CDN\$10,000 (US\$7,520). This program helps families with pregnant women and children under one year old by providing them with food, diapers, and other items.

On January 2, volunteers served as usual at the food bank. In addition to distributing foods such as vegetables and fruit, volunteers on this day helped people pick up snow boots. The boots had been

donated to Tzu Chi by a Chinese businessman, Leaf Alifu (阿力夫), for distribution to needy people.

This was the second time volunteers had distributed boots at the bank. They gave out a total of 134 pairs that day. Volunteer Ye Ying-liang (葉盈良) said that when it is snowing outside or when the weather is damp and cold, it is important to keep one's feet warm. "They [the recipients] were all delighted when they saw the boots," said Ye. "Some of them were refugees from Syria or Africa, so this might have been their very first pair of winter boots in Canada."

A mother and her daughter came to the food bank that day. Because there was a limited number of boots to give out, each family was limited to one pair. However, when volunteers saw that the mother was wearing flip-flops and that it was cold and raining outside, they asked her to pick a pair for herself too. The woman thanked the volunteers profusely for this heartwarming offer.

Fu Jia-lin (傅家琳) has been volunteering at the food bank for a while, but every time she serves there, she feels richly rewarded spiritually. She said that few people get a smooth ride all through their lives, and when you are down and out, a helping hand can put you back on your feet. Therefore, she appreciates this opportunity to serve people at the food bank. Although she was tired after being on her feet for four hours straight, she was happy, especially when she saw the smiles on the recipients' faces.

Ecuador

Tzu Chi held seven free clinics from January 10 to 16 in Ecuador. The venues were located in Canoa, Portoviejo, and Santa Ana, in Manabi Province, and Guayaguil, in Guayas Province. The foundation started providing aid in Ecuador after the nation was hit by a major earthquake in April 2016.

January to April is the rainy season in Ecuador. The unstable weather posed a challenge to the free clinics, some of which were

A professor from the dentistry department at the University San Gregorio de Portoviejo treats a girl at a Tzu Chi free clinic in Santa Ana, Ecuador, on January 15, 2019.

held outdoors. Thankfully, the construction team for a local church Tzu Chi was helping rebuild set up canopies for shelter in case of rain. On January 10, the first day of the clinics, 42 people from the construction team assembled before six in the morning and began putting up canopies and setting up the venue in Canoa.

The free clinic mission was led by William Keh (葛濟捨), MD, CEO of the U.S. Tzu Chi Medical Foundation. Medical professionals from the United States and Ecuador worked together to serve local patients.

Dharma Master Zong Chuan, a traditional Chinese medicine doctor from New York, has taken part in Tzu Chi free clinics for years. This January, she volunteered at the free clinics in Ecuador. Anna, a little girl whose leg had been injured in a fall several months before, had had surgery at that time, but she was still in pain. After the Master administered acupuncture to her at the free clinic in Canoa, Anna broke into a smile because her pain had been greatly alleviated.

Three professors from the dentistry department at the University San Gregorio de Portoviejo took 11 fourth-year students to volunteer at the free clinics held in Portoviejo and Santa Ana. The professors said that their school encourages students to serve society and participate in free clinics. They thanked Tzu Chi volunteers for giving them this opportunity to work with them to serve local people.

Dentist Lai Ming-zong (賴銘宗) said that due to limited equipment and time at a free clinic, dentists like him were sometimes forced to pull teeth that



WENHS SHU-RU



YE JIN-HONG

Refugees at the Sid camp in Serbia pose for a photo after receiving winter clothing from Tzu Chi volunteers.



CAI WAN-ZHEN

could have been saved. "But this time," he said, "when we encountered similar situations, we did root canal treatments to save the teeth and prevent regrets."

Aside from services in family medicine, pediatrics, dentistry, and traditional Chinese medicine, people could be fitted for prescription glasses at the events. This service was important to some local people because they were too poor to afford prescription glasses and had had to live with blurry vision.

The seven free clinics served more than 3,900 patient visits. After the events concluded, volunteers headed home with a sense of fulfillment for having contributed what they could to serve those in need.

Serbia

Over 30 Tzu Chi volunteers from 11 countries visited five refugee camps in Serbia from January 10 to 14. They held five distributions, four blessing ceremonies, and three hygiene education classes for children.

Serbia is located on a major refugee migration route from the Middle East to Europe. The route was shut down in 2016, leaving many refugees stuck in Serbia. Tzu Chi volunteers in Europe have extended care to refugees there since 2016.

Many refugees do not have enough clothes to keep them warm during cold weather. They were forced to flee their countries because of war or religious persecution, and so they have nothing that they couldn't carry during their escape. Sometimes all they have are the clothes on their backs. During their visit in January, Tzu Chi volunteers distributed 3,325 sets of winter clothes and thermal underwear. Some refugees changed into new clothes as soon as they got them.

Noor, 10, is from Afghanistan. His family of eight fled to Serbia two and a half years ago. Telling volunteers the story of their escape still visibly upset him. He said that while on the road they had been chased by police, gone hungry in the woods, and forced to sleep unprotected on the cold, wet ground.

He thanked Tzu Chi volunteers for giving him and other children school supplies, book bags, winter clothes, toothbrushes and toothpaste. He was also grateful that Tzu Chi had arranged hygiene education for children in which they were taught how to properly brush and protect their teeth. Despite having gone through a lot during his escape, Noor harbored no ill feelings in his heart. He said he hoped he could help others when he grew up. Even though he was chased by police during his escape, he wanted to become a policeman so he could help people in need.

Gheisar is an architect from Iran. His family of four was forced to flee their country for survival because they weren't Muslims. He said that this winter had been very cold, and they didn't have winter clothes with them because it was summer when they fled their country. He was therefore full of gratitude to Tzu Chi volunteers for bringing them warm clothes.

Djurdja Šurlan, manager of the Krnjača camp, said that the camp had been blanketed in snow for the past 10 days, and the temperature had dropped to -10 degrees Celsius (14 degrees Fahrenheit). She extended appreciation to Tzu Chi for the clothing, which will help refugees pass this cold winter.

In 2018 alone, the Tzu Chi Foundation provided in Serbia over 1,249,000 servings of bread to refugees, one-year's worth of school supplies to 536 refugee children, and summer clothing to 2,990 refugees. Volunteers will continue to help refugees through this difficult time in their lives with material aid and sincere love. ❁

Directory of Tzu Chi Offices Worldwide

TAIWAN

Hualien: Headquarters
Tel: 886-3-8266779
Fax: 886-3-8267776

Taipei: Tzu Chi Humanitarian Center
Tel: 886-2-28989000
Fax: 886-2-28989994

ARGENTINA

Tel: 54-11-48625770
Fax: 54-11-43140252

AUSTRALIA

Brisbane
Tel: 61-7-32727938
Fax: 61-7-32727283

Gold Coast
Tel: 61-7-55717706
Fax: 61-7-55717703

Melbourne
Tel: 61-3-98971668
Fax: 61-3-98974288

Perth
Tel/Fax: 61-8-92278228

Sydney
Tel: 61-2-98747666
Fax: 61-2-98747611

BRAZIL

Tel: 55-11-55394091
Fax: 55-11-55391683

BRUNEI

Tel/Fax: 673-3336779

CANADA

Edmonton
Tel: 1-780-4639788
Fax: 1-780-4621799

Montreal
Tel: 1-514-8442074
Fax: 1-514-2889152

Toronto
Tel: 1-416-8868886
1-905-9471182
Fax: 1-416-9002048

Vancouver
Tel: 1-604-2667699
Fax: 1-604-2667659

DOMINICAN REP.

Tel: 1-809-5300972

EL SALVADOR

Tel/Fax: 1-503-7293905

FRANCE

Tel: 33-1-45860312
Fax: 33-1-45862540

GERMANY

Tel: 49-40-388439
Cell: 0049-152-2951-9571

GREAT BRITAIN

Tel: 44-20-88699864
Fax: 44-20-89334262

GUATEMALA

Tel: 502-22327648
Fax: 502-23675872

HONG KONG

Tel: 852-28937166
Fax: 852-28937478

INDONESIA

Tel: 62-21-5055999
Fax: 62-21-5055699

JAPAN

Tel: 81-3-32035651
Fax: 81-3-32035674

JORDAN

Tel/Fax: 962-6-5817305

LESOTHO

Tel: 266-28312566
Fax: 266-22313897

MALAYSIA

Ipoh
Tel: 60-5-2551013
Fax: 60-5-2421013

Kedah
Tel: 60-4-7311013
Fax: 60-4-7321013

Kuala Lumpur
Tel: 60-3-62563800
Fax: 60-3-62563801

Melaka
Tel: 60-6-2810818
Fax: 60-6-2812796

Penang
Tel: 60-4-2281013
Fax: 60-4-2261013

MEXICO

Tel: 1-760-7688998
Fax: 1-760-7686631

MYANMAR

Tel: 95-1-541494/541496

NETHERLANDS

Tel: 31-629-577511

NEW ZEALAND

Tel: 64-9-2716976
Fax: 64-9-2724639

PARAGUAY

Tel: 595-21-333818
Fax: 595-21-310588

PHILIPPINES

Tel/Fax: 63-2-7320001

SINGAPORE

Tel: 65-65829958
Fax: 65-65829952

SOUTH AFRICA

Cape Town
Tel: 27-21-9130934
Fax: 27-21-9137057

Durban
Tel: 27-31-5615348
Fax: 27-31-5644438

Johannesburg
Tel: 27-11-4503365
Fax: 27-11-4502256

Ladysmith
Tel: 27-36-6341333
Fax: 27-36-6341261

SWEDEN

Tel/Fax: 46-31-227883

THAILAND

Tel: 66-2-3281161-3
Fax: 66-2-3281160

TURKEY

Tel: 90-212-4225802
Fax: 90-212-4225803

UNITED STATES

San Dimas
Tel: 1-909-4477799
Fax: 1-909-4477948

Atlanta
Tel: 1-770-4581000

Austin
Tel: 1-512-4910358
Fax: 1-512-9261373

Boston
Tel: 1-617-7620569
Fax: 1-617-4314484

Cerritos
Tel: 1-562-9266609
Fax: 1-562-9261603

Chicago
Tel: 1-630-9636601
Fax: 1-630-9609360

Cleveland
Tel/Fax: 1-440-6469292

Columbus
Tel: 1-614-4579215
Fax: 1-614-4579217

Dallas
Tel: 1-972-6808869
Fax: 1-972-6807732

Detroit
Tel/Fax: 1-586-7953491

Fresno
Tel/Fax: 1-559-2984894

Hawaii
Tel: 1-808-7378885
Fax: 1-808-7378889

Houston

Tel: 1-713-2709988
Fax: 1-713-9819008

Indianapolis

Tel: 1-317-5800979

Kansas

Tel: 1-913-3976517

Long Island

Tel: 1-516-8736888
Fax: 1-516-7460626

Madison

Tel: 1-608-2687692

Miami

Tel: 1-954-5381172
Fax: 1-954-5381907

New Jersey

Tel: 1-973-8578666
Fax: 1-973-8579555

New York

Tel: 1-718-8880866
Fax: 1-718-4602068

Los Angeles Northwest
Tel: 1-818-7277689
Fax: 1-818-7279272

Los Angeles West
Tel: 1-310-4735188
Fax: 1-310-4779518

Oakland

Tel: 1-510-8790971

Orlando

Tel/Fax: 1-407-2921146

Phoenix

Tel: 1-480-8386556
Fax: 1-480-7777665

Pittsburgh

Tel: 1-412-5318343
Fax: 1-412-5318341

San Diego

Tel: 1-858-5460578
Fax: 1-858-5460573

San Francisco

Tel: 1-415-6820566
Fax: 1-415-6820567

San Jose

Tel: 1-408-4576969
Fax: 1-408-9438420

Seattle

Tel: 1-425-8227678
Fax: 1-425-8226169

St. Louis

Tel/Fax: 1-314-9941999

Washington DC

Tel: 1-703-7078606
Fax: 1-703-7078607

VIETNAM

Tel: 84-8-38535001
Fax: 84-8-38535055



*Many seek illumination by lighting up a lamp, when the
true light is actually within.*
—Master Cheng Yen

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