

Tzu Chi



**Buddhism
in Action**

Spring 2015

慈濟

SYRIAN REFUGEES IN TURKEY

Cleaning Up in Malaysia	4
All One Family in Bosnia	32
A Country Doctor	54
New Life Through Painting	66

Lin Chun-chieh (from left), Lee Bing-hong, and Chang Hui-mei at the home of Annette Alvarez in Miami.



Three Able Persons

Text and photo by Liu King-pong

“I’m grateful to my parents for always treating me as a normal person,” said Lee Bing-hong (李秉宏), the first blind lawyer in Taiwan. He added that his parents’ attitude allowed him to cultivate an unflinching spirit of perseverance in overcoming challenges and difficulties, without using his handicap as an excuse.

Lee, age 35; Chang Hui-mei (張惠美), 51, deputy secretary general of the Taiwan Association for Disability Rights; and Lin Chun-chieh (林君潔), 34, secretary general of the Taipei Independent Living Association (TILA), are three remarkable disabled persons from Taiwan. As a testament to their achievements, they were all invited by the U.S. State Department to participate in the International Visitor Leadership Program. They toured five cities in the United States for 21 days, starting in August 2014.

Despite their challenges, they are truly accomplished individuals. Lee, who has worked for the Legal Aid Foundation in Taipei for eight years, often provides disadvantaged people with free legal consultation and assistance. Chang brings the plight of the disabled to the attention of lawmakers to enact beneficial legislature. Lin’s transformative experience of studying abroad in Japan from 2004 to 2005 inspired her to start a movement for independent living for the disabled. She established TILA in Taiwan in 2007.

My friend Annette Alvarez welcomed the group to Miami and was responsible for arranging their local itinerary. She hosted an American-style barbecue at her home on August 31, and I was lucky enough to be invited to attend the event. Thanks to their amiable and forthright personalities, I was completely comfortable asking each of the Taiwanese visitors whatever I was curious about. I didn’t need to worry about offending them.

When I asked about the major difficulties he faced, Lee told me there were two: a lack of adequate, audible information for blind people, and people’s incredulity regarding his actual capabilities.

“Do you have any wish other than helping disadvantaged people?” I asked. “Getting married,” he remarked candidly.

Lee is a very handsome man, but due to his visual deficiency he is still very reserved in courting his sweetheart. He admits to having an interest in a woman within the same Christian community he belongs to, and he hopes to move forward with the relationship soon. I asked if he could tell how she looked by touching her features, but he said it would be too rude to do so.

After listening to Lee talk about this topic, I could not help but admire his suave, debonair manner. Pondering deeply the matter of marriage, I feel we “normal” people often take too many conditions into consideration, such as the other party’s economic status, appearance, education, etc. In contrast, Lee’s condition is so very pure and simple: love. I don’t know if his potential spouse realizes how lucky she is!

Lin has been suffering from brittle bone disease since she was born. People with this condition have bones that break easily, often from mild trauma or even with no apparent cause. Lin told me that she had fractures frequently when she was a child, but fortunately the symptoms stabilized after she went to college. When talking to this lovely doll, you cannot help but notice the dazzling smile that appears on her face all the time.

Chang led a healthy life until she was in a car accident when she was studying at California State University in Fresno in 1990. Her physical condition deteriorated further after the birth of her son in 2001 and her daughter in 2004. She was diagnosed with muscular dystrophy, a genetic, hereditary muscle disease that causes progressive muscle weakness. She hopes to introduce in Taiwan the day-care systems designed specifically for the elderly and for young children that she witnessed in Baltimore, Maryland. I was so moved when she said that her illness is unimportant. “What really counts is that we should unite all of our strength to show care and concern to the disadvantaged in our society.”

These three people share one thing in common: Their hearts are full of hope for the future, and they want to encourage people with disabilities by personally setting good examples for them to follow. They are able persons indeed! ❀

Tzu Chi Quarterly

Vol. 22 No. 1 Spring 2015



4



32



18



66



54



80

- 1 **THREE ABLE PERSONS**
Three disabled persons have one thing in common: hope for the future.

- 4 **FROM MUDDY MESS TO CLEAN, SOLID GROUND**
A Tzu Chi cash-for-work program brought neighbors together to clean up after the worst flooding in 30 years.

- 18 **HOME WAS BEAUTIFUL ONCE**
Tzu Chi volunteers in Turkey provide humanitarian aid to refugees from the civil war in Syria.

- 32 **BOSNIA: DIFFERENT PEOPLES, ONE FAMILY**
After years of civil war and antagonism between three ethnic groups and religions, the most disastrous flooding in over a century ravaged the country. Volunteers hoped that their relief distributions could help thaw the discord.

- 49 **GIVING WITH UTMOST SINCERITY**
Volunteers around the world give from the treasures in their hearts.

- 54 **PUTTING DOWN ROOTS OF LOVE**
Despite long hours and heavy workloads, an immigrant doctor from Hong Kong sticks with it in the place where he is needed most: a hospital in a remote area of Taiwan.

- 66 **A SUNNIER LIFE**
Although Chen Yu-yu has had both cancer and a spinal injury, he has found a fuller life through writing and painting. He faces every day with a heart of gratitude.

- 80 **THE HOUSE OF GOOD PEOPLE**
Huang Rong-dun found that even relatively small efforts can make a big difference in helping farmers and protecting the Earth.

- 88 **BETTER DAYS DAWNING**
Once desperately poor, a Malaysian woman and her family now help others.

- 91 **THE ILLUSTRATED JING SI APHORISMS**
When difficulties or conflicts arise in your life, be grateful.

- 92 **TZU CHI EVENTS AROUND THE WORLD**
Tzu Chi briefs from all over.



The *Tzu Chi Quarterly* welcomes contributions of personal experiences or reports of Tzu Chi activities. We also welcome letters to the editor containing personal comments or opinions on matters of interest in the Tzu Chi world. We reserve the right to edit the letters for purposes of space, time or clarity. Letters should include the writer's name, address and telephone number.

Address: No. 2, Lide Road, Taipei 11259, Taiwan.
Telephone: 886-2-2898-9000 ext 8046
Fax: 886-2-2898-9977
E-mail: chris_wu@tzuchi.org.tw

Tzu Chi Quarterly

President and 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

Tzu Chi Quarterly is owned and published quarterly by the Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation, No. 1, Lane 88, Jingshe St., Kanglo Village, Shinsen Hsiang, Hualien County 97150, Taiwan.
Shih Cheng Yen, Chairman.
Copyright © 2015 Tzu Chi Foundation.
All rights reserved. Printed in Taiwan.
For a free copy of the *Tzu Chi Quarterly*, please contact your nearest Tzu Chi branch office (see inside back cover).

中華郵政台北誌字第910號執照登記為雜誌交寄

MALAYSIA

From
Muddy
Mess

to
Clean,
Solid
Ground

Two Tzu Chi volunteers on the scene of a cash-for-work program to clean up flood-ravaged Kuala Krau, Pahang, Malaysia.

LEE KOK KEONG



TZU CHI RELIEF EFFORTS AFTER MALAYSIAN FLOODS

From December 23, 2014, to January 17, 2015, Tzu Chi volunteers in Malaysia put in 8,030 person-times to provide help in 18 areas across five states. They made and delivered 13,125 boxed meals, provided relief supplies for 8,203 families, provided free medical service for 1,468 patient visits, and held cash-for-work programs, which logged 16,768 person-times.

LEE MUN KEAT

By Gan Chian Nee
Translated by Tang Yau-yang

The rainy season in Malaysia runs from November to March, during which time the Northeast Monsoon brings abundant rain to the east coast states of Peninsular Malaysia. Residents there are prepared for heavy rains during this season, but they were not prepared enough for the deluge this year—the rains that came in December 2014 led to the worst floods in 30 years. Hundreds of thousands of people in nine states were affected. The states of Kelantan, Terengganu, and Pahang were hit the hardest.

In the aftermath of the flooding, residents were stuck with thick mud and debris that the water had left behind. It would be daunting for anyone to clean it up alone. A Tzu Chi cash-for-work program brought neighbors together, and with their combined strength the path to recovery has been made much easier.

Pahang is the largest state in Peninsular Malaysia, and the third largest in the country. The 270-mile Pahang River, the longest in the peninsula, flows through the state, where 1.5 million people live. The river is a major source of economic activity in the region, helping to sustain a fishing industry and boost tourism.

Unfortunately, this river floods almost every year. Flooding in low-lying areas is especially commonplace. Residents along its banks are

accustomed to the situation and have largely adapted their lives to it.

But in December 2014, heavy rains brought floods unlike any before. Floodwaters, instead of receding normally, continued to rise because of high tides due to a full moon. This wave of floods affected 260,000 people throughout Malaysia, 120,000 of which lived along the river. The disaster prompted the Malaysian Ministry of Education to postpone for a week the opening of all primary

and secondary schools, which were originally slated to open on January 4, 2015.

Tzu Chi volunteers in the nation decided to focus on the especially hard-hit states of Pahang and Kelantan. They set out on December 26 and 27 from Penang and Kuala Lumpur to assess the damage. When they arrived, they found so much water everywhere it was difficult to tell whether solid ground or a ditch was underneath the water. It was quite dangerous to wade in the

Even the name of the town of Temerloh, one of the places hardest hit by the flood, was half washed away in the flood.

water, so they went about their mission in small boats. They took special caution to prevent their boats from being overturned.

After the visits, they were in no mood to welcome the New Year. Instead, they worked through the holiday to help flood victims.





LEE MUN KEAT

Making the best of circumstances, residents go out for some sun and fun in the mess that the flood left behind.

Cash-for-work program

Temerloh is a town with a large Malay population that sits near the Pahang River. Many people there operate fish farms along the river. In good times, the river is a lifeline for many families; in bad times like this, it brings them misery.

During this flood, Temerloh was submerged for nearly a week; more than 15,300 residents were affected. On December 27, Tzu Chi volunteers visited the area to appraise the situation. Commercial districts and residential neighborhoods alike were under water, and volunteers had to take boats to get around. More volunteers followed this initial group into the town. While they continued to assess damage, they also distributed relief goods.

At the peak of the disaster, 260,000 people in Malaysia were affected. Tzu Chi volunteers inspected the situation, carried out relief distributions, and provided free medical services in different areas. During this time, they found that the best way to help communities return to normal would be to initiate cash-for-work programs to clear the mud, damaged furniture, and debris from the affected neighborhoods. They set to work on it, but before such programs could be started, a few hurdles had to be overcome.

Muslims account for more than 60 percent of the nation's population. Though Tzu Chi has always helped people in need without regard to their religion, ethnicity, or any other considerations, it is nonetheless a Buddhist organization by name. They had to address this issue before anything else. Therefore, volunteers worked with village heads and councilmen to iron out

issues, and they made the community leaders feel comfortable in supporting the initiative.

While distributing goods in Temerloh, volunteers heard that a fellow volunteer in Kuala Krau, 45 minutes away by car, was also a victim of the floods. They decided to take some time to visit her. When they arrived, they discovered that about 600 families there had been severely affected by the floods. No aid had yet arrived.

Kuala Krau became one of the areas in which volunteers started a cash-for-work project. The project kicked off on January 4, 2015. Volunteers had anticipated that a thousand people might turn out for work, but a mere two hundred showed up. They pressed ahead all the same. "Let's go into people's homes and help them move out damaged furniture," said volunteer David Liu (劉濟雨), who coordinated the cleanup work. "Then we'll use excavators and trucks to clear the garbage from the neighborhoods. As soon as the homes and the roads are clean, life will return to the community." Liu also urged volunteers to take the opportunity to talk to residents and encourage them to join the program.

Volunteers worked in teams of ten. Whenever they saw local residents cleaning up, they helped them out and told them about the program. Some people thought that the program was too

good to be true—they found it hard to believe that they would get paid for cleaning up their own homes and community. Others went to the designated spot to sign up and started to work. True enough, they each got a hundred ringgits (US\$28) at the end of the workday.

On the second day, more than 800 people signed up. The floods had caused many workplaces to shut down, so many people were temporarily out of work. The money they received from the project came in handy.

Regaining vitality

The three-day cash-for-work program ended on a high note, but the cleanup was not completed. Therefore, volunteers returned to Kuala Krau on January 10 to extend the program one more day. On January 11, they also conducted a large-scale relief distribution at a local school, where daily necessities, folding beds, and blankets were given out to flood victims. A free clinic was held at the same time.

After four days of the cash-for-work program, which logged more than 2,600 person-times, Kuala Krau was transformed. Mountains

Days after the flood, standing water still made the road impassable. Villagers in Temerloh relied on boats to go purchase necessities.



HENG SUI CHANG

of garbage, large furniture dragged from houses, and tons of mud had been cleared out. The streets were restored almost to their usual condition and were no longer hard to negotiate. Many stores, which had been closed since the flood, opened their doors, and many owners and workers were going through their inventories of goods to determine what to keep and what to toss. Even street vendors were back in business. Families could be seen busily cleaning up the inside and outside of their homes.

Yeong Kam Lin (楊金蓮), 64, is the sole Tzu Chi commissioner in Kuala Krau. "We had all thought that the mud and garbage would be very hard to clear," she said. "But everyone's combined efforts really made a big difference. People really pitched in during the four days of the cash-for-work program."

Ramlah bt. Mamat, 62, lives in a corner of the village that is easy for people to overlook. All of her belongings were flooded. She had been worried that help would never reach her home. Just when she was feeling the most distressed, she saw Tzu Chi volunteers come into her village to inspect the damage and help clean up. They listened to her pour out her anguish. Grateful for the help the volunteers rendered to the village, she repeatedly told the volunteers that she would invite them back to her home when she had made it more presentable.

In addition to leading the cleanup work, volunteers also visited household after household to identify people who needed help. Immediately after, they began preparing for a distribution of cash aid so that flood victims could buy new furniture and necessities.

Schools

Many schools suffered heavy damage in the flood. Some schools could not replace desks, chairs, and books soon enough to meet the government-mandated start date for a new term. Besides, some of the teachers, staff, and students at the schools were flood victims themselves. Those schools were forced to delay opening by another week.

Schools needed cleaning just as badly as the homes and streets did, but there were only so

On January 11, 2015, volunteers distributed emergency cash to 243 primary and secondary school students in Kuala Krau affected by the flood. The cash will help them buy things such as school uniforms.



LIM CHIN TONG



Residents and volunteers load garbage onto a truck provided by the work relief program in Kuala Krau.

Imam Roslan Awang Mohamad leads villagers to clean up a school so it may reopen soon.



Dr. Lim Lian Cheoo (林連水) treats a wounded toe for Viveganda Ponnar, 41. A rock fell on it when he was cleaning up his house. On January 11, 2015, 95 Tzu Chi International Medical Association members from Kuala Lumpur and Klang held a free clinic in Kuala Krau.



many hands to go around. School principals and teachers were therefore at their wits' end. Tzu Chi volunteers rushed to help so that children could return to school as soon as possible.

SMA Darul Naim is a good example of how Tzu Chi helped local schools. Located in a low-lying area, the school had seen its share of flooding in the 52 years since its founding, but the worst they had ever experienced was waist-high water. That record was easily shattered in this deluge, when floodwaters reached as high as the second floor.

Imam Roslan Awang Mohamad pointed out that the flood had come when the school was on break. Though he lived closest to the school, the deluge had prevented him from going there. When the water finally receded, he was the first on the scene. His heart sank when he saw the mud all over the campus.

He rounded up 30 relatives and friends to clean up. They worked a whole day and managed to clean an area that measured 150 square meters (180 square yards). They were totally exhausted. Just then the imam got word that a non-profit named Tzu Chi would come the following day to help them. His heart lifted.

Sharifah Fazura bt. Syed Omar, an 11-year veteran teacher at the school, said, "When I saw the horrible sights in the school after the ravages of the flood, I thought we would have to close. There was no way we could muster enough help to restore the school." As soon as she heard about the cash-for-work program, she told everybody about it and urged alumni, family, and friends to sign up.

The imam said, "It was like people sinking in a river: They waved their arms for help, and Tzu Chi offered a helping hand and pulled them up just in time." What moved him the most was seeing the volunteers sincerely and willingly putting in the time to help. "Where there is suffering, there are Tzu Chi volunteers," he added.

After the cleanup, watermarks everywhere at the school still vividly reminded everyone of this horrible flood. But the campus was no longer covered in mud, and people could once again walk on solid ground. The school was ready to serve its students again.

"On behalf of my fellow residents in Kelantan, I wanted to thank all my fellow volunteers," said Ho Ji Yuan (何濟淵), a Tzu Chi volunteer. "I felt really helpless when this huge calamity hit us. Thank you for giving us so much help."

Ho had volunteered in the Philippines after Typhoon Haiyan, so he had witnessed the marvelous effectiveness of cash-for-work programs in quickly returning disaster zones to some degree of normalcy. Now a similar program was being implemented in his home state, where many places, things, and people were so familiar to him. That proximity was tangling up his emotions.

Ho had been impressed by many people. "Businesses loaned us tools for cleaning and motor scooters to help us move about. Two hotels even provided space for Tzu Chi to set up coordination headquarters," he said. "A mosque allowed us to cook on their premises, and they led prayers after the cleanup. Some people declined the cash after they had worked all day. There is love everywhere."

Although this natural disaster led to distress and suffering, people helping people, disregarding the barriers of religion and ethnicity, stirred up expanding ripples of love. People have been brought closer together by the warmth of mutual help.

Better Beds, Better Sleep

By Tan Kim Hion and Koh Poo Leng
Translated by Tang Yau-yang

Wet floors were not the most comfortable place to sleep, but they had to suffice for many flood victims. But after receiving folding beds at a relief distribution, they could rest easier and have more energy to face the challenges on their road back to normalcy.

“Although Master Cheng Yen isn’t here personally, we still feel her love for us,” said Charlie B Din, the village head of Kampung Paya Mendo. Tears welled up in his eyes as he lay across a folding bed.

On January 11, 2015, Tzu Chi volunteers held a relief distribution for flood victims at SMK Kuala Krau, a secondary school in Pahang, Malaysia. Items including daily necessities, blankets, disinfectants, and folding beds were given out. Charlie B Din, himself one of the aid recipients, finally cracked a smile when volunteers handed the items to him.

Volunteers followed him home after the distribution, though the other members of his family were not there. “The flood came in that high,” he

Village head Charlie B Din explains to villagers how the folding bed and the blanket came about.



SOHTECK HING

said, pointing at a water line on a wall. “The lowest 23 homes in the village were awash first.”

A flood-damaged gas range lay on the floor. An improvised contraption made with wood planks in his bedroom served as his bed, such as it was. It was not long enough for a tall man like him to stretch out. Though he did not particularly enjoy sleeping in a constrained, curled-up position, he didn’t have much choice—the only alternative was to sleep on the cold, wet floor.

The volunteers helped him move the rickety old bed out of the house and open the folding bed he had received at the distribution. The village head could not wait to lie on it. He stretched all out on the bed, first flat on his back and then sideways. He was enchanted. He sat up, choked back his tears, and said, “This is good, really comfortable. Now I can

A Malay woman, 69, smiles as she sits flanked by two Tzu Chi volunteers on a folding bed.

have a good night’s sleep with my body fully stretched out.”

Norhayati Ibrahn lived in Kampung Tanjung Kubu on the bank of the Pahang River. As soon as she and her mother had received their goods and returned to their house, they pulled open their folding bed. The Tzu Chi volunteers who had followed them home sat with her mother on the bed. The old woman smiled widely. She held a volunteer’s hands and gently said, “You’re all very kind, very kind.”

“Look! Mom is smiling! She has rarely smiled since the flood,” Norhayati Ibrahn said a bit emotionally. She did not expect that the first group to reach them with aid after the flood would be Chinese—people of a different ethnicity from her, and total strangers to boot.

The daughter cast her mind back to the time when the flood struck. The Pahang River rose fiercely and quickly. She, her mother, and their neighbors had to run for their lives, leaving all their things behind. They were put up in a shelter, which was without water and electricity for the first two days they were there.

A week later, the water had receded and they went home for the first time. When her mom saw what the flood had done to their house, she cried her heart out.

“Dad built this house with his own hands,” Norhayati Ibrahn explained, “and many things in the house belonged to him and Mom. After Dad passed on, those were the only things that Mom had to remember Dad by. When the deluge destroyed everything, it was more than she could take. She has cried a lot since.”

Their furniture and refrigerator were covered in mud and their walls and windows were damaged. Having nothing better, they slept on the damp concrete floor with only a straw mat to shield them from the chill of the floor. Things did not look very good for the two of them.

Then Norhayati Ibrahn heard about the Tzu Chi cash-for-work cleanup program. Early on January 10, she took her mother to SMK Kuala Krau to sign up. The program did not extend to their village, but at their sincere request volunteers visited the village to appraise the situation. They saw a dozen families, all consisting of older Malays. No aid had reached them yet, so the vol-



LEE KOK KEONG

unteers arranged for trucks and people to come in and clean up.

“Ours is a forgotten village,” Norhayati Ibrahn said. “If you hadn’t helped us, we wouldn’t have been able to afford trucks to haul away the garbage. We’d have had to live with stinky rubbish.” She was really glad that her village got the assistance.

She sat on the new bed and said to her mother, “This bed from Taiwan is wonderful. Mom, lie down and try it out.” The old woman cheerfully did as her daughter suggested. Then she smiled and said that after having slept on the cold floor for several nights, it would be a great blessing to sleep on such a comfortable bed.

“Thank you for coming to my home often to show care for my mother. Only when she’s happy will I feel right,” Norhayati Ibrahn added. At the sight of her mother tightly embracing the volunteers, she realized that love knows no skin color, ethnicity, or religion. All people are family.

The volunteers told them that the blankets they distributed had been made from recycled PET bottles. That made Norhayati Ibrahn think. She thought of the Styrofoam, plastic bags, bottles, and cans floating in the river. She did not know where this stuff all came from, but she knew that if people kept throwing garbage into the river, one day the river would again carry such garbage into her house.

“Although I’ve known Tzu Chi for just two days, I really identify with its ideals,” she said. She believes that everybody should recycle and help others now, and not wait until another disaster strikes. “Mom and I used to live idly before the flood. Now I don’t want to live that way anymore. I want to join in Tzu Chi’s recycling work. That is a meaningful cause.”

Her decision moved the volunteers. They hugged her. She hurriedly wiped away her tears and smiled.

Home Was Beautiful Once

Syrian Refugees in Turkey

There are more than a million Syrian refugees in Turkey. They live in poverty, not knowing when they will be able to go home. The protracted civil war in Syria has made their once beautiful country a frightening and dangerous place.

A refugee professor is working with Tzu Chi volunteers in Turkey to provide humanitarian aid to his own fellow countrymen.

Text and photos by Hsiao Yiu-hwa
Translated by Tang Yau-yang

A woman goes home with blankets distributed by Tzu Chi.



A Syrian mother and her children panhandle at a tourist hot spot in Istanbul.



A small restaurant in an old part of Istanbul, Turkey, posted a small note on its door announcing a vacancy for a cleaner. The note did not specify any qualifications for prospective applicants, but it did tersely state who was not welcome to apply: “No Syrians.”

What a difference the Syrian civil war has made. The country used to be one of the most highly educated nations in the Middle East, but it became entangled in civil war in the wake of the Arab Spring revolutions that started in 2010. The fierce fighting in Syria that began in 2011 impelled three million people, half of them children, to flee the nation. More than a million went to Turkey.

“That’s just the number of those that are officially registered. There have been a great many more that have entered illegally,” said Faisal Hu (胡光中), a Tzu Chi volunteer living in Turkey. Out of the 1.6 million Syrian refugees there, only 220,000 are in the 22 fully operating refugee camps at the border of Turkey and Syria; the rest have scattered around Turkey fending for themselves. How are these people doing?

In limbo

On a November day in 2014, the weather was crisp and cold in Istanbul. The setting sun painted the New Mosque on the Bosphorus gold. The call for prayers, the *adhan*, sounded, calling faithful Muslims to stop and pray. The atmosphere in the mosque was solemn and respectful.

The spice bazaar close to the mosque in this popular tourist district, brightly lit and bustling with shoppers, was another picture. Pigeons gathered in front of the mosque, fighting for crumbs that people had scattered for them. Also in the area, some people—less fortunate than the birds—were begging to survive.

The last group of people was who we had come here to see. As we photographed and videotaped them, some passersby stopped to ask us why we were interested in these beggars. “Don’t ever mistake them for Turks,” they said to us with a slight touch of disdain in their voices. “They’re Syrians.”

In fact, we were already very aware of just who they were. We had learned about the plight

of Syrian refugees struggling to scrape by in Turkey, so we came here to record it. Having nowhere to turn, these refugees, mostly women and children, panhandled on the streets. We saw kids dressed in shabby clothes, some even barefoot, begging for money.

“I met a little barefoot girl one day begging for money,” Hu said, recalling an encounter a few months earlier. “I asked her if she was from

Syria, and if she could take me to see her home.” She agreed, and so they took a short train ride and walked some way to an area where many Syrians lived.

Hu had seen refugees streaming into Turkey for more than three years, but not until that moment did he realize how difficult their life was. He saw women and children living outdoors and children combing through garbage

cans for scraps of food. His heart went out to these people as he pondered what he could do for them. He went to Taiwan and reported to Master Cheng Yen the adversity he had witnessed. The foundation decided to help.

However, even with the solid support of Tzu Chi in Taiwan, there was no guarantee Hu would be able to help Syrian refugees in Turkey. There were fewer than ten Tzu Chi volunteers in the



Faisal Hu, left, his wife Zhou Ru-yi, and another Tzu Chi volunteer, Yu Zi-cheng, visit a Syrian refugee at her home. The information they gather will be used in planning future aid initiatives.



A group of Syrian refugees take care of each other in their rented quarters. Many Syrians held good jobs back home, but as refugees in a foreign land, they can only work illegally at menial jobs. Despite their difficult circumstances, many Syrians help out at Tzu Chi distributions.



country, so they would need help if they wanted to reach out effectively to the Syrians. Just when Hu was racking his brain on how best to proceed, Professor Cuma Suri came to him.

Suri used to be a college professor of the Arabic language in Syria, but the civil war had forced him to flee to Turkey. He had wanted to do something to help his struggling fellow refugees, but he lacked the resources to do so. A former student of his from Taiwan told him about Hu, so Suri got in touch with the Tzu Chi volunteer. That's how two non-Turks, both living on Turkish soil, started working together, hoping to make a dent in the suffering of Syrian refugees.

Their immediate goal was to hold large-scale distributions of daily necessities for those displaced from Syria. The work was split like this: Hu, his wife Zhou Ru-yi (周如意), and Yu Zi-cheng (余自成), another Tzu Chi volunteer in Turkey, set out to procure blankets and food for the distributions; Professor Suri would enlist help from his fellow countrymen and work on identifying aid recipients and recruiting volunteers to help in the distributions.

Education for the young

Many refugees, like the professor, used to have good jobs in Syria, but none of that mattered in their host country. A good many of them, if they could find work at all, ended up in menial jobs. Even worse, they got paid less than Turks for doing the same work. Since they could not work legally, they could not complain about the lower wages. After they had paid rent with their meager incomes, not much was left to pay for anything else. As a result, many children were forced to quit school just so they could work to help support their families.

"War is the most stupid thing that man can do," Professor Suri lamented, pouring out his worries to us. "Just a few years of war can ruin the educational foundation of a nation, and the damage cannot be repaired fully even with a hundred years' work. A child without education is a child without hope for the future, especially a child in exile."

Like the professor, many refugees also worried about the education for the young. Some of them had banded together to provide Syrian children with an education. They set up a learning facility where children could receive lessons, live, and eat for free. The facility was located in a building space that some kind-hearted people

had provided to the group without charge. A few volunteer teachers taught there.

Professor Suri led Tzu Chi volunteers on a tour of the facility. It was winter and very cold, but the children were sleeping on cardboard mats with thin covers. "Aren't you cold?" Hu asked. "Yes, we are" they answered. In response, Tzu Chi volunteers delivered blankets and mattresses to them.

There were many refugees who badly needed help—far more than Tzu Chi could cover. Therefore it was necessary to identify those most in need. Hu joined Professor Suri and some ten Syrian volunteers the professor had recruited to make a roster of recipients for the distributions. Starting two weeks before the distributions, they called on Syrian families at their homes each day after work to assess their situation firsthand and determine whether or not to include the family on the roster.

Relief distributions

Since it was winter, it could get cold at night, below ten degrees Celsius (50 degrees Fahrenheit), so blankets, which were to be among the items distributed, would come in handy indeed.

However, Hu had much to do before that could happen. For several weeks, he worked closely with a local blanket manufacturer and Tzu Chi headquarters in Hualien, Taiwan, to iron out all the issues and make all the necessary arrangements. "We've finally gotten hold of the blankets for Syrian refugees. These blankets are light, soft, and warm," Hu said, his tone conveying his excitement. Each blanket measured 2.3 by 1.8 meters (7.5 by 5.9 feet), and was about a centimeter (0.4 inch) thick.

Volunteers shopped around for other distribution items and found the best values at a BIM store. They decided to purchase 11 types of food, including pasta, rice, wheat, cooking oil, flour, green lentils and red lentils. Hu paid for the purchases with large wads of cash. He and his wife explained to us that checks are not usually accepted for purchases in Turkey, so they had to use cash, even for big purchases.

Now that the blankets and food were taken care of, volunteers prayed for nice weather so things would go smoothly at the distributions, which were scheduled on four days. The first one took place on November 8, 2014, at a community center in the Arnavutköy district of Istanbul, followed by another one the next day at a cultural center in the Sultangazi district. Blankets were

Blankets from Tzu Chi add warmth to the children's sleep.



An imam teaches the Quran in a make-shift learning facility for Syrian children. Children must sit on the floor for their meal at the facility.





Volunteers are on hand to help people carry the blankets they receive. Family size determines the number of blankets that each household receives.

the only items given out on these two days. Food would be distributed a week later.

About 50 volunteers set up the distribution venues beforehand. Tzu Chi volunteers in Turkey, Professor Suri and the Syrian volunteers he had recruited, Taiwanese students studying in Turkey, members of a Taiwanese chamber of commerce, and city councilman Zeki Demir participated in the distributions. Deputy Mayors Kemal Aygenli and Bekir Koç of Arnavutköy and Sultangazi also helped out at the distributions held in their districts.

Syrian volunteers, chanting the Quran, opened the distribution. Hu, his wife, and their son, Hu Yun-kai (胡雲凱), then read a letter of sympathy from Master Cheng Yen in Turkish, Mandarin, and Arabic to the gathering.

Volunteers put their right hands on their chests to greet the recipients, then bowed low and handed blankets over to them. Family size determined the number of blankets provided. Some women put their blankets on their heads and walked home hand in hand with their children. They would sleep warmer and more comfortably.

Shukran—"thank you" in Arabic—was often heard at the distribution venues as people expressed their gratitude for the goods they had received. The volunteers who helped out were grateful as well. A young Syrian volunteer, Barış, reflected on the events: "I was really touched during the distributions. All I did was pass blankets to be handed over to recipients, but my work was valuable too. I know that an untold amount of hard work had been done before the blankets could be given out, and I'll never forget such kind help."

Professor Suri said, "I used to know little about Buddhism, but now I see that Islam and



Professor Cuma Suri goes over the distribution process with Syrian volunteers. Faisal Hu and Zhou Ru-yi display a blanket like those to be distributed to refugees.



A Syrian family that sleeps on a sidewalk wakes up to another day in Turkey.

Buddhism share the same values: altruistic love, large-heartedness, and peace. My involvement with the distributions has given me a better understanding of Buddhism."

Yan De-fen (顏德芬), a member of the Tzu Chi Collegiate Association from California, was studying in Turkey; Lian Yi-jing (連翊晶), from Taiwan, moved to Turkey after she got married; Wang Yu-zhen (王玉珍) was deputy director of a local Taiwanese chamber of commerce. Though different circumstances had brought them to the nation, they all volunteered their services, and they all felt that they had gotten something valuable out of the participation. "Although we handed out blankets to keep them warm, it was their smiles that warmed my heart," Wang said.

The distributions of blankets for 1,100 families went off smoothly on November 8 and 9. Food packets—each containing 11 items—went out to 970 families on November 15 and 16 at the same venues in Arnavutköy and Sultangazi.

Some refugees, even after having worked a long 12-hour shift, volunteered to help in the distributions. Ahmad, one of the volunteers, said, "In my own country, I used to have a loving family and a peaceful life. Syria was beautiful before the war." The difficult life in a foreign land made him want to reach out to help his fellow countrymen.

Manar, another Syrian, said, "I've prayed for peace, and I've seen the first sign of peace emerging, with Tzu Chi at the forefront."

Another volunteer added, "I hope that one day there will be no weapons in the world, and that no passports will be necessary because people will be seen not as Americans, Asians, or Arabs, but as brothers and sisters."

That is not just his hope, but also the hope of Tzu Chi volunteers. ♣

[Editor's note] A bit of good news has come for refugees featured in this article and their fellow displaced countrymen. In December 2014, the *New York Times* featured an article, "Turkey Strengthens Rights of Syrian Refugees." The article reported that the Turkish government has granted the refugees "access to basic services like health care and education...[but] stops short of granting Syrians official refugee status, which would entitle them to a broader array of benefits like housing, public relief and various social services."



BOSNIA

Different Peoples, One Family

A century ago, the assassination of the Austro-Hungarian crown prince Franz Ferdinand in Bosnia sparked World War I. The region has had its share of turmoil in the years since, its history littered with man-made or natural disasters.

The new nation of Bosnia and Herzegovina gained independence in 1992 after the dissolution of Yugoslavia, only to be engulfed in a three-year civil war that left 200,000 people dead.

Then in May 2014 came the worst flooding in over a century for the country. With unemployment levels sky high, many people there already had tough lives. The disaster only added insult to injury.

At her home, Bahri, 67, remembers the disastrous flood. Her house is still in disarray five months later.



A glimpse of the three major religions in Bosnia: a priest in his Serbian Orthodox church; Muslim girls at a Friday service in a mosque; a Catholic woman attending Mass, dressed in traditional attire.





Text and photos by Hsiao Yiu-hwa
Translated by Tang Yau-yang

I set out for Munich, Germany, on October 15, 2014, traveling from Taipei, Taiwan, by way of Istanbul, Turkey. In Germany, I was going to join Tzu Chi volunteers in Europe for a trip to Bosnia (formally Bosnia and Herzegovina). Our mission was to distribute aid to flood victims.

I arrived at Istanbul International Airport at 5:00 in the morning of the 16th. Though it was still very early, crowds of people thronged the airport and automobiles packed the roadways outside while one airplane after another landed or took off. Constant noise filled the early morning air.

Istanbul, once the center of the Ottoman Empire, is now an international hub for air travel. At the zenith of its power in the 16th and 17th centuries, the empire controlled much of Western Asia, the Caucasus, North Africa, the Horn of Africa, and Southeast Europe, including the Balkan Peninsula, of which Bosnia was a part.

From 1867 to 1918, Bosnia was ruled by the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which collapsed as a result of defeat in World War I. The empire was divided into many countries, including Yugoslavia, of which Bosnia was a constituent. Bosnia gained independence after Yugoslavia disintegrated in 1992.

A path made rockier by floods

Bosnia has had a rocky history since it declared independence. A three-year civil war followed, leaving thousands upon thousands of people dead, to say nothing of the damage to property and infrastructure. Afterwards, the nation needed to heal, rebuild, and make up for lost time.

Unfortunately, the economy has not picked up much in the 20 years since the war. "Unemployment, at 40 percent, is a thorny problem that we're trying very hard to solve," said Živko Budimir, President of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. He spoke to us in his small but well-kept office in Sarajevo, the national capital. The bright morning sunshine coming through the window spotlighted the resolve on his face.

An honor guard on duty at a cemetery in Sarajevo for people killed in the 1992-1995 civil war.

However, before he could resolve the unemployment problem, the nation was devastated in May 2014 by the worst floods in over a century. Four in ten people in the nation were affected as the deluge submerged houses and roads and dealt a heavy blow to an already struggling economy.

The government was unable to help victims clean up their homes and neighborhoods. Some neighborhoods remained in disarray five months after the deluge. Bahri, 67 years old, lived alone near the Tinja River. During the catastrophe, the river spilled over its banks and inundated her home. Five months later, her house was still a scene of chaos and a musty smell pervaded the air.

Her messy home was representative of the dire situation in the disaster zone. The international community pledged one billion U.S. dollars in aid, but it had yet to reach the victims. People were still in distress, still waiting.

Crossing borders

It was October 17, 2014, not yet 5:00 a.m. In the near-dawn darkness, shadows of people moved about in front of a house in a suburb of Munich, Germany. The light from the open garage provided illumination as the group of people hurried to and fro, loading things onto a large bus. A half hour later, the people boarded the bus and headed southeast toward Bosnia.

On the bus were 50 Tzu Chi volunteers from Germany, Italy, Austria, Great Britain, France, Ireland, Malaysia, and Taiwan. Also on board were a thousand blankets made from recycled PET bottles, 163,200 Euros (US\$203,000) worth of cash vouchers, copies of a letter of sympathy from Master Cheng Yen, copies of *Jing Si Aphorisms* (a collection of maxims by Master Cheng Yen), and small gifts. The group was scheduled to distribute the relief items to 332 families from the flood-hit towns of Srebrenik and Šamac in Bosnia.

The trip had been set in motion three months earlier. In July 2014, at the invitation of the Bosnian government, Tzu Chi volunteers in Munich visited the disaster area twice to assess flood damage. The distribution was a result of their findings.

In Srebrenik, landslides triggered by rainstorms had caused extensive damage. The town of Šamac, submerged for 17 days, was also hit hard; waterborne heavy metals from factories had polluted the soil, causing severe damage to agriculture. Many young people were forced to work in neighboring countries. Those who stayed behind were too old, too young, or did not have the financial means to clean up or repair their homes.

Ammunition showcased at the Sarajevo Tunnel Museum is a potent reminder of the ferocity of the civil war.

After their assessment trips to Bosnia, Tzu Chi volunteers began preparing goods for a relief distribution. Chen Shu-wei (陳樹微), who lives in Germany, indicated that the wealth in Europe had generally made it harder for Tzu Chi volunteers there to find occasions where they might provide assistance. Besides, there were very few of them in Europe, spread out in various countries. It was not easy for them to get together and work on a project. That's why they cherished and seized the opportunity to help, even when one roadblock after another sprang up as they planned and prepared for the distribution. With volunteers from different countries putting aside their personal responsibilities and pitching in to help, they were able to pull everything together and overcome their obstacles.

It was more than 800 kilometers (500 miles) from Munich to Srebrenik. The volunteers had to cross Austria, Slovenia, and Croatia. The trip



The country of Bosnia and Herzegovina encompasses an area of 51,197 square kilometers (19,767 square miles). Its population consists of three main ethnic groups: Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats. The national capital is Sarajevo.

Fifty volunteers from Germany, Italy, Austria, Great Britain, France, Ireland, Malaysia, and Taiwan traveled by bus from Munich, Germany, to Srebrenik, Bosnia, where they conducted a relief distribution on October 18, 2014. A thousand blankets made from recycled PET bottles, cash vouchers for a total of €163,200 (US\$203,000), copies of a letter of sympathy from Master Cheng Yen, copies of *Jing Si Aphorisms*, and small gifts went to 332 households.





Even before 5:00 a.m. on October 17, 2014, Tzu Chi volunteers in a suburb of Munich, Germany, were busy loading distribution goods onto a bus.



Volunteers greet a woman at the distribution site.
At the beginning of the distribution ceremony, volunteers lead the crowd in singing the English version of “Love and Care,” a popular Tzu Chi song.



At the opening ceremony, Bosnian President Živko Budimir, center, Srebrenik mayor, right, and Tzu Chi volunteer Rudolf Pfaff pray according to the Catholic, Islamic, and Buddhist ways.
At the distribution, recipients watch a film of the May flood.



took 12 hours, but the group finally arrived in Srebrenik, Bosnia, in the late afternoon. After dinner they assembled to review the plans for the distribution slated to take place the next day. They wanted to make the event as successful as possible.

Harmony

“There are three major religions in Bosnia: Islam, Serbian Orthodoxy, and Roman Catholicism,” Chen Shu-wei observed. “Their respective adherents used to live in peace with one another. However, that changed when the civil war [1992-1995] cracked the concord and mutual respect between them.” Chen said that in view of that history, Master Cheng Yen had expressed her hope that through the distribution Tzu Chi volunteers in Europe could help thaw the historical hatred and discord with warmth.

Bringing people from those three religious groups together for the distribution would be quite a challenge. Tzu Chi volunteers were unsure what might happen. German volunteer Rudolf Pfaff was so worried that he could not sleep a wink the night before the distribution.

The event venue was a theater with just one entrance. The help of local police was enlisted in case of disorder. Recipients were seated in three sections according to their religion. President Živko Budimir expressed his gratitude to Tzu Chi for gathering Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats together in the same room to receive help from the foundation.

The event started with volunteers leading those present in singing the English version of “Love and Care,” a song popular in Tzu Chi. The volunteers hoped that everyone could use love to dissolve disasters and warm each other’s heart. When the prayer began, each person in the theater prayed in their usual manner. President Budimir, a Catholic, made the sign of the cross. The mayor of Srebrenik, a Muslim, prayed with his palms open and facing up. Rudolf Pfaff folded his palms before his chest, as Buddhists do when they pray. Everyone was at ease with what they themselves were doing and what other groups were doing. What could

Carrying blankets and cash vouchers, recipients look happy as they leave the distribution site.





In the picturesque ancient city of Mostar, a rebuilt bridge connects people of two religions: Bosnian Muslims to the right of the bridge and Croatian Catholics to the left. The adherents of these two religions used to be friendly, but they fought each other in the 1992-1995 civil war. The bridge is a reconstruction of a more-than-400-year-old bridge that was destroyed during the conflict.

have been an awkward moment turned out just fine—more than fine. It was solemn, peaceful, and touching.

The feared scenario that had kept Pfaff up all night did not materialize after all. The sympathy letters, cash vouchers, and blankets were distributed in perfect order before the sun sank below the horizon and took down the temperature with it.

Temporary relief for 1,170 people in 332 families undoubtedly made only a small dent in the suffering that the great flood had inflicted on the nation. But this sincere effort to help had at least touched the lives of some people who were in need.

At the end of the distribution, a recipient in a wheelchair firmly holds the hand of a Tzu Chi volunteer to express his thanks, marking a perfect conclusion to the event.

Receiving the goodwill from Tzu Chi, one Islamic lady expressed her gratitude to me. She said she wanted to thank the group of strangers for bringing love and care to Bosnia even though they shared no common ties in language, culture, or religion with local people. She did not understand why they had done it, but she was sincerely grateful to them for giving her a glimmer of hope at a time in her life when she was feeling most helpless.

Her appreciation was a shot in the arm for the volunteers and strengthened their resolve to continue helping flood victims in that area in the not-too-distant future. After all, to many Tzu Chi volunteers, seeing people suffer is like seeing their own family suffer. We all live on the same Earth, and it is fitting to give a helping hand to those in need, whoever and wherever they may be. By joining Tzu Chi, volunteers have committed themselves to bringing love to the less fortunate—a pure desire to relieve suffering and live out the great loving-kindness of the bodhisattvas. ❁



Giving With Utmost Sincerity

By Dharma Master Cheng Yen

Translated by Teresa Chang

From December 2014 to January 2015, massive flooding caused by heavy downpours devastated the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia. Over 260,000 people in nine states were affected. When the floodwaters receded, deposits of mud covered vast areas. Soaked garbage and household goods were piled up everywhere as people tried to clean out their homes. The weather was warm and humid in the flooded areas. The longer the mountains of garbage were left out in the open, the more risk they posed to public health. The deluge also affected the livelihoods of many who were temporarily thrown out of work.

The same thing had happened a little over a year earlier in the Philippines when Typhoon Haiyan hit that nation. At that time, Tzu Chi launched a large-scale cash-for-work program to help typhoon victims clean up their houses and communities. The program succeeded in restoring life in ravaged areas, and the money that typhoon survivors received helped tide them over that difficult time. After the flooding in Malaysia this time, our volunteers in the country followed the example of Tzu Chi Philippines and initiated similar work-relief projects. They used heavy machinery and trucks to clear out garbage, and they led local residents in cleaning up streets, neighborhoods and schools.

Since running water and electricity were out of service in some areas, many people hadn't

had hot food for days. In response, our volunteers provided hot meals for participants of the clean-up programs. Workers could go home at the end of a day not only with the cash they earned but also with their stomachs full.

Malaysia has three major ethnic groups: Malay, Indian and Chinese. The three groups don't usually have much interaction with each other, but our volunteers made no distinction between the different ethnicities while conducting the work-relief programs. They gave out of sincerity, care, and a respect for different religions to bring comfort to the flood victims. In the process, people from the three ethnicities worked in unison to restore their homes. They expressed gratitude to one another, dissolved what ethnic barriers there might have been between them, and made society more harmonious as a result.

To relieve suffering caused by the floods, volunteers from areas including Kuala Lumpur, Selangor and Penang traveled to the disaster zones and rendered relief with their hearts united. No matter what difficulties they encountered, they remembered this: Where there is a will, there is a way. Reaching out to flood survivors, they wanted to use love to soothe their hearts.

Our volunteers have worked nonstop for over a month now. In addition to conducting the cash-for-work programs, they have provided free clinics and held aid distributions. Our volunteers in the neighboring nation of Singapore mobilized to help raise funds. The



This article is excerpted from a series of speeches delivered by Master Cheng Yen from January 1 to 17, 2015.



TEE KIM WOO

Tzu Chi initiated a cash-for-work program in Kuala Krau, Pahang, Malaysia, to help local residents clean up their community in the aftermath of a major flood.

floods dealt such a heavy blow to some areas that impoverished people there are facing a daunting road to recovery. Tzu Chi volunteers will continue to bring care to them for as long as it takes to help return stability to their lives. Working in the spirit of the bodhisattvas, they will not rest as long as there are people in need of help.

A natural disaster does not differentiate between rich and poor. When a disaster hits, everyone suffers. No matter how beautifully decorated a house is, it lies in ruins after the ravages of a flood. By visiting a disaster area, Tzu Chi volunteers witness the impermanence of life and the fragility of the land. The suffering they witness helps them learn to count their blessings and inspires in them a deeper realization of how they must seize every chance to give and to pool together people's love to fend off disasters.

Our world is filled with suffering. Once you have resolved to be a real-life bodhisattva, you must make altruistic vows, act on your compassion, and give with utmost sincerity to cultivate

yourself and benefit others. As long as you firmly resolve to live out the bodhisattva spirit, you'll be able to overcome all difficulties and fulfill your wish of helping others.

Pure Land

Denise Tsai (蔡岱霖), originally from Taiwan, is the first Tzu Chi commissioner in Mozambique. In just over two years, she has inspired 900 people in that country to volunteer for Tzu Chi. Tzu Chi first started in Taiwan with volunteers saving up coins to do charity work, and the volunteers in Mozambique have followed suit. Despite the fact that they live in poverty themselves, they are committed to helping the needy.

Recently two Tzu Chi year-end blessing ceremonies were held in Maputo, the capital of Mozambique, on land donated by Taiwanese businessman Chen Chun-fa (陳春發). That piece of land had been lying idle for some time, and our volunteers weeded it, cleaned it, and set it up for the events. More than 2,300 people attended the ceremonies.

During the ceremonies, Denise Tsai gave out *hong-baos* to the attendees. [Giving out these artistically designed small red packets is a tradition of a Tzu Chi year-end blessing ceremony. The money for making them comes from royal-

ties from Master Cheng Yen's books.] Each *hong-bao* contained a Mozambican coin worth 1.5 American cents. Tsai explained that the *hong-baos* were from Taiwan and represented the best wishes from the Jing Si Abode, the spiritual home of all Tzu Chi volunteers. It was a small gift to wish everyone blessings and wisdom.

In order to teach children the importance of filial piety, an activity was held in which children washed the feet of their mothers and served them beverages. Many mothers were so moved by the gesture that they took only a couple of sips before feeding the beverages back to their children. The atmosphere was heartwarming and touching. Through this activity, volunteers hoped to convey this message to the children: "Never delay in practicing filial piety and doing good."

I was warmed when I saw the participants walk into the venue with their steps in unison, following the rhythm of the chant, "On Opening the Sutra." Some of them have been listening to my Dharma talks. Though they do not understand my words in Chinese and their understanding of the English subtitles is limited, they

take in the Buddha's teachings with a pure and simple heart and express their faith in what they have learned by practicing the Buddha's teachings in their daily life, thereby dignifying the Dharma with their actions. Though the venue where the blessing ceremonies were held was simple and crude, their hearts were pure and clear. The purity of their minds transformed the place into a Pure Land.

When our minds are impure and tainted, they easily give rise to unwholesome thoughts, which can lead to all sorts of wrongdoings. The purpose of spiritual practice is to keep our minds pure and clear. When our minds are pure and unpolluted, we will be able to open our hearts to the Dharma and put it into practice to relieve the suffering in the world.

Firm commitment

If we want to purify and transform people's minds in this world, we must have patience

Denise Tsai, a Tzu Chi commissioner, distributes hong-baos to participants of a year-end blessing ceremony held in Mozambique.



SHI BO-JIN

and forbearance. We must stay true to our commitment, do our best to overcome difficulties, and bravely go forward. Facing different kinds of people, we must use our wisdom to guide them according to their levels of understanding and lead them out of suffering. At the same time, we must keep our minds pure, in the same way a lotus flower grows unsullied out of the mud.

Walking the Bodhisattva Path, we need to practice the Six Perfections: giving, keeping the precepts, tolerating insults, diligence, contemplation, and wisdom. When we see others in need of help, we must quickly go to them to give them material aid, share the Dharma with them, and help rid them of fear and gain peace of mind. This is “giving.” By “keeping the precepts,” we observe morals and ethics and avoid misdeeds and wrongdoings. We practice “tolerating insults” when we show good sense and remain unperturbed in the face of challenging conditions. We practice “contemplation” when we don’t adopt or share others’ bad habits or attitudes, and “diligence” when we cultivate ourselves assiduously every day without slacking off. Then, we’ll be able to help our “wisdom” grow. If we can live out the Six Perfections, our resolution to practice the Bodhisattva Way will be firm and we won’t be daunted by any difficulties.

If a seed of goodness can sprout in places full of poverty and hardship, more people will be lifted out of suffering. Knowing that, our volunteers in Durban, South Africa, have formed an international team to guide new volunteers in other African countries in doing philanthropic work and to help strengthen their commitment to walk the Bodhisattva Path. They often need to travel long distances for this purpose. Such work is hard.

One of the team members is 78-year-old Tolakele Mkhize. She joined Tzu Chi 16 years ago and has remained very dedicated to giving to the needy. Last November she caught a cold after going on a trip with other team members to Botswana. But after resting for merely four days, she was off again with other volunteers to do Tzu Chi work in Port Elizabeth.

Since they would have to travel over a thousand kilometers, everyone urged her to stay home and rest. But she said that even if she didn’t go, she couldn’t rest with peace of mind, for every time she lay down to rest, she would think of how I worked even when I was ill. “I’m old,” she said. “There isn’t much time left for

me. I must make the best use of the time I have left by working harder for Tzu Chi.” She also said that she felt reborn when she joined Tzu Chi 16 years ago, and so she was only 16 now.

She is indeed very dedicated. Not even illness can slow her down. She gives of herself so wholeheartedly and willingly. By devoting her life to society, she has made a positive difference in many poor people’s lives.

Though our African volunteers are materially poor, they are spiritually rich. They have taken the Buddha’s teachings to heart, and the Dharma is like an inexhaustible treasure trove from which they draw strength. The process of helping others might be filled with challenges, but once they know they are going in the right direction, they stride forward cheerfully.

If we don’t commit ourselves but just march in place, we’ll surely never make any headway on the Bodhisattva Path. But if we bravely commit ourselves and move onward, we’ll find that it’s not difficult to walk this path at all. Let’s pave each inch of this road with love and inspire others to join us as we proceed on it. The world will indeed benefit if we do so.

Treasure trove within

On January 1, 2015, a raging fire believed to have been ignited by firecrackers engulfed 200 houses in Quezon City, Metro Manila, leaving nearly two thousand families homeless. Local Tzu Chi volunteers quickly went to help. After assessing the destruction, they distributed daily necessities and emergency cash to help victims get through this difficult time.

A fire survivor said that she had received help from Tzu Chi five years ago after Typhoon Ketsana. Some time later, Tzu Chi gave her rice and medical assistance again. This time, when she was affected by the blaze, Tzu Chi volunteers came to her aid again. The sight of our volunteers has made her feel very safe and warm.

Suffering abounds in this world. When a disaster hits, it usually falls the most heavily on the poor. I hope everyone uses their worldly wealth wisely. When you have enough to eat, think of those who are starving. When more people pool their love together, more suffering people will be saved. Please do not live blindly and damage the environment and Mother Nature for your personal gain. Even if we accumulate abundant wealth, we can keep nothing with us forever. What’s more, we’ll have to worry about whom to leave our wealth and treasures to after we

Tolakele Mkhize, a dedicated Tzu Chi volunteer in South Africa, carries on her head a bag of rice to be distributed to an aid recipient.

depart from this world. We are simply creating troubles for ourselves.

Human beings rely on the Earth to live. However, instead of cherishing the environment, they keep damaging it to satisfy their desires. Such greed harms not only the physical world, but also their inner spiritual worlds.

Yushan Island in China’s Fujian Province used to be clean and beautiful. In recent years, however, the growing economy in China has boosted tourism, and tourists have brought a lot of pollution to the island; garbage can now be seen everywhere there. Local Tzu Chi volunteers have worked hard to pick up recyclable garbage and carefully sort it out for recycling. They have worked so hard that blisters and calluses have formed on their hands. In my eyes, the calluses on their hands are like gems—they are worth far more than the diamonds rich people wear on their fingers.

I am really thankful to these recycling volunteers. They use their hands to clean up and protect the Earth. The well-being of the Earth is the well-being of us humans.

Everyone possesses infinite treasures in their hearts. All we need to do is open our hearts to good teachings and tap into that inner wealth. Then we will be able to benefit the world with infinite wisdom and love. Furthermore, unlike material treasures like diamonds or gold, our spiritual treasures can be found without drilling into and damaging the Earth. Nor do we need to rent safety boxes to keep them safe. When our time in this world comes to an end, we can even take them with us to our next lives. They are truly the most precious thing in life.

Time ticks by relentlessly second by second. We have now entered 2015. My biggest wish for this new year is for everyone to embrace sincerity.

Unbalanced minds and erratic climate conditions have resulted in a greater frequency of man-made and natural disasters. If we want to



be safe and well, we can’t rely on praying. Safety and peace only come to us when we live each day with pious sincerity and vigilant care, when we accumulate blessings by respecting heaven, loving the earth, and doing good deeds.

I’m truly thankful for living in a safe place, for passing each day in peace and safety. Gratitude and pious sincerity are what make a society harmonious. Think positively, speak kindly, and do good deeds—that’s how we can bring happiness to the world.

I hope everyone starts with themselves and embraces sincerity, integrity, faith and honesty in their hearts. Respect your parents and older family members, love and care for your siblings and younger family members, and interact with all people with sincere earnestness. Doing so will create blessings for the world. When everyone has sincerity and helps love to grow and converge, the world we live in will be very fortunate.

Let us be ever more mindful.

Putting Down Roots of Love

A Doctor Transplanted

He grew up in Hong Kong, but for the past 12 years he has been doctoring in Taidong, eastern Taiwan. Although his heavy workload has led to perpetually long days and short nights, he has stuck with it, in just the place where he believes he can do the most good.

Text and photos by Yang Shun-bin
Translated by Tang Yau-yang



At an hour before midnight, Dr. Wing-Him Poon (潘永謙), the superintendent of Guanshan Tzu Chi Hospital, was still in the administrative office area reviewing paperwork that he, as a manager of the hospital, needed to handle. He had gone to his office to do paperwork during a slow time in the emergency room. He was on ER duty for the second time this week. A doctor had quit, and Dr. Poon was

filling in until a replacement could be found. He occasionally also substitutes for the Saturday shift if the doctor from Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital cannot show up as routinely planned.

Poon is a busy physician. "I guess I'm approaching 96 hours this week," he said with a wry smile. In addition to his regular work in the orthopedic clinic, he also serves in the ER and operates on patients. He can rest on Saturday

and Sunday when things are less hectic, but even then he still works more than 80 hours a week.

The main reason for his long work hours is a shortage of doctors in the hospital, which is located in a remote area of Taiwan. Most people live on the west side of the island, but Guanshan is on the relatively undeveloped east side. Few doctors are willing to work here. Even if they do, chances are good they will move on to other

Dr. Wing-Him Poon examines a patient late at night in the emergency department of Guanshan Tzu Chi Hospital.

positions in two to three years. The difficulty in attracting staff and the high turnover of personnel has been a perpetual problem for the hospital. As a result, Dr. Poon often works in more than one role and puts in long hours.

As he reviewed the paperwork, he glanced at the photo of his family on his computer. Though his work is hard, the support of his family and the positive feedback from his patients is enough to keep him going.

Where to serve?

Poon came to Taiwan from Hong Kong more than 30 years ago to study at the Department of Medicine at National Taiwan University. He had seen a TV series as a child about how surgeons saved lives. He thought that they were cool and admirable, and that influenced his choice of a career in medicine. "It surely isn't a bad deal to help people and make a living at the same time," he said.

To satisfy a requirement for students in the last year of med school, Poon interned at the school hospital and elsewhere. His experiences led him to decide to specialize in orthopedics. As an orthopedic surgeon, he'd be able to operate on patients in emergency situations and immediately witness the effects of his work. He liked the challenges it brought. He would be much like the stars in the TV series he had seen long before.

Around that time, Poon learned that Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital, outfitted with brand new equipment, had just opened. He also learned that Dr. Chen Ing-ho (陳英和), a few years ahead of him at the same med school and now an accomplished surgeon, was relocating to work for that hospital. Wanting to learn from an old hand, Poon joined Chen at the Tzu Chi hospital in 1991.

In early 2002, Dr. Chen, who had by then become the superintendent of Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital, broached a topic while dining with Poon. He told Poon that the orthopedic surgeon at Guanshan Tzu Chi Hospital, on loan from Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital, was near the end of his two-year commitment and would soon return to Hualien. Chen had yet to find a doctor to replace him in Guanshan. "I'm hoping that you, with your orthopedic background and a complete resume in emergency medicine, can take up that post. What do you think?" he asked Poon.

Chen expected Poon to hesitate with his answer, but Poon didn't. He accepted the offer on the spot. He had always wanted to serve in remote and underdeveloped areas. Once Poon had agreed to take the position, all that was left was to set a date.

A few days after their conversation, Poon saw a patient in his clinic at the Hualien hospital. He

had seen this small girl a year earlier, when he had suggested surgery to fix a broken bone in her right thigh. However, she had not returned to see Poon again until this day. Her condition had grown much worse, and she was unable to bend her right knee. She had walked into the clinic with her father propping her up.

As it happened, the family did not want the little girl to be operated on after the first visit out of a misplaced ideological distrust in surgery. Furthermore, it was very difficult for the family to take her to see bona fide doctors from their home far in the mountains, so they had taken the girl to a quack who claimed to be able to fix bone problems. However, one year later now, instead of improving, her condition had gotten a lot worse.

By delaying proper treatment, the family had caused the girl to miss the golden window for treatment. The condition of the girl's leg had deteriorated beyond even the help of modern medicine. Now Poon had to tell the eager but anxious family the best course of action under the circumstances: "You'll have to wait until she grows up and her skeleton has fully developed. At that time, we can try to secure or replace the joint."

As the downcast family was walking out of the clinic, the girl cried out, "I don't want to be a cripple!"

Her cry caused Poon to reflect on the sorry episode. A simple operation a year earlier could have completely cured the girl's problem, but now she faced disability. He attributed this tragedy to two factors: Hospitals were too far for people in remote areas, and misconceptions were widespread among people. He had to do something to change this situation, and he could not wait.

After talking to his wife, Huang Su-hong (黃素虹), Poon informed Chen the next day of his desire to relocate to Guanshan Tzu Chi Hospital as soon as possible. He started working there in July 2002 as an attending physician in orthopedics.

A second home

Guanshan is located in the southern part of the East Rift Valley, in eastern Taiwan, and has a population of less than ten thousand. When Poon first arrived in this remote area, he was excited and eager to serve his patients there.

Poon removes a cast for a patient in his clinic while instructing a physician in training.



However, his enthusiasm was soon dampened with the challenges he faced.

Dr. Wu Wen-tien (吳文田), Poon's predecessor, had done a very fine job with his patients. As a result, Poon had a tough act to follow. He quickly learned that helping the folks here would take more than he first thought. "I don't understand what you're saying," a patient blurted out, not mincing words. "Dr. Wu was nicer. He talked Taiwanese to me."

Despite the small population, the people there speak a variety of languages: Taiwanese, Hakka, aboriginal languages, and Mandarin. Poon was familiar only with Mandarin, which he spoke with a strong Hong Kong accent. The variety of languages he encountered proved quite challenging to him.

He had much to do to meet the expectations of his patients. But one of the things that he could do was give them sincere, heart-felt care.

One day, a 119-year-old woman was rushed to the emergency department. The doctor on duty suspected a fracture near the pelvis and consulted Poon. Poon decided that the woman needed surgery. Considering her age, a transfer to a larger hospital for the surgery would be quite risky, so Poon decided to perform the high-risk surgery himself. He completed it in 40 minutes, and it went very well.

The day after the surgery, Poon visited the patient in her room. Upon seeing him, the patient held his hand and talked excitedly in Bunun, an aboriginal language. Poon had no idea what she was saying, but her smile was contagious. Through a translator, he learned that she was saying that he was a blessing that her ancestors had sent to help her.

Later, he lay down on the empty bed beside hers and showed her how to do rehabilitation exercises. No words were exchanged, but the two of them communicated nonetheless. Thus he added a little credibility to his short resume in his new job and made a dent in the estrangement that stood in the way of his medical service to the people of this town.

"Mi ho mi san—How are you doing?" said Poon to a Bunun patient. "How may I help you today?" The longer Poon worked in Guanshan, the more acclimated he became to this small town. When he completed his two-year commitment at the hospital, he could have returned to Hualien and resumed his life there, but he chose to stay. About a year later, in May 2005, Poon was promoted to superintendent.

"The superintendent is in the hospital just about every day, year round," said Gu Hua-mei (古花妹), who has worked in the nursing department in the hospital since its construction. "He works so hard. How can we not be on the ball and do our part too?"

Lin Bi-li (林碧麗), Poon's secretary, pointed out that Poon is easygoing with everyone and is very mindful of employees' health. At his suggestion, the hospital cafeteria switched from white rice to mixed grains.

Poon has also been mindful of the needs of the patients, who are mostly elderly and children, just like the population of Guanshan. He has initiated many services specifically for them.

He put up a board in a conspicuous place beside the outpatient registration counter. Using the board, patients can easily locate the floor and room for their clinic appointments. He had a magnifying glass placed by the pharmacy counter to help the elderly see more clearly the directions for their medications. He even fitted a retractable hook on his desk in his own clinic from which patients could hang their purses or walking sticks. Such considerate gestures have won him praise from patients.

And that is not all.

"Please use this baby stroller," Poon said to an elderly person holding a small child. He had placed carriages in the hospital for just such occasions. As jobs are hard to come by in that area, young people typically go out of town to work, leaving their children at home in the care of their parents, the so-called "skip-generation caretakers." The strollers in the hospital are to help elderly patients like them, so they may see their doctors or do whatever else they need to do at the hospital without having to hold the little ones all the time.

Poon's attention to service has extended beyond the hospital grounds. The town was the first in Taiwan to feature a paved cycling path, which many tourists have taken advantage of to get a little workout while they see the beautiful scenery around the town. However, the influx of

A woman (above) checks a medicine bag through a magnifying glass at the pharmacy counter. It was placed there for the convenience of older people who need a little help in reading the finer print. Most of the hospital's patients are older people. A board (below) beside the outpatient registration counter clearly directs patients to the floor and room of their clinic appointments.



bicycles resulted in many collisions and falls, prompting Poon to think about what the hospital could do to help reduce those accidents.

That led the hospital to start what would become a periodic workshop in 2005 to promote safe biking practices. The hospital has invited bike renters and government personnel to the workshop, and Poon has been the main speaker. Accidents have gradually decreased over the years since the workshops started.

A conscientious surgeon

An automobile accident in 2004 left four people injured. The three most seriously injured, all high school students, were rushed to Guanshan Hospital. Poon, who had just finished an operation, hurried to the emergency room and found that the three all required surgery: a severed arm, a broken thigh bone, and facial lacerations.

Xiao-jian (小健) had been thrown out of the car in the accident. His lower right arm had been all but completely severed—only the skin was keeping the forearm and hand from falling off. Judging that he was the one who needed to be treated first, Poon rushed Xiao-jian into the operating room for immediate surgery.

It was seven thirty in the evening. Poon scrubbed up for back-to-back operations on the three patients.

“Two bones, three nerves, two blood vessels, and more than ten ligaments were broken,” said Poon, recalling the demanding procedure that Xiao-jian needed. “Each one of them had to be

reconnected under a microscope for precise alignments. There was no room for error.” A transfer to a larger hospital would have meant delayed treatment and possibly amputation. He was the only surgeon at the hospital capable of conducting the surgery, so he decided to take on the challenge. He believed that he could do it.

The big operation began. Seconds and minutes ticked away inexorably as Poon meticulously and microscopically put things back in their proper places. Xiao-jian’s family waited outside, but the wait was getting too long for them. They kept ringing the bell and bombarding the nursing staff with questions: “Is it going all right?” “What’s taking so long?” Finally, Poon finished the last suture for Xiao-jian. It was 10:30 the following morning. They had just been through a 15-hour marathon session.

Xiao-jian was taken to the recovery room, but Poon continued to work on the second, and then the third patient. At long last, when he emerged from the operating room, it was 5:30 in the afternoon. He had just operated for 22 hours straight. He had not closed his eyes in 36 hours, but he could not rest just yet. He still had to talk to the three families and bring them up to date.

For Xiao-jian, the surgery was over, but the recovery was just beginning. Poon told the boy’s family that he still ran the risk of making less than a hundred percent recovery. “You’re telling us that after that very long surgery, Xiao-jian may still not return to normal?!” the family exclaimed. Instead of launching into a lengthy explanation, Poon smiled and said to Xiao-jian, “You’re still young, so the odds of a good recovery are on your side. Hang in there.”

The family was not convinced. They had a fundamental distrust of small hospitals, such as the one in Guanshan. Their distrust came to a head

Guanshan Tzu Chi Hospital is located amid the serenity and green fields of Taiwan’s East Rift Valley.



when a nurse was changing dressings for Xiao-jian and they saw wounds that had not been sutured. It was explained to them that, given the long duration of the operation, those wounds had become severely swollen and had to be left open for a few days for them to shrink before they could be sewn up. Such explanations fell on deaf ears. The family demanded that the boy be transferred to a medical center in northern Taiwan.

At that much larger hospital, physicians ran tests and examined Xiao-jian carefully. They told him and his family that the surgeon at

Poon studies an X-ray during a free clinic in Yogyakarta, Java, Indonesia. He has also been to free clinics that Tzu Chi held in Sri Lanka and China.

Guanshan Hospital had done a superb job of reconnecting all the nerves and ligaments, and that he had thus spared the young man an amputation. The doctors were surprised to find out that Poon had done the job by himself, something that would normally have taken several surgeons to do, and he had done it so well. They praised him highly.

Xiao-jian's family realized that they had wronged Dr. Poon. Later they took the boy back to Guanshan Hospital for a follow-up. They apologized to Poon and thanked him for all he had done. In the end, Xiao-jian's youth and sustained rehabilitation therapy greatly helped him to recover. His arm and hand have healed well without any significant impairment.

The twists and turns and the emotional rollercoaster rides in this episode closed on a bright note. Perhaps experiences like this have been part of the pull that has kept Poon in Guanshan.

A new place

In the early morning of May 27, 2006, a magnitude 6.3 earthquake struck Yogyakarta, Java, Indonesia. The temblor brought down 260,000 homes while many people were sleeping. More than 5,000 people died and 37,000 were injured.

Watching the disaster scenes on television, Poon felt for the victims and wanted to help. When he heard that Tzu Chi was sending medical teams to provide free clinics for quake survivors, he immediately signed up. Having arranged for people to cover his hospital responsibilities while he was away, he went with a team to Yogyakarta on June 3 as the team leader. Another team had gone before them, and Poon's team would go to replace them. That was his first free clinic trip abroad.

"I literally went right into the operating room as soon as we had gotten off the plane and the first team had handed over their duties to us," he recalled.

Team members had to start taking antimalarial pills when they arrived in the country. Side effects notwithstanding, when they saw the long halls in the hospital filled with injured people, all Poon and his teammates could think of was getting to work right away.

There were many broken bones to be treated, far too many for the available surgeons, so even patients with open fractures, where the bone is exposed through broken skin, often had to wait days for their turn. Medical workers, including Poon's team, did the best they could to relieve suffering. They left their lodgings at eight each morning and didn't return to rest until eight in the evening. During the intervening 12 hours, they were kept busy performing operations. As

soon as one patient was patched up, a surgeon would hurry to check the X-rays at patients' bedsides to see who was in the next most urgent need of attention. Once a decision was made, that patient would head into the operating room. In this way, the surgeons served one patient after another throughout the day. Poon himself conducted 29 operations in the five days that his team was there.

In addition to the shortage of medical workers, medical equipment and materials were equally in short supply. A surgeon, while evalu-

ating treatment options for a patient, had to check the availability of the apparatus that his treatment choice would need, such as steel plates. If they were not available, a supplier would be called to immediately deliver the materials to the door of the operating room. The supplier got paid on the spot, and the apparatus would be immediately sterilized and used on the patient. That was by no means an ideal setup for surgery, but Poon was quite at home in such a tough environment. His experience at Guanshan Hospital, a small facility without all the

best equipment, had prepared him well for just such a day.

Together, the first team and Poon's team provided medical service at the disaster area for ten days. During that time, they greatly helped the injured. Both teams were on the ground very soon after the earthquake, certainly early enough to properly treat bone fractures, which should be treated as quickly as possible.

"It's fortunate that I work for Tzu Chi so I was able to reach the victims as early as I did," Poon reflected on the experience. "It would have



Dr. Poon visits a patient at her home. This is part of a Guanshan Hospital outreach initiative that Poon and his fellow physicians take turns to staff.



LI HENG-YI

An exercise nut, Superintendent Poon has been a perennial winner at road races held by Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital and Guanshan Tzu Chi Hospital as part of their anniversary events.

been a pity if I had missed this opportunity to serve." In addition to giving timely help to patients, "seeing the adversities some people were facing really brought me to reflect on the blessings that I enjoy."

Small hospital, big hearts

In Poon's mind, one patient stands out more than any other. He treated her in December 2012, when she was on the verge of death upon arriving at Guanshan Hospital.

She was 81 then. She was being treated at a hospital in western Taiwan for pneumonia when she suffered a stroke. Bedsores followed and she deteriorated gradually, losing weight to as low as 28 kilograms (62 pounds). Her family decided to take her home to die. After quite some time, though, she was still hanging on. Her family couldn't stand to see her suffering, so they took her to Guanshan Tzu Chi Hospital for palliative care.

Poon examined her and believed that there was a chance that she might still be saved. He put her through a whole body checkup and actively treated every problem identified. Hydration, blood transfusions, cleaning bed-

sores, and antibiotics were all part of the regime, and she got better.

Poon met with a dietitian and a thoracic physician to plan further treatment for her. He also involved a physical therapist so the patient could undergo rehabilitation and treatment at the same time. They did not forget to carefully tend her sores.

Day in and day out the team gingerly looked after her. Seventeen days later she recovered, almost like magic. Her family was overjoyed and took her home.

Snatching a hopeless patient from the claws of death lifted the spirits and confidence of the medical team at the hospital, not the least of whom was

Poon. He observed that although it was a small hospital and may not have had first-rate equipment or even techniques, "as long as we insist on giving a little extra love and we don't give up on patients easily, we can take very good care of our patients and save precious lives."

This small hospital has been home to Poon for the last 12 years. He knows only too well the challenges that the hospital faces in providing emergency services in such a small, out-of-the-way town. Patients do not lower their demand for good medical service just because Guanshan is a small hospital.

All sorts of medical conditions may show up in an emergency room. As good as the medical team at Guanshan Hospital is, it cannot handle all of them. There are therefore occasions that necessitate transferring patients to bigger hospitals. However, the nearest large hospitals are 40 kilometers (25 miles) to the south or 130 kilometers (80 miles) to the north. It is therefore not always easy to make a judgment call on when to keep a patient in-house and when to send him to a hospital that is better able to handle the case. If a transfer is made prematurely, the patient incurs extra but unnecessary expenses for the ambulance service. On the other hand, if a transfer is made too late, the patient may miss out on getting more suitable care.



HUANG MING-CUN

Dr. Poon, his wife, Huang Su-hong, and their three daughters, all born in Guanshan, pose for a photo at the 12th anniversary celebration of the hospital in 2012.

Another problem a physician practicing in a small town might face is lack of sleep. Dr. Dong Min-ji (董民基), an anesthesiologist at Yuli Tzu Chi Hospital, about 40 kilometers (25 miles) north of Guanshan, used to support Poon in his surgery quite frequently. He recalled that one day after they had finished an operation, it was already very late at night. Yet after Poon drove him back to Yuli, Poon went back to Guanshan to start another operation and work the day shift. Dong greatly admired Poon for his dedication.

"I don't have any special way to stay alert," said Poon. "I only think of this as my job and my responsibility, and that mental awareness gives me all the alertness that I need to do my job." Though there is a lot of pressure and little sleep, he views it as what a surgeon's job naturally entails. To keep in good shape, he often jogs in his few spare moments early in the morning or after work. That helps him handle the heavy workload.

Poon's dedication in guarding the health of the local community has won him recognition. In 2009 the Lion's Club presented him with a Contributors to Taiwan Award. In 2014 he received a medical dedication award for individuals from the Health, Welfare and Environment Foundation. Despite the accolades, Poon has always thought of himself as doing nothing more than what is called for, and he credits all his colleagues for the recognition that he has been accorded. "It's not my personal contributions that have won me awards. It's the hard work of the one hundred employees at Guanshan Tzu Chi Hospital who work alongside me to serve the people in this back country. All the glory should be theirs."

He continued with a smile, "There are already many physicians in metropolitan areas. Nobody will miss me there. I'll continue to do my bit in a place like Guanshan, where medical resources are scarce."

When he talks, the slight but indelible accent in his Mandarin still betrays his roots in Hong Kong. But after 12 years in Guanshan, he has given his heart to the small town he continues to guard, day and night. ❀

A Sunnier Life

Text and paintings by Chen Yu-yu
Translated by Tang Yau-yang



Chen Yu-yu (陳宇昱), born in 1967, is a cancer patient who also suffered a spinal injury in a traffic accident that left him seriously disabled. Fighting these two serious medical conditions, he managed to regain enough use of his hands to write and paint and live a fuller life.

In November 2014, his writings and paintings were collected and published in a Chinese book, A Sunnier Life, which we have condensed into the following article. From these excerpts and the accompanying artwork, the reader may get a glimpse of the adversity, despair, love of family and friends, hope, and joy that Chen has experienced in his rollercoaster ride of a life, and how after all his hardship he is still able to face every day with a heart of gratitude.

ON JUNE 7, 2003, A SATURDAY, I drove my family to Hualien for a funeral and drove back home late that night to Taoyuan. With little rest, I went to work on Sunday as usual. [As a cook, the author worked in shifts]. After making enough lunches to feed 4,000 people, I got off work exhausted and rode my scooter home, longing for some soothing shuteye. But instead of arriving at home, I ended up in an ICU.

When I regained consciousness three days later, I found that there were tubes in my mouth and nose and IV drips in both of my arms. I tried to move my butt, but my body refused to respond.



Missing My Hometown

I created this painting outdoors in Daxi, Taoyuan. My caregiver said, “You did a wonderful job of painting this. It looks so much like my hometown in Vietnam.”

I passed out again soon after, but not before realizing that things looked pretty ugly.

It was unclear what had happened. Was I trying to avoid a pothole or was I hit by a car that caused me to fall off my scooter and land on the side of the road? Whatever had happened, a passerby had seen me lying there, reported the accident to the police, and had me rushed to the hospital.

The thing that mattered the most was very clear, though. I was wearing a whole-head helmet at the time of the accident. When I fell, the force of the collision pushed the edge of my helmet violently against my neck and caused the discs between my fourth and seventh cervical vertebrae to slip. They were severely damaged. As a result, I was paralyzed from the chest down and had little grip strength left in my hands.

“He’s severely injured,” my attending physician told my family. “Even if we can save him, he’ll probably end up in a vegetative state. I recommend that you take him home.” The doctor probably thought I was too sick to hear him, but I was conscious and heard every word.

“Please do everything possible to save my brother,” pleaded Xun-hui (迅暉), my younger brother. “He’s only 36, and he’s got two small children to raise.” The doctor said nothing in reply.

I clung to life by a thin thread in the neurological surgical ICU, thanks to a respiratory machine and other life-support equipment. I lay there, unable to move. Due to the constant bright light in the unit, I wouldn’t even have been able to tell day from night if my family hadn’t visited me every day. They were allowed to visit me twice a day, for 20 minutes each time. Their visits let me know that I’d survived another day. I stayed in that ICU for ten days.

THE FIRST SIX MONTHS AFTER MY INJURY were critical to my survival. After I was moved out of the ICU into a regular ward, Xun-hui and A-jin (阿錦), my wife, hired a professional caregiver for me. The cost was 2,200 Taiwanese dollars (US\$73) a day, or about 2,200 American dollars a month. Mom had wanted to personally take care of me so that we wouldn’t have to fork out such large sums. She had tried to do it for a short while after I was moved into the regular ward, but she soon had to turn that work over to a professional.

On my first day in the regular ward, my lungs were severely infected and mucus was pervasive in my respiratory tract. I needed to cough forcefully to expel the phlegm. The problem was that I couldn’t even breathe smoothly, let alone cough with enough force to clear my lungs. As a result, I needed external help to get the mucus out. I needed someone to push on my abdomen up towards my diaphragm in rhythm with my weakened coughing. This outside help, or “mucus pushing,” would make it possible to evacuate large lumps of phlegm.

I still remember that on that first day I suddenly had difficulty breathing. “Whish, whish....” I struggled and gasped for air before I passed out. Horrified, Mom yelled for help.

A nurse hurried over to my side and revived me. She said to my mom, “Mrs. Chen, you need to do ‘mucus pushing’ for him.” She demonstrated how to do it. “Now cough—one, two, three,” she told me. As I followed her orders, her palms pushed my abdomen up. My exertions, however weak, were magnified by her force. Together, we managed to get lots of mucus out. I felt much better.

When I needed to vacate mucus again, Mom tried to mimic the nurse and help me push it out. Her strong hands delivered plenty of force, but she pushed down into my stomach instead of up toward my diaphragm. Rather than pushing out mucus, she hurt me like crazy. “Please, Mom! You’re breaking my bones!” I moaned. After some chaotic maneuvering and painful moments, we did get some mucus out, but I was exhausted. Mom was sweaty from all the exertion too.

There were many other things that I needed help with besides mucus pushing: urinating, bathing, rehab, and extraction of feces. The last of these items was a big deal that took a helper and me at least four hours to accomplish. My wife might have been able to do those things for me, but she had to take care of our kids and run our household, so we had to count her out. Mom realized that taking care of me would not be so easy, so she finally consented to hire a professional caregiver for me. Seven such helpers have cared for me since.



Confidence, Perseverance, and Courage

I saw a lot of clover blooms early one morning, and they inspired me to do this work. The three white circles represent my iris, eye, and eyeglasses, showing how I took in the beauty of the world. In the center of the painting I wrote “confidence, perseverance, courage” to cheer myself and others on.

SINCE I WAS PARALYZED FROM THE CHEST DOWN, even easy movements like rolling over in bed, sitting up, and crawling were difficult for me. I had to start like a baby, learning everything as if for the first time. I had to undergo a great deal of rehabilitation.

Often, overly anxious for progress, I would push my body too hard. I ended up scraping my skin and aching all over. I needed massage and pain-relieving ointment every night. At the suggestion of a therapist, Mom made elbow guards out of bicycle tire inner tubes for me. They helped prevent blisters and they added traction and propulsion for easier crawling.

I was making a slow recovery, but my will to survive was severely challenged by persistent pain. I always felt numb, prickly and tight; these stubborn symptoms of neuralgia just would not go away. I tried all sorts of medications and all forms of physical therapy, acupuncture, and electrotherapy, but nothing relieved my pain. When I asked the doctors for help, they always urged me to hang in there and put up with it. I felt living like that was worse



I Love My Wife

My wife has stood like a solid rock behind me all through my rocky journey. She never complains about the hardships she has had to go through because of me. I have nothing but gratitude for her.

than dying. I was thoroughly discouraged and depressed. I lost interest in eating and my weight dropped drastically.

One day while I was staring idly at the ceiling in my hospital room, Mom put down the knitting that she was doing and came to my bedside. She gave me two solid slaps on my face and sobbed, "It's time you woke up. No amount of self-pitying will change the facts about the accident. It really hurts me to see you like this. See how much weight you've lost!"

Mom then buried her face on my chest and cried her heart out, venting her pent-up emotions. Afterwards, she wiped away her tears and said, "We'll never give up on you as long as you live. Please do your best at physical therapy. Live for yourself, for your wife, and for your children."

I gradually adjusted to a life constrained by my badly paralyzed shell. On top of my obvious physical disabilities, my cardiopulmonary functions had also deteriorated. My body retained only a weakened ability to regulate my heart rate, breathing, blood pressure, perspiration, body temperature, bowel movements, and urination. If I sat up, my blood pressure would fall and I would pass out, but when my bladder was full my blood pressure would suddenly spike. I often had spasms, and the risk of pressure sores developed.

All that may sound horrible, and it was. But it paled in comparison to the pain from the neuralgia. This stubborn pain topped the list of my troubles by a wide margin. It never failed to torture me several times a day. When the pain hit, it felt like a knife had gashed the skin over my spinal column. Then it would seem like the wound was pulled back to either side of the spine to expose more of the flesh inside, and salt was sprinkled on the raw flesh. The pain was horrendous and penetrated everywhere. Even today, I am seized with fright and my pulse quickens every time I think back on those days when I was tortured by so much pain.

ACTUALLY, PAIN WAS NOTHING NEW TO ME. Just a year before the traffic accident, I was diagnosed with oral cancer. I had only myself to blame for getting the disease: I used to chew betel nuts.

I started chewing betel nuts [a common habit in Taiwan] when I was a teenager. Mom tried to talk me out of that bad habit, one that had been proven to cause oral cancer. She even offered me a large sum of money, every penny of which she had saved from running a soybean pudding stand, to get me to quit chewing.

"What is money?" I said frivolously in response to her offer. "You can earn it easily enough, but the happiness chewing betel nuts gives me is beyond anything money can buy." So I stayed with my addiction, and ended up getting cancer.

For my treatment, doctors determined the best course of action was to remove a large area in my mouth that had been overrun by cancer, and then transplant a skin graft from my buttock into my mouth to cover up the wound.

Before the surgery, I took a good look at my own face. Never before had I looked at it so carefully—I had thick eyebrows, large eyes, and a high, straight nose. It was a nice-looking face. Before the operation, a nurse asked me, "Do you have anything to say to the surgeon?"

"I beg him to please keep as much of my looks as possible." I was terrified of what I might look like after the surgery, and I regretted my self-indulgence and reckless imprudence.

As promised, the surgeon took out the affected part. But it didn't heal well afterwards. The skin graft was rejected, and my face became red and swollen, like a ripe persimmon. Later, the doctor extracted 11 healthy teeth on my left side. He said he did that for fear that I'd be unable to clean my teeth well if the fibrosis of tissues in my mouth got worse in the future.

If I had known better, I would never have touched betel nuts.

THE DOCTORS WERE AT THEIR WITS' END about how to treat my neuralgia. The frequent change of medications to relieve my pain only led to depression. On September 2, 2005, a little over two years after my spinal injury, I couldn't take it anymore and decided to commit suicide. Late that night, while all was quiet and my caregiver was sleeping, I took out a knife and tried to slit my wrist. However, instead of cutting a deep gash in my wrist, the attempt left but a pitiful line with only a little blood oozing out. My hand couldn't even grip the knife firmly enough to do the job. I knew that I wasn't going to end it all that way.

Then I tried stabbing the knife into my chest. After a few dozen attempts, blood began seeping from my chest. With my strong resolve to die, I fixed the knife the best I could and threw my full weight on it. Finally, I heard a *ka-cha* sound, and blood began flowing out in earnest. I closed my eyes. All my pain would finally end now....

In a trance, I dreamed of going out on an excursion with my dad, who had passed away years before. My mom, sister, and brother were also in the dream. They had all reached the top of a slope on their bikes, with me lagging far behind. I waved my hand like crazy and cried out, "Dad! Mom! Wait for me!" But none of them heard me. I pedaled the best I could, but no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't catch up. With tears and sweat running down my face, I saw them disappearing in the distance.

I jolted awake from my trance. I could feel my blood pressure falling rapidly due to loss of blood. I called out loud to wake my caregiver. She called the nurse, and people ran in to save me.

My family rushed to the hospital. Seeing tears streaming down my brother's face, I was too ashamed to say anything. "Doctor, should we give him another X-ray?" Mom asked the doctor. "Is he really okay? Are you sure his intestines weren't damaged?"

Gripped by deep remorse, I apologized to my mom, my wife, and my brother.

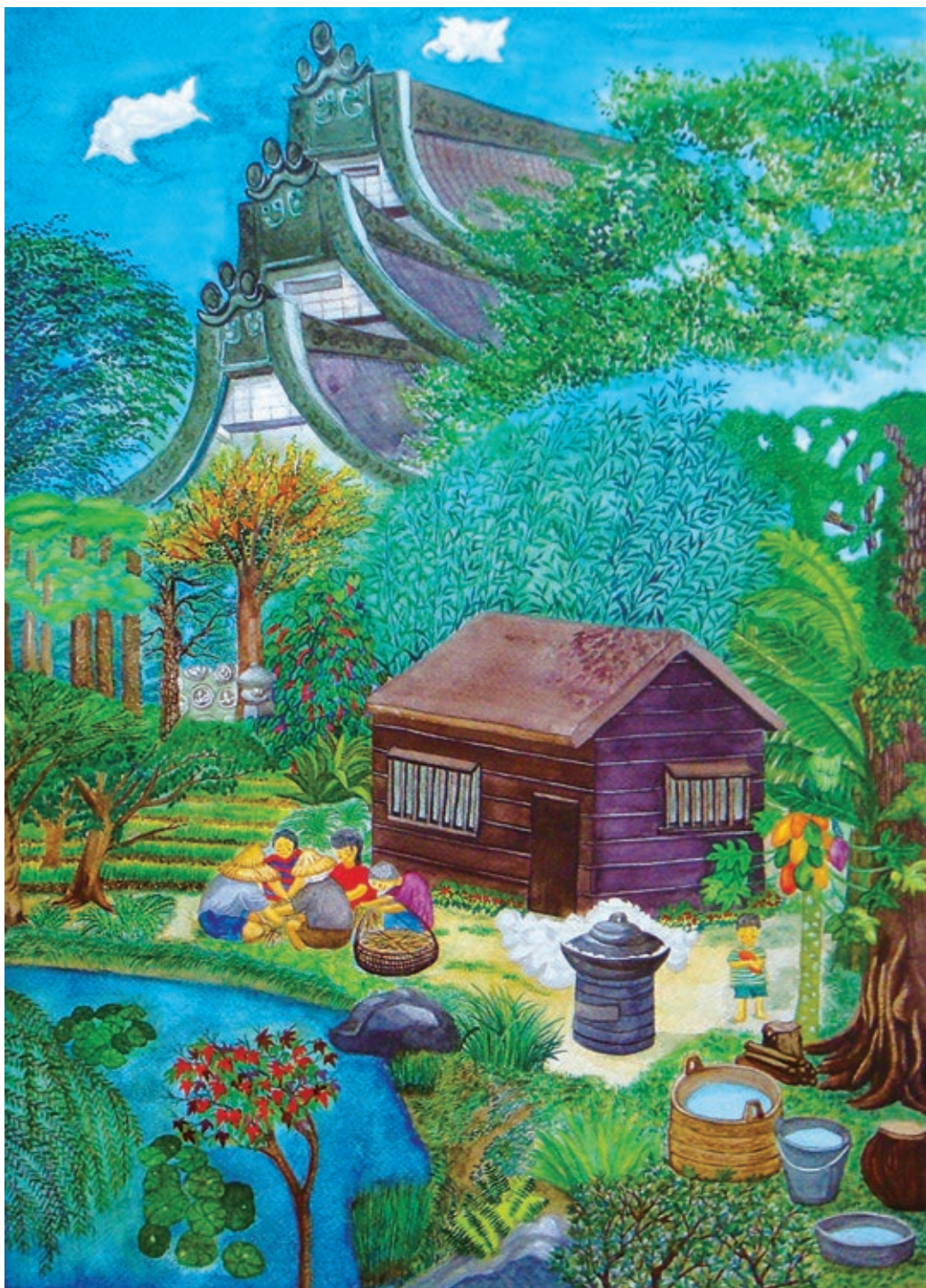
JUST BEFORE CHINESE NEW YEAR in 2007, I heard about a case in which doctors at Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital had used an implanted microchip to relieve pain for a spinal-injury patient. The news gave me a glimmer of hope. If the pain I suffered could be eased, the quality of my life would improve tremendously.

I was admitted into the Hualien hospital on March 1, 2007. The medical team decided that an implanted "pain pump" in the spinal canal would be the best choice for me. This extremely precise device would be capable of releasing pain medicine in fractions of



Gratitude for Doctors

When I was hospitalized at Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital, I often drew pictures in the lobby. To thank the doctors, nurses and volunteers at the hospital for taking good care of me, I did this painting of the mosaic entitled "The Buddha Cares for the Sick," which is a feature of the hospital lobby, with me in front.



Commitment and Strength

Master Cheng Yen used to carry out her spiritual practice in a small hut like the one in the painting. But since then she has inspired many people around the world to follow her in doing good and helping the needy. One's strength is as great as one's commitment. Her story has encouraged me to use painting to transcend my suffering.

a milliliter (0.03381 fluid ounce) a day. Even when the amounts of medicine I received were about one hundredth of what I took orally, it would be more effective in relieving pain.

It all sounded great to me, so I was put through tests to evaluate how well I would respond to this device. I responded well, and the pump was implanted on March 22. I had to thank my older sister, Wan-xin (婉昕), and her husband for paying my medical bills, which came to 760,000 Taiwanese dollars (US\$25,000). Growing up, my sister, brother, and I had been very close. After my accident, they went all out to help me.

I was confined to bed for a week after the surgery, and during that time I was already sleeping better. Before the implant, I would take two sleeping pills before I went to sleep at night. Even so, pain still woke me about every three hours, and I had to take more sleeping pills to fall asleep again. But on the last night of the bed confinement, I awoke only once to empty my bladder with a catheter and to turn over. Then I slept through the rest of the night and well into the morning. Ah, that was so very refreshing and invigorating!

With my pain easing, I stopped pitying myself and I felt that my life was looking up. Eventually, I was transferred to the rehabilitation department to undergo vocational and physical therapy. Invited by nurse Yu Jia-lun (余佳倫), I visited other spinal-injury patients to cheer them up. When Master Cheng Yen came to visit patients in the hospital during my hospitalization, she encouraged me to carry on bravely and to make the best use of my life. I decided that I would become the Master's disciple and join Tzu Chi.

After three months of treatment at the hospital, my pain was effectively under control. Before I was discharged, I signed a consent form to donate my body for medical research after I die.

WITH THE IMPLANTED PUMP WORKING GREAT FOR ME, I felt like I'd been reborn. Step by step, I walked out of the valley of darkness.

One day in July, Mom drove me to a flower market. On the way we passed a Tzu Chi Jing Si Hall [a Tzu Chi activity center]. We stopped and visited. My eyes were attracted to a poster put up at the entrance advertising some continuing education classes. I took a close look to see if there was any class I could take. Then we went to a painting exhibition on the second floor. I was mesmerized by the paintings showcased there.

"You once wanted to go to a vocational school and study art, but we couldn't afford it," Mom said. "Since you like painting, why don't we sign you up for the painting class offered here?"

So, just like that, I started taking an art course called "Plain Art" in September 2007. "It's not important whether your painting resembles your subject," said the teacher, Zhang Jun-xiang (張鈞翔), in our first class. "But it's of utmost importance to have fun and feel confident in drawing." He said he wouldn't teach us how to paint. The purpose of the class was to draw as we wished, in whatever way we liked, and to express ourselves happily through art. Students would share their artwork in class, learn from each other, and gradually develop their own unique style.



The Shangri-la in My Heart

You are welcome to join me in getting close to Mother Nature. This park has the best weather all year round, and it is perfect for hiking and having fun. It is equipped with disabled-friendly facilities. To protect the natural environment and maintain the peace in the park, barbecues and firecrackers are forbidden.

Mr. Zhang asked us to paint at home on any topic that we pleased, and each student was to come to the next class with at least one painting to show and share. Because I couldn't sit too long at any one time and because my fingers sometimes twitched uncontrollably, I finished my first painting over the course of many separate sessions. It took me a week to get it done, but I was profoundly grateful and happy because I was fulfilling a dream of my youth.

I enjoyed the class tremendously. The teacher did a great job of inspiring our interest, enthusiasm, and potential in painting. In the 15-session class, Zhang led us from being total novices to painters with at least 20 drawings. I made surprising headway, both physically and spiritually, through each class. I could feel my strength returning, and I was able to sit longer. I used drawing to improve my dexterity and grip. I poured my feelings and emotions into my paintings, behind each of which was a story. I felt spiritually enriched and cheerful. I was having all the joy of painting while also being physically rehabilitated.

After that class, I signed up for more classes, including watercolor, ink painting, and oil painting. I even signed up for a singing class. Encouraged by Tzu Chi Sister Zhuang Min-fang (莊敏芳), I also began training to become a Tzu Chi documenting volunteer to record inspiring life stories and to cheer up dispirited souls. My life became very busy and fulfilling.

EVEN THOUGH MY LIFE REGAINED ITS VIBRANCY thanks to the painting class, I continued to need medical care. Once while painting works for an exhibit, I often sat too long at a stretch without taking a break. I was well aware that such reckless behavior could result in pressure sores, but I was more anxious to put on a good show. I kept telling myself to hang in there. When a pressure sore did develop, I figured it could wait. I decided to finish my works first and treat the sore later.

As I painted, my sore got worse. I implored my caregiver not to tell my family about my condition. Eventually I did go to see the doctor a couple of times, but I kept up my work pace just the same. At last I finished my works before the exhibit, but I also had to suffer the consequences of my recklessness. On June 19, 2009, I had a high fever and felt extremely weak, so I was rushed to the emergency room. The medical team did all they could for me. I survived, but not without an egg-sized sore on my bottom.

I checked into Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital under the care of Dr. Lu Chun-de (盧純德), head of plastic surgery. At first I didn't respond well to his treatment, but he assured me he was giving me his best care and asked me to trust him. "This is just a sore. Together, you and I will fix it. Don't worry."

My brother had provided for my family since my injury, and my wife, besides running our household, worked at a breakfast shop for a small income. Given my limited finances, the nurses promised to help us save on treatment expenses.

Dr. Lu operated on me numerous times. Two months into the treatment, I discovered a small lump on my throat. An ENT doctor did a biopsy and confirmed that my cancer had recurred. Dr. Lu comforted me and told me not to be discouraged. He said he

and the ENT doctor would work together to care for me. That lump was later surgically removed.

Eventually, Dr. Lu successfully helped me grow enough flesh to fill the cavity of the horrible sore. It took 15 operations. He then took a piece of skin from my head and transplanted it to my butt. One reason for choosing my head to provide skin was that the wound where the skin had been taken would be basically invisible when my hair grew back.

But to reap that benefit, I had to pay a very painful price. Fortunately, it was a one-time and temporary pain. My head hurt badly after the grafting surgery. When I was returned to my room, despite the pain medicine, I could not stand it anymore. I howled out loud—something that I had never done through all my prior surgeries.

Blessedly, I returned home with that sore repaired. I deeply appreciated Dr. Lu's efforts. I can never thank him enough.

WHEN ZHANG, WHO CONDUCTED THE PLAIN ART CLASS, learned of my desire to hold a solo exhibition, he picked 41 of my works and, with the aid of other Tzu Chi volunteers, staged an exhibit for me at Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital in March 2011. More exhibits of my works were held later at other Tzu Chi hospitals and Tzu Chi branch offices around Taiwan. The 14-exhibit tour concluded after two years and seven months. People who came to the exhibitions gave me very encouraging feedback.

I was once a seriously disabled man who didn't know how to carry on with his life, but I rediscovered confidence, hope, and a sense of purpose through painting. Over the years, while fighting my own physical battles, I have often shared my experiences with people whose lives have been turned upside down by illness. I hope that I have helped them pick themselves up and go on living the best they can.

At the same time, I have benefitted from Mom's care during all these years. She's become quite an expert in caring for me, a far cry from that person who didn't know how to get the offending mucus out of my chest and who panicked when I passed out because I couldn't breathe.

Things have gotten better for me, but my health has been far from excellent. It has often gotten worse. Several times, too many times, this was because of my oral cancer—the consequence of my one-time bad habit of chewing betel nuts. In 12 years, the cancer has recurred five times. I've even had to have half my tongue removed. But it's too late to regret.

Since the accident, many people have helped me, too many to list them all here. I am grateful to them beyond words. My family has supported me with unconditional love, money and time. Doctors and nurses have done their best to treat me. Tzu Chi volunteers have given me a lot of care. Master Cheng Yen's teachings have given me great strength to face the hardships thrown in my way. Wanting to give back to society, I've completed training and become a certified Tzu Chi volunteer. Years of illness and countless treatments have left me feeble, and I feel like a lamp with the flame flickering in the wind, but I'll carry on bravely and continue to emit what little light I have. ❀

The House of Good People

A Creative Samaritan—Huang Rong-dun



Huang Rong-dun has been promoting hand-washing clothes with recycled soap since 2013. Hand-washing with soap changes a dirty T-shirt, such as the one in Huang's hands, to a clean T-shirt, such as the ones on the rack. Bars of recycled soap, lower left, help take used oil out of circulation, reducing its damage to people and the environment.

By Pan Mei-ling
Translated by Tang Yau-yang
Photos by Alberto Buzzola
Used with permission of *Rhythms Monthly Magazine*

Hot real estate markets in Taipei have priced out many people. On October 4, 2014, some of those persons and their sympathizers called for housing justice by staging a protest on Renai Road, a tree-lined boulevard along which stand some of the priciest residences and shops in the city.

In the midst of the crowd, a small truck made its way to the curb. Huang Rong-dun (黃榮墩) and his cohorts climbed out of the cab and quickly unloaded large bags of pomelos (similar to grapefruit). They untied the bags, emptied out the pomelos, and lined the fruit up neatly in a rectangular pattern on the pavement.

The pomelo, the largest of citrus fruits, is traditionally associated with the Mid-Autumn Festival, an important Chinese holiday. In Taiwan, the fruit is a must-have during that season, and there is usually a high demand for it. However, once the festival is over, the price of the fruit plummets. When Huang put the fruit on display, the Mid-Autumn Festival had been over for nearly a month. Because the festival demand had not exhausted the available supply of pomelos, many of them remained on the market, albeit at low prices.

Crowds gathered around Huang's pomelo rectangle. They wondered what the fruit was doing there when the Mid-Autumn Festival had already ended some time before. After asking what Huang was doing, they took pictures of the fruit diagram and posted them on their favorite social media sites.

"Be good Samaritans, support the farmers," Huang shouted. "Buy their slow-selling fruit from a bumper crop!" Huang and two young volunteers, Yang-ling (仰玲) and Sheng-hui (生輝), hawked their goods to passers-by, raising their voices to be heard over the racket at the scene.

Standing off to one side, I saw how good Huang was at setting up a display, livening up the atmosphere, and engaging the crowd. I was impressed by his creativity and activism. Watching him made me realize that, to be a really helpful do-gooder, one has to have more than just a good heart: One must also use one's brain. Huang surely has used his a lot.

For example, to help egg producers increase their sales in a glutted market, he learned to cook eggs in such a way as to make them soft on the inside and chewy on the outside. When garlic was in excess supply and its price tumbled, Huang helped farmers speed up the turnover of their stock. He called on volunteers to skin the garlic to help sell it. He set up stands to sell the garlic, and he explained to consumers that it was fresh from the Yunlin area, a major agricultural center. He emphasized its superb flavor and nutritional value. He also helped sell soap made from used cooking oil (more about this later in this article).

Huang Rong-dun helps people in various ways, all under the name of what he calls "the House of Good People."

Happier farmers, better society

In July 2014, pomelo trees in Ruisui, Hualien County, eastern Taiwan, were heavy with maturing fruit. It looked like it would be a bumper year for the orchards...until Typhoon Matmo hit. The storm swept about 70 percent of the pomelo fruit crop off the trees. Farmers were devastated.

But in the midst of the catastrophe, Huang Rong-dun had an idea. He suggested that the farmers add brown sugar to their otherwise useless fruit and let it ferment to make "eco-enzymes" useful for cleansers or fertilizers. Then he bought large plastic buckets needed for that undertaking and gave them to the farmers. Three months later, he and his son Shu-yan (舒燕) drove a truck to Ruisui to pick up the enzyme-filled liquids that the farmers had made and took them to Taipei to sell.

Among its many good deeds, the House of Good People is most famous for helping farmers turn stocks of excess agricultural products into cash. This goes back to 2007, when Huang was secretary general of a community development committee in Hualien. He learned by accident that eggplants were selling for a paltry 1.50 Taiwanese dollars (five American cents) per pound. That meant that even if farmers could sell their entire crop, they'd get next to nothing in return. What could they do? Huang decided to do what he could to help.

He bought a whole truckload of eggplants for 1,500 Taiwanese dollars (US\$50), hauled his purchase to a famous local temple, and set up a stall in front. Then he left the eggplants unattended, leaving only a note briefly explaining

the situation and a box for purchasers to drop money into.

He made a whole lot more money than he had expected; in fact, the endeavor far eclipsed his wildest expectations. The response gave him great confidence and opened the door to a series of good deeds.

Everybody's business

The House of Good People was not a name that Huang picked out of thin air. Many people have piled praise on Huang and his volunteers, and their kind words have often included phrases like "good people" and "good deeds." He thus decided to call his group of volunteers "The House of Good People."

"We're actually quite a loose organization," he said. "We don't have many people, and we have no funds. We have no regular volunteers, much less organized volunteer training programs. But however unorganized we may seem, we're glad that we've become the way we are."

This sentiment is consistent with his philosophy of helping others. He believes that doing good should not be the exclusive province of

Is cheap bad?

With the Mid-Autumn Festival over, pile after pile of unsold pomelos from Hegang, also in Hualien County, crammed the office.

"Why do people stop eating pomelos after the festival?" Huang wondered. "The fruit is actually at its best, sweetest and most delicious, long after it has been picked." Pomelos keep for a long time, often months. They are perfect for human consumption in the post-season market, but they are neglected because they can no longer fetch good profits for merchants. "Amidst all this, people fail to recognize that when a fruit is at the peak of its production, it is also [farthest from use of chemicals and] closest to being organic," Huang pointed out.

Bountiful harvests are often followed by slow sales and bargain-basement prices. This scenario has been repeated time after time, and farmers wish they could get a better handle on the situation. On this subject, Huang has much to say: "Never think that you can lower the price enough to move a product that's lost favor. Besides, if you sell cabbage for two Taiwanese dollars [six American cents] a head, you won't even be able

Huang hawks pomelos to the crowd at a demonstration when the fruit was selling very slowly. Bags of pomelos and garlic and bottles of enzymes made from fruit waste take up a lot of the space in the House of Good People on Hangzhou South Road, Taipei.

formal organizations, but that it is something that any individual can do in their everyday lives, at any time. The helper does not have to be wealthy. When you see someone in need and reach out to help, you automatically become a member of the "gang of good people."

The Taipei office for his crusade is an old apartment on Hangzhou South Road. The House of Good People branched out of its Hualien place to this old apartment in 2011. Here Huang keeps sacks of farm products he has rounded up from distressed farmers. He often has more products than space, so the stairwell and available empty places also become his storage areas. When we visited, we saw sacks of pomelos, garlic, sweet potatoes, and bar soap made from used cooking oil everywhere we looked.

Huang keeps a vegetable stand on the street level; it is unattended and never closes. People simply deposit money for their purchase. The open stall, based entirely on the honor system, is friendly and rather unique in the big city of Taipei.

to cover the cost of harvesting. Not only that, but the low prices can disrupt the market." He believes that flooding the market with farm products at cut-throat prices only makes things worse. "If you really want to help farmers, you must sell their products at reasonable prices."

Huang has striven to build a mechanism to support reasonable prices in a glut. For this mechanism to work, he needs to convince people to pay prices higher than prevailing market prices; he needs to awaken people to believe that doing such a seemingly irrational thing is actually worthwhile. Consumption in this way embodies another level of meaning. That's why Huang refers to people who purchase from distressed farmers as "helpers" instead of "consumers."

Early indoctrination

Huang impressed me with his eloquence and clear logic when I first interviewed him. After I got to know him better, however, I learned that as a child he used to be quite unsure of himself. Whenever his teacher asked him to speak in class, he'd freeze with stage fright. His class-





On the third floor of the House of Good People in Taipei, Huang keeps a Buddhist statue and sutras that he brought from Qingxiu Temple in Hualien. He has written books about the temple, and he devotes his free time to studying the sutras.

mates would ask him afterwards, “Why were you shaking all over?” He did not do well in school, and he was the perennial holder of the second-to-last place in his class.

He only discovered the source of his trouble when he was in third grade. His homeroom teacher, who taught most of the school subjects to that class, had been accidentally burned by hot oil and was replaced by another teacher. The boy was surprised to find that he completely understood what the new teacher was teaching—an experience that he had never had with the original teacher, who had come from mainland China and spoke with a strong accent. Huang’s grades improved, and he eventually went to college and graduated from the Department of History at Fu Jen Catholic University. He taught in Hualien before forming the Hand-in-Hand Teen’s Service Center in 1994.

His grandfather was active in helping people in need, so Huang cut his teeth in philanthropic work early. He remembers tagging along when the old man went about doing things for the benefit of the public. Huang cites one example from his childhood: “Come along, big guy,” the senior Huang hollered one day, “let’s go fix the road.” The little boy quickly filled a basket with dirt and went with his grandfather to fill some potholes.

Huang recalled that in his hometown in the countryside, people swept public streets in the morning as a matter of course. They did it on their own initiative—nobody asked them to do it. He lamented that such wholesome acts and goodness have all fallen by the wayside in the process of urbanization.

Because of his upbringing, serving others became second nature to him. He organized

people to be “temporary grandchildren” at the Hualien Railway Station to help elderly people carry their luggage.

When a typhoon knocked the Suhua Highway out of service, farmers could not ship their vegetables to Taipei. In response, Huang called on train passengers to help, encouraging each passenger to take some vegetables onto the train and carry them to Taipei. Though the managers at the Hualien Railway Station, citing internal rules, would not lend their support, Huang pressed ahead anyway. In the end, the effort proved successful and he put out another fire for the farmers—again with the help of an army of volunteers who had almost no formal organization. Huang commented that few things could be accomplished if they were all done “by the book.”

Other ideas that he has implemented to help farmers include “buy by the truckload,” “armies of eaters,” and “community dining halls,” each brimming with heart-warming creativity in line with his history. Each of those efforts, if you considered the time and manpower involved, were apparently cost-ineffective.

However, they all successfully aroused the love in people. Seen from that viewpoint, the efforts were quite effective.

“It’s important that we believe that we’re good people,” he pointed out. “Equally important is that there are folks willing to act on their goodness.” For him, the good people movement is not just about helping those in need, but more about bringing out the good in people’s hearts to make our society better. He wants to recruit “one good person, ten good people, a gang of good folks” to get on his bandwagon.

Used cooking oil

“Gutter oil,” a term used in Taiwan and China, is obtained from waste oil collected from many sources, including restaurant fryers and slaughterhouse waste. Such oil is strictly forbidden for human consumption. However, in 2014 it was discovered that some unscrupulous merchants in Taiwan had been processing and repackaging gutter oil and selling it as cooking oil, reaping astonishing but illegal profits. When the scandal broke, people in Taiwan began to pay attention to the disposal of used cooking oil.

Long before the issue came to the attention of the general population, Huang had been promoting the use of waste oil in making soap, thus helping solve the disposal problem. For three years now, he has regularly purchased such soap produced by the Hsinchu Patrolling Volunteers Association (HPVA), the Penghu Single Moms Workshop, the Taichung City Association of Parents of Mentally Disabled Children, and Xianxi Junior High School in Zhanghua and promoted its use to consumers. For Huang this soap is good for cleaning and personal hygiene, and at the same time it helps protect the environment and creates jobs for the disadvantaged.

Middle-aged Zhou Gui-mei (周桂美) lost her old job, but she wanted to return to work. She went to the HPVA and learned to make soap and eco-enzymes. She is grateful that these skills gave her a chance to find a new job. In 2013 the HPVA collected 1,300 liters (343 gallons) of used oil from fried chicken stores, stinky tofu stands, and other restaurants. With that oil it made 1,300 kilograms (2,866 pounds) of soap, achieving a defect rate of almost zero.

No doubt the Hsinchu association was quite good at making soap, but it was not nearly as knowledgeable in selling what it made. Even after giving away 70 percent of its soap and saving only 30 percent for sale, the association still had trouble selling that 30 percent and could barely find enough room to store the inventory.

Huang realized that for the soap initiative to sustain itself, there had to be a repeating cycle of production and use. With the widespread use of washing machines, people rarely wash their clothes by hand anymore. The machines require liquid or powdered detergent, and so bar soap for washing clothes is not as popular as before. “I used to urge people to be eco-friendly by using recycled bar soap,” Huang said, “but then I realized that I myself had been all talk and no walk with regard to soap use.” Since he was not a user himself, how could he expect other people to be any different?

He had identified the problem, but then he needed to find a solution.

He decided to launch a “Wash Your Clothes by Hand” movement. He himself practices what he preaches. In the sweltering heat of summer, he routinely changes T-shirts at least

HUANG RONG-DUN AND LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE WORK HARD TO HELP SOCIETY. THE THINGS THEY HAVE ACCOMPLISHED CAN BE DONE BY ANY ORDINARY PERSON. ALL YOU NEED ARE A GOOD HEART AND A LITTLE CREATIVITY.

Huang's parents help mind the original House of Good People in Hualien.

three times a day. He washes them by hand with recycled soap.

To promote the idea to the public, he fashioned a mobile washtub, complete with a sink, a scrub board, and a self-contained water supply—all on a wheeled cart. He then showcased his brainchild to the crowds at the demonstration for housing justice mentioned at the beginning of this article. He urged his audience to come forward and try washing with his recycled soap, explaining to them how such soap was a solution to the thorny issue of waste oil disposal. He successfully grabbed people's attention, and they inquired how to purchase this type of soap.

Huang pointed out that used oil had always been a problem for which the government had been unable to find a sound solution. That is why it became a source of potential misuse. "If we take used oil and make soap out of it, then it can't be made into fake cooking oil that can hurt our health," Huang declared. "Besides, when you buy this soap, you provide financial support for disadvantaged families too."

As small as it is, a bar of soap can do a lot of good.

An idea factory

Though we have shown quite a few of Huang's ideas, this is by no means a complete list. When he becomes aware of a difficult situation that farmers or others are facing, he tries to help. All the initiatives that he has launched share one thing in common: They are all down to earth, concerned with people's everyday life.

"Please help me eat these cabbages!" urged a campaign slogan of Huang's to help cabbage farmers. "Allow me to treat you to some juice" offered another slogan for a campaign in which Huang's volunteers offered free juice on the streets to raise public awareness of the problem of the oversupply and dull sales of oranges. At the same time, they advertised the benefits of eating fruit at the height of its production, when it is flavorful, fresh, abundant, and inexpensive.

Another time, volunteers showed up at convenience stores and gave away shredded cucumbers and carrots to shoppers who had bought cold noodles from the stores. The noodles are a ready-to-eat item to which these two vegetables



are often added. The shoppers received a couple of extra veggies for the day and they learned something about the quandary that the vegetable producers were in and how the shoppers might help.

Sometimes Huang shows up at surprising moments or venues. For example, in the tense moments of some public demonstrations, he has arrived with a pot of hot vegetable soup or chow mein with cabbage to warm the stomachs and hearts of protestors. At the same time that he's giving people something heartening and practical, Huang and his fellow workers get a chance to advance their own cause.

Huang attributes the success of what he calls the "good people movement" to the fact that our society has feelings. "If folks didn't have feelings, if they weren't willing to act on their goodness, how could we have resolved these challenges over and over again?"

People often ask him how he can be so brimming with ideas and creativity. He says that he isn't a smart person, but that he has been able to come up with many ideas because he sincerely wants to help the society of which he is a part. He feels for the youth and for the elderly. Such care for people has led to one light bulb after another going on in his brain.

"Many people go to distant corners of the world, such as Africa, in the pursuit of their grand dreams to help others," Huang said. "However, they tend to brush aside problems they witness around them in their daily lives."

Everybody's circumstances are different. Only a few people can do grand things to help, but many more people can do things on a much smaller scale for the benefit of others. Huang and his group are doing that; many others can join them.

Even such mundane things as buying vegetables and washing clothes can enable us to help make the world a better place. ●●



Volunteers visit the home of Normimi and Abdul Hamid.

By Tan Yun Ru

Translated by Tang Yau-yang

Nur Alya walked home after school let out, across a hillside on Langkawi, an island off the coast of Kedah, Malaysia. Inside her front door, she took some spare change from her pocket and dropped it into a coin bank. Her younger sister, Nurul Nabila, came in a little later and did the same. Though they did not deposit much, dropping a few coins into the bank upon coming home was routine for everyone in the family.

Just a few years ago, the girls' parents, Abdul Hamid and Normimi, could hardly provide for the family. But this family has experienced a remarkable turnaround—from people who needed aid to people who are providing aid to others.

In 2006, Abdul Hamid had a kidney stone operation and was subsequently bedridden for two years. He lost his job, and Normimi was forced to become the breadwinner for the family. They could not continue to pay rent, so the family of eight moved into a wooden shed which their relatives and friends had built for them. "I was desperate at the time, thinking that we'd live in poverty for life," Normimi recalled.

Normimi worked as a cleaner at a hotel while also taking care of her children and husband. She was overstretched in all directions. She even lost her job for a while. In 2008, Abdul Hamid needed another operation; Tzu Chi volunteers learned of their plight and started visiting them. Volunteer Chang Sau Kam (曾秀金) remembered one visit clearly: Normimi was at the hospital looking after Abdul Hamid, and the children said that they had not eaten in a couple of days.

"Each time they came," Normimi said of the volunteers, "they would tell me to be strong and to believe that Allah would bless me, that my children would work hard and take care of me in the future, and that a good life was in store for me. I would reflect on their words before I fell asleep each night. Gradually their words sank in, and I came to terms with my circumstances." She added that each time the volunteers visited, they gave her and her family money, daily necessities, and spiritual support. It was like a shot in the arm for them.

The shed they lived in was very small, not quite 70 square feet. It almost always flooded after a rain. The year after Tzu Chi volunteers started visiting them, the couple applied to the govern-

Better Days Dawning

They were once so poor that they didn't always have enough food to eat. They needed aid to get by. Now they save a little money each day to help others. They believe that a brighter future lies ahead.



Along with a Tzu Chi volunteer (right), Normimi (left) and her family count the coins that they have saved up for Tzu Chi.

"We used to receive others' help, so why not help others now?" Abdul Hamid remarked. "If Nur Alya puts in ten sen a day, Nurul Nabila puts in ten, Nabil ten, and Normimi and I ten each, then we'll have 50 sen a day," Abdul Hamid said. "That's 15 ringgits [US\$4.30] a month that we can give to Tzu Chi to help needy people."

For more than three years now, putting pocket change into

a coin bank has become the first thing Abdul Hamid's children do when they come home from school. Following the same spirit, Abdul Hamid fashioned another coin bank out of a beverage bottle to put away money for emergency. Having lived through poverty, he knew what it was like not to have any money. He wanted to teach his children the importance of saving for a rainy day.

Syawal, 21, their oldest child, is a yacht pilot by day and an airport guard by night. He has worked since he graduated from high school to help support the family. He works hard, and he encourages his siblings to study hard. He hopes to own a yacht one day and take tourists out himself. "I'll work toward a better life so my family can live in comfort," he said.

It was heartening for volunteer Lee Ei Ching (李玉菁) to see Syawal and his siblings work toward their goals and dreams. She has accompanied this family since 2008 and has seen them rise from destitution to independence. Their success makes her as happy as if they were her own family. "Life can't always be a smooth ride—there are bound to be ups and downs. When people are down, they need others to give them care to help them through."

Tzu Chi volunteers not only give care recipients financial support, but continually accompany them to help build up their confidence, perseverance, and courage to face life. They do not expect anything in return. The transformation of care recipients from people-who-receive to people-who-give is the best reward for them...just as is shown by the story of Normimi and her family.

At a Tzu Chi aid distribution, Abdul Hamid and his family learned about the origin of Tzu Chi—how the foundation had started in Taiwan with 30 housewives each saving 50 cents (then 1.2 US cents) in a bamboo coin bank every day to help the needy. Inspired, they decided to start saving coins to do good for others.

The Illustrated JING SI Aphorisms

The Buddha says:

When anyone points out our mistakes, misdeeds or faults, we should be as grateful as if they had told us about a hidden treasure.



WHEN DIFFICULTIES OR CONFLICTS ARISE, YOU SHOULD KEEP AN OPEN MIND.

NOTHING IN LIFE IS EASY, BUT THE THINGS YOU LEARN IN BAD SITUATIONS CAN ACT AS LIGHT-HOUSEES TO GUIDE YOU THROUGH LIFE.

BUDDHISTS SEE HARDSHIPS AS UNIQUE OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH. SO WHEN SOME TOUGH LUCK COMES YOUR WAY, YOU SHOULD FEEL GRATEFUL.



An air force captain: "Our combat training is quite rigorous, and we all feel a great deal of pressure. How can we keep calm so that we can fly safely? As a military leader, how should I educate my subordinates?"

Except for the flight training, your regular, disciplined lifestyle is the same as that of religious life. Religious beliefs can also help you maintain your mental balance and cope with the pressure. As a team leader, you should set a good example yourself by strictly following the regulations in your daily life, and by treating your subordinates with love.

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



WANG SU ZHEN

Tzu Chi volunteers in Singapore take to the streets to raise donations for flood victims in Malaysia.

Singapore

On January 4, to help flood victims in Malaysia, 707 volunteers from Tzu Chi Singapore hit the streets, donation boxes and posters in hand, kicking off a fundraiser that would last a month.

The volunteers went to markets, shopping malls, bus stops, and MRT stations to solicit donations. With smiles on their faces, they beseeched passers-by to give. Each donation was met with a low bow and a cheerful "Thank you and bless you."

The Geylang Serai market is a gathering place for local Malays. The volunteers received much attention there as they called, "Show your love, support Malaysian flood victims." Many people expressed their support by depositing money into the boxes.

Rahima, a 65-year-old donor, said that she was very concerned about her brother and his family. The family had to stay in a shelter

because their house in Gua Musang, Kelantan, Malaysia, had been submerged. Rahima could not visit them because transportation had been cut off. When she heard about Tzu Chi volunteers distributing emergency cash and relief supplies to flood victims, she was very touched by how they gave without regard to ethnicity and religion.

Masitah, a Malay mother, said that Tzu Chi did the right thing to take to the streets to raise money. Doing so taught children the meaning of charity. She asked her son to drop money into a donation box and explained to him that the money would go to help flood victims in Malaysia.

Volunteer Li Shu Fang (李淑芳) said that she had probably called out 6,500 times that day to solicit donations, from seven o'clock in the morning until six in the evening. Though her feet were sore and her voice was hoarse after standing and yelling all day long, those were

small problems that would go away in a couple of days, compared to the much longer time it would take for flood victims to rebuild their lives. "When a disaster strikes, the fortunate ones should chip in and help the less fortunate," she said.

Volunteer Xu Yu Bao (許毓寶) had gone to the flood zones in Malaysia to help with Tzu Chi relief work there. "What I saw was beyond my imagination." She said that though many brick houses were undamaged, the things inside, like furniture, were still flooded and damaged. Some people lived in stilt houses, but the deep water stranded them in their homes all the same. To buy necessities, they had to row out on Styrofoam boxes. Life became difficult for some people as they could not work and had no income.

Born and raised in the richness of Singapore, Xu did not know if she could have hung in there as well as those flood victims had. Witnessing the suffering of others helped her

count her blessings. She was especially touched when she saw some flood victims return or decline the emergency cash that Tzu Chi volunteers had handed over to them. They wanted Tzu Chi to give the money to others worse off than themselves.

By soliciting donations and pooling together the love of many people, volunteers hoped that they could help the flood victims feel the warmth of the world.

Japan

Tzu Chi volunteers in Osaka held their inaugural winter aid distribution on January 11, 2015. Before the event, volunteers went over the distribution procedures and other related matters. Six homeless people would help maintain order, check recipients in, and hand out numbers.

Of the volunteers, six were Japanese males. One of them, Shogo Nakamura, didn't use to

Five volunteers standing in a row present blankets to homeless recipients in Osaka, Japan.



LIN SHU-FEN



Fire victims in Quezon City hold up their thumbs to thank Tzu Chi for the aid they received.

he became curious and wanted to know more about the organization. He felt Japan needed this type of unselfish spirit of benevolence. He also wanted to know how Master Cheng Yen was able to lead so many volunteers, so he visited the Tzu Chi Japan branch in Tokyo and learned more about the work of the foundation around the world. He decided to go to Hualien, Taiwan, in 2015 to experience firsthand the life of a volunteer there and the life of the nuns in the Jing Si Abode, the Tzu Chi headquarters.

Iwao Nishioka, himself a homeless person, was the liaison between the recipients and Tzu Chi. He said the distribution of blankets was very helpful to the homeless in the bitter cold of winter, and he was grateful for Tzu Chi's assistance. He asked the volunteers if they could give out more blankets in the future to help more homeless people.

The original plan for this event was to distribute between two and three hundred blankets, thermal undershirts, towels, and gloves. However, the volunteers in Osaka were uncertain that they had the manpower and expertise to carry out such a big event in their first attempt. Therefore, they scaled it down to just 80 blankets and towels. One homeless person dropped 500 yen (US\$4.20) into a Tzu Chi coin bank to show his gratitude. He said, "I don't have much to give—this is a small token of my desire to help other needy people. I hope that you don't mind its size."

The volunteers hope to establish deeper connections with the homeless and to give them more spiritual support. They hope to help them return to society and live normal lives again.

The Philippines

On January 1, 2015, a severe blaze, believed to have been started by firecrackers, left nearly two thousand families in Quezon City homeless. Tzu Chi volunteers promptly went to assess the disaster zone. On January 3 and 7, Tzu Chi Philippines conducted relief distributions for 1,978 families that had been placed in two shelters. In addition to emergency cash—one thousand pesos, or US\$22.57, for each family—items including reusable bags, comforters, cooking pots, laundry soap, dish detergent, second-hand clothes, dining utensils, and rice were distributed.

know much about Tzu Chi. When his Taiwanese wife, Qiong-zhu (瓊珠), talked about going with Tzu Chi volunteers to help survivors of the tsunami that hit northeastern Japan in March 2011, his first thought was to oppose it. But since the disaster had occurred in his country, he felt it wasn't right to stop her from going. After she had left for the relief mission, he felt greatly inconvenienced by her absence at home, so he later told her not to go again.

However, when his wife wanted to go again, Nakamura did not stop her. By that time, he had seen how much Tzu Chi, headquartered in Taiwan, had done for tsunami victims in northeastern Japan. He felt ashamed of himself—he should have done more to help his own people.

As a result, he began going with his wife to visit the needy, pray for the deceased, and participate in other Tzu Chi activities. The more he participated, the more deeply he felt that Tzu Chi was indeed helping those really in need. This is when he became completely committed to Tzu Chi work.

Ikuma Sugiura, a junior at Kyoto Sangyo University, traveled from Kyoto for this event. When he heard a teacher mention the good deeds that Tzu Chi was doing around the world,

Francisco Quiapo, a carpenter, lost all his possessions in the fire. He said he would use half of the emergency cash to buy new tools for his trade, and give the other half to his wife to buy daily goods. Another aid recipient, Salome Cagampang, thanked Tzu Chi for the aid. She observed that the money could help her set up a vegetable stand again. Rosalinda Abaya also expressed her gratitude to Tzu Chi; the cash she had received would be used toward the purchase of building materials for a new house.

In the face of a disaster, only love can help the affected out of suffering. May the love from Tzu Chi help the fire victims restart their lives and ease their way back to normalcy.

Taiwan

On February 4, TransAsia Airways flight GE235 from Taipei to Kinmen lost power soon after takeoff from Taipei Songshan Airport and crashed into the Keelung River. Fifty-three passengers and five crew members were on board. Before the crash, the left wing of the plane clipped a taxi running on an elevated expressway. Both the taxi driver and passenger were

In low tide, close to a hundred divers form a human chain and comb the Keelung River for missing passengers from a plane crash that happened in northern Taiwan in February 2015. The low temperatures were a big challenge to the rescue workers.

injured, but not seriously. The crash took the lives of 43 people on the plane.

Tzu Chi volunteers quickly set up a service station near the site. They gave whatever assistance was needed, and they served hot food and ginger tea to rescue workers and crash victims' families as the search for missing passengers went on. Volunteers also visited survivors at hospitals and went to the Second Funeral Parlor to chant sutras for the deceased.

Of the passengers aboard, 31 were from Xiamen, China, so Tzu Chi volunteers in that city also mobilized to help. Seven of them even accompanied family members from Xiamen to Taiwan, where they were picked up by other volunteers. In their rush to come to the island, some of the relatives didn't bring enough clothes. Volunteers immediately went about preparing clothes and other needed items for them.

Many rescue and search divers were volunteers from private groups. At their request, Tzu Chi volunteers provided two tents for them to change clothes and rest. The temperatures were low, and the river must have felt like ice water to the rescue workers. As soon as they emerged from the river, volunteers quickly handed them hot tea and blankets. Chen Jia-hao (陳嘉豪), a rescue worker, thanked Tzu Chi volunteers for taking care of them. "The hot tea and food you serve really help us keep up our strength."

By February 12, all the missing passengers had been found. During the nine days after the





To shoulder a burden is an inspiring force. To admit a mistake is a noble virtue.

—Master Cheng Yen

PHOTO BY LI BAI-SHI