

Tzu Chi



**Buddhism
in Action**

Fall 2014

慈濟

**CLASSROOMS
IN BOHOL**

A Butterfly Garden

Text and Photo by Liu King-pong

“Hello, K.P., this is Eros. I’d like to invite you and your wife to my place for breakfast on Sunday.” Eros Peres, an immigrant from Cuba, is one of my neighbors in Miami. Becoming acquainted with him has been one of the most delightful experiences since my wife, Jeanny, and I moved here in January 2013.

Jeanny and I have tremendously enjoyed taking daily walks throughout our neighborhood. Our neighbors are exceptionally friendly, and their front yards, with neatly mowed lawns and beautiful flowers, are a sight for sore eyes...with only one exception. When I laid eyes on one particular yard a year ago, I was shocked by how “spontaneously”—to be euphemistic—all the bushes, ivies and trees seemed to grow in it. “It’s a jungle in the city,” I mused.

But in several subsequent walks, we noticed a lot of beautiful butterflies, dragonflies, bees, and even hummingbirds flitting through it. I gradually realized the garden was actually quite ecologically balanced. I commented to Jeanny that the owner of the house must be a friend of nature.

One morning I saw a man watering the plants in the “jungle.” “Your garden looks like a jungle,” I called.

“Yeah, my mom says the same thing,” he replied with an embarrassed smile.

“It’s quite special since it attracts so many beautiful butterflies, which you don’t see in other yards,” I continued.

“Oh, so you like it?” I could see his eyes sparkling as I nodded my head.

He told me his name was Eros Peres. He was studying for his Ph.D. in psychology at Carlos Albizu University. He and his friend, Vern Decato, who is associated with the Royal Caribbean Cruise Line, shared the house. He said it was Vern’s idea to turn their front yard into a butterfly garden, and they’d been working hard to do that. Eros then enthusiastically showed us various kinds of plants and herbs—food for butterflies—that they were cultivating in the yard. He explained that the butterflies would naturally go where food was abundant.

Eros Peres works hard to make his front yard an ideal habitat for butterflies.

I was amazed at their passion for nurturing butterflies in a healthy, pesticide-free environment, which is so hard to come by nowadays. I asked if I could interview both of them so that I could learn more. Eros consented, but my request was not fulfilled until a year later, when he invited us for breakfast.

When Jeanny and I arrived, Eros and Vern received us warmly. Before we sat down to enjoy the food, they zealously showed us around their huge back yard, which turned out to be their nursery for special plants. We saw milkweed, rue, dill, passionflower, and Dutchman’s pipe, to name just a few. The plants would be transplanted to the front yard once their growth had stabilized. Vern, a gentle, amiable man of French descent, explained that these plants were food for butterflies, including Queen, Monarch, Giant Swallowtail, Black Swallowtail, Julia Heliconian, etc. There were eight species of butterflies in their garden, and the creatures would be more active and agile when the temperature got warmer.

I said that I had noticed during my evening walks that their house lights were turned down before 7:30, and I asked why. Eros replied that they were worried the lights might disturb the sleep of the butterflies, lizards and mockingbirds nesting in the yard. When I praised him for being so compassionate, he shyly denied it and said that he needed to spread alcohol on aphids, transmitters of plant diseases, in hopes of wiping them out.

When asked what kind of pleasure the butterfly garden had brought to them, Vern remarked, “Our garden has created a ‘channel of social connection’ for us.” He elaborated that he had provided a British and a Brazilian lady in the neighborhood with some baby passionflowers and rue, and they in turn invited him and Eros over to watch the butterflies that had been lured to their gardens. “Likewise, we wouldn’t have gotten to know you two without the garden!” Vern’s words brought big smiles to our faces.

After finishing breakfast, we stepped out of their house and saw dozens of butterflies joyfully dancing in the balmy Miami sunshine. We felt just as joyful as those gorgeous creatures as we bid goodbye to our two new friends! ❀

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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.
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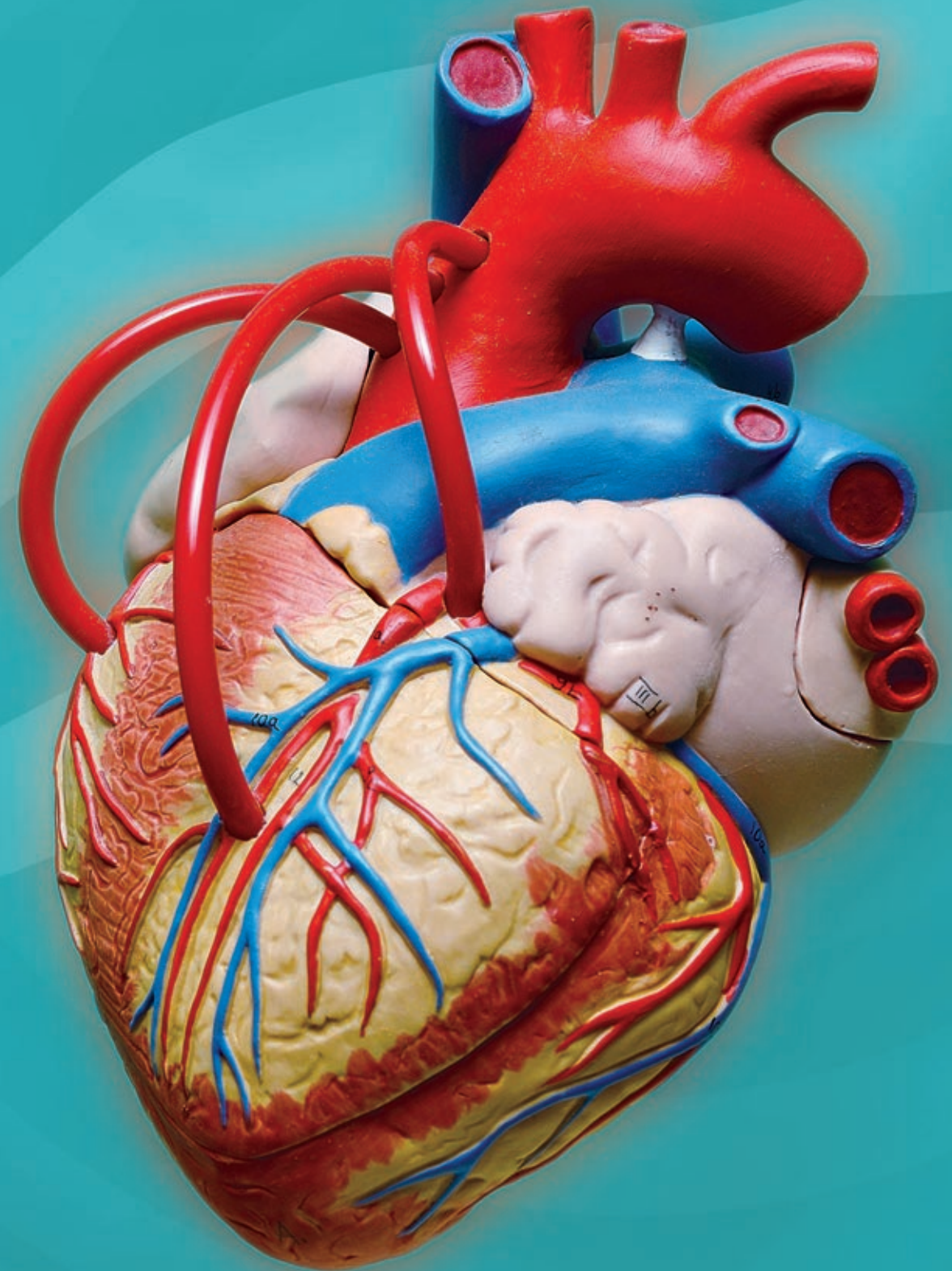
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Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital Excellence in Catheterization

Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital provides comprehensive care for cardiac diseases, such as surgical interventions and catheterization. This series of two articles focuses on the latter.

The hospital excels in cardiac catheterization to treat heart conditions, and it has successfully extended the benefit of the procedure to patients suffering from peripheral vascular diseases as well.

By Huang Xiu-hua
Translated by Tang Yau-yang
Photos by Yan Lin-zhao



Dr. Chang Heng-chia

Every Second Counts

Every second counts in using catheterization to open up clogged arteries of the heart. It is a race in which the very survival of the patient hangs in the balance. This pressure-cooker profession is not for the faint of heart. Even so, cardiologist Chang Heng-chia, who has been in this business for nearly 30 years, loves his job more and more by the day.



An emergency call shatters the stillness of the night. A nurse rushes to the emergency department, checks on the patient, obtains the essential information, and then runs right to the cardiac catheterization room. There she powers up the equipment and prepares the needed instruments. Technicians put

on lead aprons, scrub up, don surgical robes and caps, and stand ready for the patient. Upon his arrival, they administer anesthesia, turn on the defibrillator, and affix ECG electrodes. Finally, a cardiologist inserts a catheter into an artery to start the process of opening up a blocked blood vessel.

This well-choreographed procedure plays out several times a week at Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital, and daily in winter as low temperatures often precipitate cardiovascular diseases. After a heart attack, the damaged heart cannot pump as much blood as the body needs. To do the most good for the patient, the cardiologist has a window of 90

minutes in which to remove obstructing matter from blocked vessels. Cardiologist Chang Heng-chia (張恒嘉), deputy superintendent of Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital, leads a team that performs these unclogging interventions. For the last nine years, the team has been on call at all times, always at the ready to pull off these life-saving treatments.





Chang Heng-chia, right, was the first grandson of the family. He always keeps in mind his grandfather's expectation for him—to be a good doctor.

COURTESY OF CHANG HENG-CHIA

Noble qualities

"I feel really bad when I see a patient suffering shortness of breath," Dr. Chang said, explaining why he had chosen this high-pressure medical field. "When my emergency treatment saves a patient, I feel tremendous joy. Words just can't describe that feeling."

Chang was born in Huwei, a small town in Yunlin County, southern Taiwan. His father worked for a bank as an assistant vice president before joining a textile company. Before Chang, there had never been any physicians in his family. Following his family's wishes, Chang strove for a career in medicine. He earned admission to Kaohsiung Medical College, now Kaohsiung Medical University.

Chang's grandfather, who had always doted on him, suffered from emphysema as a result of chronic pneumonia. In the summer before Chang was to start medical school, the disease worsened. The old man had great difficulty breathing and had to rely on an oxygen mask. Chang's heart ached to see his grandfather suffering like that, but he could not do much for him.

One night, it was Chang's turn to attend to him. "How you suffer when you get sick," his grandfather mumbled to the young man at his bedside. "You must study what's ailing me when you become a doctor and do your best to help others."

The disease took the old man's life less than a month later. However, his advice and expecta-

tions stayed with Chang as he embarked on his medical career. His grandfather's hope for him constantly reminded him to strive to be a good doctor so he could help relieve the suffering of sick people.

When Chang was training to become a doctor, a relative told him a story which also helped shape him into a good physician. The story helped steer him clear of a morally reprehensible but common practice in the old days of medicine in Taiwan.

Chang's relative had been scheduled for a minor operation at a hospital. Someone hinted to him that he should pay the surgeon before the operation to buy better service during the surgery—not a regular payment of hospital charges, but a bribe for the surgeon's personal pocket. Though the relative did not want to comply, he did so eventually for fear that the doctor would not do his best.

In a corner of a hallway, the relative delivered the money to the surgeon. The operation went well after all, but when the relative told Chang the story, there was contempt in his voice and facial expression. He even described the deftness with which the surgeon had accepted his bribe, apparently having had much experience on the receiving end of the deal. "He gained some money, but he certainly lost his integrity and honor. Is that worthwhile?" the relative fumed. That was enough to warn Chang to keep away from that bad path.

After he became an attending physician at Chang Gung Memorial Hospital, he sometimes encountered patients who tried to bribe him for better care. He always declined, going so far as to write letters to them describing the bad experience of his relative. He would also write that he treated all of his patients with the same high level of care, and that no extra money was needed for that. He asked the patients and their families to rest assured that they were getting his best service.

Calm under pressure

Identifying with the compassionate spirit that Master Cheng Yen showed as she founded

Wang Xiu-feng brings Chang a bouquet of flowers on the eve of every Mother's Day to thank him for taking good care of her mother.

the various Tzu Chi hospitals in Taiwan, Chang joined Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital in 2005, just prior to its opening. His charge was to establish a cardiac catheterization lab. The unit took in its first patient on May 31 that year, and it has remained active ever since.

The lab team is fully aware that heart disease is like a ticking time bomb. When patients are delivered to the hospital, the team has to respond very quickly. Therefore, team members have chosen to live near the hospital. Nurse Chen Cui-lan (陳翠蘭), for example, can reach the emergency room on foot in just five minutes. Radiology technologist Zhong Qing-hua (鍾情華) always keeps her cell phone on her, and when she gets an emergency call, she runs in big steps to the hospital, even in the middle of the night.



Chang finds it comforting that the first nine cardiologists who joined the hospital in 2005 are still around. The hospital later established a peripheral vascular center, and three of these cardiologists have shifted to treating clogged blood vessels in the lower extremities [see the next article]. To meet the high demand for cardiology department services, the hospital has been adding one cardiologist a year, for a total now of 13.

Cardiologists often face life-and-death situations, and as a result are often under tremendous pressure. However, they have to stay calm under duress. The more urgent a case, the calmer one must remain.

"If the heart stops beating, we [strive to] get it pumping again," Chang said. "If the blood pressure falls off a cliff, we pull it back up. If the

Chang conducts a checkup in the cardiac catheterization room.

breathing stops, we rush to restore it." It is not unusual for a patient to arrive at the hospital already unconscious. Reviving him often tests the cardiologist's skills.

Chang said that his religious beliefs help him in such circumstances. He quietly chants the name of the Amitabha Buddha, and in just a few seconds he is calm enough to make critical decisions. At times he still experiences a churning stomach, tightness in his chest, or a headache while working on a patient, but as soon as the patient turns the corner, all his discomfort and fatigue dissipates. Usually, the only indication of the high-pressure procedure is the drenched clothes on his back.

Sympathizing with patients' families

When treatment leads to improvement in patients, medical care providers can take comfort knowing that their efforts have done good. But things do not always go so well. Despite



Dr. Chang has a little chat with a patient to ease her tension before she is wheeled into the cardiac catheterization room for a checkup.

their best efforts, physicians may come up short of the expectations of the patients or their families and be wrongly blamed as a result.

One case shocked Chang more than any other. In 2003, when he was still at Chang Gung Memorial Hospital, he treated a woman in her 60s for a heart attack. The woman was critically ill when she was brought into the emergency room. Chang judged that her only chance to live was to immediately undergo cardiac catheterization.

The woman's husband, who had delivered her to the ER, could not decide whether or not to proceed with the surgery. The man called his daughter, Wang Xiu-feng (王秀鳳), and put her on the phone with Chang. When he told her about his conclusion, she asked, "What is cardiac

catheterization?" Then she expressed her doubt to the doctor: Her mom had never had a heart attack, so how could she be in critical condition? It seemed so out of the blue.

Wang rushed to the hospital. When she arrived, the mother had already been through the procedure and had been rolled out of the cardiac catheterization room. Smiling, she told her daughter that Dr. Chang had used angioplasty to unclog a blood vessel for her.

She was then taken to an intensive care unit to recover. Unexpectedly, her condition took a sudden turn for the worse and she went into shock. The doctor hurried to save her. A nurse came out to inform the family of the situation. After a while, Chang emerged, his steps heavy. He said to the family, "It doesn't look good. There's a 90 percent chance that she's beyond hope."

Wang was devastated. Unable to handle this sudden blow, she snapped at the physician, "You killed my mom!"



That hurt Chang badly, but he knew that, under the circumstances, her concerns about her mother naturally overshadowed everything else. He softly explained her mother's condition and what he would do next for her.

"If she were my mother, I'd agree to keep the emergency treatment going," Chang told the daughter. This statement, delivered with sincerity, touched her and helped her regain her good senses. She knelt in front of Chang, crying and begging him to do his best to save her mother.

A long time later, Chang again emerged from the ICU. He asked for one person who was closest to the patient to go into the ICU with him. "If that person can awaken her, then we have a chance. Otherwise, she is gone, medically speaking," Chang explained.

Wang ran towards her mother and called out, "Mom!" Amazingly, the patient's eyelids fluttered slightly. Chang continued his rescue work, and another hour passed. The mother eventually regained consciousness.

The first words she said to her daughter when she came around were: "This doctor is good. He's worked so hard to save me. You shouldn't have doubted him."

The woman was later discharged and went home healthy. However, she passed away half a

year later as a result of complications from long-term peritoneal dialysis.

On the eve of the first Mother's Day following her death, Chang received a bouquet of flowers from an unlikely person: Wang, the one-time antagonist who had accused him of killing her mother. She had sent the flowers to Chang on behalf of her mother.

The doctor wrote Wang a letter that went something like this: "Your mother was most kind to me. She endured a lot of pain when undergoing treatment, yet she always wore a smile and never hesitated to let me know that she had trust in what I was doing for her. I appreciate her kindness, and I will always miss her."

Another year went by, and he again received a bouquet from Wang around Mother's Day. One year later, she showed up at his clinic and said to him, "We really appreciate what you did. You gave my family six extra months to be with Mom. During that time we were able to help her fulfill many of her wishes. She did many things that she had really wanted to do."

Doubters abound

It has been 11 years, and Chang continues to receive the yearly bouquet from Wang, which

she delivers personally to his clinic. She herself has become his patient, as have her father, younger brother, and husband. Chang is literally their family doctor. Having seen how Chang cared for her mother, Wang realized how challenging a physician's work can be, and her initial distrust of him became total confidence.

However, many other patients or their families have yet to come to this realization and appreciation. News reports about adversity between recipients and providers of medical care have abounded, but Wang now understands that such incidents can be avoided or made less severe if the receiving side is more trusting. When trusted, a doctor can be undistracted to deploy the treatment strategy that is best for the patient.

Chang, on the other hand, believes that doctors can also do a lot to help ease the tension. "When a patient is critically ill, it is understandable that the family becomes worried or even angry," he said. "Their reactions, however, must not cause the physician to become indifferent. Instead, he should continue to do his best to serve the patient and their family. Eventually they'll come to see your efforts."

Chang has shared his experience with the Wang family with younger doctors. His advice to them: "The more tempestuous their attitudes towards you, the calmer you must remain." Trying to see things from a family's perspective will help a physician make sense of, and hence empathize with, their behavior. Once that is done, adversity dissolves, mutual appreciation arises, and the patient benefits.

Furthermore, a doctor must not fret over being woken at night, not get too worked up when patients or their families wrongly blame them for not doing enough, not be knocked off balance by the mercurial swings of a patient's condition, and not lose heart when, despite the best medical intervention possible, the patient dies anyway. Only after having repeatedly survived these trials can one become, in Chang's mind, an experienced, mature physician.

Medical excellence

On this day, a 78-year-old man came to the cardiac catheterization lab for treatment. Doctor Zhan Shi-rong (詹仕戎) examined him while Chang stood in an adjacent observation room, looking in through a glass window and at the same time viewing images on computer monitors showing the patient's condition. Looking at

a frozen frame, he discussed the extent of the old man's coronary artery blockages with other staff members, as well as the pros and cons of angioplasty and stents versus surgery.

Chang pointed out two major blockages. On the left, two major vessels had severely narrowed, forcing blood to go down smaller branch vessels. If there were a heart attack, then the entire surrounding region would suffer blood deprivation and the risk of abrupt death would become quite high. The blockage on the right, on the other hand, could be more easily treated with a stent.

Even though the old patient's life was on the line, he was still able to carry on a conversation with Dr. Zhan as if nothing was wrong with him. He looked perfectly fine. Chang said that that was exactly why heart disease was so frightening. This old man came to the clinic only because he had experienced chest tightness, shortness of breath, and an inability to walk more than a few steps. But a checkup revealed that he was actually in critical condition.

There was no time to lose. Chang asked a staffer to call a cardiac surgeon to take a look at the old man. Then he explained the situation to the patient's family and informed them of the benefits and risks of the available treatment options. He recommended a more invasive procedure, coronary bypass surgery, to treat the problem on the left side. Its benefits would be longer lasting, and the need for repeated stent insertions could be avoided.

After presenting his professional opinion, he emphasized to the family the importance of a healthy lifestyle. People nowadays like to eat refined food. They tend to eat too much and exercise too little, which often results in high blood pressure, high blood sugar, and high body fat. This patient, for example, suffered from hypertension, diabetes, and high blood lipids. These risk factors sped up the hardening of his blood vessels—which were already losing elasticity due to his age.

Having given careful counseling and treatment to many patients in the same condition as this old man, Chang and his team have built up a reputation of excellence over the last nine years.

The "door-to-balloon" (D2B) time—the time from when a patient enters the hospital to when blood flow is restored to the heart by performing angioplasty to remove a blockage—is critical to the survival and recovery of patients. The

How to Prevent Cardiovascular Diseases

As told by Chang Heng-chia

Eat plenty of whole grains, vegetables, and fruit. Be cheerful. Exercise regularly. Don't smoke. Avoid obesity. Keep your blood sugar, blood pressure, and triglyceride levels in their proper ranges, and have the trio checked regularly. Get them down if they become elevated. If you do that, you may be able to improve your odds of having good health for decades down the road. Properly controlling the trio can reduce your risk of getting cardiovascular diseases.

I need to point out one more thing: Early-stage heart disease doesn't usually show symptoms. Be mindful when you notice chest tightness and shortness of breath. If the more you walk, the easier it becomes, then you probably don't have angina pectoris, and your discomfort is probably stress-related. However, if you feel as if a rock lay heavy on your chest, if you can't breathe and walk easily, then it is quite likely that you are experiencing a myocardial ischemia [when blood flow to the heart muscle is decreased by a blockage of the heart arteries] and the functions of your heart are impaired.

If your blood pressure drops, your pulse quickens, your hands and feet turn cold, and you perspire all over, get to a doctor quick—your blood vessels might be severely clogged. A heart attack is quite deadly. You cannot be too careful.



Despite working in a high-pressure field, Chang loves his profession.

D2B Alliance, a campaign sponsored by the American College of Cardiology along with 38 partner organizations, has set a goal that 75 percent of patients should receive life-saving heart attack care within 90 minutes of arriving at the hospital. Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital has set a higher bar for its cardiology team—90 percent—and the team has cleared that high bar.

The proficiency of the staff has also been shown to professionals outside the hospital. Taiwan Transcatheter Therapeutics 2014, a Transcatheter Cardiovascular Therapeutics symposium, was held at National Taiwan University Hospital. Participants came from the United States, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, China, and Taiwan. Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital was invited to perform catheter procedures live on six patients, evenly divided between those with blocked cardiac and peripheral blood vessels. Tzu Chi physicians won accolades for conducting these particularly difficult procedures with obvious skill.

For example, Dr. Ke Yu-lin (柯毓麟) led a team that performed a procedure for conference attendees. He used a high-speed rotablator to treat a patient with multiple diffused and calcified vascular lesions. This involved using a diamond-tipped burr on the head of the device to grind off some calcified blockage to widen the passage inside the blood vessel before he performed an angioplasty and deployed a stent. When the clog was opened up, the audience erupted into enthusiastic applause.

Many people on Chang's team worked behind the scenes while Ke and other doctors worked onstage. Many of them went to help even though it was their free time off work. Chang was very proud of their team effort and spirit. "We showed the conference not just our skills, but also our teamwork," he said. "I believe our team will do better and better in the future."

Looking back, Chang said that he had gotten into medicine because his school grades had offered him a choice available to only a few—not because he had a natural love of it. However, he has grown to love it after years of practice. He is 54 now and has been in the field for almost 30 years—and his love for it continues to grow. With that love, he strives for perfection in his endeavors to save lives because, he said, "Nothing is more precious than life."





Dr. Huang Hsuan-li

Artery Open, Leg Saved

When the clogs are cleared and blood flows again into the leg, the patient is surprised and delighted by the warmth that returns to the cold limb.

Dr. Huang Hsuan-li has performed peripheral vascular interventions for ten years, sparing about 700 patients the physical and mental agony of having their legs amputated.

In the ten years that Dr. Huang Hsuan-li (黃玄禮) and his team have engaged in peripheral vascular intervention, 889 legs have been saved. Instead of amputation, 690 patients have regained the use of their legs as a result of the treatment. This represents an amazing success rate of 96 percent for the doctor and his team.

Huang was promoted to the rank of attending physician in 2002. Just two years later, while he was working at Chang Gung Memorial Hospital, Professor Wen Ming-shien (溫明賢) assigned him to the field of peripheral vascular disease (PVD, also called peripheral arterial disease). The treatment for PVD is called peripheral vascular intervention (PVI)—that is, opening up blockages in blood vessels in the legs to save them from being amputated.

Dr. Huang Hsun-li has treated peripheral vascular diseases for a decade. Over that time, he has helped save nearly 900 legs from amputation.





It really tests a doctor's mettle to open up narrowed arteries and remove blockages. Huang is blessed with a pair of dexterous hands.

Peripheral vascular intervention

When Huang first started treating patients for PVD, he chose only those whose prognosis was particularly poor. Some of them had been confined to wheelchairs because occlusions in their legs had reduced blood flow to tissues there long enough to cause damage and result in conditions such as skin ulcers. The worst cases had to have their limbs amputated.

Huang did not originally have high expectations for his interventions, which consisted of using catheters to open up circulation in peripheral blood vessels, especially those in the lower extremities. Those blood vessels are typically plagued by plaque build-up.

However, he was surprised by the marked improvement in some patients after treatment.

For example, one man who had been wheelchair-bound before the intervention walked unassisted into Huang's clinic after the procedure and exclaimed, "Dr. Huang, I can walk now!" Huang was overjoyed. He was thrilled beyond words. His confidence in the procedure surged.

Shi Chun-ren (施純仁), now in his 60s, was one of Dr. Huang's first patients. When he first met Dr. Huang in 2004 at Chang Gung Memorial Hospital, he had been suffering from diabetes for more than ten years. Poorly controlled glucose levels had led to many complications. He had been on kidney dialysis, and he was suffering from PVD. As a result, his left leg had already

Huang puts on a radiation-blocking lead apron, weighing about six kilograms (13 lbs.), before entering the catheterization lab. The weight of all the lead protection he must wear has already injured his neck twice.





A PVI procedure can be performed on many areas in the body. To meet treatment needs, Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital has a full stock of catheters, balloons and stents of various sizes.

An image of a vessel after removal of a clog.

The doctor employed percutaneous transluminal angioplasty to treat Shi. He inserted a balloon catheter on a guide wire into Shi's right groin and then maneuvered it to the narrowed artery in Shi's leg. He inflated the balloon to push the accumulated deposits against the artery wall. With more blood flowing through the widened artery, Shi once again felt warmth and sensation in his leg.

When Dr. Huang moved to Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital in 2005, Shi followed him. The doctor gave him five more PVI treatments after the move and eventually saved the leg. Shi has been Huang's patient for a decade now.

been amputated. He was seeing Huang because his right leg was cold and numb. He feared that he would soon lose that leg too and would have to spend the rest of his life in a wheelchair. That prospect left him extremely depressed.

"It's so nice to feel the leg warm to the touch again," Shi exclaimed. "Thanks to Dr. Huang, my right leg has 'lived' an extra ten years now." He said that were it not for the doctor's patient and careful treatment, his leg would have been sawn off long ago. "Though I can never move around as freely as ordinary folks can, I still have the use of one leg. I can at least take care of myself and live with more dignity."

Challenges along the way

The same principle underlies both peripheral arterial and cardiac catheterizations, but because of the differences in the lengths and widths of the blood vessels being treated, there are different requirements for the instruments used. Cardiac catheterizations were much more widely performed when Huang started performing catheterizations on lower limbs. Peripheral catheterizations took much more time to perform than cardiac catheterizations, but received only a quarter as much reimbursement from the national health insurance system. As a result, hospitals were generally not as interested in offering non-heart catheterizations. That made it difficult to procure the equipment—catheters, balloons, and stents—for peripheral catheterizations because with such a small market, few businesses were interested in importing them.

Huang, therefore, encountered many setbacks by focusing on peripheral instead of cardiac catheterizations. "Using cardiac catheters to treat blockages in lower limbs just does not work well," Huang explained. "The farthest a cardiac catheter needs to reach is seven centimeters [2.8 inches], but a catheter for the lower extremities needs to reach 100 centimeters [39.4 inches]. The shank alone is 30 centimeters [11.8 inches]. When I first started, the longest balloon available in Taiwan was but four centimeters [1.6 inches]. Using such inadequate equipment made our treatment not just time consuming but also ineffective." Similar problems with the stents also plagued Huang.

Because suitable instruments were not readily available, it was inevitable that some patients still had to undergo amputations. But Huang remained undaunted. He did not quit his PVI treatments, which he believed to be a better and safer alternative to the much more invasive and dangerous bypass surgery.

Always learning

Though the equipment seemed to pose a major problem, Huang often asked himself when he ran

into difficulties treating patients whether they were caused by inadequate instruments—or by his limited capabilities. Hurdles in treating patients prompted him to attend conferences and training courses abroad in order to learn new techniques. In 2007, he learned the latest PVI techniques at a conference in Italy. In 2009 he traveled to Germany at his own expense to study for three weeks at Park Hospital Leipzig, a heavyweight institution in the world for the treatment of peripheral vascular diseases. Huang remarked, "That hospital had a wealth of clinical experience from treating more than 4,000 patients a year. We in Taiwan were just beginning in that field. They were far and away better than us."

Park Hospital Leipzig also boasted topnotch talents in the field. "Dr. Andrej Schmidt was the best among the best," Huang said of his teacher there. Huang learned much in this enriching environment. Experiences like this helped him realize how vast the field was and how much he had yet to explore. Each time he returned to Taiwan, he brought back not just new procedures but often also information about the equipment necessary for those procedures.

In Leipzig, Huang took time to write down identifying information about the instruments that the doctor used in the procedures that he was observing. After the doctor had finished the procedure, Huang would go through the garbage cans to pick out the packaging materials for the instruments that the doctor had just used, then he would call and pass on the information to staff at the catheter lab at Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital. They in turn would work with local trading companies to import those instruments.

Through efforts like these, Huang has built up his store of equipment to treat patients with various needs. The last thing that he wants is for a patient to lose a limb because some instrument is unavailable.

Medical equipment and instruments undergo frequent updates and renewals. When Huang gets a new instrument, he first uses it only on patients whom he has carefully screened. Then he observes the results for three to six months. "I'd typically observe five to ten patients," Huang noted. "Only after I'm satisfied with the results will I recommend an instrument to more patients."

Dedication to the field

Huang closely follows up on his patients to improve the efficacy of his treatment. He pays close attention to every case he handles, making





COURTESY OF HUANG HSUAN-LI

Dr. Andrej Schmidt, a world-renowned expert in treating peripheral vascular diseases, was invited to Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital in September 2013 to give training on peripheral vascular interventions.

Huang trains an outside physician who has come to learn peripheral vascular interventions from him.

bold hypotheses and carefully proving or disproving them. Such observations and follow-ups take time but help him gain in-depth knowledge every step of the way throughout the entire PVI cycle. His long-term follow-ups allow him to accumulate much experience and better devise comprehensive plans for treating PVDs. This has helped make him an excellent doctor.

The efforts that he and the rest of the PVI team have put forth over the years have catapulted Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital to the top tier of hospitals in Taiwan in the treatment of peripheral vascular diseases. Patients have flocked to the hospital for high-quality care.

Huang Chun (黃純), 105, is the oldest patient Dr. Huang has treated. At first the doctor worried that because the patient was so old, her blood vessels might have aged to such an extent as to affect the efficacy of treatment. However, a check-up revealed that her blood vessels were as good as those of a person in their 80s. Dr. Huang performed a PVI, and her toes were no longer black and cold. She was all smiles, and her granddaughter even exclaimed, "It's a miracle!"

Liu Zhang Qiu-ling (劉張秋苓), 88, had a PVD that resulted in a vascular ulcer on the big toe of her right foot. Because she was not diabetic, she was at first diagnosed with athlete's foot and treated accordingly. But her condition



continued to worsen and the ulceration spread. She was in so much pain that she could not walk. She lost her appetite, slept poorly, and became very depressed.

When she was finally properly diagnosed with PVD, her doctor at the time decided to use balloon angioplasty to fix her problem. However, just 20 minutes into the procedure, he walked out and informed the family that he was unable to carry on because of the patient's advanced age and the serious blockages.

Later, the patient sought help from Dr. Huang. Due to the severity of her condition, Huang decided on a two-phase treatment. On the day the final procedure was finished—two weeks after the first two procedures—the patient said she was no longer in pain. She could even get out of her bed and walk around. She was discharged from the hospital the next day. Before she left, she walked on her own into Huang's clinic to say goodbye.

"That's the marvel of medicine," Huang said, "and that's what gives physicians the biggest shot in the arm. It just amazed me to see the treatment transform Mrs. Liu and make her mobile again." And Liu was not the only one who benefited from the treatment. Peace of mind returned to her family—they no longer had to worry so much about her and could carry on with their lives.

Liu deeply appreciated Dr. Huang's efforts, and his hard work was not lost on her. "It was about eight in the morning when Dr. Huang started the final procedure on me," she recalled. "I lay on the operating table wide awake. He stood there working on me until two in the afternoon. Standing for so long, his lower back and feet must have been awfully sore. It hurts me to just think of that."

Besides being a doctor with good skills, Huang is extremely patient in working with his patients and their families. "Dr. Huang is very affable," said Liu's daughter. "He always responded to our questions in detail, and he was especially patient with my mom. He never got tired of answering all her questions. He's truly a conscientious and loving doctor."

It's all worth it

Through years of learning, dedication and breakthroughs, Huang and his team have raised their success rate from 87 percent to 96 percent: For every 100 limbs on which they work, 96 are saved from amputation.

Such success, however, has not come without sacrifice. During a PVI procedure, a physician must wear protective gear to help shield him or her from too much exposure to radiation. A lead vest and skirt together weigh about six kilograms (13.2 lbs.). An older version even weighed as much as ten kilograms (22 lbs.). "The weight of the lead stresses the shoulders and the pelvis. The longer they are under stress, the more seriously they are damaged," explained Huang.

Each catheterization procedure lasts between two and six hours. Wearing so much weight for such a long time can exact a big toll on the doctor's body. In addition, when physicians perform such a procedure, they often need to stare at computer screens with their full attention and unconsciously tend to lean forward. Maintaining such a bad posture for long stretches of time easily leads to injuries in the joints, ligaments and tendons.

Huang has been doing this for ten years. During that time his cervical vertebrae—the bones in the neck—were hurt twice: three years ago and again a year ago. In addition to the pain, his mobility was severely affected. He only recovered after a period of care and recuperation.

Despite his injuries, he has not a word of complaint. After all, he himself chose this profession. Besides, the joy that comes from seeing improvements in his patients makes all of it worthwhile. "I derive the greatest joy from that, and it has given me the strength to stay the course," he said.

He clearly knows the significant value of saving a leg from being cut off—it means a lot not only to the patients themselves but to their families as well. The positive impact just cannot be overstated.

Seeing the value in his work, Huang has never regretted shifting from cardiac catheterization to peripheral vascular catheterization. "There are plenty of physicians in Taiwan doing cardiac catheterization—one fewer doctor won't matter. However, there are so few of us doing PVIs that each of us has added value for our existence."

He further pointed out that diabetes, which is linked to vascular disease, afflicts no fewer patients than does heart disease, and that complications from diabetes can be just as deadly. Therefore, there are real unmet medical needs for physicians like himself to strive to serve. This is yet another reason why he keeps pushing ahead.

Over the years, Huang has encountered his own share of medical setbacks. The vascular occlusions in some patients were so firm and well established that he could not even put a catheter through. There were also cases where even after blockages had been opened, serious infections still led to the removal of parts of limbs where gangrene had set in.

Huang clearly remembered a patient in her 70s whom he treated in 2005. The initial treatment saved both of her legs, but later, when an artery in her left leg clogged up again, Huang failed to pull off another successful catheterization. Worse, the procedure caused a thrombosis (when a blood clot blocks an artery or vein), and even after the patient's whole leg was amputated, she still passed away. Huang could not hold back his tears when he talked about the patient.

Huang Chun, 105, celebrated her regained ability to walk after Dr. Huang removed the occlusions in her left leg in 2012.

Though the patient's family did not blame him and instead even cheered him on, encouraging him to use that experience to serve the next patient better, Huang still could not help thinking, "If I had been more circumspect and more skillful, would it have turned out differently?"

His skills today are nothing like his skills those long years ago—his proficiency has greatly improved. Even so, he still thinks of that female patient and reminds himself to do his very best with every patient. "Every life is precious," he affirmed.

"Confidence comes with tears and sweat." Huang believes that he would not be where he is today without the patients who gave him opportunities to perform on them. "My patients are really my teachers."

Many more legs to save

Of the 1.5 million diabetes patients in Taiwan, about 20,000 have suffered from ulcerations in their legs, and 10,000 have had ampu-



tations. The latter number is shockingly high to Huang. His clinical experience tells him that PVI could have saved about 90 percent of those PVD patients from amputation. But here-in lies the problem: Not enough physicians in Taiwan are trained to do PVIs.

There are only three attending physicians at the peripheral vascular center at Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital: Huang, Zhou Xing-hui (周星輝) and Wu Dian-yu (吳典育). At the most, the three of them together can treat 360 patients per year. Many more PVI specialists are needed to bring the amputation rate down.

Though hospitals in Taiwan are equipped with ten times more PVI equipment today than ten years ago, it is still inadequate to handle the rapidly growing patient population suffering from PVDs, many of whom have yet to be identified as such. Many medical doctors are not even familiar with PVI yet.

Huang therefore sees an urgent need to spread the word on PVD and PVI in order to save more people. To do that, he has published quite a few articles in professional journals and often spoken at medical workshops.

One of the reasons why more PVI was not done in Taiwan was its relatively low level of reimbursement from the national health insurance. Huang has worked with two cardiology societies in Taiwan to lobby for higher reimbursements, and they have succeeded. Though the raised insurance payments are still not even half

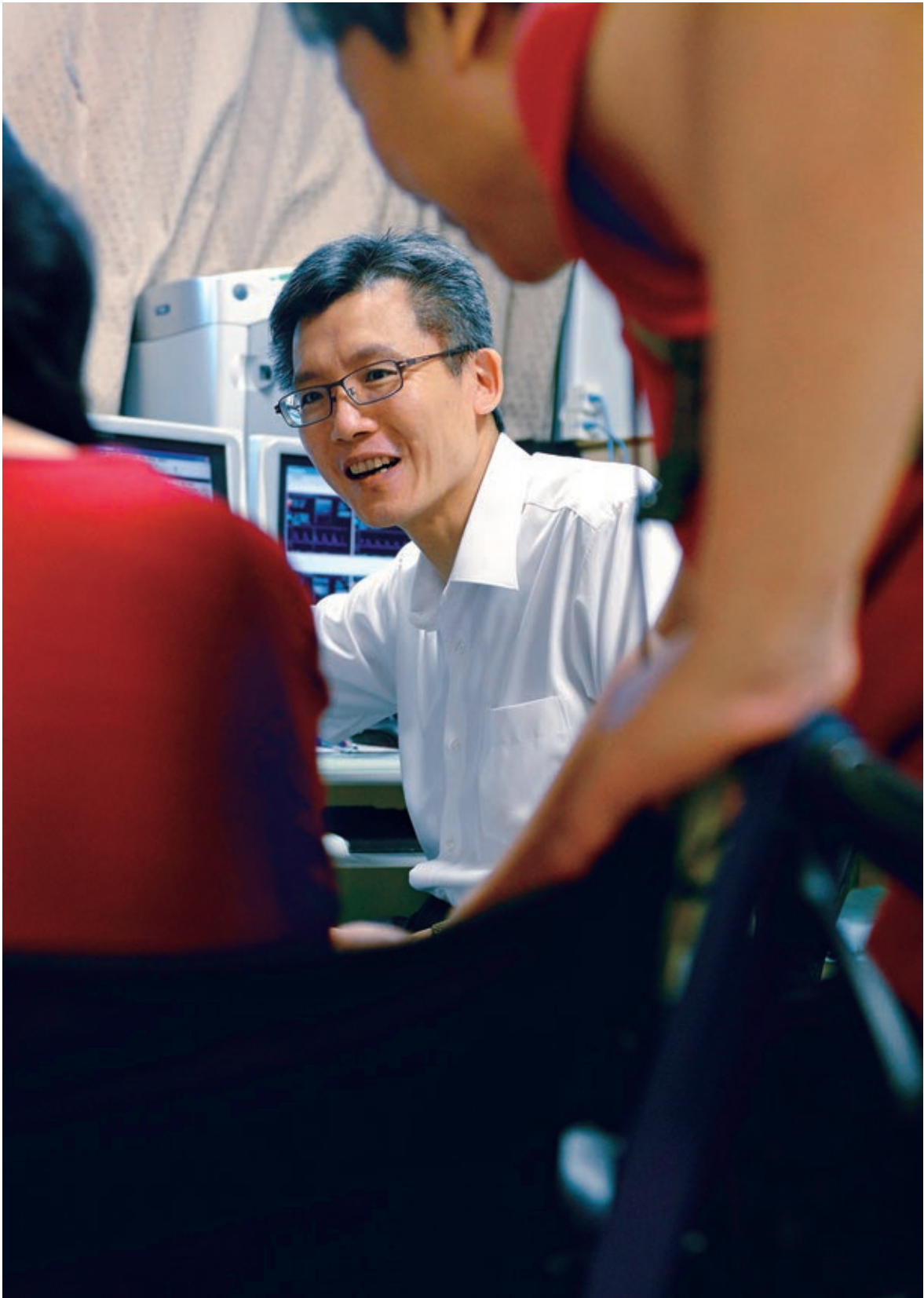
Most of Huang's patients experience marked improvements in their conditions after treatment. Their relief gives him joy and encourages him to help more patients.

as much as those for cardiac catheterizations, Huang hopes that the new reimbursement rate will attract more practitioners to the specialty.

Still more to do

Huang said that when he first started in this field, he didn't have a clear sense of the direction he should take. But after all these years at Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital and after all the work he has done, he feels like a ship coming into port. Many of his dreams have been fulfilled. For example, he has helped acquire a full complement of equipment of all sorts and sizes necessary to treat all kinds of cases, and his comprehensive follow-up system has helped improve the success rates of interventions. All this would not have been possible without the full support of the hospital.

He is only 46, and he and his team hope to do more. They want to further hone their proficiency in using PVI to treat occlusions in lower limb arteries and deep veins, and they also want to apply the procedure to superficial veins, a newer frontier for them. When they achieve what they hope to achieve, Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital will be able to provide care for more patients from head to toe, from artery to vein, from deep vein to superficial vein. ❀



A Message to Diabetics

As told by Huang Hsuan-li

If you are a diabetic, you must first get your blood pressure, blood sugar, and cholesterol under proper control. Do not smoke. If you have had diabetes for more than ten years or, if you are more than 50 years old and have had diabetes for four or five years, it is best that you have a doctor check the blood vessels in your legs once a year. If indeed there is a problem, follow the doctor's advice in medication and exercise.

If your condition is more advanced or you have had the disease for a longer time, you need to watch out for neurological and other vascular diseases, too. Remember to wear shoes that cover your entire feet to prevent foot injuries. Be sure not to cut the skin when you clip your toenails. Ordinarily, a small cut in the skin will heal in four or five days. If your wound does not heal within two weeks, it is best that you seek medical help to check your blood vessels.



The Gentle Hands of a Doctor

Soothing the Old and the Young

By Zhang Jing-mei

Translated by Tang Yau-yang

Photos by Chen Yu-yan



Taoyuan and Liugui districts in Kaohsiung, southern Taiwan, are vast but remote. Because breadwinners largely work out of town, most residents there are either old or young. Getting medical treatment is inconvenient for them, so members of the Tzu Chi International Medical Association take the services to them.



Every Tooth Counts

Dentists clean old people's teeth, and volunteers teach children how to correctly brush their teeth. For these volunteer helpers, oral hygiene care is important because every tooth counts.

There are not many jobs around Taoyuan and Liugui districts in Kaohsiung, southern Taiwan. These mountainous areas are spread out and off the beaten track, so most people there have to go out of town for work. Since Typhoon Morakot devastated the areas in 2009, tourism has been in a slump, further driving workers away. The regions are therefore left largely with just the old and the young.

Getting medical treatment is inconvenient for these people, so they tend to put off seeing doctors. To fill the gap, members of the Kaohsiung chapter of the Tzu Chi International Medical Association (TIMA) take medical services to where these people live so they may be cared for right in their own communities. For example, they hold monthly free clinics at Baolai Elementary School in Baolai, Liugui.

One such clinic was conducted on April 27, 2014. When TIMA doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and support volunteers arrived in Baolai that day, they got tied up in throngs of people and traffic for a temple fair. After some effort, they finally wove through the street and reached the school.

An advance team had already gotten there and set up the equipment that the clinic would need. The noise of firecrackers from the fair was close and inescapable, but still all the volunteers gathered in a hallway to pray. Some were moved to tears during the prayer. A serene aura seemed to have descended and insulated them from the car horns, firecrackers, and clamor of the fairgoers outside. When the volunteers were finished, they settled down and got ready to open the clinic.

Nurse Lai Ling-yin teaches schoolchildren how to brush their teeth.



Follow-up

Volunteer nurse Lai Ling-yin (賴玲吟) stood at a corner of the school, making phone calls. Holding a stack of lab reports on the Pap smear specimens that had been taken from some local women during her previous visit, she was calling the women to come to the elementary school and pick up their results, but none of her calls was answered.

This being the harvest season for Chinese plums, most people in this mountain village had probably gone to pick them. Lai began to feel a little anxious because some of the reports showed worrisome numbers, and she wanted to let these women know so they could get follow-up treatment without undue delay. She continued to call, and finally she got through and talked to all the women.

After her last call, she raised her head and saw a feeble old woman with unsteady gait standing at the check-in counter, where a volunteer was holding her medical chart and asking her questions. The old woman, however, did not seem to be paying attention to the volunteer. With a blank look on her face, she just kept murmuring, "My legs hurt really bad...."

Lai hurried over and talked into her ear: "I'll help you register for the rehab clinic, and your legs will feel better." The medical chart indicated that the woman was 79 years old, so Lai asked the volunteer to also set her up for internal medicine and an abdominal ultrasound. When the volunteer rushed off to make those appointments, Lai led the woman, her mouth red from chewing betel nuts, to the dental clinic.

A classroom turned dental clinic

Early that morning, volunteers on the advance team set up a rather complete dental clinic in a classroom with all the instruments, adjustable chairs, and even adjustable surgical headlights ready for use.

Dr. Wu Ching-yuan (吳慶源), one of the TIMA dentists, had had a cold for days. On the day of the free clinic, he could hardly speak. As soon as the woman brought by volunteer Lai sat down in the chair in front of him, he could easily tell that the old woman was a habitual betel nut chewer because of the indelible telltale signs—the fibrous residues of betel nuts in her mouth and stains from the reddish-purple betel nut juice.

Betel nut chewers run a high risk of oral cancer. Dr. Wu wanted to advise the woman to ease

Volunteer Xie Rong-feng (謝榮峰) sets up instruments for a dental clinic. It is people like him that make these mobile clinics possible. Such a clinic typically offers services in as many as ten specialties, including cardiology, ob-gyn, surgery, family practice, and dentistry.

off on that unhealthy habit, but he did it quite tactfully. "Your skin looks nice," he said to her. She gave him a big smile, obviously pleased. "You'd look even more beautiful if your teeth were cleaner and brighter," Wu continued.

He began cleaning the woman's teeth. Despite the high-pitched noise of scaling plaque from her teeth—a sound that many people dread—she appeared completely at ease.

"You chew quite a lot of betel nuts, right?" Wu gently asked her. "And smoke a lot of cigarettes, too?"

The woman stammered as she tried to defend herself: "Er, er...no...it's just...tough, you know, to kick these habits." Wu did not press. "Can you cut down just one betel nut and one cigarette a day?" he carried on, as if cajoling a child.

After finishing his job, Wu turned the patient over to Lai. Now it was time for another aspect of oral hygiene: brushing the teeth. Lai used a toothbrush on the knuckles of her fingers to show the woman how to brush the right way.

Just then a stir occurred in the room. A power surge had caused the circuit breaker to trip. Volunteers rushed over to check. Dr. Wu and another dentist, Cai Yuan-hong (蔡元弘), apologized to their patients, whose mouths were wide open for treatment. The power was soon restored and everything returned to normal.

"Eh, why isn't the water flowing?" someone said. No water was coming out of a tube for teeth cleaning. Volunteers again rushed to check. They adjusted the jungle of tubes and wires this way and that, and sure enough, the flow resumed right away.

"We really can't do without these versatile helpers," Wu said of those volunteers. He added that of all the medical specialties, the dental clinic is the most instrument-intensive and thus the most complicated to set up. It requires a lot of support personnel to run smoothly, and treating dental patients is also the most time-consuming of all services. Often at a free clinic, when lunch time comes and everyone is eating, only those who serve in the dental clinic are still working.



Wu went on to see another female patient. This woman was a petite 80-year-old, but she spoke vigorously with a resonant voice. However, she was not doing too well as far as her teeth were concerned: She had just three left, and two of them hurt, which made her restless. "I pray that all three will fall out so they won't hurt anymore," she told Dr. Wu.

Wu carefully examined her all the same—every tooth was important to him.

Most dental patients at the free clinic are old, and their teeth are mostly in worse than bad shape, like this three-toothed 80-year-old. Yet even though most of their teeth are past praying for, Wu, who has participated in these Tzu Chi free clinics for six years, still feels that every visit to this village is well worth it. Dental treatment is a time-consuming process that requires frequent visits to dentists, which can be a challenge to older folks in the mountains because of factors such as their limited mobility. That is why they simply skip treatment and suffer. Compared to them, the TIMA members are much more mobile. Visiting the village every month and treating these old people can at least help ease the discomfort caused by toothaches and keep their remaining teeth healthier. "We use our mobility to bring dental service to them. That's what we as doctors should do," Wu remarked.

Young teeth

Chen Song-hong (陳松宏), 6, stood outside the clinic timidly looking in at Gao Han-sen (高韓森), 8, who was lying in a dental chair as Dr. Wu examined his teeth.

Chen's mother was selling peaches in front of Baolai Elementary School while the free clinic was underway inside the school. She really wanted to know whether her son had cavities or not, but she was too busy to attend to that. To help her out, a volunteer took her little boy to Dr. Wu. The boy tried several times to just walk off because he was scared—until he saw Gao, a friend of his, in the chair.

"What's Gao Han-sen holding?" Chen asked.

"A mirror," Dr. Wu said.

"For what?"

"So he can see if any of his teeth have turned black."

"If I sit there, can I hold the mirror, too?" Chen was interested in the mirror. Perhaps he was curious about how his mouth would look under the spotlight.

Dr. Wu Ching-yuan chats with Chen Song-hong before working on his teeth.

"Sure thing," the doctor said.

That settled Chen down, and he waited patiently for his turn. Finally, Gao was done. During the treatment process, the eight-year-old did not so much as frown. The adults piled praise on him as he climbed off the chair. Gao proudly told Chen, as if he himself were a hero, "It didn't hurt at all; it only tingled a little."

With that assurance, Chen hopped bravely on the chair, also like a hero. Volunteers cheered him on. He grasped the mirror tightly as Dr. Wu started working on him.

A short while later, several children showed up outside the dental clinic. One of them spoke up: "The principal told us we could come here if we wanted our teeth checked." Principal Ke Hui-ling (柯惠玲) has been supportive of the Tzu Chi free clinics. Aside from providing the school as a clinic venue, she reminds the students at their morning assemblies about the free medical service.

These six- and seven-year-olds sat quietly in the waiting area. Lai Ling-yin gave each of them a new toothbrush, squatted down to be at their height, and showed them the correct way to brush their teeth.

"I feel like they're my own children," Lai said. Looking at them, she became a little emotional—she wanted to hold every one of them tight. Though her legs were numb from squatting, she could not have been happier. A person cannot be healthy without first having healthy teeth. She was glad to spread information on oral hygiene. She very much hoped that each child would grow up healthy.

"Brush this side, and then the other side." "Brush the right side with your right hand and the left side with your left hand." "Brush two teeth at a time." "Do it gently." The children repeated Lai's instructions in earnest.

It was close to noon and the boisterous crowds of the temple fair had long gone. All that was left was a breeze wafting under the blue sky, lightly stirring tree leaves. This half-day clinical outreach would come to an end after all the remaining patients were treated, but the TIMA members were sure to come back in about a month to help patients get rid of their aches and pains, get healthier teeth, or hang on to their last few teeth.



Every Patient Counts

Dr. Wu San-jiang calls on medical care professionals to join him in taking free medical services to remote mountain villages in Kaohsiung. Most of the patients he treats there share two characteristics: They are elderly and they are sick. He delivers tender loving care to these folks, hoping to help rekindle their joy in living.

A grocery store stood on one side of a quiet road in Jianshan, a mountain community in Taoyuan District, Kaohsiung, southern Taiwan. No shoppers were in sight; the only thing that livened up the scene was a bougainvillea plant in full bloom, its red flowers showing off their vibrant color under the spring sun.

Inside, the store was crowded with snacks and agricultural implements. An old dog lay indolently on the floor. Suddenly, the quiet was broken by the patter of approaching footsteps. The dog pricked up its ears.

A small group of people came into the store. They called out, "Mr. Wang, we've come to see you. How have you been lately?" An old man sitting in the store opened his eyes, looked at the visitors, and nodded without saying anything. The group of people was a familiar sight to him. They visited the community once a month to provide medical checkups for elderly folks in the village, and he was one of their regular patients.

After checking Mr. Wang out, Dr. Wu San-jiang (吳三江) reported, "Your blood pressure is good and your blood sugar normal, your breathing is smooth, pulse steady. You're in great shape. How old are you, sir?"

"I'll be a hundred in three months," he replied. The old man was not only in good health—he had a very clear head, too. He still managed every aspect of the store.

Dr. Wu San-jiang tends to a patient in her home.



ZHONG MEI-LIAN



TIMA members regularly provide medical checkups for elderly people living in Jianshan, a community in Taoyuan.

them had a conversation that the others did not understand. Some of the others knew a few simple Japanese phrases, so they put in a word here or there to amuse Mrs. Gao.

After a while, a neighbor came over and told them, "Hey, she knows Taiwanese [a widely used dialect]!" Everybody burst out laughing. Amidst the laughter, Mrs. Gao herself said, "I speak Mandarin, too."

All the while, Yang, the pharmacist, was carefully checking the medicines in Mrs. Gao's possession. The old woman had needed to see several specialists for her various ailments, and Yang wanted to make sure that those medications did not overlap or interfere with one another.

After bidding goodbye to Mrs. Gao, the group visited Mr. Yan's home. Bedridden due to a stroke, Yan was lying in bed watching Tzu Chi's Da Ai TV when the volunteers entered his house. "You knew we were coming, so you tuned to Da Ai TV, didn't you?" they teased him.

He hurried to defend himself. "No, no. I watch it every day. I like watching it. People helping people is good." Dr. Wu held Yan's hand and said, "Right, we were just teasing you. Now let me check your blood pressure."

As the doctor got ready to do that, his attention was caught by something else. He looked closely at the man's fingers, each joint showing an obvious bulge.

"Do you know what these bumps are?" Wu asked Yan. "They're a symptom of gout. Have you ever had your uric acid checked?" Yan shook his head. Pharmacist Yang checked the old man's medications and told the doctor there was no gout medicine among them. The doctor was worried. "If not treated, gout can cause problems in the kidneys and other organs. This is serious."

The air turned gloomy. The grave expressions on the faces of those around him prompted Yan to comfort them. He said, "My wife is taking me down the mountains tomorrow for a

The dog suddenly rose from where he lay as a domestic helper pushed Mrs. Wang in a wheelchair from the back of the house into the store. She had suffered from a stroke, so her head drooped. Tzu Chi volunteer Wang Xiu-chuan (王琇釧) patiently showed her some rehabilitation exercises to strengthen her hands.

"Her blood sugar is 293. That's way too high," a nurse exclaimed. Pharmacist Yang Zhu-mao (楊竹茂) checked Mrs. Wang's medications. They were the correct meds, and she had been on them regularly, but Yang knew what to ask: "What did you just eat?" Mrs. Wang squeezed out a few halting words: "Her... bal tea...all...na...tural."

It turned out that Mrs. Wang had just had some bottled tea.

Dr. Wu said, "Mrs. Wang, that beverage has added sugar, even if it's made from natural ingredients. You shouldn't be drinking it." To make sure his message got across, he repeated his words until the old woman no longer looked blank and nodded in understanding.

Reassured, the group of volunteers said good-bye to the Wangs and moved on to their next stop.

Swollen knuckles

Mrs. Gao, 88, was sitting under the eaves of her house when the group arrived. Dr. Wu started talking to her in Japanese. [Many old people in Taiwan grew up while Taiwan was under Japanese rule, from 1895 to 1945.] The two of

doctor's appointment. I'll ask the doctor to run a blood test on me." That helped put the volunteers at ease, but they still reiterated the necessity of having his uric acid checked.

"Thank you," Yan said to the volunteers. "May the Lord be with you."

After some more small talk, the group left for their next visit. Even after they were out of the house, they could still hear the cheerful Yan calling out repeatedly, "May the Lord be with you."

Home alone

Next they visited Mrs. Wen. As they got close to her house, mountain breezes carried wave after wave of stench to them.

Mrs. Wen was blind in one eye, and she had been immobile since fracturing a thigh bone in a recent fall. The accident had left her unable to do things for herself. She had to wear a diaper and lie in bed all day long. She was entirely isolated during the day when her family went to work. When she felt bored, she turned on the TV; when she felt like talking to someone, she talked to the rag doll on her bed.

The volunteers surrounded the old woman. Despite the inescapable smell, they chatted with her as if the odor were not there. Taking this all in, Dr. Wu felt warm inside.

He looked back on his own life, especially his medical career, which he had entered with lofty aspirations. His idealism, however, had been chipped away bit by bit as he experienced the trials of work and life. Though he earned himself a good reputation as a physician, he knew deep down that his passion for medical care was dissipating.

His waning enthusiasm only started to pick up when he joined the Tzu Chi International Medical Association (TIMA). Through one free clinic after another, one house call after another, he gradually regained his sense of mission as a physician.

Off to one side, Yang was checking Mrs. Wen's medications; he did not see any pain and blood pressure medicines, which were what she needed the most. Looking at the old woman's gloomy face, Yang could feel his own eyes growing moist.

Dr. Wu quickly wrote a prescription for her. At lunch time, volunteer Chen Teng-wei (陳騰威) drove Yang to the pharmacy at a free clinic taking place at Baolai Elementary School and got the prescription filled there. They also packed a boxed

lunch for Mrs. Wen. Then the two of them rushed back and gave her the meal and the medicine.

The house calls and the free clinic at the elementary school that day ended at two o'clock. All the volunteers gathered at the school afterwards to share their thoughts for the day. Yang talked about a few elderly patients that his team had visited that day. He could not help crying as he recalled their loneliness and need for care.

Tears also filled the eyes of Dr. Ye Tian-hao (葉添浩) as he listened to Yang. He felt for those old folks as well. At the same time, he was grateful that the free clinic had gone as scheduled. He was the leader of the free clinic team this time, and heavy rain the night before had really worried him. Like all the other volunteers, he did not want the event to be rained out. He had tried to reassure himself the previous evening: "This is a good thing. Heaven will give us many blessings." Just as he had hoped, everything turned out well.

Dr. Wu San-jiang started working with TIMA free clinics in 2003. He has seen for himself the dearth of medical resources in the mountains and the inadequacy of medical knowledge among the people there. He knows he has no magic wand to take away the misery of all those elderly people, but he reminds himself that he can at least make the situation better for one person at a time.

He gave the example of a Mrs. Zeng, a 73-year-old Taiwanese aborigine who was suffering from Parkinson's disease, high blood pressure, and severe diabetes. Her family had hired a woman who had taken very good care of her. However, they themselves could not spend much time with her, and the helper could not speak Mrs. Zeng's tribal tongue. The old woman was therefore quite lonely. Often she would say nothing all day long except when her next-door neighbor, Mrs. Chen, came over. The two of them would chat in their native Bunun language. Wu said, "Sometimes they just need some care from people."

After having served people like Mrs. Weng and Mrs. Zeng in medical outreach missions for ten years, Wu feels a need for more medical professionals to join TIMA so that more underserved people can get the personal attention and good health care they need. He hopes that together they can give old people in the mountains some warmth and help them enjoy their later years more.

Special Service Every Month

The blind old man lives alone. Month after month, TIMA volunteers visit him to check up on him and cheer him up.

Dr. Ye Tian-hao (葉添浩) walked up a familiar, winding mountain path in a Taiwanese aborigine settlement called Shishan, located in Liugui District, Kaohsiung. When he saw a short wall where a bougainvillea plant was blooming vigorously, he knew they were almost there—Mr. Pan's house.

Earlier that day in Baolai, also in Liugui, these people had taken part in a monthly free clinic provided by the Tzu Chi International Medical Association (TIMA). But instead of going home after the clinic ended, Dr. Ye and the others took an hour-long detour to make a house call. They were visiting Mr. Pan, who was 87, totally blind, and living alone. Only after they had given him a checkup and found out how he was doing would they feel they could go home. Checking in on Pan after the free clinic had become a monthly routine for Dr. Ye.

Pan lived in a run-down clay house. He had lost his eyesight gradually over the years. The first time Tzu Chi volunteers called on him, he ignored them. He had lived alone for such a long time that his isolation had made him unsociable and wary of strangers.

"It's been a month since our last visit. I wonder if Mr. Pan still remembers us," Ye thought to himself a little nervously.

As the group rounded a corner, they saw the old man coming slowly out of his house and walking towards them with the help of a cane. They were surprised by this welcoming gesture—on their prior visits he had always just sat in his dark living room. They picked up their pace toward him.

Having been wiped clean, Mr. Pan, right, looks good and feels refreshed.





While Chen Hong-yan gives Mr. Pan a haircut, Dr. Ye Tian-hao, right, looks on with a smile.

before, Pan turned them down outright, and they had to repeatedly cajole him before he finally changed his mind. Therefore they were pleasantly surprised this time when the old man accepted their offer right off the bat. "Sure, go ahead. I felt nice and neat after you cut my hair the last time," he remarked.

Chen Hong-yan (陳紅燕), Dr. Ye's wife, hurried back to their car and got her gear out. Once back, she draped an apron around Pan's neck and began to run the electric hair clippers over his head. The man kept his head down and sat quietly, like a well-behaved grade school student. As his hair got shorter, whitish patches on his skull became more visible. They were there because he had not washed himself in a long time—it was a skin condition that can be avoided if the skin is kept clean.

"Let me give you a wash today, okay?" Ye asked the old man.

"No! No!" he replied, shaking not only his head but his hand too.

Everybody expected that from him. It was exactly the same reply he had given them on all previous occasions.

Given the fact that he was healthy, the volunteers had always let this matter go, but Ye really felt that something should be done about it.

The old man's dark brown skin was covered with thick cuticles and small bumps. Ye knew that his condition would improve if he would wash himself more often, so he squatted by Pan's side, like all those times before, and pleaded with him to reconsider. Despite his best efforts, the old man showed no sign of relenting.

Seeing that Ye was bound to fail again this time, volunteer Weng Hui-zhen (翁惠珍) and public health nurse Wei Rui-qin (魏瑞琴) decided to try a different approach. They went to the man's kitchen, scooped water out of a cement tank and started to heat the water. Wei looked everywhere for a clean towel, but every one she could find was dirty and greasy. She could only pick out one that appeared to be the least dirty.

"Have you seen any soap?" Wei asked.

"He doesn't wash himself, so I doubt he's got any," Weng answered.

Wei eventually found some dish detergent in a cupboard thick with spider webs. She squeezed some of it on the towel and washed the towel clean. Weng poured the water she had been heating into a washbowl. Then the two of them walked out of the kitchen with the water and towel.

They returned at a good time: Chen had just finished cutting Pan's hair. Weng whispered to Nurse Huang, "We've got the water ready." Taking the cue, Huang said to the old man, "Mr. Pan, let us sing you a song." She and Weng belted out a popular tune, and everyone danced to it, which made Pan very happy. While they were at it, Lai and Wei began to wipe Pan, starting with his hand. The man suddenly noticed what they were doing and protested with a "No!" Lai and Wei stopped because they didn't want to nettle him, but the quick-witted Huang quickly drew the man's attention back to their singing by saying to him, "Clap along to our singing, Mr. Pan." That successfully distracted Pan while they continued to wash him.

Lai and Wei were not finished with the wiping when the song ended, so the singers started another song, and then another. Finally, the monumental act of washing the man was completed. Everyone joined their hands and merrily sang "We Are Family" together. The old man clapped away cheerfully. Sounds of laughter rang out in the usually quiet mountain village.

"Mr. Pan, you seem to have become whiter!" Weng said, carrying another washbasin of clean water toward him. Now, Dr. Ye, who had been squatting nearby through all this, inched forward and took the man's feet in his hands and washed them thoroughly. He even scrubbed the old man's sandals.

Refreshed from head to toe, the old man could not stop smiling, displaying his only two teeth. Ye stood up, smiling even more broadly than the old man. ☘

"Mr. Pan, here we are!" they greeted him. They hurried to help him sit down under the eaves of his house.

"Tzu Chi ladies?" he asked, his unseeing eyes looking in the direction of the group. "How many of you are here this time?" he asked.

"Ten," they replied after they had counted off.

"Let me check your blood pressure, Mr. Pan," Nurse Lai Ling-yin (賴玲吟) said. The man nod-

ded. His pressure turned out to be slightly high but not too bad.

In addition to being blind, Pan had a skin condition. Other than that, he was quite healthy, so there was not much that they needed to do for him medically.

But he really needed some help with his appearance. "Shall we give you a haircut?" Nurse Huang Jin-tao (黃金桃) asked. When the group had asked the same question a month



New Classrooms for Bohol

The island of Bohol, a popular tourist destination in the Philippines, was visited by an unwelcome guest in October 2013: a 7.2-magnitude earthquake. More than 200 people perished. Buildings and houses in the area suffered poorly as well. Six in ten schools were damaged to some extent.

Tourists stopped going there after the quake, but Tzu Chi volunteers started going. They helped put up 150 prefabricated classrooms for 16 schools in seven towns. They had many local helpers—5,000 residents, parents and teachers made 100,000 concrete flooring bricks for the new classrooms, and students helped move construction materials.

Built with so much help from the community, these classrooms feel like home.

By Li Wei-huang

Translated by Tang Yau-yang

Photos by Lin Yan-huang



On October 15, 2013, a 7.2-magnitude earthquake rocked Bohol, an island province in central Philippines. The disaster took the lives of more than 200 people. Of the 7,000 school buildings on the island, 2,700 were damaged. Many classes had to be held outdoors.

Charitable organizations, among them Tzu Chi, rushed into the area to help the afflicted. Four days after the quake, 30 Tzu Chi volunteers from Manila and Cebu inspected areas that had suffered heavy devastation and distributed emergency cash to victims. They also visited schools to assess the damage and see which ones were in greatest need of help.

Barely three weeks later, in early November, Super Typhoon Haiyan ravaged central Philippines. The damage from the typhoon was much worse than that inflicted by the earthquake. Tacloban in Leyte Province was among the hardest hit. Bohol Province, slightly to the south of Leyte, did not suffer any damage from Haiyan. However, it sustained some collateral damage of

Local villagers and Tzu Chi volunteers assemble frames for prefabricated classrooms at Infant King Academy. The ground is already laid with flooring bricks previously made by villagers.

sorts: Outside aid that had been coming to Bohol was diverted instead to Leyte. For a while, reconstruction in Bohol was all but forgotten.

Tzu Chi was among the international charities that had to divert its aid resources to Leyte after the typhoon. But as soon as emergency aid to Leyte came to an end, Tzu Chi resumed its assistance efforts in Bohol. In June 2014, 150 prefabricated classrooms provided by the foundation were completed at 16 schools.

Cortes Central Elementary School received seven of these classrooms. As the school started a new semester in June, teachers and students said goodbye to the tents or straw huts that they had used as make-shift classrooms for eight months. With the new classrooms now in service, Principal Amelia Ancog could breathe easier.

Reconstruction agonies

Cortes Central Elementary School was closer to the provincial capital than the other 15 recipient schools, but proximity to the capital did not translate into more available resources. The school received little help from the government after the earthquake.

"Principal, what should we do?" Seeing the destruction at the school, teachers, parents, and villagers felt helpless. With so many things in ruins waiting to be repaired or replaced, she could only tell them to have faith and patience. As much as everyone wanted to have things immediately restored to normal, she knew that was out of the question.

"They all thought that I was really strong," Ancog said, "but in fact, I was quite stressed out by the pressure." Not only was aid inadequate and slow in reaching the school, her own family also kept her worried. Being the oldest child among her siblings, she had many family responsibilities. Her father had just had a diabetes-induced amputation at the end of 2012, her mother had an eye injury, and her 18-month-old son had just been diagnosed with an eye condition. Juggling family and school responsibilities and hiding her own hardships from public view, Ancog sobbed and prayed when she was alone.

With little aid reaching the school, people in the local community were forced to come up with money themselves in order to purchase materials needed to fashion makeshift classrooms so that school could resume. What they built was similar to what other schools had built throughout the disaster zone: simple frames with roofs of straw, plastic sheets, or galvanized steel sheets. Though they seemed airy at first glance, these structures often provided inadequate shelter from the elements. Rain often forced the suspension of classes. Many teachers and students caught colds, suffered heat stress, or fainted in class.

The structures were far from being proper places for lessons, but Ancog was helpless. Without outside assistance, there was no way to make improvements.

Sharing the agony

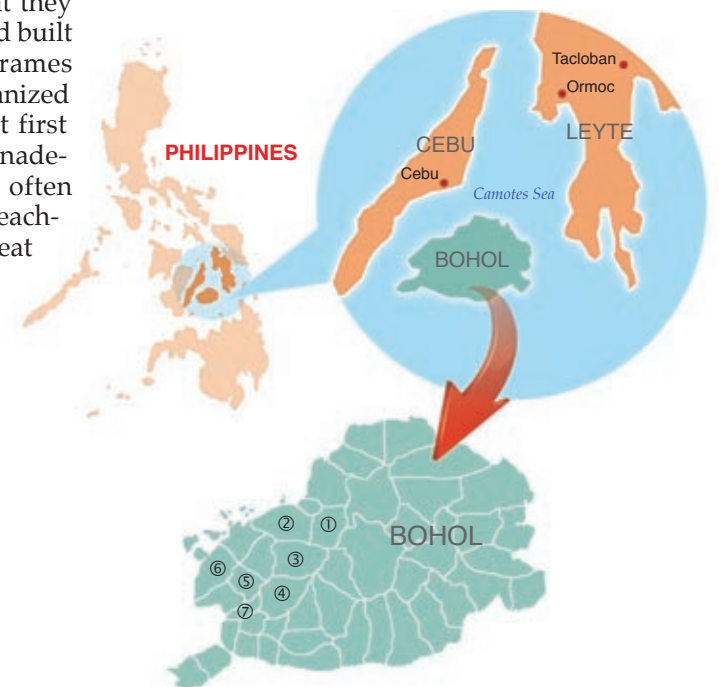
As can be imagined, Ancog was not the only school principal struggling in the aftermath of the earthquake. Principals and teachers at damaged schools were among those who had to work the hardest in the recovery process, a task made even more difficult for them considering that many of their own homes had also been damaged. Instead of thinking about getting their homes back in shape, they had to tend to their students and school reconstruction first. Understandably, many of the principals and teachers were overextended and exhausted.

Sagbayan, the epicenter of the quake, was one of the seven towns that later received prefabricated classrooms from Tzu Chi. Bebeth L. Diez, principal of Sagbayan Central Elementary School, and her husband had lived and slept in a junked car in their yard since the earthquake. They had spent their life savings to build their concrete home, but the quake had caused so much damage to its structural integrity that it had been rendered useless.

Her husband was unemployed, and their three children were in college. Now the house was destroyed. She could not help wondering if she would be able to continue to keep her chil-

Towns that received prefabricated classrooms from Tzu Chi:

- ① Sagbayan
- ② Tubigon
- ③ Catigbian
- ④ Balilihan
- ⑤ Antequera
- ⑥ Loon
- ⑦ Cortes





Villagers carry corrugated roofing materials, fresh from the United States, for prefabricated classrooms.

dren in school, or how much longer the two of them would have to sleep in the car. “Will I have the stamina to face the challenges of reconstruction day after day?” she asked herself. These thoughts brought her to tears.

Juvy Marie R. Inojales taught fifth grade at the school. She said that it had been tough holding class in makeshift classrooms after the school had been all but wiped out. The sun made it extremely hot, but rain was no easier. In a heavy rain, she sometimes needed to hold an umbrella and change into sandals because the downpour would result in a small flood in her classroom. Like the principal, she used to wonder how she could carry on. She had neither a home nor a functioning campus. She has been living with a relative since the tremor.

Local efforts

School principals and teachers in the disaster areas were in despair. Students, too, could not have felt too good when their schools could not provide services as basic as roofs over their heads to keep out the harsh sun and rain.

In the midst of such frustration, Tzu Chi decided to help.

When Tzu Chi volunteers visited Cortes Central Elementary School for the first time, Principal Ancog was not able to meet them. She was off campus that day, but her staff informed her of the visit when she returned. That news brightened her mood, because she knew the group.

In 2012, her father’s amputation cost 300,000 pesos (almost US\$7,000). However, the family could not afford the additional high cost of fitting him with a prosthesis. Tzu Chi volunteers in Cebu put him in touch with the Tzu Chi Great Love Physical Rehabilitation and Jaipur Foot Prosthesis Manufacturing Center in Zamboanga, Mindanao, where he got his prosthesis free of charge in August 2013.

That was how Ancog came to know about the foundation. She believed that Tzu Chi was God’s answer to her prayers. But some of her colleagues were not quite so certain about that. They did not know the foundation, and they doubted whether the volunteers would indeed come back. Principal Ancog told them of her father’s experience with the foundation, and she

assured them that the visitors would make good on what they had promised.

She was not disappointed. Tzu Chi volunteers did come back to help.

Before the classrooms could be put up, volunteers in Taiwan worked as fast as they could to prepare the building materials. In the meantime, folks in Bohol got busy too. In the seven towns that received classrooms, more than 5,000 teachers, parents, and residents signed up to volunteer for the Tzu Chi project. They prepared the sites, made concrete flooring bricks, dug drainage ditches, and greened up the campuses so that their schools would be ready for the immediate assembly of the classrooms as soon as the materials arrived.

"Tzu Chi volunteers came from far away just to help us, so how can we not do our bit?" a local resident said.

Jessica A. Verano, a second grade teacher at Cortes Central Elementary School, often went

For about eight months, between the earthquake and the completion of the prefabricated classrooms, displaced students and teachers held classes in makeshift classrooms like this one—a tarp held up with metal poles.

with her husband on weekends to help mix sand and cement for making concrete bricks. She said that school reconstruction had been painfully slow. There was no telling how much longer they would have had to wait if Tzu Chi had not reached out to them. She was glad to do what she could to help.

Tzu Chi also provided classrooms for Infant King Academy, situated beside Cortes Central Elementary School. Many parents at this school had also gone there when they were children. For the sake of their alma mater and for the future of their children, they also volunteered to help with the reconstruction.

Their efforts helped 15 prefabricated classrooms go up at Infant King Academy. Knowing how scarce resources were in the aftermath of an earthquake and a super typhoon, and knowing how thin the government had been spread, Principal Margarita R. Lomod appreciated the aid from Tzu Chi. Though it took eight months after the earthquake for her school to receive the Tzu Chi classrooms, Lomod did not think that they had come too late at all. Now her students and teachers could devote their energy to learning and teaching without being distracted by the elements.



Volunteer villagers make concrete flooring bricks: Some mix sand, gravel, cement and water to make concrete, some pour the concrete into molds, some compact the concrete mix, and still others smooth over the surface. According to suggestions from Tzu Chi volunteers, the bricks are reinforced with embedded bamboo lattices to boost their weight-bearing capacity.

Hidden strings?

The town of Loon received a heavy blow from the earthquake. Tzu Chi built more classrooms there than in any other town. Sandingan National High School alone received 12 classrooms.

When Principal Mario L. Garcia heard about the plan to install these classrooms at his school, he was suspicious. "What strings lie behind assistance like that?" he wondered.

As he worked with Tzu Chi volunteers, he began to learn more about the foundation and its ideals. As a result, his suspicion gradually dissipated. When all 12 classrooms were completed, he was finally convinced that there were indeed no strings attached to the gift of the classrooms. "Tzu Chi has won me over. I even hope

that folks in Bohol can learn from these volunteers," he said.

And some of them have already done so. Of the 1,400 local volunteers that Garcia recruited to help build the classrooms, 600 have already joined the foundation as donating members. Garcia himself deposits money into a Tzu Chi coin bank in his office every day. Through their donations, Garcia and his fellow donors are helping people in need.

When Tzu Chi conducted training courses for people in Bohol who wished to become Tzu Chi volunteers, Garcia was among them.

After school lets out, many students and teachers return to the tents or shanties that serve as their homes. They are without electricity and are infested with mosquitoes and other pests. Even though life is still hard, the prefab classrooms provide them with a sense of hope. Those temporary classrooms might not be as comfortable as permanent school buildings, but they do offer a reasonably good place for instruction and learning to take place. They let the users know that there are people who care enough to give them a hand.



Teacher Jessica A. Verano and her second graders in their new classroom at Cortes Central Elementary School

At the sight of the new classrooms being used, Principal Amelia Ancog of Cortes Central Elementary School was in tears. This time, she cried not because of the unbearable pressure from her work and home, but because she was deeply touched by the goodwill that had come to her school.

She said that after Tzu Chi provided the classrooms, other benefactors stepped forward and pledged to underwrite the rebuilding of the school library and infirmary. A school alumnus has promised to put up the money to rebuild the quake-damaged school perimeter wall. Of these heart-warming good deeds, Principal Ancog said, "Tzu Chi volunteers brought us more than just new classrooms—their benevolence has activated a chain reaction of goodwill."

Now her students can learn and teachers can teach in the safety and relative comfort of the new classrooms. The floors in the classrooms—paved with the concrete bricks that so many loving people made—are solid; even when it rains, they no longer have to worry about stepping on muddy ground.

Ancog said that she had applied before the earthquake for a transfer back to her hometown. Now she wants to wait till the school reconstruction has reached a reasonable point before she feels it right to hand the school over to her successor. "Until then, I hope that Tzu Chi volunteers can continue to accompany us."

Cortes Central Elementary School Principal Amelia Ancog visits students in their new classroom.



Local Forces Behind New Classrooms

Snow-white beaches, rolling hills, and pristine natural environments—these were the pillars that propped up the tourism industry on the island of Bohol.

Though the earthquake has trimmed 40 percent off the tourism-related economy, residents remain optimistic. They believe that nothing can take away their happiness if they themselves don't give up hope.

More than a thousand small hills like the one to the far right dot Bohol. They turn brown during the summer, hence their name: the “Chocolate Hills.” These natural wonders are one reason that the island is often referred to as the Jewel of the Philippines. Primitive in many respects, the island lacks modern machinery. In the foreground of the picture, a farmer plows his field the old-fashioned way—with the help of a water buffalo.



When Tzu Chi decided to build prefabricated classrooms in the aftermath of the tremor that hit Bohol in October 2013, the local schools and communities knew they needed to mobilize to help out.

The frames of the prefabricated classrooms would be assembled on site and erected on platforms of concrete flooring bricks laid on level ground. In all, 150 classrooms would sit on about 100,000 such bricks. As a result, much work was required to prepare the ground for the new classrooms. The ground itself needed to be cleared and leveled, and cement, sand, gravel, and water needed to be mixed into concrete for the flooring bricks. A total of 5,000 villagers volunteered to work on the project.

Marvic Pino, 14, left, at home with her family. Only her ten-year-old sister, a live-in domestic helper, is away. Though the family lives a materially deprived life, they take it in stride and face life with optimism.

Patricio Teneza and his wife, Venus Roxas Teneza, were among the volunteers. They lived in the town of Cortes and tended a stall outside Infant King Academy. Faith Teneza, their daughter, attended Cortes Central Elementary School nearby.

The couple sold fried pancakes, which they made with flour and butter. Their pancakes were very popular. They made about 200 each day and quickly sold out. They also sold drinks and other snacks. The couple typically earned more than 600 pesos (US\$13.60) a day, better than most residents on the island made.

The couple's regular life became much busier in April 2014, as preparation got underway for the construction of prefabricated classrooms at 16 local schools. The two of them volunteered for the classroom project six days a week, Mondays through Saturdays. She mixed concrete, and he laid concrete bricks and moved heavy things. "For the sake of the children's education, we didn't miss a day of work," they said. They



A Boholano family makes roofing pieces with nipa palm leaves. Many people make these at home for sale.

believed schools were so important that everyone in the town should get involved.

In June 2014, the materials for the prefabricated classrooms arrived at Cortes Central Elementary School, ahead of the volunteers from Taiwan. Those volunteers were scheduled to arrive a little later to teach local helpers how to assemble the structures, but Patricio Teneza and other volunteers in the town could not wait. They were more than enthusiastic and anxious to get the classrooms completed. After all, they had been waiting for this day for a long time. The excited townsfolk helped themselves to the newly arrived parts and assembled them the best they could, for as long as they could. They worked all day for two days in a row, not quitting until after midnight each day.

The Taiwanese volunteers arrived at the school two days after the locals started putting the parts together. They were pleasantly surprised to see that so much work had already been done. The community residents had already screwed togeth-

er the metal frames for seven classrooms. The frames had been erected into shape and were standing on their concrete brick platforms when the volunteers arrived.

The Tzu Chi volunteers appreciated the enthusiasm of the local residents, even though they had made some mistakes in assembling the frames and the Taiwanese volunteers had to spend some time fixing them. "The people here did very well," said volunteer Qiu Xiang-shan (邱祥山) with admiration. "Without training and without any instructions, they managed to put up all those frames themselves."

Contented folks

Bohol has a population of over one million people. Many islanders make a living by fishing. They make their own small boats, go out to sea at night, and sell their catch at the market early in the morning. There are also many islanders who grow fruit and vegetables. Still others work in the tourism industry. Bohol's beaches, its Chocolate Hills (numerous limestone mound formations), and its pristine natural scenery have made the island a popular tourist destination.

Another source of income is weaving nipa palm leaves. Woven leaves are often used on the island to make roofs for homes. The plants are abundant, and the roofs made with them are durable and functional in keeping out the rain and leaving the interior airy and cool. This, however, is not the easiest way to make a living. Because the plants grow in soft mud and tidal and river waters, it takes a lot of work to gather the leaves. They can nick fingers and hands if not handled carefully during weaving, and the products do not fetch much money.

There are no big factories on the island, and no buildings taller than eight stories, even in downtown areas. No major grocery chains have set up shops here, because the islanders don't have enough income to support such businesses. On average, about eight out of ten people earn a daily wage of only 200 pesos (US\$4.50).

Despite all this, the islanders are a content people. They rarely complain about their lot in life, even if they receive less than the minimum wage from their employers. They live simply.

Patricio Teneza, right, and his wife, Venus, tend their snack stall.



Jack Gaisano (施嘉驛), a Tzu Chi volunteer, runs more than 40 grocery stores in Manila and Cebu. Many of his employees come from Bohol. "They have hearts of gold, work hard, and do whatever they're assigned," Gaisano said of those employees. He knows about the low wages prevalent on the island. "Jobs are hard to find there, so locals accept whatever they're given."

With such a restricted job market, more than half of the college graduates from this island choose to seek employment in Cebu, Manila, or even abroad. Those that have left the island for work have become a source of funds in the post-quake rebuilding effort; many locals have no other means of rebuilding their homes than relying on the money sent back by those working elsewhere.

Under these circumstances, residents in the disaster area are very grateful to Tzu Chi for providing prefabricated classrooms for schools damaged in the quake.

Just a beginning

Venus Teneza, who owned the pancake stall outside the Infant King Academy with her husband, Patricio, was a native of Bohol. Now 36,

she remembered her classroom when she was a first grader at Cortes Central Elementary School. It was a brand-new classroom then, but the earthquake left it dangerous and unfit for occupancy. "That's sad," she said, but then she smiled as she pointed to the school: "But now the school has new buildings—those seven prefabricated classrooms provided by Tzu Chi."

Venus not only helped construct the prefabricated classrooms at her alma mater, but she enlisted the help of her parents and daughter too. In addition, the family of five attended the training courses Tzu Chi held on the island for people interested in volunteering for the foundation. Venus learned that were it not for donations from loving people around the world, the foundation would not have been able to make the 150 classrooms a reality on the island.

Venus and her husband sustained substantial losses in the earthquake. The concrete house that they had saved for three years to build was badly damaged. Yet so far, the two of them have not received any monetary aid or subsidies for construction materials from any organization, public or private. The couple and their daughter have been forced to live with Venus' parents

until they can save enough money to fix and restore their own home.

Many other families were similarly affected by the tremor. A lot of people were still living in roadside tents, even eight months after the quake. In addition to constructing classrooms, Tzu Chi volunteers visited areas damaged by the quake to learn about what other help they could give.

During one of their visits, they met Marvic Pino. She was 14 years old, but still attending elementary school.

Pino had seven younger siblings, but due to their poverty, only she and her ten-year-old sister were able to attend school. That sister was a live-in domestic helper—she worked to earn money so that she could go to school. Their father was a poor fisherman. He simply could not afford to send more of his children to school.

They lived by a river in a shanty which was situated so low that high tide covered the floor. The worst part about the hut was that it was in a

Many victims still live in tents, eight months after the earthquake. Volunteer Ferdinand Dy, left, visits one of the tents.





Venus, Patricio, and their daughter, Faith, volunteer to help build classrooms.

dangerous mudslide zone. But what could they do? For families as poor as the Pinos, relocating to a safer place simply was not an option. Even without the earthquake, life was not easy.

It was noon when Tzu Chi volunteers came to visit them. They saw the family's lunch on their dining table: steamed rice made with rice that the foundation had distributed earlier. No other food was present.

To help needy families like the Pinos, Tzu Chi volunteers planned to carry out more charity work on Bohol. Their aid to the island will not end with those 150 prefab classrooms.

Closer family, closer community

Although Venus was raised in Bohol, Patricio was born in northern Philippines. They met some years ago when both were working in Manila. He was a security guard at a factory and she, with a college degree, was an accountant.

One day she went to make a deposit at a bank, and someone attempted to rob her with a knife. Though she emerged from the incident entirely unhurt, she was thoroughly scared, so much so that she gave up her well-paying job and moved back to Bohol. Patricio went with her, and they were married there.

Patricio had worked in Manila for ten years. He pointed out that the pay was indeed better in large cities such as Manila, but it was hard to put

away money, much less buy a home. In Bohol, the two of them were able to save enough money to build a house of their own just three years after they had moved to the island. More and more, they felt that Bohol was home.

Though their home is now damaged and they cannot yet rebuild it, they remain optimistic. They are facing life with equanimity. On school days, Venus walks to Cortes Central Elementary School at noon to fetch her daughter, Faith. The two of them walk to the pancake stall outside the Infant King Academy to join Patricio. They cook up something simple, and the family eats together. After lunch, Faith returns to school. Venus again picks her up at five o'clock, when school lets out, and they walk home together.

This has seemingly been their daily routine forever, but that routine—of regularity and predictability—became more precious after the ravages of the earthquake. Having experienced

life's impermanence, the mother and daughter now cherish their time together more, and have become closer as a result.

The earthquake impacted many islanders' lives. According to statistics, more than 200 people were killed and over 30,000 buildings were damaged. Coming from far away, Tzu Chi volunteers tried to help disaster areas with the construction of prefab classrooms. In the process, something good happened among community residents which the volunteers were happy to see—the project has brought them closer together. By participating in the project, multitudes of people worked together, sweated together, and felt part of the community together. As a result, they became tighter. "We see each other every day, and our camaraderie is stronger than ever before," Venus concluded, laughing wholeheartedly.

An earthquake may topple buildings and take lives, but it cannot crush the spirit of people. Life may be affected for some time, but it will return to normal. With their optimism and resilience, local people have faith in this.



Patricio Teneza, left, works with another volunteer to assemble the frame of a prefabricated classroom.

Blue-Collar, White-Collar

These volunteers from Taiwan, almost all of them over 50, extended the love they have for their own children and grandchildren to students at Bohol schools—they assembled prefabricated classrooms for the students to use after their classrooms were damaged by a devastating earthquake. Bohol residents treated the volunteers from afar like celebrities and made them feel very welcome.

From June 10 to 18, 2014, a group of 20 volunteers from Taiwan trained residents in Bohol to assemble prefabricated classrooms. The classrooms were provided by Tzu Chi for 16 local schools which had all sustained significant damage in a temblor that devastated Bohol in October 2013. The town of Loon, hit especially hard by the quake, received more classrooms than any other town. Sandingan National High School, one of the schools in Loon, received 12 classrooms.

Li Jie-yu (李界育), from Taichung, central Taiwan, assembled one of the classrooms on an open space at the high school. He wore a tool belt, a white cap, and a cloth wrapped over much of his face to block the scorching sun. Proper sun screening was advisable because the volunteers worked long hours in the sun.

Li worked quietly, using a drill motor to drive in screws. It wasn't the language barrier that prevented him from conversing with local residents—he was just taciturn by nature.

Li, who deals in used car parts in his real day job, left Taiwan for the first time in his life to volunteer in Leyte Province after Super Typhoon Haiyan hit central Philippines in

Twenty volunteers from Taiwan visited Bohol in June to show people there how to put up Tzu Chi prefab classrooms. Most of the volunteers were over 50.





Taiwanese trainers (above) work alongside local trainees and pass on assembling skills.

Cai Bo-chang (left) and Hong Sheng-fu (洪生富) measure a classroom window. Working ten-hour days for a week in a row in hot sun like this could be daunting. The volunteers had a single but potent shield: their sense of mission.

November 2013. Tzu Chi provided prefabricated classrooms for Tacloban and Ormoc in Leyte, and Li was among the volunteers who went to help put the classrooms together. He made two trips to that area.

In June 2014, he went to the Philippines a third time, this time to Bohol Island to help erect classrooms. He was impressed by the attention of the local people. Students gathered around as he worked. When he accidentally dropped a screw, the youngsters would race to be the first to pick it up for him. Many villagers

watched him work as if he were putting on a show. When the classrooms at one school were completed and turned over to the administration, the Taiwanese volunteers were treated as if they were big stars. "I felt so flattered!" Li said. Like all Tzu Chi volunteers, he cheerfully paid his own travel expenses and took time off from his job to participate in the project. Thus the warm reception by the villagers made it all even more worthwhile.

Relief work abroad

Zeng Ming-song (曾明松) is another volunteer from Taiwan. He has run a motorcycle repair shop for the past 30 years in Nantou, also in central Taiwan. Like Li Jie-yu, Zeng took his first trip abroad to help assemble prefabricated classrooms in Leyte.

He used to work in his shop from 8:00 in the morning till 10:00 in the evening, day after day, including weekends. But that schedule changed

after he joined Tzu Chi. Nowadays he shuts his shop down on Sundays so that he and his wife can volunteer at Tzu Chi free clinics or recycling stations. On weekday evenings, he often has to attend Tzu Chi meetings, visit needy families, and chant sutras for the deceased. On those days, he just puts his work behind him and goes out to volunteer. His wife can't repair motorcycles, but she can change motor oil, so she is able to serve some customers. When both he and his wife have to volunteer, he simply closes his shop.

Zeng said that volunteering has become their primary job over the years, while tending the repair shop has been relegated to a secondary role. He pointed out that they are not rich, but they have learned to see money for what it really is.

Volunteer Hong Xi-cai (洪錫財) enjoys a lighter moment as he and schoolchildren sing a song accompanied with hand gestures. This is not exactly his forte, as he handles tools like a drill much more adroitly than he performs hand gestures. Still, he is all smiles.

They used to take advantage of every opportunity to make money, but they were unable to keep what they made. They loaned out their money and ended up losing it all to defaults. They now believe the truth of a popular saying: "Money has four legs and people have only two." It's useless to chase money. If something is meant to be yours, it is yours; if not, it's a waste of time to fret over it. They are therefore completely at ease now about closing their shop to go do volunteer work.

For this trip to Bohol, Zeng had packed his backpack with pencils, candies, and hanging decorations with aphorisms by Master Cheng Yen. He gave them to students or teachers whenever he had a chance. He cherished this trip to help people in Bohol. "Wealth doesn't guarantee a slot on the delegation," he said of his good fortune to have the opportunity to serve.

Lai Han-xiang (賴翰祥), from Taichung, was an ironworker and then a plumber before switching to selling Chinese flatbread 20 years ago. His business was very good, so he and his staff needed to run in high gear to fill all the orders each day. All hands were needed to keep his store

humming; even one person taking time off work was unthinkable. As a result, "I rarely went anywhere far from home," he said.

But Lai's involvement with Tzu Chi changed that. Like the other volunteers, he went to Leyte to build prefabricated classrooms in 2013. At one of the schools he worked at, he saw over 60 crosses that had been erected on the campus. He later found out that each cross represented a student of the school who had perished in the super storm. That really saddened him.

Every time he thought of that scene, he reminded himself to seize time to do good. He signed up for disaster relief work in the Philippines three times, and he was selected each time. He felt that he had been extremely fortunate to have been selected three times in a row, especially considering all the volunteers who wanted to participate.

His "reward" for being selected to participate was a chance to spend his own money and use his own time to work in heat that reached 90 or 100 degrees Fahrenheit. He often got heat stress while putting up classrooms under the scorching sun, but he stayed at the work sites with the other volunteers and did his best. He did not want to have traveled so far only to end up lying in bed. "During this trip, the only thing I worry about is that my health or strength might fail me," he said.

Sun and sweat

This was also the third time that Cai Bo-chang (蔡泊昌), from Qingshui, Taichung, had been to the Philippines. However, his state of mind this time was vastly different from that during his previous two trips. His wife of 42 years had just passed away. Thinking of her while assembling classrooms in Bohol, he often could not stop his tears from falling.

He regretted not having been a more considerate husband to her. He had thought nothing of spending lavishly on liquor, but he had not once taken her out to a nice dinner. Now he carried her picture around in his billfold. He told himself to volunteer doubly hard, both on her behalf and on his own.

When he first arrived in Bohol, Cai saw how classes at local schools were conducted outdoors. The teachers and students had only flimsy, makeshift shields, such as tarps hanging overhead, that were often grossly inadequate in blocking out the sun. Students were forced to move their seats with the moving sun

to stay out of the heat and the bright light as much as they could.

Conducting classes under tarps day after day was not very pleasant, and it certainly was not conducive to effective teaching and learning. It was no wonder that students moved their desks and chairs into a classroom just as soon as one was completed. They did not want to wait one second longer.

Their eagerness to get inside a classroom helped Cai appreciate the extreme urgency of his task, so he worked particularly hard. But however busy he was, he never forgot to regularly take his medications to control his blood pressure and blood sugar so that he could handle the hard work.

These Taiwanese volunteers all had had experience working with their hands, with tools, and with heavy things. That, however, was not the case with Chen You-ji (陳佑吉). He used to work mostly with his head, not hands. He retired from his position as the chief financial officer of a company in 2012.

Before that, he had spent 15 years working abroad while his wife had stayed in Taiwan. When he returned to Taiwan on vacation, he felt left out because his wife was often busily volunteering for Tzu Chi. He admitted that for a long time he had been mad at the foundation over that.

After he retired, he started volunteering at a Tzu Chi recycling station, and so he and his wife were both volunteers. He had wanted to help in international disaster relief work, so he was very glad he was selected to come to Bohol this time.

They worked all day long with only a brief break for lunch. The volunteers were thus exposed to the hot sun almost the entire day. Their clothes were alternately soaked from their sweat and dried by the sun before becoming soaked again. Many volunteers developed rashes as a result. After working hard all day, they fell asleep as soon as they hit the sack.

Their exhaustion was understandable. Prolonged exertion in heat like that could exhaust even the fittest young men, let alone these volunteers. They were mostly in their 50s and 60s, and some were even grandfathers.

Though they were physically tired, they took delight in seeing the immediate impact of their labor. They were happy that they had done the right thing. ☸



Pictures of Children

The author of this article is a seasoned professional photojournalist. Over the years, he has taken countless photographs on assignment or otherwise, amongst which are many images of the children he has encountered. We featured six of those photos in our Winter 2013 issue. We feature some more in this issue, along with the captions that the photographer himself wrote.

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

Ten Thousand Whys

Guizhou, China, 2005

The recess bell had no sooner rung than the children, books in hands, stampeded towards a classroom with barred windows. The room they were headed for functioned as the school library, and the children were rushing to return books. The scene reminded me of a run on a bank.

The room was about 360 square feet, sparsely occupied here and there by a small number of books for young readers, in just a few genres. The most common book in the library, by volumes held, was *Ten Thousand Whys*, a popular science book for children. I read that book when I was little, almost half a century ago. I was a little surprised to come across it again in this elementary school in a remote mountain region of Guizhou, southern China.

Unlike typical libraries, it had no open shelves stacked with books. Instead, students had to borrow or return books through a barred window. On one side of the bars, throngs of students jockeyed for position. On the other side—in stark contrast to the chaos outside—a librarian was taking his time serving his customers.



Perhaps the crowds and the hustling were just part of the job for the librarian: It had always been this way and would perhaps always remain the same. The students appeared to be inured to it, too. Jostling and hustling in order to learn, to acquire knowledge, was nothing to them. I was reminded of a famous ancient Chinese poem: "Only after experiencing bone-chilling cold can a plum flower exude real fragrance." [A Western

saying that conveys a similar meaning is: "No pain, no gain."]

Less attuned to such local thinking, I kept asking myself, "Why?" Why did the school library have to operate like that? Why didn't the librarian quicken his pace? Why didn't the school train the children to wait in line for service? Why should getting a book to read be so laborious and trying?

I couldn't help wondering if managing a library in such a way pumped up the students' desire to read—or diminished it. Perhaps it had never occurred to the school administrators to find ways to improve the situation because they had never felt anything was wrong here.

My many questions would probably never be answered and would forever be left hanging in the air.

What's On His Mind?

Guizhou, China, 2006

Wang Xiaoming [王小明], not his real name, was a second grader at an elementary school nestled in the mountains of Luodian, Guizhou, China. Perhaps you wonder what the story was behind the gloomy, pitiful expression on his face in this picture.

I visited his school with Tzu Chi volunteers in December 2006 to distribute relief goods. After the distribution, we asked a teacher to recommend a student from a needy family so we could write a report on the case and help people get a better understanding of local poverty.

The teacher recommended Wang Xiaoming. Poverty had forced his parents to work out of town. The family had not heard from them in years and didn't even know whether they were still alive. Xiaoming lived with his aged grandfather. On school days, after school let out at noon, the boy had to go home to cook lunch for the old man.

After describing the circumstances surrounding the Wang family, the teacher called out to Xiaoming and told him to take us to his home after school that day. The boy said nothing in response. He only listened to her with a vacant look on his face.

We returned to the classroom at noon, ready to go visit the Wang household. When the students were released from school, they all rushed out of the room happily—with the exception of Xiaoming. He alone remained fixed to his seat, showing no intention of going anywhere.

Seeing him sitting there, the teacher cried out to him, "Xiaoming, aren't you going to take the visitors home to see your grandpa? Why aren't you going?" The boy said nothing in return, only staring at his teacher and at us. He looked very much like a cornered animal at that moment, anxious and on edge, trapped in a classroom where there was no place to hide.

The boy's silence only spurred the teacher to talk even more loudly and urgently. Still, Xiaoming remained silent. Over ten minutes passed in the standoff. All the other students had gone home, leaving the campus almost empty. Xiaoming, the teacher, two Da Ai TV workers, a print reporter, and I were the only people remaining in the classroom. The air became a bit suffocating as we stood there awkwardly.



We eventually told the teacher that we would not impose on the boy. Perhaps we could find another case elsewhere. With that we said goodbye to them and stepped out of the classroom.

When I looked back, I saw Xiaoming standing by a broken window looking out at us. It seemed like he wanted to say something, but he bit his tongue. In that instant, the photographer in me jumped to life. I took out my camera and snapped six shots in a row.

We kept a tight schedule during our trip to Luodian, so I had little time to think much while on the scene. Soon, the Xiaoming episode was

gone from my mind. It didn't come back to me until I had returned to my office in Taipei.

Working through the shots that I had taken during the trip, I saw the photos I took of Xiaoming. His innocent face brought back memories of that day in his classroom and of my own school days when I was his age.

Back in my time, a teacher was a figure of absolute authority, whose directives a student simply carried out without a second word. A student had no reason, much less the guts, to say "no" to a teacher. I know that at the mountain school Xiaoming attended, a teacher was still as much a

figure of absolute authority as back in my days. Disobeying the teacher was regarded as an extremely serious offense, an absolute taboo. When a student chose to behave like that, he most likely was under some kind of pressure to do so.

What then was the pressure that Xiaoming was under? Was it because he felt too ashamed of his poverty to show his home to strangers? Was it because his grandfather had told him to never take other people home? Or was it for some other reason that he simply didn't want to make public?

Only Xiaoming knows for sure.

Those Pesky Worms

Yangon Province, Myanmar, 2008

Cyclone Nargis devastated southern Myanmar in 2008. In its aftermath, the Tzu Chi Foundation distributed relief supplies and provided other aid in the disaster areas.

When volunteers were giving out school supplies at a rudimentary elementary school located in a temple, I saw a Malaysian volunteer, a medical worker by profession, kneeling on the floor, feeding the students roundworm medicine.

This sight warmed my heart and took my mind back to my childhood, half a century ago. It was a time of malnutrition and poor hygiene.

Roundworms were common among children, including my siblings and me. Occasionally, my mom would buy a kind of sweetened medicine to expel our parasites.

But the medicine was not the only way she dealt with the worms. From time to time, around midnight in the depth of winter, she would peel away the covers under which my siblings and I

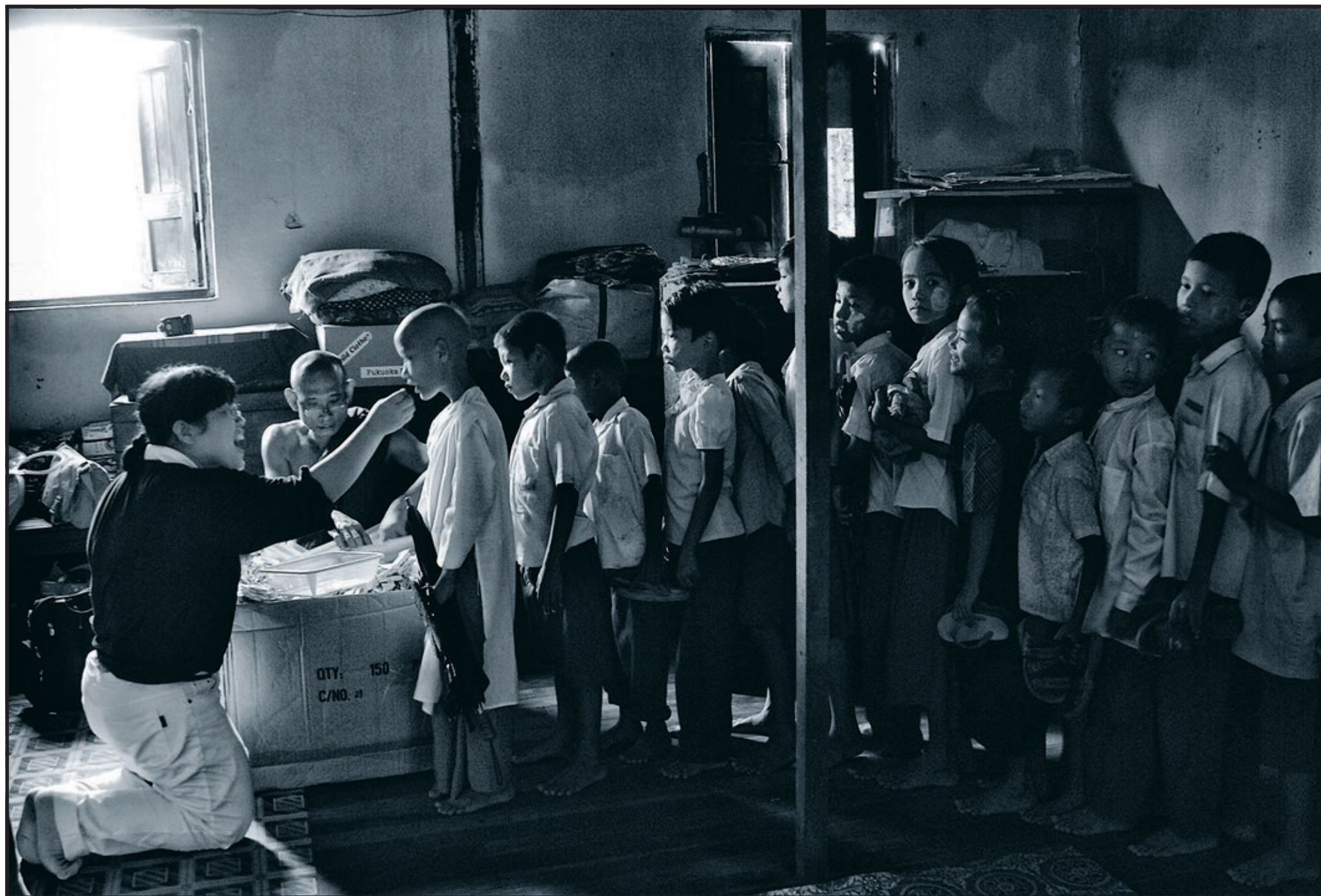
were sleeping together, turn us face down and butt up, and remove our diapers or pants. Then, one child at a time, she separated our buttocks, looking for roundworms or other kinds of parasites lurking there. If she saw any, she picked them off one by one.

Roundworms were bigger and easier to get rid of, but some parasites wiggling in that area were but half a centimeter [four tenths of an inch] long and not much wider than a hair. It was quite an undertaking to get rid of those pesky, teeny worms, but Mom always carried out that abominable, time-consuming task patiently and meticulously.

As the time dragged on, we kids, still heavy-eyed, couldn't stand the cold and would keep asking her, "Mom, are you done? It's freezing." I'll never forget that cold.

That was half a century ago. My mom has been gone now for almost 20 years. I don't know why, but as I recall those bone-chilling nights long ago, a warm glow still fills my heart.

I wonder: Thirty years from now, will any of the students in this photo remember us foreign visitors, who once visited their homeland and did this seemingly trivial thing for them?



Instant Noodles

Guizhou, China, 2005

It was time for lunch at an elementary school tucked away in the mountains of Guizhou. At the sound of the class bell, students swarmed to a store next to the school to buy lunch.

It isn't easy to get around in the mountains, and their homes were far from school, so the students usually took care of their lunches this way. Lunch was generally instant noodles that sold for one renminbi [16 U.S. cents] a pack. The store owner supplied a bowl and hot water to soak and soften the noodles.

However, so many students were buying noodles that the store owner could not keep up with the demand for hot water. Many students were forced to use lukewarm water instead. The crisp, crunchy noodles would not easily become soft when soaked in such water, especially in the cold weather, but given their poverty and the general scarcity of goods, the children just had to make do.

Hot water or not, the students wolfed down the noodles all the same. I don't know whether it was because they were starving, or because the seasoning pack had piqued their appetite. Perhaps it was both.

For these children, the noodles were not snacks but their lunch, a main meal of the day, a meal that they had to have to sustain them.

I have never eaten that kind of instant noodles, so I don't know what they taste like. But I do know that while the cheap noodles could somewhat fill a stomach, they offered little else to the eater. They provided little to no nutrition—nutrition which these growing children badly needed. The sores at the corners of their mouths and the discolored patches of various sizes on their faces gave away the fact that they suffered from malnutrition. They were obviously deficient in vitamins, a friend on that same mission told me.

These children might be as medically naïve as I, so they didn't know the nature of the problem that they were facing. Even if they had known, they couldn't have done anything about it. Their fate is a cruel reality—sometimes life leaves you with no choice.

I didn't ask my friend to tell me the consequences of vitamin deficiencies; I wasn't all that eager to find out.



Looking at this picture now, I suddenly think of a propaganda film I once saw which described how food worth many hundreds of millions of renminbi has been wasted in China every year in recent years. I wonder what those kids who ate instant noodles for lunch would think if they saw that film.



Little Butterfly

Guizhou, China, 2005

That basket filled with firewood was really heavy. I tried it. It weighed more than my bag fully packed with photography gear—cameras, lenses, and all. And yet, this little girl was able to carry the basket on her back, negotiating the gritty paths in the mountains with ease and agility. I had to hustle to keep up with her.

She was not training or in a PE class. Instead, she was gathering firewood with which her family could cook and boil water. This was a daily routine for children in the area. They did it before or after school.

This mountainous area of Guizhou had little in the way of transportation and natural resources. The land was barren. People made do with what was available to them, which they ferried home on the backs of animals—or themselves. Things being what they were, children grew up expecting to work. They had known since they were very young that nothing could be had without labor.

I didn't pity the little girl, however. Quite on the contrary, I envied her. I envied the way she and her friends traversed the mountain trails with such ease and grace, like butterflies, their laughter echoing across the skies. The big mountains had nurtured in the local people minds as open as the valleys, and they possessed a "truth" that represented humanity at its most sincere. We outsiders could easily feel it.

Life is not all sunshine; sometimes it is cloudy and rainy. When the children got tired from their work, they rested and then set out again. The local people labored and received from nature what they needed. They never needed to worry about energy problems such as whether nuclear power plants should be abolished, nor did they need to please their bosses to advance their careers. In this way, they possessed peace of mind. I envied them for that.

Dreamland Boy

Rosario, the Philippines, 2011

I used to believe that children, whatever their background or wherever they lived, were largely immune from their environment: As long as they weren't hungry and had friends to play with, their worlds came alive. I drew that conclusion from my own experience as a child, and I thought that it was the truth the world over. But this long-held presumption of mine was debunked when I saw the expression on the face of the boy pictured here.

He lived on a remote shore in the Municipality of Rosario in Cavite Province, Philippines, about a 90-minute drive south of Metro Manila.

Perhaps because of a lack of government control or for some other reason, a dumping ground for the city's waste had formed beside the boy's home. Mountains of garbage emitted a repulsive stench. Dirty, foul-smelling fluids ran in all directions from the piles. The garbage attracted not just swarms of flies, as big as bees, with red heads and golden bodies, but also scavengers who picked out things from the rubbish to sell. They had built makeshift homes nearby because there seemed to be no housing regulation—they could just build at will. Illegal dwellings built of salvaged plywood and corrugated metal sheets had popped up one after another in the vicinity of the dumping ground. This boy lived in one of those shanties.

When you don't have two pennies to rub together, having a place to live is good enough, wherever that place might be. The inconveniences of having no running water or electricity, as well as having to put up with air pollution and poor hygiene, don't matter that much as long as you have a roof over your head to protect you from the elements.

He lived in a village named Dreamland. It was such a pretty name that one really hated to look at the reality. ●●●



A Way to Transform Our Minds

By Dharma Master Cheng Yen

Translated by Teresa Chang

Two training sessions were held in Taiwan in June 2014 for Tzu Chi volunteers from over 30 countries. The participants diligently learned and shared their personal growth stories and Tzu Chi experiences at the sessions. On the surface, they have different skin colors and speak different languages, but deep within they share the same Tzu Chi humanistic spirit. They all try to make the best of every moment by shouldering their responsibility to purify people's minds; they all endeavor to live a life of value by being of benefit to others.

Many volunteers shared how they wake up early every morning to listen to my Dharma talks. Some talked about how doing so had changed their lives; others shared how those talks had taught them to work with others in harmony and unison. Their experiences demonstrate that when we take in the Dharma—the Buddha's teachings—and thoroughly understand it, then we will naturally know the right direction to take in life.

Without the help of the Dharma, it is difficult to transform people's minds and relieve their suffering. After we have learned the Dharma, we must put it into practice in daily life. Let's pave our paths with love, and transform our inner selves by being content, grateful, understanding and tolerant. Those who are content and grateful are the richest; those who are understanding and tolerant are the wisest.

This article is excerpted from a series of speeches delivered by Master Cheng Yen from June 1 to 14, 2014.



TZU CHI ARCHIVES

When we are content with what we have, we won't be greedy. Insatiable greed gets us into trouble. When we are grateful at all times, we will love one another and get along in harmony, and our power will increase. When we are understanding, we will have the wisdom to discern right from wrong and will not suffer from delusions and mental afflictions. When we are tolerant, our mind will be broad enough to accommodate all there is in the world, our compassion for all living beings will be impartial, and we will be free from emotional entanglements such as selfish love, hatred and animosity.

I often share my "Three No's" with Tzu Chi volunteers: "In this world, there is no one I do not love, no one I do not trust, and no one I do not forgive." Though I use the pronoun "I," the same statement can be said by anyone.

In this world, there is no one I do not love. Because I love everyone, I cannot bear to stand by when I learn that someone is suffering. I have to find out what I can do to lend a helping hand.

In this world, there is no one I do not trust. "The mind, the Buddha, and living beings—there is no difference among these three." Since all living beings have the buddha-nature, our love should not be limited to the human race. We should expand our love to all living creatures and treat them all with respect.

In this world, there is no one I do not forgive. Life is full of suffering. If we understand life's truths, we can help prevent regrettable



COURTESY OF JENNIFER CHEN

Jennifer Chen and other Tzu Chi volunteers in Lesotho visit care recipients.

things from happening. A change of mindset can eliminate hatred and enmity and lead to peace of mind.

We learn the Dharma to help our wisdom grow and to bring blessings to the world. When we truly take the Buddha's teachings to heart, we will remain untainted and maintain our pure innate nature through all sorts of problems, even in the face of numerous challenges presented by people suffering from all kinds of afflictions.

A will, a way

Famine, drought, war... Faced with so much poverty and suffering in the world, what can we do? I believe the solution lies in giving. By "giving," I mean the giving of not only money and food but also love. We need to give love to inspire the goodness in people's hearts and bring peace to their minds. When peoples' minds are balanced and at peace, they will not cause disasters. Our society will enjoy stability and harmony and love will be everywhere.

Our Zulu volunteers from Durban, South Africa, visited Swaziland again in May and June to show new volunteers there how to take care of care recipients. Even though the Zulu volunteers were away from home, they watched recorded videos of my Dharma talks every day before setting out to visit the needy.

Beatrice Sibisi, one of the volunteers from South Africa, is already 71 years old and has been in two car accidents. Even so, she plodded ahead undaunted on the undulating, uneven mountain roads. She never stopped to rest, but instead kept on going, gradually overtaking some younger volunteers. As they trod on, they sang a song composed by volunteers in Swaziland: "I'm going over the mountains and through dark forests. I'll forever follow you, our beloved Master, on the Tzu Chi Path."

I truly admire their willpower and wisdom. Every time I speak of them, light seems to radiate from my heart. Physically they are very far away from Taiwan, and they live a life very different from ours, but the love in us is the same. Most of our volunteers in Africa are poor, yet by pooling their compassion they form a river of love and are

able to nourish people in greater need than they are. They forge ahead on this path, never stopping or going back. Their contribution is no less than that of anyone else. This goes to show that a heart rich in love is like a field with abundant blessings. If you are rich in love, you will have unlimited strength to help others.

As long as we have the will, no obstacles can stop us. As long we have love, no place is unreachable. The road may be rugged and bumpy, but with everyone walking hand in hand, it is not difficult to walk on.

Our volunteers have also been promoting Tzu Chi missions in Lesotho. Some of the residents there have been inspired to join Tzu Chi. In May 2014, three gatherings were held on two days under the winter sun for aspiring volunteers. But Lesotho is spread out with a sparse population. How could the news of the gatherings be spread? By word of mouth. People in village after village learned about the events this way. They gathered in the open air and listened to volunteer Jennifer Chen (陳美娟) share about Tzu Chi.

Two training sessions were held at Tzu Chi offices in northern and central Taiwan in June 2014 for Tzu Chi volunteers from over 30 countries.

In order to spread Tzu Chi missions, Chen took local volunteers in her car and visited remote villages. Sometimes they had to travel across areas so bumpy and steep that Chen was quite scared. To cheer her on, volunteers in her car started chanting “Amitabha Buddha.” With that, she calmed down and found the courage to go on.

It may not seem easy to sow seeds of love in this world, to bring the Dharma to people so that they can learn life’s truths and overcome their desires. But when Tzu Chi volunteers see more and more people following them on this path, when they see one community helping another community, one village helping another village, when they see love spreading everywhere, the joy they feel is so great that they keep pressing forward.

Our volunteers sincerely absorb the Dharma into their whole being—every cell in their body, heart, and brain. In this way they purify and transform themselves. Furthermore, they put the Buddha’s teachings into action and help relieve others from suffering. When they help themselves grow in wisdom and get rid of mental afflictions, they reveal an energy of love that can reach everywhere.



JUAN LIAO



COURTESY OF TZU CHI HEADQUARTERS

Master Cheng Yen encourages graduates of the Tzu Chi College of Technology to take the Tzu Chi spirit of “gratitude, respect, love” to their future workplaces.

It’s a blessing to serve others

Every June, when I attend the commencement ceremonies at Tzu Chi schools, I always feel a lot of confidence in our graduates. In the ceremonies, I see them displaying good manners and showing respect to their teachers, and the teachers gently giving back to them their best wishes. Seeing this new blood joining the workforce, I feel a lot of hope for our society.

Lin Sheng-han (林聖翰), the valedictorian this year at the Tzu Chi College of Technology, was a student in the Department of Nursing. He said that participating in the adaptation of the *Compassionate Samadhi Water Repentance* in 2012 inspired him to see nursing as his life calling. He is joining the emergency department at Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital to take care of acutely and severely ill patients. He said that he would serve patients with a smile on his face despite the high pressure of that work environment.

Wu Cheng-hao (吳承濤), who graduated from the Department of Social Work at Tzu Chi University this year, suffered from cerebral hypoxia at birth. He has a slight case of cerebral palsy and has undergone seven surgeries as a result. Every time he woke up from anesthesia after an operation, he always saw his mother at his bedside. He knew how hard his parents worked to take care of him. He told himself that no matter how painful the rehabilitation process

might be, it could never compare with the hardships his parents had undergone for him. He was grateful that they had never given up on him, so he told himself he would never give up on himself either. He worked hard on his physical therapy, and he studied hard to make up for his physical deficiency. He said that he had received a lot of help from society; to pay back, he decided to stay in Hualien after graduation and devote himself to social work. “Master Cheng Yen says that the firmer your resolve, the greater your strength,” he said. “Even though I can’t move around as easily as others, I believe I’ll be able to overcome all difficulties as long as I have the will.”

Xu Jin-yi (許晉譯), also a graduate of Tzu Chi University, said that when I hung a stethoscope on his neck [as I do for Tzu Chi medical students who are starting their internships, as a way to give them my blessings], he felt a sense of heavy responsibility, but a responsibility he willingly accepted. With that sense of mission, he was dedicating his expertise to Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital after he graduated.

I was impressed by these young people who were determined to live a life of value by serving others and relieving suffering. In addition to treating illnesses, they hope to soothe patients’ anxiety with smiles on their faces. By working for the good of humanity, they will make the best use of the bodies their parents gave them.

Despite advances in medical technology, the work of medical professionals has not become any easier. Instead, people's misconceptions have made their work harder and added to their pressure. Under these circumstances, we need more people with a strong sense of commitment to join this field and work together for a better medical environment. Students who have been nurtured in our schools know that fame, status, and wealth don't bring you real happiness—real happiness comes from being of service and benefit to others. I sincerely give my blessings to all these graduates. I hope that they will treat their workplace as a spiritual cultivation ground and happily give of themselves with the spirit of a bodhisattva.

Learn from Purna

Purna Maitrayani Putra was one of the Buddha's ten chief disciples and the foremost in expounding the Dharma. He once asked for the Buddha's permission to go preach in Sudana. The Buddha told him that the place was undeveloped and people there were wild and aggressive, and that if he went there, he might encounter many difficulties and get into trouble. "They might shout angrily at you and insult you," he warned.

Purna replied that the uncivilized nature of the people there was even more of a reason to go share the Dharma with them and point out a good path for them to follow. Then he added, "If they yell at me, I'll thank them for not beating me."

"What if they beat you with a stick?" the Buddha asked.

"Then I'll thank them for only hurting my body and not killing me with a knife," answered Purna.

"What if they kill you with a knife?"

"I'll still be grateful. If they take my life, it might be because I had hurt or killed them in a previous life. I was the one who induced this rancor from them, so I'd willingly repay my karmic debt with my life and thank them for letting me put an end to this negative affinity."

Despite the challenges that stood in his way to spread the Buddha's teachings, Purna was undaunted. He believed that everyone possessed the buddha-nature and that with sincere piety and firm resolve, he would be able to change people and transform their minds. Seeing his confidence, resolve, and faith, the Buddha finally gave him his blessing.

It is inevitable that we formed negative affinities with others in a previous life. As a result, no matter what we do, they just don't like us; no matter how much we give to them, they are not happy. Even worse, they speak harshly to us and treat us badly. When that happens, we must keep in mind the karmic law of cause and effect—what happens to us is a result of what we did in a previous life. We must reflect on ourselves and not hold grudges. Furthermore, we should look upon this situation as an opportunity to cultivate ourselves. If we can willingly accept what comes our way, we will be able to mitigate the antagonism others feel toward us. In our life, we come into contact with all kinds of people with different temperaments. We should train ourselves to get along with them, to focus on their good points and accommodate their flaws. Then we will be able to turn bad into good and avoid forming negative affinities in this life.

If we let go of our grudges, play our part the best we can, and harbor gratitude at all times, then we have truly taken the Dharma to heart and thoroughly understood the wholesome principles we should abide by in life. Let us all learn from Purna. He truly understood the Dharma, so he was able to do what he needed to do with unwavering faith and resolve. If we can learn from him, we'll be able to dissolve all antagonism and shoulder all responsibilities, no matter how heavy they might be. No obstacles will stop us from striding forward on the Bodhi Path.

Everyone goes through the cycle of birth, aging, illness and death. One day, we shall all return to dust, so there is really no need to quibble with others over any matter. Even our thoughts go through this cycle of arising, abiding, transforming, and disappearing. Facing this ever-changing world, we must seize every chance to do good. If we do that, we will be able to make the most of our transient life and sow blessings. On the other hand, if we let others' opinions get to us, if we harbor bad thoughts and become attached to our ego, the chance to sow blessings will pass us by.

We must often practice the Fourfold Mindfulness: Contemplate the body as impure, contemplate the senses as sources of suffering, contemplate the mind as impermanent and ever-changing, and contemplate all things as having no self. When we allow the Dharma to enter our hearts, we will be able to take good care of our minds and extinguish the fire of mental pollutants. Please be mindful at all times. ❀

Seeing With the Heart

Text and Photos by Du Hui-xi

Translated by Tang Yau-yang

The sudden loss of most of his eyesight at a young age made his world gloomy. Little did he know that donating unsold newspapers would lead to an unexpected turn in his life. Now he does his best to help people help others.

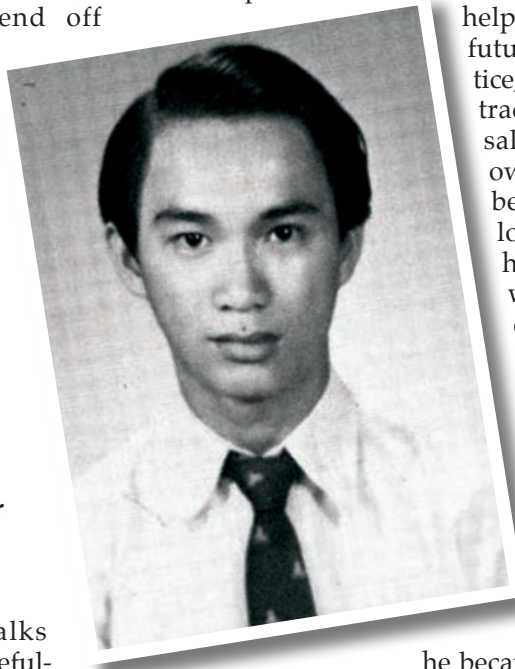


Lin Rong Quan (林榮泉) lives in a 17-story apartment building in Penang, Malaysia. The building was constructed in the 1970s, and Lin has lived there for 44 of his 50 years. Every day, he combs his hair to resemble John Travolta, his idol from the old days. He wants to make sure that he looks decent before he leaves the apartment. He's been like that for decades.

He looks and walks like any average man. Every afternoon at four, carrying his heavy tote bag and an umbrella, whose main purpose is to fend off aggressive

When Lin Rong Quan graduated from high school, he was determined to escape his childhood poverty with hard work, but fate had a different path in store for him.

COURTESY OF LIN RONG QUAN



dogs, he walks slowly and carefully to the newsstand where he sells newspapers.

To those who do not know him, he appears to be an ordinary newspaper vendor. However, the ease with which he does these everyday actions has actually come to him after years of falls and frustration. His younger sister, Lin Qing Jiao (林清嬌), knows that well. She recounted a couple of the incidents that he's had over the years, her heart full of sympathy for his poor eyesight: "One day on his way to his newsstand, he bumped into a fire hydrant. It took ten stitches to close the wound. Another time he kicked a cat and was almost bitten."

Lin himself remembered another time. "One day I wanted to step over a ditch, but I fell into it instead. I felt that Heaven was making a fool of me. Instead of looking after me after taking away my eyesight, it made me fall or bump into things and get injured or bruised. Honestly, I was really depressed at the time."

Shattered dreams

Lin was raised in an impoverished family. He started selling newspapers to supplement the family income while attending junior high school. Despite his young age, he knew that working hard was the only way to escape poverty. His ambition as a young person was to go into business and make it big.

He started taking steps toward that goal after graduating from high school. He was willing to learn or do anything that he believed could help him succeed and make money in the future. He was an air conditioning apprentice, became involved in import and export trading, and even tried his hand at direct sales. He envisioned becoming a homeowner at 25 and getting married at 30. He believed a bright future awaited him as long as he worked hard. Unfortunately, his grand plans were derailed when he was stricken with a stubborn eye disorder at the age of 23.

The doctor suspected that Lin suffered from optic neuritis, an inflammation of the optic nerve, but he could offer no effective treatment for this condition. Lin tried everything he could—from medical help to divine guidance—but no matter what he did, a cure proved elusive. The only thing his attempts brought him was a depleted bank account. In the end, he became completely blind in his left eye. His right eye was a little better, but not much: Its visual acuity was less than 20/200, or just 20 percent of normal visual efficiency.

"The suffering caused by being sightless is not just temporary," Lin said, recalling his state of mind in the early days of his near total blindness. "It lasts a lifetime. You feel that there's no hope for you. When I was learning how to use a white cane at a school for the blind, tears would roll down my cheeks as soon as I picked the cane up. I just couldn't come to terms with what had happened to me."

He wanted to be able to see so badly that he even dreamed about it. He'd dream of a blurry blackboard with words that he just could not make out. Sometimes he found himself crying after waking up from such dreams.

He had a steady girlfriend at that time, but he decided to terminate the relationship. He believed that he should set her free if he could not bring her happiness. His pride made him leave her and

keep his misery to himself. Clinging to a faint hope of finding a cure for his eyes, he began selling newspapers again. He had done this as a child, but it was something he had never dreamed of doing as a full-time occupation.

Sadly, a cure for his eye disease never came, and time marched on relentlessly as he passed one day after another selling newspapers.

A glimmer of hope

In 1998, Lin learned from a volunteer that Tzu Chi Malaysia had been channeling all proceeds from its recycling efforts, which it had started the year before, to help impoverished people receive free services at the foundation's dialysis center in Penang. Because of his own eye disorder, he knew only too well how tough it was to be sick. In response, he decided to regularly donate the leftover newspapers at his newsstand to Tzu Chi.

This decision unexpectedly led him to "see" light again in his life.

Lin makes a living by selling newspapers. He often invites his customers to do good and help others.

In addition to donating leftover newspapers to the foundation, he started knocking on doors to solicit donations of recyclables. He asked for such things as old newspapers and used clothing. Such interactions with strangers helped him get to know more people and provided him with opportunities to introduce Tzu Chi and raise money for the foundation.

He has been doing this for 16 years. One of the tools that he uses to spread the word about the foundation is the *Tzu Chi Monthly* magazine. "Once I gave a copy of the Monthly to a friend. A few days later he told me he wanted to become a donating member [one who makes monthly donations to Tzu Chi]," Lin recalled. "A month after that, he told me he had recruited seven other donating members." Lin says that he can't overstate how important this Tzu Chi periodical is to him.

Lin doesn't give up easily when he encounters people who say no. For example, one time he met a man who said, "I'm old, and I myself need help. How can I help others?" Lin shared his own experience with the man to illustrate that even people with modest means can give just as well. His story proved that making





Lin encourages everyone he meets, even those of modest means, to donate. He stresses that the amount of money donated is not important.

WENG SHI-YING

donations is not the exclusive province of the rich, nor is the amount of money donated all that important.

He urges people not to delay in helping others. "Doing good deeds should not be put off; instead it should be sped up," he said to a woman. "The new dialysis center will be completed in two months. We must hurry up and donate. Tzu Chi uses its money in the right places."

In the course of recruiting donors, Lin has seen many people with good hearts. A woman of Indian descent said to him, "My husband is out of work and I'm the sole breadwinner in my family, but I can still give a little. I know it's not much, but everyone's small donations put together will be able to help the needy."

Though he has little to no sight, Lin's involvement with Tzu Chi has helped him gain insight he never had before. When one door is closed to him, another is opened. As he works hard to recruit donating members, he helps people do good deeds. And as he helps others, the past vicissitudes in his own life no longer cause him so much agony. He has found new freedom.

Enjoying the freedom

Lin is happier because of that freedom, but his impaired eyesight still causes him problems from time to time on his Tzu Chi path. He has not given up, though.

In the 16 years since his first encounter with the foundation, he has recruited more than four hundred donating members. Taking care of the paperwork for so many members is in itself a huge undertaking. After collecting donations from his members once a month, he needs to record the collections in detail and submit them to the foundation. The foundation then issues to him a receipt for each donation received, which he then gives back to the donor. All donations to the foundation are strictly accounted for.

Lin carefully commits the donation details to memory, but he cannot see well enough to record them in the donation booklets. Fortunately, Lin Xiu Zhu (林秀珠), in her 70s, has been there to help him. They are old neighbors. Although she needs to baby-sit her twin grandchildren, she takes the time to handle the paperwork. "I admire Lin. Despite his limitations, he takes good care of

himself and does good deeds, so I do what I can to help him," the good neighbor said.

Yang Xiao Rong (楊曉蓉) tends a stall near Lin's newsstand. She has known him for more than two decades. She often stops by to make her monthly donations after getting off work.

Yang said that when she first became one of Lin's donating members, people would ask her how she could be so trustful of him, trustful that the money would be used honestly. That was more than a decade ago, and Tzu Chi was not well known in Malaysia at that time. It was quite normal for Yang to field such questions. But she chose to believe in Lin and the cause he was helping. She had seen reports about the foundation in the newspaper. "When each of us chips in just a little, together we can help others."

Talking about Tzu Chi

It has become Lin's passion to introduce more people to the foundation. When he leaves his home, he carries a tote bag filled with Tzu Chi publications and newspaper clippings in both Chinese and English, so that he can accommodate people from different ethnic groups. His bag has gotten fuller and heavier over the years, but he doesn't mind. "We need to take care of not only our physical life, but our wisdom-life as well. It doesn't matter if my bag gets heavier as long as it helps me recruit new members."

One day, Lin went with other Tzu Chi volunteers to a neighborhood to spread the word on the foundation and solicit donations. Wang Zong Hai (王宗海) took Lin on his motorcycle to the event. After they arrived and started work, Wang led the way with Lin's hand on his shoulder. The two of them went from door to door to invite people to do good.

It was Lin that brought Wang and his wife, Chen Ai Qun (陳愛群), into the Tzu Chi family. When Lin first brought up the idea of donating monthly to Tzu Chi, Wang was not very receptive. He just wanted to take good care of his own family, and he was not open to donating, even for a good cause. His wife, on the other hand, began to make donations, which Wang neither supported nor disapproved.

Lin could not sway Wang, but he would not quit. "He just kept talking and talking [about the foundation]," Chen said of Lin's attempts. "Even when we showed impatience, he wasn't discouraged." Thinking back, Chen was very grateful to Lin for persistently inviting them to Tzu Chi activities.



Lin is very happy that his sister, Lin Qing Jiao, is now also a Tzu Chi volunteer. She has taken good care of him over the years.

In 2011, Wang's father died unexpectedly. His sudden passing deeply saddened Wang, who knew he could no longer show filial piety to his dad. That year he followed Lin's suggestion and subscribed to the Da Ai TV channel.

One day when Wang was watching, he heard Master Cheng Yen say: "A good way to pay back your parents for giving you your physical body is to do good deeds and give to others." He was moved by this statement and decided to start giving.

He kicked his gambling habit and stopped buying new clothes, and he used the money thus saved to help the needy. He and his family also began volunteering on the recycling day each month.

Like Lin, Wang began recruiting new members and soliciting donations. "I used to be a real tightwad, but I'm a changed man now," he said. "If you can't give a little, you won't give a lot. Donating to a good cause helps nurture good thoughts, and the accumulation of those

thoughts from many people can become a powerful positive energy."

Through doing good, Wang, too, is walking more surely on life's path.

"Being disabled, I often experience joy and sadness in equal measures in the course of doing Tzu Chi work," Lin said. "I feel hurt when people think that I'm trying to do too much, but I feel joy when I know that I can still help people."

Despite the bittersweet feelings, he knows that there is nothing more important in his life now than to help the people he encounters help others, so he presses on. Though he has lost almost all his sight, he can "see" very well with his heart.

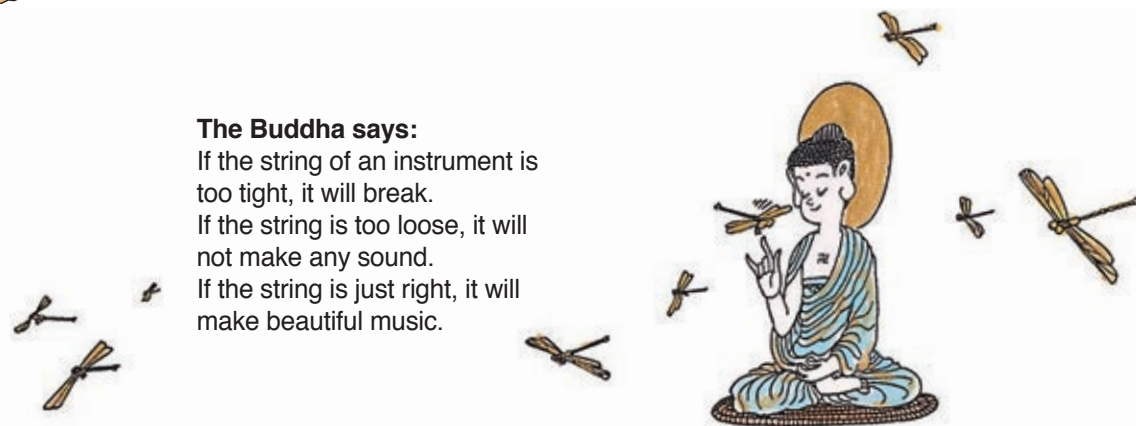
An outwardly smiling but inwardly sorrowful Lin has now become transformed. "With confidence, courage, and perseverance, nothing is impossible," he said.

He has vowed to recruit five hundred members, who will collectively become a Guan Yin Bodhisattva of a thousand hands and eyes. With more people in the world doing good, there will be more warmth and more energy of love to light up the dark corners. ❀

The Illustrated JING SI APHORISMS

The Buddha says:

If the string of an instrument is too tight, it will break.
If the string is too loose, it will not make any sound.
If the string is just right, it will make beautiful music.



SINCE WE HAVE CHOSEN TO CULTIVATE OURSELVES ACCORDING TO THE PROPER DHARMA, WE MUST STICK TO IT WITHOUT GIVING UP HALFWAY. WE MUST FEARLESSLY REFRAIN FROM EVIL AND PRACTICE THE PROPER DHARMA.

WE MUST ALWAYS CONCENTRATE ON THIS WITHOUT A MOMENT'S REST. DON'T GIVE UP AFTER YOU HAVE ALREADY STARTED.



What is the best way to treat a terminally ill patient?

It must be extremely painful when a person is no longer independent and must rely on others for everything. Forcing him to live on without dignity really does him no good. Why not just let nature take its course? We need to find a balance between reason and emotions. It is not helpful to be either too rational or too emotional.

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



Tzu Chi volunteers in Tokyo gave out hot meals to the homeless on July 21, 2014. This meal service was started five years ago.

Japan

Volunteers in Tokyo give out hot meals to the homeless twice a month at Yoyogi Park. One such distribution fell on July 21, which also happened to be "Umi no Hi" ("Ocean Day"). Umi no Hi is a national holiday that celebrates the ocean's bounty and its importance to Japan, an island nation. Some Japanese took advantage of the holiday as an opportunity to volunteer with Tzu Chi.

Volunteers arrived at the park after ten in the morning and greeted the homeless people who had lined up for the meals. Volunteers Lin Zhen-zi (林真子) and Huang Su-mei (黃素梅) are long-time veterans of this program, and they have become friends with many of the meal recipients. They chatted naturally with some of the attendees, "It's hot these days. Be sure to take good care." They also shared tips with those who were volunteering for the event for the first time about how to interact with the recipients.

Volunteer Li Su-ping (李素萍), who works for the immigration bureau, came to the venue with two of her colleagues, Sachiko Kamo and Patorishia Kan. Kamo said that she had heard Li describe Tzu Chi activities before and was glad she had come to experience it. Her job at the distribution was serving food to the homeless. She said that seeing Tzu Chi volunteers' interactions with the homeless had inspired her to care for others more. Kan was also touched by what she had witnessed. She shared that she had long wanted to give back to society and that she hoped to attend the event again in the future.

Xiao Nan (肖楠), from China, began working in Japan after finishing her studies here. She had heard about Tzu Chi from her family in China and had visited the Tzu Chi Japan branch office a month earlier. At the invitation of Tzu Chi volunteers, she came and served at this event.

Her day job is normally quite stressful, so she had been worried that coming to volunteer

instead of resting at home would make her even more exhausted. To her surprise, just the opposite happened. "Helping others brings a joy that is quite a different experience to me." She said she would take the positive energy she gained from volunteering at the event back to her workplace, and in the future she would do what she could to give back to society.

It was also the first time that Kaoru Hanada, a business owner, volunteered at the event. He was in charge of guiding people into the waiting line. Because of his wife, Jian Mei-li (簡美莉), who was from Taiwan, Hanada was very supportive of Tzu Chi activities.

He feels that Japan needs more caring and giving groups like Tzu Chi, and he was happy and grateful to have a chance like this to contribute. "An old man like me should still try to do meaningful things, like this one," he said.

Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 had been shot down on July 17, just a few days earlier, so the volunteers asked everyone to pray for the victims. The volunteers also encouraged the homeless to

call their families, who would be happy to hear from them and to know that they were okay.

On this day, over 170 people came for the hot food. Volunteers also distributed towels made from recycled PET bottles to the homeless.

Bolivia

Continuous heavy rains early this year devastated Bolivia. Low-lying Beni Department suffered the heaviest damage. Tzu Chi volunteers from the city of Santa Cruz visited Trinidad, Beni, twice to inspect the damage. Based on their assessment, they decided to hold an aid distribution on June 1.

A team of volunteers from Argentina and Chile arrived in Bolivia on May 29. Along with local volunteers, they packed medical kits, one of the aid items to be distributed.

On the evening of May 30, 27 volunteers embarked on a ten-hour bus journey from Santa Cruz to Trinidad. They reached Gran Mamoré Stadium, the event venue, at seven the next morning and began to set things up for the distribution.

Aid recipients cheerfully carried their goods back home from a Tzu Chi disaster relief distribution for flood victims, held in Trinidad, Bolivia, on June 1.





Scholarship recipients and their families assembled at the Tzu Chi branch office in New Jersey to receive college scholarships.

Thanks to the help of over 200 government workers, soldiers, and flood victims, six truckloads of relief goods—including rice, cooking oil, sugar and pasta—had already been packed.

On June 1, the stadium bustled with aid recipients. Many people held up posters they had made to thank the Tzu Chi volunteers. Volunteers respectfully handed the supplies over to victims, along with their best wishes. Three thousand families, or 11,000 people, benefited from the distribution.

One recipient, Edward Rodriguez, was very grateful for the goods his family had received. There were twelve people in his family, and he had a 12-year-old daughter who could not move around easily because of an illness. “Thanks to Tzu Chi for helping so many people and making our lives easier.”

Four volunteer doctors were on hand to help out at the event and take care of minor discomforts. For example, one of the aid recipients felt unwell because of high blood pressure. Gao Zhong-cheng (高忠成), a Chinese medicine doctor, gave her acupuncture treatment. Another patient had a stiff and sore neck and shoulder and could not raise her arm very high. After Dr. Cai Ming-ming (蔡銘明) treated her with acupuncture, she felt great relief. Amazed, she encouraged other people to try the treatment.

It was a cloudy day, but the smiles on the victims’ faces as they carried their goods home lit up the hearts of the Tzu Chi volunteers.

USA

The Tzu Chi New Jersey branch established a scholarship in 1998 to assist needy high school graduates with a GPA of at least 3.0 to pay for a college education. The program was expanded in 2014 to include students attending special schools as well. In January, the branch sent out application forms to 390 prospective candidates, 86 of whom submitted their applications to Tzu Chi by March. Volunteers reviewed their information, visited their homes, interviewed them, and examined their needs to assess their qualifications before choosing this year’s 25 recipients.

On June 14, 18 of the recipients, from various parts of New Jersey and as far as Delaware and Philadelphia, arrived at the Tzu Chi office to receive the scholarship awards. The other seven students did not attend in person because they lived too far away or were otherwise engaged.

Going to college is a dream come true and an exciting event for many young people, but it can be a real financial nightmare for poor students. Economic hardship has forced many companies to curtail or scrap their academic scholarships. The federal government also has reduced its financial assistance to students. Therefore, many high school graduates try to get as many scholarships as they can to reduce their burden.

A Tzu Chi scholarship of US\$1,000 might not seem like much given the high cost of a college education, but the money came from donations from all sectors of society. With so much love

behind the scholarship money, the recipients might feel more encouraged and blessed as they pursue their education and dreams.

Brea Brown, one of the recipients, volunteered at school and in her community in her free time. She will start attending Rutgers University in the fall of 2014. Brown was happy to learn that there was a Tzu Chi Collegiate Association chapter at the university. She said that she would become a member of the club. She would like to do her part to help others and contribute to society.

Kaitlin Peltz came with her father to receive her scholarship. After watching a video clip on Tzu Chi, Mr. Peltz thanked the foundation for helping victims of Hurricane Sandy. He was also amazed by the huge combined power of the volunteers in Tzu Chi.

Ashley Mogle, of Delaware, came with her parents and two sisters. She and her mother said that the event had been an education for them. They would read more about Tzu Chi on the Internet and tell their friends and relatives about the foundation and the good that it has done.

Canada

A ten-acre farm in Richmond, British Columbia, has over 10,000 blueberry shrubs that are over 70 years old. They produced many tasty blueberries this year. Zhuang Hua-ren (莊華仁) and his wife, the owners, are devout Buddhists. They told local Tzu Chi volunteers that they would donate the blueberries on five acres of their farm to Tzu Chi to help the foundation carry out its missions.

To take up their generous offer, volunteers needed hands to pick and pack the fruit, solicit orders, and deliver the goods. They called for help, and many people responded. The picking started on June 21. To ensure consistency in quality, volunteers also sorted the berries. Then they weighed the fruit and gingerly packed it into boxes.

The farm has flourished because of Zhuang’s hard work. He prunes and waters the plants, pulls weeds, fertilizes, and does everything else necessary for his shrubs to thrive.

“All the blueberries here are organic. That’s beneficial for health,” observed volunteer Lin Pei-lin (林培霖). He said that he had not been into

Farm owner Zhuang Hua-ren cheerfully gave away five acres of blueberries in Richmond, British Columbia, to Tzu Chi.

farming much, a quarter-time farmer at best, but he and his wife had come to Zhuang’s farm every day for the previous three weeks. The tan they’d developed made them look like real farmers.

Chen Xiu-lian (陳秀蓮) had come to help for a week. “I pick all that is within my reach,” she said. She did not want the fruit to become over-ripe, fall to the ground, and be wasted. That would be a terrible thing and would let Mr. Zhuang down.

Volunteer Weng Zhen-lun (翁振倫) said that he was grateful to the Zhuangs for allowing them to pick the fruit, the labor of their love, and for providing them with baskets to put the berries in during picking. He had received orders for more than 2,000 pounds. “I work on the farm until six in the evening, and then I deliver the fruit in top form to people in Richmond and Vancouver.”

Volunteer Zhuang Wei-qing (莊惟晴) was another regular. “So many people have helped out in this endeavor. Some placed orders, some picked and sorted the fruit, while others prepared meals and delivered snacks to us.” All of that made her feel very warm inside. Even though sometimes she felt tired and would have liked to skip a day, the steady flow of orders kept her going.

Barely four weeks into the endeavor, the volunteers have fetched C\$20,000 (US\$18,300) from charity sales.

Myanmar

Basic Education Primary School Htaw Twun is located in Thanlyin, an hour’s drive from Yangon. Children from kindergarten to third grade receive their lessons in a single, old classroom. The teachers all talk at the same time, so they raise their voices in the hope that their own students might better hear them over the sounds of other teach-





ZENG YU-HUA

Tzu Chi is building new classrooms for Basic Education Primary School Htaw Twun in Thanlyin, Myanmar.

ers’ competing instructions. Thus the teachers are often hoarse at the end of a school day.

That’s not the only problem the school faces. Over the years the elements have aged the school building, which is also infested with termites, but local residents are powerless to improve the situation. Many farming families there can barely afford to send their children to school, let alone keep the school in better repair.

Fortunately, the problems will be solved in September.

Tzu Chi built three large schools in Myanmar after Cyclone Nargis hit in 2008, and volunteers continued to help needy people in the country by distributing goods and conducting other charity work. In 2010 volunteers distributed rice seeds in Thanlyin. In the process, they noticed the rundown buildings at local schools. After visiting 35 schools, they decided to build new classrooms for 12 schools in the town.

Construction commenced in March 2014. All buildings feature steel frames and green build-

ing materials. The first school is scheduled to be completed in September.

Erecting buildings in this rural town has been a challenge in many ways, including transportation of the necessary materials and equipment and the lack of skilled labor. A group of skilled workers from Taiwan came to help with the construction. They were Burmese of Chinese descent who had earlier immigrated to Taiwan. They joined the project because they wanted to do something for their home country.

The local community has been heavily involved as well. Villagers work on the project as a way to earn money and to contribute to an endeavor that benefits the whole community.

“The school buildings that Tzu Chi is giving us have been built with materials and quality seen only at very large construction projects in Yangon,” said U Myint Khine, a carpenter who has two children in primary school. “This is a project that is going to benefit us for several generations.”



Directory of Tzu Chi Offices Worldwide

TAIWAN

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Tel: 886-3-8266779
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Tzu Chi Humanitarian Center
Tel: 886-2-28989000
Fax: 886-2-28989920

ARGENTINA
Tel: 54-11-48625770
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AUSTRALIA

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

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

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

Perth
Tel/Fax: 61-8-92278228

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

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

BRUNEI
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CANADA

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

Toronto
Tel: 1-905-9471182
Fax: 1-905-9474655

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

DOMINICAN REP.
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EL SALVADOR
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FRANCE
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Fax: 33-1-45862540

GERMANY
Tel: 49-40-336806
Fax: 49-40-32027870

GREAT BRITAIN

Tel: 44-20-88689691
Fax: 44-20-89334262

GUATEMALA
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Fax: 502-23675872

HONG KONG

Tel: 852-28937166
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INDONESIA
Tel: 62-21-5055999
Fax: 62-21-5055699

JAPAN

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Fax: 81-3-32035674

JORDAN

Tel/Fax: 962-6-5817305

LESOTHO

Tel: 266-22321823
Fax: 266-22321877

MALAYSIA

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

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

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

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

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

MEXICO

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

NETHERLANDS
Tel: 31-629-577511

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

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

PHILIPPINES
Tel/Fax: 63-2-7320001

SINGAPORE
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Fax: 65-65829952

SOUTH AFRICA

Cape Town
Tel: 27-21-9137082
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*To win the hearts of others and always be welcomed,
we must be cautious of our tone of voice and facial
expression.*

—Master Cheng Yen

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