

慈濟

# Tzu Chi

Buddhism in Action

Tzu Chi Recycling  
Volunteers



January 2019

# Let Your Every Second Count

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

I set off from the Jing Si Abode in Hualien, eastern Taiwan, on November 12, 2018, to confer certifications on new volunteers from 24 countries and to preside over the first round of our year-end blessing ceremonies in various places in Taiwan. I returned to Hualien on December 9. During those 28 days, I also met with many senior volunteers. Though some were healthy and fit despite their age, some were showing signs of old age and were afflicted with aches and ailments. Looking at them, I felt a mix of joy and sorrow. Such is life. We can't defy the changes time may bring. It is all the more reason we must endeavor not to let our time slip by in vain while we're still able to give. That's why I urged everyone during the blessing ceremonies to make the most of every second and create a meaningful life. As long as we're still able to move or talk, we must put those abilities to good use and not leave the pages of our lives blank.

I also met many recycling volunteers during my trip. Many of them are also advanced in years. Some have to wear back braces when they work, but they are determined not to let their aches and pains get in the way of their volunteering. They told me that they were now just 20, 30, or 40 years old, after depositing 50 years of their age in my age treasury. [An "age treasury" is an idea developed by the Master, in which older people can deposit 50 years of their age, leaving them that much younger at heart.] These older volunteers have such implicit faith in me. They believe in my teachings and dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to caring for the Earth by reclaiming reusable resources. They feel fulfilled knowing that the plastic bottles they have helped sort and recycle have been made into blankets and distributed to needy people around the world. Contributing to a good cause makes them feel that their lives have great value.

The fruits of our recycling volunteers' efforts have been showcased internationally. Recently, a group of Tzu Chi representatives attended the 2018 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Katowice, Poland. Lin Ming-nan (林名男), vice superintendent of Da Lin Tzu Chi Hospital, southern Taiwan, was a member of the Tzu Chi delegation. While in Katowice, he shared with people from different organizations that what he was wear-

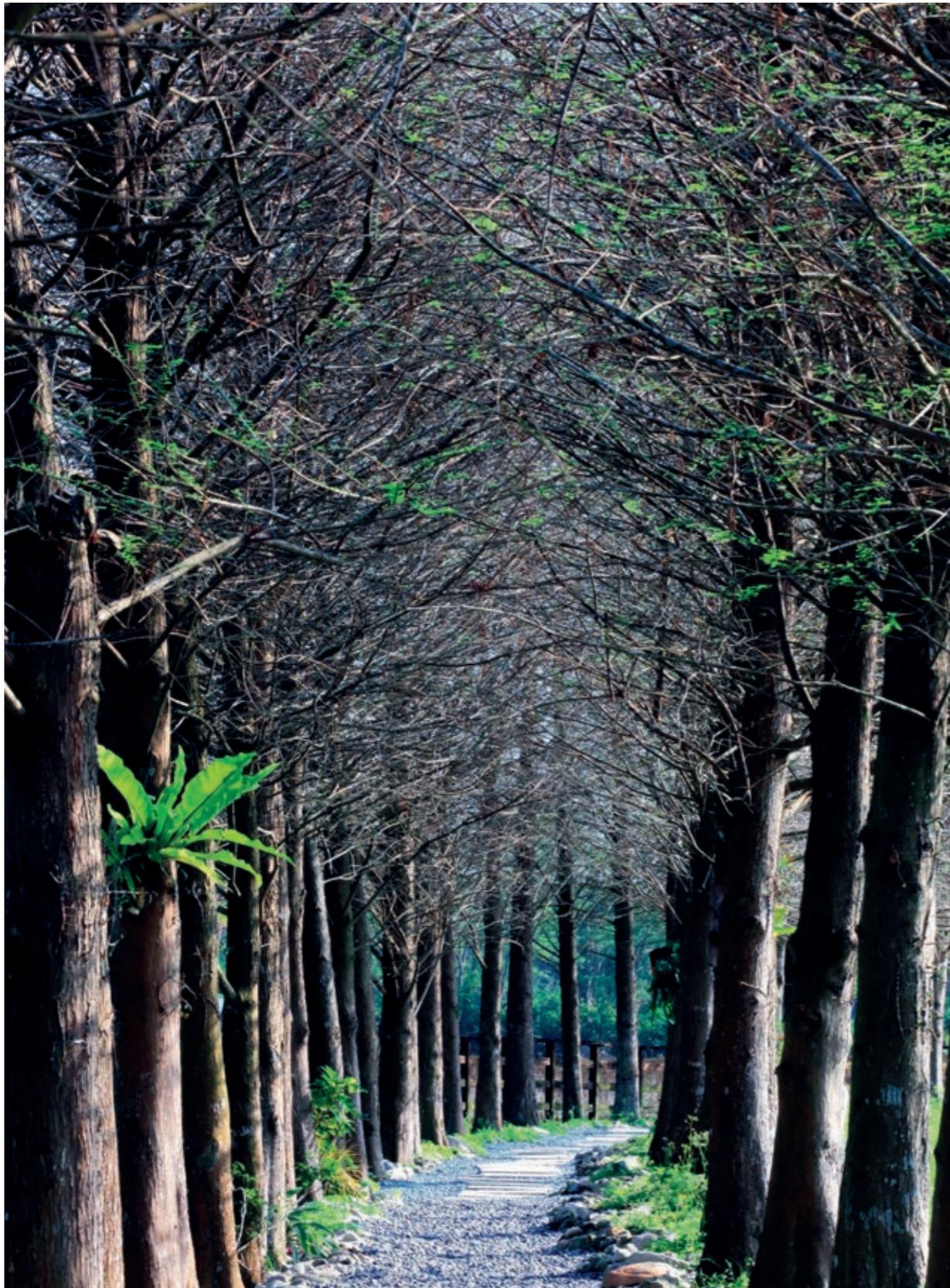
ing, from top to bottom, was made entirely from recycled plastic bottles. He explained that over the years, materials recycled by our volunteers have been developed into many kinds of products.

Besides our recycling efforts, Lin also shared with people how eating vegetarian can help mitigate climate change. According to statistics from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, over 2,000 animals are killed every second for human consumption. This means that more than 180 million animals are slaughtered every day for food. It's hard to conceptualize the amount of land, water, and feed needed to raise such an enormous number of animals, not to mention all the pollution resulting from the process. It is no wonder experts have recommended a vegetarian diet as the easiest way to protect the Earth.

All creatures want to live, just like people. And just like people, animals feel fear and hatred when they are killed. Arguably the most intelligent of all animals, we humans should protect all lives, instead of killing and eating defenseless animals for our gastronomic satisfaction. Life is precious and ought to be respected. I urge everyone to respect all lives and not cause lives to be lost just to satisfy our cravings for meat.

Evidence presented in United Nations-related conferences and from the scientific community has clearly shown that if we don't make eco-friendly changes in our lifestyles, we'll witness even more severe and extreme climate events. Irregular climate conditions have already caused a lot of suffering in the world. We must awaken to their alarming messages and change our mindsets and lifestyles accordingly before we plunge the entire Earth into crisis.

I sincerely hope that people around the world recognize the need to improve global environmental conditions and, even more importantly, take action to make those changes happen. Besides making lifestyle changes such as switching to a vegetarian diet, we must love and respect all people and creatures and harbor gratitude toward everyone and everything. When we can form good affinities with others and encourage one another to do good and sow blessings for humankind, we will together create a peaceful world. ❀



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# Tzu Chi

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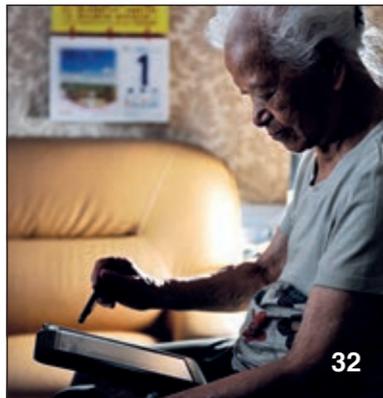


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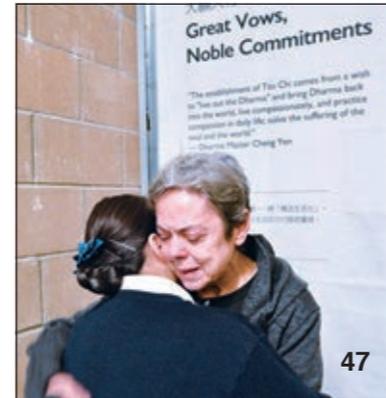


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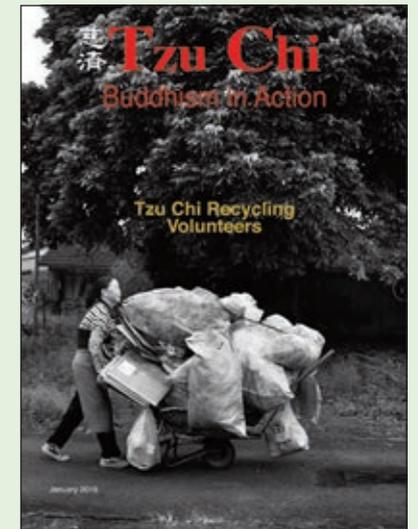


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The *Tzu Chi Bimonthly* welcomes contributions of personal experiences or reports of Tzu Chi activities. We also welcome letters to the editor containing personal comments or opinions on matters of interest in the Tzu Chi world. We reserve the right 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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# Rohingya Refugees in Kuala Lumpur

Text and photos by Lee Mun Keat  
Abridged and translated by Tang Yau-yang  
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Madrasah Hashimiah, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, is a school for refugee children that Tzu Chi helps fund. Most students at the school are Rohingya from Myanmar. For more than ten years, Tzu Chi volunteers in Malaysia have been helping Rohingya refugees that have escaped persecution in Myanmar and settled in Malaysia.



*At 7:00 one morning, refugees of various nationalities wait outside the Tzu Chi Free Clinic on Pudu Road, Kuala Lumpur, for its opening at eight.*

HSIAO YIU-HWA

I work for the Kuala Lumpur and Selangor branch office of Tzu Chi Malaysia, where I have dealt with refugee matters for 12 years.

Refugees in Malaysia face many difficulties. Their children cannot attend regular schools, and, without permits to work legally, they are often exploited. They have no choice but to do “3D jobs”: difficult, dangerous, and dirty, the three dimensions of refugees’ work. One might also add a fourth dimension: diminutive—in salary. As a result, refugees are generally malnourished, and when they fall ill, they often suffer through it without seeking medical care because they can’t afford it. They also avoid seeing a doctor because they are afraid of getting caught by the police.

They really need all the help they can get.

### Refugee stories

Early one morning, people formed a line in front of a building on Pudu Road, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. They were waiting for the Buddhist Tzu Chi Free Clinic to open for the day. Though there were refugees from the Middle East, Central Asia, South Asia, and Africa, most were from Myanmar.

Mohd Hanif Bin Mohamed, a 21-year-old staffer at the clinic, began to distribute numbers to people in the waiting line. The crowd pushed forward and there was quite a stir. The stocky Hanif, however, handled the situation with ease and a smile. He is fluent in English, Malay, Burmese, and Rohingya, and so he had no problems communicating with the waiting patients.



*Tzu Chi volunteers once paid monthly visits to this detention facility in Bukit Jalil, a suburb of Kuala Lumpur, to provide medical care to refugees who were locked up there.*



*Many Rohingya refugees rent units in this apartment building in Ampang, Kuala Lumpur. Their rents are collected by people who don't even own this property—it has long been deserted.*

The clinic is open six days a week, closed only on Saturdays. On average, 150 patients a day are treated there. Six refugees from Myanmar, Afghanistan, and Pakistan work there translating, checking in patients, assisting physicians, and doing whatever administrative work is necessary to keep the clinic running smoothly. The clinic offers a variety of services, including family medicine, dentistry, physical therapy, psychotherapy, AIDS screening and prevention, and traditional Chinese medicine.

Hanif came with his parents to Malaysia from Myanmar when he was eight years old. They were Rohingya refugees. His father supported the fam-

ily of eight by scavenging garbage to sell. Hanif studied in a UNHCR Tzu Chi Education Centre where he completed his elementary education at the age of 16. After that he worked picking through garbage to help support his large family, which continued to struggle to subsist.

Hanif’s life started to change for the better at the age of 19, when he started working for the Tzu Chi Free Clinic as a translator. His regular income has since enabled him to adequately feed his family.

He is not resentful when he looks back on the tough times before. He is instead grateful that he has gotten involved with Tzu Chi. A stable job

that pays regularly has helped make the lives of his family easier. Now they live not in despair but in hope.

When asked about his native land, Hanif says he has only vague memories of Myanmar. Though he never actually witnessed any military battles when he was there, he feels hurt when thinking of his home country, like an overhanging shadow over his heart. The feeling is probably the result of having listened to discussions of horror stories among his family and friends over a long period of time as he was growing up.

To Hanif, Myanmar seems far removed—in time, in space, and in emotional connections—and he has no intention of returning. His greatest wish is that he and his fellow Rohingya will one day be accepted in Malaysia so that they may have access to education, medical care, and employment.

Many other Rohingya refugees in the country share that wish. Live in a place long enough, and it grows on you and becomes home. The birthplace or homeland fades with time further and further into the retreating past.

Mohd Rafiq, about 40, is another Rohingya who has sought refuge in Malaysia, where he has lived for more than a decade. In Malaysia, he once worked for the United Nations as an interpreter. He got paid only when he worked. It was better than nothing, but his pay was unpredictable, which was hard on his family. Eventually, he got hired as an English and mathematics teacher at a UNHCR Tzu Chi Education Centre. A steady income has replaced the unpredictable, fluctuating pay, so he has been able to better provide for his family. He, his wife, and their son now have a place to live, courtesy of the education center.

Unprompted, Mohd Rafiq told me a story about an illegal foray into Singapore.

Though now settled in Malaysia, he told me that he had initially come here only as a staging area for his final push to sneak into Singapore, his real destination. He worked in Johor Bahru, the capital of the state of Johor, Malaysia, waiting for his chance to slip into Singapore. He worked and waited in Johor Bahru for several years.

One day, the wait was finally over. He and others were arranged to hide in a factory in an industrial park, where they stayed for a few days. Then very late one night, they were loaded into a vehicle and driven through pitch-dark jungles and swamps. When they finally arrived, they were transferred to a sampan. On board were already a dozen people from Vietnam, Sri Lanka, and China.

The boatman ordered them to go to the lowest level of the skiff and hide. It was such a tight space they had to embrace the next person for all to fit in. It was undoubtedly too close for comfort—there was no escaping body odors, no escaping heavy breaths. Though uncomfortable and constrained, they uttered not a sound. The vessel pushed on for nobody knew how long, sometimes fast, sometimes slower, as the hull cut through the waves.

They eventually arrived at a shore and could finally leave the cramped space. Once on dry land, everyone followed a man and ran frantically into a building that looked like a factory. They spent several days in hiding before being loaded onto a truck, driven some distance away, and dumped on a street somewhere. They were on their own now in Singapore.

The UNHCR and Tzu Chi jointly host an annual athletic event for Madrasah Hashimiah, Unity School, and Harmony School—schools for refugees.



Mohd Rafiq tried to blend in with Singaporean crowds, and he watched out for signs of danger for illegals. He asked for work at many places, but no one wanted to hire him. Though he saw many foreign laborers from South Asia around, the streets in Singapore didn't feel as free to him as those in Malaysia. Two weeks after he landed in Singapore—two weeks of fear, anxiety, hunger, and sleeping on the streets—he turned himself in to the police.

He was held in custody for a month, then given 50 Singapore dollars (US\$36), put on a boat along with others who had been in custody in the same place as he, and repatriated to a seaport in southern Myanmar.

Not long after that, he was back in Malaysia. Loose border control and rampant human smuggling groups made it easy to cross into Malaysia. Besides, Malaysia is a Muslim-majority nation, and much more likely to accept Muslim refugees like Mohd Rafiq and his people. That is why many Rohingya end up there.

To serve refugees, including the Rohingya, Tzu Chi started offering monthly free clinics on Imbi Road, Kuala Lumpur, in 2006. Many refugees worked and lived in that area. The services there

“The clinic has always been packed with patients,” Foo explained. “Many refugees who seek help here have chronic conditions, which, if not treated in a timely manner, will deteriorate.”

To ensure that patients suffering chronic diseases get timely and proper care at the clinic, Foo has promoted a system for patients to make follow-up appointments to see clinic physicians in the future. These follow-up appointments help physicians track and manage their patients more easily.

Foo said that due to their status as refugees, their strained financial situation, and their lack of health knowledge, refugees often avoid seeing the doctor even when they are unwell. This hesitancy gives their condition a chance to deteriorate unhindered. “I was once very small-minded,” Foo said. “I just wanted to work in a private hospital and make bundles of money. Now my mind has turned the corner on money. I told myself there was no need to make all that money and that my time would be better spent at the free clinic, for which I could chart a course to provide better services to more needy people. That would be a more meaningful use of my time.”

*A Rohingya refugee (above) works at the Selayang Wet Market. The red advertisement signs (below) at this popular gathering place for refugees and foreign laborers, located near Petaling Street, a Chinatown in Kuala Lumpur, show that Kuala Lumpur is a multiracial, cosmopolitan city.*

only came to an end in 2010 when volunteers obtained permission for the Tzu Chi Free Clinic located on Pudu Road, which had been established to provide medical services to the needy in Malaysia, to provide care for refugees as well. Tzu Chi also once provided on-site medical care at refugee detention facilities and provided a referral service for cases that needed special medical care. With all these efforts, volunteers have hoped to help ease refugees' lives in a foreign land.

#### Free clinic

Dr. Foo Seay Liang (符之良) went to Chung Shan Medical University in Taiwan for a medical education more than 20 years ago. Afterwards he returned to his native Malaysia and practiced medicine as a general practitioner. In early 2013, he started volunteering regularly at the Tzu Chi Free Clinic and got to work with refugees firsthand. He saw many suffering from chronic diseases. He felt that more comprehensive care should be planned and offered to those patients, so he quit his well-paid job and became the director and a physician at the Tzu Chi clinic in 2015.

Because it is partly funded by the UNHCR, the clinic needs to comply with the rules that have come with the money. The UNHCR requires that the clinic provide services in psychological counseling as well as the usual clinical services. Under the unrelenting stress of life every day, be it the struggle to put food on the table or the fear of running afoul of immigration officials, many refugees have become psychologically unwell more than physically unwell. Therefore, psychological counseling has been an important part of the collaboration between the Tzu Chi Free Clinic and the UNHCR.

“Among the people we serve, patients from the Middle East are generally better educated,” said Ong Se Woon (黃詩筠), a psychotherapist at the clinic. “Afghans are generally more circumspect, and they know how to get better treatment for themselves. Chins from Myanmar help each other out; they tend to be less uptight and tend not to take things too seriously. Rohingya people, on the other hand, are less expressive of their emotions and are shy to talk about some of their experiences. We have to be empathetic when dealing with refugees from





*Refugees get dental care at the Tzu Chi Free Clinic in Kuala Lumpur (opposite). Dr. Foo Seay Liang (right) is the director of the Tzu Chi Free Clinic. After earning his medical degree in Taiwan, he returned to Malaysia where he later quit a well-paid job to take his current position.*



different countries. We try to put ourselves in their shoes when listening to their problems and try to put things in perspective for them.”

Ong pointed out that Rohingya refugees talk to her about gang rapes and sexual assaults more than anything else, while Taliban females are often confronted with problems related to underage marriage.

“By listening intently as they talk to me, I help them release the blues that they have bottled up for so long,” Ong said. “I use sincerity and smiles to make up for the language barrier.”

Their homes were destroyed in military conflicts; they fled their countries; they endured hardships and fears during their escape; as refugees, they face risks of being exploited, abused, or sexually assaulted. Ong knows the challenges refugees face, so she also has established an appointment mechanism for patients to schedule intensive and regular psychotherapy sessions for their emotional or mental issues.

### Education

The UNHCR signed a memorandum of understanding in 2007 with Tzu Chi, making the latter an implementing partner in the Community-Based Literacy and Numeracy Program. As such, Tzu Chi volunteers were to visit Rohingya refugees and other peoples of the Islamic faith from Myanmar in some areas of Kuala Lumpur and formulate a plan to provide education in basic reading, speaking, listening, writing, and arithmetic for refugee children. The plan was also to get a good understanding of the situation and needs of refugees. In the process, Tzu Chi volunteers found that of the Myanmar refugees in Malaysia, the Chin and Kachin peoples had received more assistance than the Rohingya people. Rohingya and other peoples of the Islamic faith from Myanmar may worship and celebrate Islamic festivals with local Malay people in the same mosques, and assimilate more easily into the local communities because of their shared religion, but Malay aid organizations rarely

extended help to the Muslim refugees. This was a group that could use some help from the Tzu Chi and UNHCR collaboration project.

Four Rohingya communities were selected in which to establish UNHCR Tzu Chi Education Centres. The initial intention was for Tzu Chi to help the Rohingya independently run these schools themselves, but that turned out to be a goal too difficult for the Rohingya to achieve. The operation of two of these schools was later transferred to local Islamic organizations, and the remaining two schools—Harmony School in Selayang and Unity School in Ampang—have been run entirely by Tzu Chi.

Outside of that arrangement entirely and without any UNHCR funding, Tzu Chi started funding Madrasah Hashimiah in 2004. (A madrasah is a school, particularly for Islamic religious instruction.) Being a religious school, it does not qualify for UNHCR funding, and Tzu Chi does not get involved with its operations except for providing the funding.

Ustaz Hashim Bin Kassim, the principal of the school, was once a laborer. He fled from Myanmar to Thailand in 1995 before eventually settling in Malaysia. He started out by working in the Selayang Wet Market. He saw many children of his own nationality and religious faith wandering in the streets, so he set out to teach them a code of conduct under Islam. His endeavors turned into an Islamic school for refugee children.

In 2004, Tzu Chi volunteers heard about the financial difficulties the school was facing when they were providing free medical services in the

community. That’s how Tzu Chi started providing financial aid to the school.

The madrasah currently enrolls 250 students, most of whom are Rohingya. The school instruction includes principally the Quran, though Malay, English, and arithmetic are also offered. Volunteers from the Tzu Chi Teachers Association started teaching English and Jing Si aphorisms by Master Cheng Yen at the school in 2006, an undertaking that is still ongoing after 12 years. In 2016, volunteers also started to teach Chinese at the school at three levels of proficiency: beginner, intermediate, and advanced. Arinna Tee Bee Leng (鄭美玲), a member of the Tzu Chi Teachers Association, said, “Learning another language will strengthen their chances of finding work in the future, particularly because most of their parents work for Chinese. A good command of the Chinese language will give them an edge. We teach them not just the Chinese language *per se* but impart knowledge and positive values at the same time.”

The students at Harmony School and Unity School consist mostly of Rohingya and a few Pakistanis. The former school currently enrolls 190 students, with 100 at the latter. Character education is included in these two schools too. In general, the parents of the students don’t really appreciate the significance of education. Coupled with that prob-



*Volunteer Arinna Tee Bee Leng (left) teaches a weekly class in Chinese language at Madrasah Hashimiah (left). The school hopes to provide refugee children (opposite) with a better future by offering classes in the Quran, languages, and arithmetic.*

lem is the uncertainty in refugees' lives—unstable jobs, a greater tendency to move due to changes of jobs or other factors. All of these factors manifest themselves in school in the form of high absenteeism, unsettled students, and a lack of parental involvement in their children's school life. Issues like these only add to the challenges that teachers at these schools must deal with, on top of teaching.

#### **Cash-based interventions**

"Our children can't go to school like other children, and it's so expensive to see a doctor that we simply skip medical care when we're sick," said Sahidah Begun, a Rohingya refugee. "If the Myanmar soldiers had not burned our homes and forced us to leave, we wouldn't have wanted to escape to another nation."

Sahidah just summed up the struggles that she and her fellow refugees have had to face, and she should know. She has been a refugee in Malaysia for more than 30 years. She wasn't able to have her diabetes treated because she couldn't afford the service. As a result, she had resigned herself to living with the disease and suffering the resulting pains that had sometimes disrupted her sleep. That only changed when Tzu Chi started offering free clinics. She is grateful that Tzu Chi, a Buddhist organization, is willing to provide free medical examinations and medications for Rohingya refugees, who are Muslims.

More Rohingya have settled in minor Malaysian cities in recent years. In response, the UNHCR enlisted the help of Tzu Chi volunteers in 2016 to carry out a cash-based intervention (CBI) project to help more refugees. The project aims to provide financial assistance to refugees

who have temporarily lost their income or are experiencing significant crises.

As part of the project, Tzu Chi volunteers visit the homes of refugees on lists provided by the UNHCR, fill out assessment forms, and input data into the CBI system, which calculates the amount to be given to each case. Each case is valid for three months, and renewals are made only if warranted by reassessments. If a family has a special need for medical care, education, legal consultation, or psychological care, the case will be handled separately.

On this day, volunteers went to Cheras, Kuala Lumpur, to visit a beneficiary of the CBI project. They walked up four flights of stairs in an old apartment building without an elevator. On the fourth floor lived Arsyad. He was feeble and unable to stand because his kidneys and liver had stopped functioning normally. His sister lived with him to care for his needs. She used to work and live with her husband in Ipoh, the capital city of the Malaysian state of Perak, but she moved in with Arsyad when the latter began having serious health issues two years before. She left her husband behind when she moved, but fortunately he was very understanding. After all, Arsyad was her brother and had no one else to care for him.

Arsyad told the volunteers that he had fled Rakhine State, Myanmar, more than two years before, at the height of the Rohingya persecution in his homeland. His village had not been burned down, but many Rohingya had been expelled from their homes. Arsyad was working out of town at that time, and he found himself unable to go home. That's when he decided to flee the country with friends.





*Tzu Chi volunteers help the UNHCR carry out a cash-based intervention project whereby financial aid is given to refugees who have temporarily lost their income or are experiencing significant crises.*

After he reached Kuala Lumpur, he contacted his parents, who had stayed in the village, to tell them that he was all right. He found to his relief that his parents were safe and sound. However, his village was under the control of the military, and villagers couldn't leave the village without authorization.

### **Rocky road**

About 160,000 people, of whom more than 30,000 are Chins, have registered as refugees or sought asylum in Malaysia. Chin refugees first settled there almost 20 years ago. Only Rohingya refugees have a greater presence in the country.

Not long ago I visited Mung Khat, the chairman of the Alliance of Chin Refugees, in Kuala Lumpur. He showed me a letter from the UNHCR Malaysia office which announced that the agency had decided to end the refugee status of the Chins after the last day of 2019. This news caused much consternation among Chin human rights groups.

The end of the Chin refugee designation doesn't mean the end of their plight. Quite to the contrary. Just as this statement by the Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN) indicated, "This change, if implemented, may result in many people being unfairly stripped of their refugee status and potentially returned to a country where their life is in danger."

Chin refugees are apprehensive of their return to Myanmar, where they don't know whether they will be safe or whether they will be allowed to return to their original area of residence. They fear that they will be persecuted and exploited all over again and end up in exile in Myanmar.

Refugee rights groups, including the APRRN, have urged the UNHCR to postpone the implementation of that policy.

There is no quick fix for the refugee problem, not only in Malaysia, but in many other places around the world. Amidst the clouds hanging over refugees, Tzu Chi volunteers try to bring a ray of light by providing medical care, education, and other assistance. Their efforts, though small in the grand scheme of things, have sparked a glimmer of hope in some refugees' otherwise grim and long-drawn-out struggles. ❀

# Humanitarian Aid Can't Wait

Compiled by **Tzu Chi Monthly** editorial staff

Translated by Tang Yau-yang

Photos by Hsiao Yiu-hwa

*Millions of refugees live in Jordan and Turkey, but there are only a few Tzu Chi volunteers there. Despite the limited manpower, the volunteers are doing everything they can to help.*



Since the civil war in Syria erupted in 2011, 6.5 million Syrians have fled to other countries, including 3.5 million to Turkey and 800,000 to Jordan. Though there is still no end in sight for the war, international humanitarian organizations in the last couple of years have scaled back their aid to refugee camps. The reduction of medical assistance has hit refugees the hardest.

There are currently only a few certified Tzu Chi volunteers in Jordan and Turkey. In fact, volunteers on the ground in those two countries number exactly ten—a far cry from the large populations of refugees, which number from the hundreds of thousands to the millions. Despite their low numbers, the volunteers plug on, doing the best they can to ease the suffering of people whose lives have been torn apart by the tragedy of war.

## Jordan

Chen Chiou Hwa (陳秋華), the head of Tzu Chi Jordan, said that he and the other volunteers in the country began caring for refugees in 2011. At one point, they were spread so thin they contemplated ending the aid to refugees on the border and in

**Chen Chiou Hwa comforts a child who has just received a Tzu Chi sponsored operation in Jordan.**

Amman, the national capital, so that they could redeploy their resources to focus on helping refugee children obtain medical care. But they persisted. In the end, they could not bear the thought of abandoning the refugees whom they had been helping. Tzu Chi Jordan now provides regular, long-term aid to 82 refugee families.

At the same time, they have sponsored 480 pediatric surgeries since 2016, mostly for children living in refugee camps. Since they started, they have financed operations for children suffering from physical disabilities, gastrointestinal disorders, imperforate anuses (a condition in which there is no opening where the anus should be), etc. In fact, they did more than just pay for the surgeries. In each case, volunteers made sure that the patient was well nourished before surgery, and they accompanied the family all the way to post-operative care. In some cases, they even followed up with the patients for two or three years after surgery.



**Faisal Hu and a student of El Menahil, a school for Syrian refugee children in Turkey**

possibly have done all the work there was to do. They have over the years been helped by many Syrian refugee volunteers.

Looking back, Hu said, “We’ve come from nothing to caring for 40,000 to 50,000 refugees every month now.” To advance the well-being of Syrian refugees in Turkey, Hu and his fellow volunteers have had to overcome many difficulties along the way. Sometimes, when they felt that they had come to a

dead end, they turned the corner and were miraculously able to move forward. Volunteers have also helped with the education of refugee children. In 2016, they started providing scholarships of 400 dinar (US\$565) per year per person to 29 refugee students. The program has expanded since then. In 2018, 42 more students were awarded scholarships; most of those students are from single-parent families living in a shelter for refugees. That made 71 the total number of students in this scholarship program.

All this work is organized by only seven Tzu Chi volunteers in Jordan. Chen is the key figure among them. He has been there almost every step of the way as they extend help to the needy.

Chen once competed in and taught Taekwondo. He is a 9th-degree black belt. An old injury has somewhat restricted his mobility, and being in his late 60s, he is no longer young. Still, he is immensely dedicated to carrying out Tzu Chi work in Jordan. “In Jordan, we have so few volunteers, but there is so much to do,” he said. “I want to be Master Cheng Yen’s eyes, hands, and legs, so even though it hasn’t been easy, I take on as much work as I can. The refugees really need help.”

## Turkey

Tzu Chi volunteers in Turkey distribute aid to 6,000 refugee families every month. They have also, in collaboration with the government of the Sultangazi district of Istanbul, established a school, El Menahil, for 3,000 refugee students. In addition, they have established a free clinic for refugees.

Given that there are only three certified Tzu Chi volunteers in Turkey—Faisal Hu (胡光中), who heads Tzu Chi Turkey, his wife, Zhou Ru-yi (周如意), and Yu Zi-cheng (余自成)—they couldn’t

possibly have done all the work there was to do. They have over the years been helped by many Syrian refugee volunteers.

Looking back, Hu said, “We’ve come from nothing to caring for 40,000 to 50,000 refugees every month now.” To advance the well-being of Syrian refugees in Turkey, Hu and his fellow volunteers have had to overcome many difficulties along the way. Sometimes, when they felt that they had come to a dead end, they turned the corner and were miraculously able to move forward. Hu pointed out that being able to go to school has transformed the lives of many students at El Menahil. Before, they had all but given up hope in life, but after they entered El Menahil, a government-sanctioned school, they found reason to dream again. For example, some of them want to become teachers when they grow up so that they may return to Syria to teach children who have been forced out of school by the war; some want to become architects to rebuild their country; still others want to be medical workers to help their countrymen injured in the war.

Having received help from others, the students in the school have learned to pay it forward. “Our school is full of love,” Hu said. He pointed out that after the February 6, 2018, earthquake in Hualien, Taiwan, teachers and students at the school and families that receive aid from Tzu Chi solicited donations amongst themselves to help victims of the quake. “They collected the equivalent of 12,800 American dollars—a figure that we could hardly have imagined, considering their own financial situation. One student said, ‘I’m deeply grateful to you for having always stood by us. Now that there has been a disaster in Taiwan, we’ll stand by you, too.’” [Tzu Chi is based in Taiwan.]

In a letter to Tzu Chi volunteers, one student wrote: “I thank all the Tzu Chi volunteers who have helped us. You’ve never met us, but you love us and help us without asking for anything in return. You are forever our brothers and sisters.”

Hu said that the 3,000 students represent 3,000 hopes. They will always live with the love of Tzu Chi volunteers in their hearts. ❀

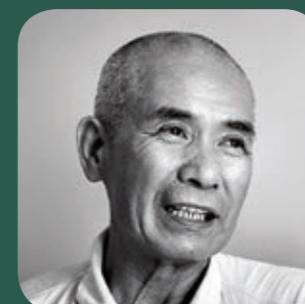
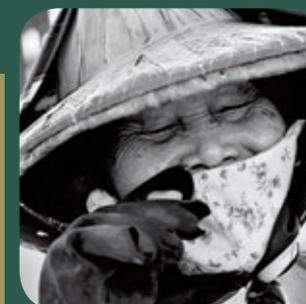


# Working for a Sustainable Earth

By Li Wei-huang

Compiled and translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Photos by Huang Xiao-zhe



Liang Bi-lian (梁碧戀), 85, lives in Nantou, central Taiwan. Every morning after breakfast, she goes to a Tzu Chi recycling station to sort recyclable garbage. She has been doing this for over 20 years. She feels it is a blessing to be able to give back to society, especially for someone her age. She helps protect the Earth by extending the usefulness of discarded things. At the same time, she feels that she is extending the usefulness of her life by contributing to the welfare of the world.

Gao A-ye (高阿葉), 84, lives in Neihu, northern Taiwan. Like Liang, she has been recycling for over two decades. With the experience she has accumulated, she can easily identify different types of plastics. She even compiles portfolios of plastic samples as a reference for people who have difficulty distinguishing the different types of plastics. Rain or shine, she recycles. She works almost all year round, even during the Chinese New Year holiday.

In Taiwan alone, there are nearly 90,000 Tzu Chi recycling volunteers like Liang and Gao, spread across nearly 9,000 recycling stations and points. Though 40 percent of these volunteers are 65 or older, a great multitude of younger people from all walks of life have joined Tzu Chi recycling work too. In response to Master Cheng Yen's call to protect the Earth by doing recycling, people roll up their sleeves and pitch in to reclaim reusable resources. They have resonated with the Master's words: "By doing recycling, we show our care for the Earth as well as for our posterity. We show our love for the Earth as well as for humankind."

Tzu Chi's recycling efforts started 28 years ago. One day in 1990, Master Cheng Yen passed street blocks littered with garbage from a night market on her way to a school to give a talk. Disconcerted by the messiness and motivated by a concern for the environment, she began calling on people to take up recycling. People responded warmly to her appeal. Just one year later, in 1991, *Global Views Monthly*, a prominent magazine in Taiwan, lauded Tzu Chi's recycling effort as "Taiwan's biggest mass movement."

#### For a cleaner world

A couple of years before Tzu Chi started promoting recycling, *Time* magazine named "Endangered Earth" as the "Planet of the Year" for 1988—a clever twist of the magazine's traditional "Person of the Year." The common human

focus on economic growth had led to indiscriminate development without regard to environmental impact, putting our planet Earth in danger. Environmental protection became an issue of increasing global concern.

As environmental protection experts like to say, "There is no real garbage—only misplaced resources." Properly sorted, what has been carelessly discarded as garbage can often be recycled into usable materials. In recent years, for example, the Tzu Chi Shuanghe Recycling Station in New Taipei City has recycled a large quantity of cassette audiotapes and videotapes. Volunteers take these tapes apart and sort the components into groups of plastic, paper, magnetic tape, and screws. Many objects are like this. Unsorted, they are just garbage; sorted, they can become reusable resources again.

Reclaimed materials get a new lease on life when they are made into new products. Tzu Chi, for example, has successfully developed fabric from recycled plastic bottles. In 2017 alone, the foundation provided over 97,000 blankets made from recycled plastic bottles for charity use around the world.

However, as far as environmental preservation is concerned, it would be considerably more efficient to reduce consumption. After all, many people are needed to painstakingly sort and prepare recyclable garbage for recycling. As volunteer Lin Xiu-chou (林秀綢), of Taipei, said, "Recycling is the last resort. Reducing the amount of waste that we produce should be the first priority in environmental protection." That's why Master Cheng Yen urges everyone to curb their desires, buy only what is needed, and cherish what they already have. At the very least, we can carry our own shopping bags and avoid using disposable plates and eating utensils.

Recycling and reducing consumption are not the only ways to protect the environment. Studies have shown that vegetarianism is healthier for our planet. The way we breed animals has long been recognized as causing many ecological problems. The livestock raised for human consumption—cows, chickens, and pigs—all need substantial amounts of food and water. They produce methane and other greenhouse gases and loads of physical waste, all of which have a negative impact on the environment. Thus, if we want to reduce the human impact on the environment, another good way is to switch to a plant-based diet.

#### Doubling as senior care centers

Thousands of Tzu Chi recycling stations and points are spread all over Taiwan. Besides serving as venues for volunteers to sort recyclables, some of them have also become senior care centers.

In 2005, Taiwan's Ministry of Health and Welfare started a program to encourage private groups to establish care centers for seniors in communities. Even before this program was launched, Tzu Chi recycling stations had to some extent acted as daycare centers for seniors. Instead of sitting idly in their homes, retirees can come to a recycling station, where they sort recyclables and chat with other volunteers. Many older people have said that joining the worthy cause of recycling has rejuvenated their lives and added meaning to their old age.

In recent years, some Tzu Chi recycling stations have begun working with government agencies to officially double as community care centers for seniors. Taiwan's Ministry of the Interior announced in April 2018 that Taiwan had officially become an "aged society," as Taiwanese people aged 65 or older had hit the 14 percent mark of the population in March. As the Taiwanese government works to provide better care for the older population, Tzu Chi recycling stations may prove to be a worthy component in the network of senior care.

#### Recognition

Over the last 28 years, Tzu Chi recycling stations have become an important teaching model for recycling in Taiwan. They have even attracted many visitors from outside Taiwan to learn about recycling. Take the Neihu Recycling Station in Taipei for example. As of October 2018, it had logged over 10,000 visitors from outside Taiwan. The largest proportion of these visitors were from China and Singapore.

An article that appeared in the May 19, 2016, print edition of *The Wall Street Journal* reported: "Once dubbed Garbage Island, Taiwan has emerged as an international poster child for recycling." In addition to government efforts, the article highlighted Tzu Chi's environmental protection work. In recent years, Tzu Chi volunteers have been repeatedly invited to United

Nations-related conferences and other international occasions to share Tzu Chi's recycling experience and accomplishments. The foundation's environmental conservation work has been widely recognized.

A climate report released in October 2018 by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), an international consortium of hundreds of climate researchers convened by the UN, says that at our current rate of emissions, the planet is likely to warm by 1.5°C (2.7°F) as early as 2030. A temperature increase of 1.5°C is nothing to take lightly. As Hans-Otto Pörtner, co-chair of the IPCC Working Group II, said, "Every extra bit of warming matters, especially since warming of 1.5°C or higher increases the risks associated with long-lasting or irreversible changes, such as the loss of some ecosystems." If we go by the IPCC report, we have only 12 years to limit devastating global warming.

Thirty years ago, "Endangered Earth" appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine. Thirty years later, it remains a focus of concern. You and I, every one of us, have contributed to the declining health of the planet.

In the big picture, Tzu Chi's environmental protection efforts may seem like tiny drops in a massive ocean of global over-consumption and pollution. We can only mitigate climate change when the international community reaches a consensus to save the planet from further damage and then acts together on that consensus. If a real difference is to be made, it will take every one of us. In every one of us lies the hope of tomorrow.





### Tzu Chi Recycling Volunteers in Every Corner

From bustling cities to quiet rural villages, Tzu Chi volunteers in Taiwan collect and sort recyclables to protect Mother Earth. Similar efforts are carried out by their counterparts in 15 other countries as well.

The volunteers willingly take up the unpaid and often unsung work. Since it is their decision to pitch in and help, they utter no word of complaint when having to process soiled or smelly recyclables. They know that every

time they contribute their time and effort, they slow global warming one tiny little bit.

The daily output of garbage in our modern consumerist society is staggering—hence we can imagine the burden on the recycling volunteers. However, we can all help to ease their burden—by pitching in as volunteers or sorting our own garbage for recycling. Small actions, when combined, can play a big role in protecting the environment.





### Priceless Actions

Tzu Chi volunteers salvage a great variety of recyclable garbage. Their priority is not the proceeds, however, but the sustainability of the environment. Therefore, there is often stuff that is unwanted by most recyclers among the garbage they collect—glass bottles, plastic bags, paper containers, etc. These things

fetch pitifully little money and volunteers often need to search far and wide for recyclers willing to take them.

Because there is almost no market for these categories of recyclables, they are often treated as useless garbage. Even so, volunteers salvage them with a mind to reducing their impact on the environment. They know that if not reclaimed, these items will eventually end up in incinerators or landfills and pollute the environment.





### A Good Place for Seniors to Go

This is how a typical day at a recycling station goes: Volunteers report to the station, and, if they want, have their blood pressure taken. Then they settle down to work while listening to Master Cheng Yen's Dharma talks. During breaks, they eat snacks and have some water. When lunch time rolls around, they have meals with other volunteers at the station. After the lunch break, some stay and continue sorting recyclables or attend study group sessions; some call it a day and go home.

There are numerous categories of recyclables to sort and take apart at a station. Some work is heavy, some lighter. Older volunteers might make slower movements, but their patience and persistence are often unrivaled. Stroke patients or people whose mobility has been affected due to accidents are sometimes in the mix of volunteers at a station because they feel that recycling is good physical therapy.

After a day of physical work at a station, sleep comes easier. Another benefit is the company you get at a station, where you can make a lot of friends. Should

you fail to show up one day, your fellow volunteers phone you to check on you. Yet another bigger benefit of volunteering at a recycling station is the sense of purpose you get from participating in a good cause, which makes you cheerful. By staying active, both physically and mentally, you remain healthier and even lower your risk of becoming senile. That's why Tzu Chi recycling stations are good places for retirees to go. They have long been fulfilling roles similar to those of daycare centers for the elderly. ☺☺☺



# At One Hundred, I Still Volunteer

**Narrated by Cai Kuan**

Compiled by Ye You-hua  
Abridged and translated by Wu Hsiao-ting  
Photos by Huang Xiao-zhe

*Our bodily functions decline with age. Before I lose all those functions, I want to live as fully and meaningfully as I can so that I won't have any regrets.*

**M**y husband passed away when I was 34. Relying on my income as a midwife, I single-handedly brought up my four children. From the time when Japan ruled Taiwan (1895-1945) up to the early 1970s, Taiwanese depended on midwives to deliver babies; only in an emergency would a doctor's help be sought. A baby could come into the world at any time. When the little life decided it was time to leave its mother's warm womb, it didn't care whether it was midnight or whether a typhoon was raging. It wasn't unusual for me to hurry out of my home with my medical kit at the oddest hours. After the government launched a planned birth campaign, we midwives also began working to promote birth control.

I worked for a public health clinic. Although the prescribed retirement age was 60, you could

choose to open your own practice after you retired. My kids, who had grown up and had steady jobs by the time I reached 60, had seen what hard work was involved in my vocation, and they urged me not to work any more. Sometimes when people came to my home seeking my services, my children would tell them I was out, even though I was just upstairs. Gradually, after that happened time and again, no one came to ask for my services any more.

I thought to myself: "Maybe my kids are right. I've worked hard for so many years. It's time for me to take it easy and enjoy life."

For ten years after that I did a lot of traveling around the world with friends. Sometimes my kids took me abroad too. People envied me for having such a good life.

**Relating an interesting anecdote, Cai Kuan (蔡寬) bursts into a big smile.**





A two-volume textbook on obstetrics from Kuan's younger days

### Volunteering

One day when I was in my late 60s, my friend Jiang Jin-fa (江金發) showed me a copy of *Tzu Chi Monthly* magazine. He told me about a Buddhist nun in Hualien, eastern Taiwan, who was very committed to helping the needy. I was surprised when I heard that—in my mind, all that Buddhist monks and nuns did was chant sutras and engage in spiritual practice. Curious, I decided to go to Hualien with Jiang and some friends and visit the place where the nun and her monastic disciples lived.

While in Hualien, I saw how the nuns worked in the fields and did handiwork to support themselves. In addition to working hard for their own livelihood, they did their best to help the needy. They had even built a hospital to serve people in eastern Taiwan, a comparatively remote area where medical resources were scarce.

As I looked at the nuns, images of my past appeared vividly before my eyes. When I still worked as a midwife, I'd pay for medical supplies for destitute families. I'd even buy nutritional supplements for some new mothers because I knew their families wouldn't be able to afford them. When the new mothers, still weak from their labor, held my hand tightly in theirs and thanked me, I always answered, "Don't mention it." I knew that the newborn would only add to the financial burden of the

family. There was nothing much I could do to help them with that, so buying them the supplements was the least I could do.

I had always wanted to help the needy; now that I was retired, I didn't know how. But Tzu Chi offered me an opportunity to do that. After the trip to Hualien, I began to solicit donating members for Tzu Chi. I worked so hard on this that even in my sleep I dreamed of successfully enlisting yet another member.

I also began volunteering at Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital. I made cotton balls, prepared bandages, cared for patients

in the wards or outpatient areas, took people's blood pressure at the blood pressure station, and guided people who weren't familiar with the layout of the hospital to where they wanted to go.

It wasn't all smooth sailing though. When I first started volunteering at the hospital, a senior volunteer told us newer ones to "listen with your eyes and look with your ears." I had no idea what she was talking about, but I was too embarrassed to ask. I just told myself I'd cross that bridge when I came to it.

Soon afterwards, someone asked me to fetch a book. I readily agreed, but I came back with the wrong book. I felt so mortified. I thought, "Such a simple task and yet I managed to botch it." The more I thought about this, the worse I felt—to the extent that the thought of quitting crossed my mind.

When a volunteer learned about it, she said to me, "Such a minor hiccup and you're thinking of quitting? How can you expect to go far on this path?"

That really woke me up. I thought to myself: "Where are the aspirations that led me to join Tzu Chi? Where is my commitment to helping the needy?" I decided then to keep an open mind and not to dwell on negative thoughts. I also reminded myself to be more mindful when I volunteered so that I could avoid mistakes.

### Bonding with a care recipient

A few years after I started volunteering for Tzu Chi, four other volunteers and I visited a woman

named A-shan. We were visiting her because someone had referred her to Tzu Chi. She lived alone, shunned the world, and locked herself in her house. No one knew how she would have survived if it weren't for her neighbors, who often put food at her door.

When we arrived and knocked on her door, she refused to open the door to us. She even called us swindlers and threw things at us. We tried to visit her again a couple of times, but the same thing happened.

Kuan with her eldest son, Huang Jing-tang (黃景堂)



We were all a little scared of her and at our wits' end about how to tackle this situation, but I really felt for her and wanted to help her break free from her self-imposed prison. I lived closest to her among the five of us who visited her, so I started dropping by her place when I could. Almost every time I knocked on her door, she bawled from inside her house: "Go away, you crook!"

I would say to her, "My name is Kuan. I'm no crook. I'm just a few years older than you. I'm here to chat with you and keep you company. Let's be friends."

Every time I went to her home, I brought gifts and left them at her door. Her neighbors told me not to waste my time on her because she never talked to anyone and always thought others were out to do her harm. After a few times, however, instead of hiding inside, she would pop her head out the window to check on me.

"A-shan, I'm Kuan from Tzu Chi," I said to her. "I dropped by the other day too. I don't have any malicious intent. Would you open the door? I'll wait here."

One day, she finally opened the door. She was a woman of few words and bad-tempered. If I accidentally said something that rubbed her the wrong way, she'd ask me to leave.

It was dark inside her house. I said to her, "It's so dark inside. Let me draw the curtain aside so you can see me better." Afterwards, she quietly moved closer to me. Taking her hand in mine, I gazed at her and said, "You have such a dignified and beautiful face. I feel happy just looking at you. The sun is shining outside, and there are birds and trees. We haven't done anything bad; people won't intentionally harm us." Before leaving, I said to her, "Take care. I'll ask some volunteers to come in and put your bed in order for you." She nodded and then said goodbye to me.

With time, she grew friendlier and friendlier to me. I also got



**On a visit to a needy family, Kuan was asked by the mistress of the house to say a few encouraging words to her physically challenged son.**

to know her better. I found out that her eyes were bad and everything looked blurry to her. That's why she didn't bother to let light into her house, let alone venture outside. I also learned that her children had left her without saying goodbye, which broke her heart and led her to close herself off. All of this made her feel insecure and suspicious of everyone.

She eventually trusted me enough to let me take her outside her house. When the sun shone on us, she shielded her eyes, unaccustomed to the brightness. "It's okay," I said to her. "Your eyes will adjust to the light. Just stand here a little while." When her eyes had adjusted, we took a little stroll outside her house while I told her some interesting anecdotes from my days as a midwife. When we were back in her house, I said to her,

"Now you have me. You can tell me everything. Don't bottle yourself up."

I kept her company for around three years. We became like sisters to each other. She would even go outside on her own and sun herself. Later, I moved away from that area to live with my eldest son and his family, and she died soon afterwards.

#### **Learning to use a tablet computer**

When I was 93, Master Cheng Yen decided to save on paper by changing from paper donation booklets to digital tablets to record the donations we collected every month from our donating members. I had never used a computer before, not to mention a tablet, so when other volunteers invited me to go with them to learn how to use one, I balked. Sister Mei-xiang (梅香) said to me, "Don't worry, it's easy. It just takes some learning."

Every one of us received a tablet when we went to learn how to use it. I was completely lost

during the class. The instructor used a lot of computer terms I had never heard before, and it was all gibberish to me. After I got home from the class and fumbled with the tablet some more, I decided that the thing was beyond me and went to return it to the Tzu Chi sister from whom I had received it.

The Tzu Chi sister, however, urged me not to give up so easily and to learn some more. I could only go home with the tablet again. After three months during which I attended three more classes, I still wanted to give up. If it hadn't been for the cajoling and patient teaching of Sister Ming-luo (明絡), I'd have called it quits. In fact, she had been encouraging other older volunteers struggling with the technology by telling them, "Sister Cai Kuan is learning too and she's over 90. How can any of us throw in the towel so easily?"

Knowing that I had been used as a poster child on this gave me the impetus to keep going. I thought that if people eventually learned how to

**For ten years after she retired, Kuan (right photo, left) traveled to many countries. She volunteered actively after receiving her certification as a Tzu Chi commissioner.**

COURTESY OF CAI KUAN

use a tablet because of me, it would be a good thing, so I bit the bullet and kept at it. Even my son, then 65, learned how to use one in order to teach me. Even with that support, I kept forgetting what I had been taught. It took me a full year to finally learn the ropes.

To me, learning to use a tablet was a real challenge. Growing up during the Japanese colonial rule of Taiwan, I had received a Japanese education. I only recognized a few Chinese characters. That's why I had an especially sharp learning curve. Even with these disadvantages, I managed to learn to use a tablet in the end. I often use my example to encourage others; I say to them, "If you apply yourself and aren't above asking for help, you'll make it in the end."

### I'm not too old

I get up early every morning and go to the local Tzu Chi office to attend Master Cheng Yen's daily Dharma talk via video-conferencing. My memory has declined with age and I often forget what the Master just said a few minutes earlier. Even so, I make a point of listening to her talks and I take as many notes as I can. Even if I remember only one sentence a day, it will still do me good if I take it to heart and put it into practice.

After the talk, I go to the park to exercise until past seven. Then I return home for breakfast. Keeping regular hours is good for you. Regular exercise is important too. I stretch for half an hour and walk half an hour every day. Strong legs lead to good health. The less you walk, the weaker you become. It is a real blessing if we can stay mobile and retain the ability to take care of ourselves as we get older.

When I need to go out to volunteer, other volunteers drive by my home and pick me up. Though I feel bad about troubling them this way, they always say it's no bother at all, so I've learned not to dwell on it. I really enjoy volunteering. Should a few days go by without my receiving a single volunteer assignment, I call the volunteers in charge and ask them not to pass me by just because I'm old.

In fact, I had doubts about my capabilities when I was 70 and everyone encouraged me to become a Tzu Chi commissioner. I thought to myself, "I'm old. What do I have left to contribute?" People of my generation tend to feel a sense of uselessness when they grow older; they feel that there is nothing much more to expect from their remaining days. Some of my relatives and friends also said to me, "You're old. Go enjoy life and leave volunteering to others. It's time to take it easy."

At that time, I met Wang Shen Yue-gui (王沈月桂) [She was Master Cheng Yen's aunt who adopted the Master as her daughter]. She was four years older than me, but despite her advanced age, she still worked tirelessly for Tzu Chi. She gave me a lot of encouragement and suggested that I take part in as much volunteer work as I could. I thought, "If she can do it, I can too." Therefore, I mastered my courage and became a commissioner. I stopped feeling that one should live a life of ease and comfort when one gets old. Recalling those years when I spent a lot of time traveling for leisure, I felt that my money would have been better spent if I had donated it to help others.

I told those relatives who had encouraged me to go enjoy life that if I could lead an active life as a volunteer, it meant that I still had good health and that they should be happy for me. Besides, volunteering was good for me. I used to be reserved and introverted, but after I started volunteering, I became more outgoing and felt more energetic.

I was born in July 1919. I'm already one hundred now, but still I keep going. [For older Chinese, people are born at the age of one instead of zero]. When I serve as a hospital volunteer, I often see older people living on ventilators. There isn't much dignity living like that. I count myself very lucky that at my age I'm still fit and able enough to go around volunteering. For that I'm very grateful.

Many older volunteers often share their worries with me. They are afraid of falling ill and losing the ability to take care of themselves. I tell them illness is hard to avoid, especially when one gets older, but worrying about it won't do any good. When you become sick, just go to the doctor. My advice to older people: Think positively, refrain from complaining, and lead an active lifestyle—these all translate into a healthy life.

Master Cheng Yen has recently developed the idea of an "age treasury." She encourages older people to deposit 50 years of their age in this treasury and continue to contribute to society with the mindset of a younger person. To us, this is like a shot in the arm. I myself have deposited 50 years in the treasury twice, leaving me as young as a newborn in spirit. With a shift of mindset, age stops being an impediment. There is no more thinking, "I'm old and useless."

In fact, I rarely keep track of my age. But I'm reminded of how old I am every year when my children and grandchildren hold a birthday celebration for me. Even though I have always felt fit and healthy, recently I have begun to feel the decline of my body. Food that is too hard has become a challenge for my teeth to handle, and I can no longer walk as fast and nimbly as before. However, I don't have any complaints. I'm content. I've lived to be a hundred. It is a matter of course for my physical and even mental functions to have declined. One day, I'll lose all these functions. But I'll have no regrets because I've lived a full life.

Before I lose those functions, I'll try my best to stay as healthy as I can so that I can do more to help others. For me, every second that I live is another second gained. ❀



Kuan uses her own experience of learning to use a tablet computer when she was 93 to encourage others not to be afraid of learning new things just because they are old.

# Senior-Proof the House

By Liu Xuan-yu

Translated by Tang Yau-yang

Photos by Yan Lin-zhao

*Houses not properly configured may be hazardous to seniors. Simple retrofitting to senior-proof a house is an act of goodwill and a preventive charity to its residents.*

One day the neighborhood chief of Renfu, Nangang District, Taipei, took Tzu Chi volunteers to Grandpa Zhao's house. The visitors told Zhao that they had come to see if his home needed handrails installed for safety's sake.

"You've come at exactly the right time, just when I needed you," Zhao said. "I just fell in my bathroom last week." The fall had required several stitches on his forehead. Upon hearing about the accident, volunteer Chen Shu-hua (陳淑華) went to inspect the bathroom. Zhao followed her in.

"I can't stand up from the toilet without using a stick to prop me up," Zhao said. He suffers from rheumatoid arthritis and has limited mobility.

"Let's install some handrails on the wall and by the wash basin," Chen said. "They will make things easier for you." She continued to inspect the bathroom. "You need to get in and out of the bathtub, so let's install a handrail here too. What do you think?" Chen asked Zhao. Zhao cheerfully concurred.

The volunteers also noticed that the hallway from the living room to the bedroom area was rather long and not well lit. They asked Zhao whether he wanted to put in brighter lights or have a long handrail installed in the hallway to make it safer at night.



Zhao thought for a second and declined either upgrade, because he says he stays in his room most of the time at night.

## Senior-proofing a house

In 2015, the Nangang Health Center, part of the Taipei City Government Department of Health, asked for Tzu Chi's help to make the homes of senior residents in Nangang safer. Volunteers had been regularly visiting 11 households of older people in the district, but the health center referred a hundred more families, bringing to 111 the total

number of families that the volunteers needed to survey for senior-proofing services. Most of these homes had only one inhabitant.

As a result of the volunteers' home visits, 27 households had their homes senior-proofed. Of those, seven families paid for the safety upgrades themselves and 20 were fully subsidized by Tzu Chi. This was how Tzu Chi volunteers got the opportunity to work with Zhao.

Zhao, 89, and his wife live in Taipei. Their two daughters live abroad with their own families. That made Zhao and his wife "seniors living

**A long hall without handrails or anti-slip aids is not particularly friendly to the elderly, especially at night.**

alone" in the eyes of the Taipei City government. "Seniors living alone" is the official designation of people, at least 65 years old, whose co-inhabitants are unable to care for them and with whom no lineal descendants live.

Since Zhao and his wife are considered seniors living alone, they were on the referral list that the Nangang Health Center gave to Tzu Chi for evaluation for senior proofing of residences.



**A volunteer checks the lighting while visiting the home of an elderly resident.**

Zhao felt safer at home after the handrails were installed. He had wanted to have safety handrails installed for some time, but he didn't know how to go about it. He was therefore grateful to the volunteers for their help in making him less afraid of another fall.

#### **The hazards of falls**

Falls may not seem like a big deal for some people, but they are often a matter of life and death for seniors. Statistics from Taiwan's Ministry of Health and Welfare put falls as the second leading cause of accidental death for seniors (people 65 of age or older) in Taiwan in the year 2015. One in five seniors had fallen before. Of this group, three in ten had been injured, and one in ten required hospitalization.

Most public spaces in Taiwan, including those in public transportation, have been built or retrofitted to be friendly for seniors and the disabled. However, the same cannot be said of many homes. This makes the home a place where the danger of accidents lurks.

Of the injuries that a fall may cause, a hip fracture is the most serious and hazardous. A hip fracture renders the patient immobile and bedridden, which over time weakens muscular strength, raises the risks of pneumonia and urinary tract infections, or otherwise leads the patient in a downward spiral of bodily health. A patient's financial health is likewise impacted, as medical and other related expenses mount over time. The road of recovery for a hip fracture patient is long, during which expenses snowball. These include the costs of mobility aids, hired care providers, maybe even placement in a care facility. Such expenses are all long-term outlays that quickly

add up and drain the financial resources of the patient and his or her family.

In addition, the haunting experience of a fall may scare an older person so much that he or she avoids walking or getting out of the house for fear of another fall. This leads to less social interactions, which in turn may lead to seclusion and depression.

What starts out as a bodily injury now evolves and snowballs to also impact the financial and mental health of the patient. It is therefore important to minimize the occurrence of falls for seniors, not the least of whom include seniors living alone.

It was in eastern Taiwan that Tzu Chi first started improving the safety of homes for elderly people living alone. Later, Tzu Chi social workers in northern Taiwan noticed an uptick in injuries caused by falls among seniors whom Tzu Chi volunteers visited. They explored the issue, consulted Tzu Chi physicians, and in March 2013 started offering to install three safety items in the homes of seniors living alone: night lights, anti-slip mats, and non-slip stickers. Handrails and other safety aids are offered for the mobility-impaired as well.

The volunteers have the best of intentions when they offer this service, and Tzu Chi foots the bill, but the actual installations have proved to be less than straightforward. They are undertaken only if the elderly give consent, but some seniors refuse to adopt the safety measures. They feel they can manage without the upgrades. Some seniors live in buildings that are so old and fragile that they cannot withstand the installation of the safety devices. In some cases, it is the landlords who won't go along with the installation.

#### **Unfriendly rentals**

Most senior renters living alone in cities live in buildings with multiple floors. Going up and down the stairs can be a challenge for these older residents if there are no elevators. Accidents are more likely to happen on the stairs. Why don't the seniors who live in walkups rent a friendlier place? It is often a matter of cost: Buildings with elevators often come with a higher rent.

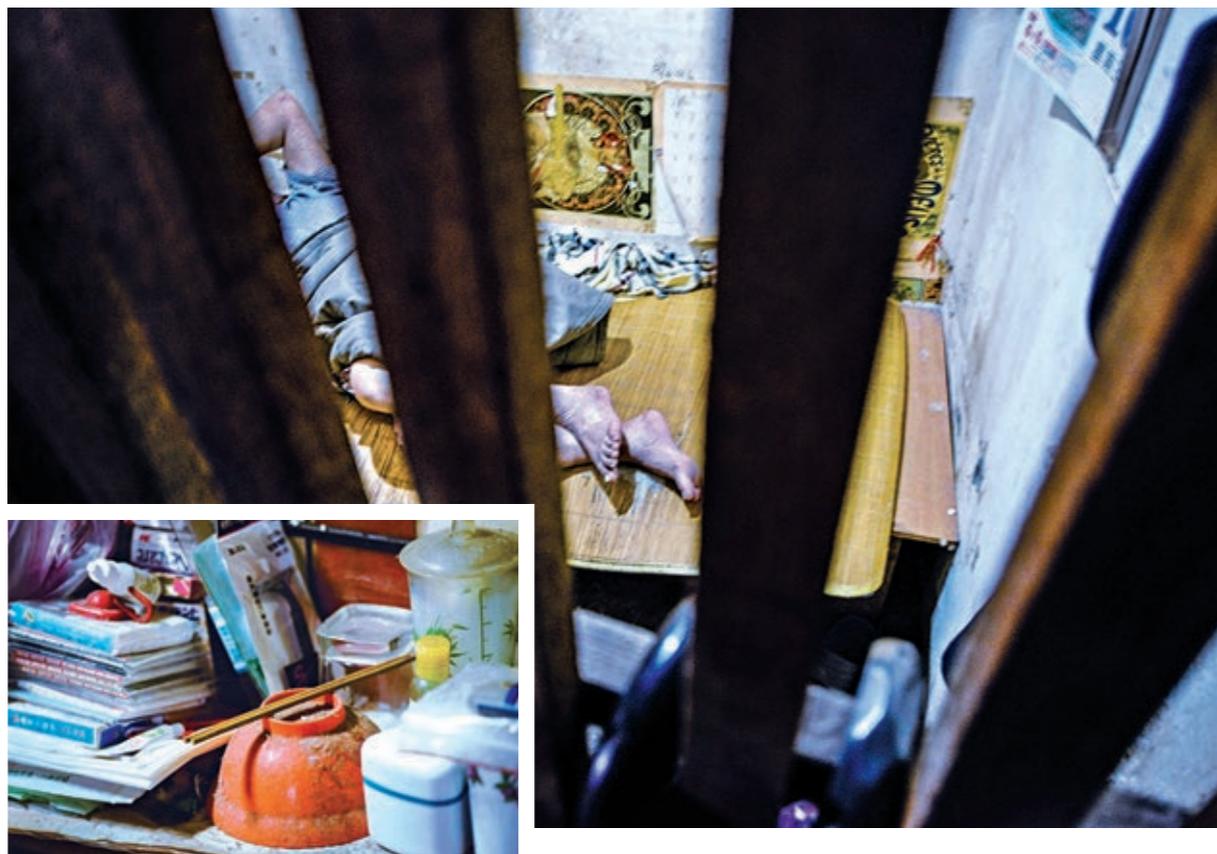
Grandpa Pan lived in an attic, accessible only by some steep, narrow stairways. He had fallen in

**With his arms resting on handrails that Tzu Chi installed in his bathroom, Zhao tells a volunteer that he also needs a handrail that is higher for him to use when he stands to urinate. He and the volunteer discuss the height of the new handrail.**

the stairwell a few times. Tzu Chi volunteers urged him to move to the ground floor, but he refused. The rent for a place on the ground floor would be higher than what he was paying, and he was getting by on a small government pension, some allowance from his son, and a Tzu Chi grant. Tzu Chi promised to increase its grant if Pan would move downstairs, which finally persuaded him to move.

Older people have long been discriminated against in the rental market. One survey pegged the percentage of landlords who did not want to rent to old people living alone at 90 percent. Facing such discrimination, older people with less means usually end up renting highly undesirable or even hazardous places. These places tend to be in older buildings in older neighborhoods.





**An infirm older person, living in a rental that does not lend itself to easy movement, has been unable to tidy up his room, leaving stuff to collect dust.**

For example, a media report in 2016 highlighted one such building in the Datong District in Taipei. This 2.5-story building had been partitioned with wooden boards into living quarters for over 20 seniors living alone. They were not eligible for public nursing homes, and they were unable to afford private nursing facilities. Consequently, they ended up in a place that could be had on the cheap.

Volunteer Chen Shun-chi (陳順池) has been helping disadvantaged seniors in the Datong District repair their homes for more than ten years. He pointed out that his tasks were rather straightforward in the early days, involving repairs for individual items like doors, windows, beds, or roofs. He and other volunteers sometimes helped seniors clean up their living quarters and surrounding areas too—all to give the elderly a sense of dignity. But the nature of his tasks has changed in recent years; his work has come to involve more comprehensive planning with a focus on safety. Whatever he does, however, Chen always carries out his projects as if he were doing them for his own family. With that, Chen observes, devises, and implements practical but beneficial

improvements for the seniors.

This building packed with more than 20 elderly residents was among the projects that Chen has worked on. “Right off the bat, I fixed eight doors,” he said. “Later, I installed handrails in bathrooms, hallways, and kitchens. Many floors were rather bumpy, so I smoothed them out. I also put in exhaust fans to improve air circulation.” Because of his efforts, the building became a more livable place for the seniors.

Besides improving the living environment, volunteers regularly visit the residents. Volunteers Chen Li-ling (陳麗鈴) and Shi Xia-lan (施夏蘭) visit the elderly every month. They bring tea and snacks, and they chat with the old folks. Sometimes they also have meals together.

Volunteers will continue to attend to the needs of older people who live alone and to make their homes safer to live in to help them have a better old age. As Taiwan becomes an aging society, the welfare of older people is an issue that demands the dedication of more resources. ❀



**Volunteers regularly visit this place packed with more than 20 elderly residents in the Datong District, Taipei. Together they have tea and snacks and chat.**

# Light After the Dust Settles

Text and photo by Hsiao Yiu-hwa  
Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting



This photo was taken in Nepal two weeks after a magnitude 7.8 earthquake rocked the nation on April 25, 2015, reducing half of the country to a disaster zone and shocking the world. The dust had by and large settled by the time I pressed the shutter for this picture, and the local people's lives were settling back to normal. The wheat in Saudol, Kathmandu Valley, had matured, and Cranga Bahadur Makaju (second from left) and his family were busily harvesting in their field.

The Makaju family was one of the many households affected by the temblor. They were, however, among the more fortunate in that only their houses were damaged—

everyone in the family was safe and sound. Some family members' homes were too damaged by the quake to be habitable, so for now all members were living in one home, sleeping under the same roof and eating at the same table.

Though the quake caused material losses and inconvenience, it had brought the close-knit family even closer. Earthquake or not, life goes on. On this day, amidst small talk and laughter, the family harvested their wheat, forgetting for the moment the hard work involved.

The entire family posed for a photo as I clicked my camera, capturing their smiles for timeless memories. ❀

# Paradise on Fire

Compiled by Lin Qi-fen  
Translated by Tang Yau-yang

*The Camp Fire raged through the town of Paradise in Butte County, northern California, in November 2018, almost wiping the town off the map. Angels emerged in the aftermath from all over to shine lights of hope for victims.*



**The Camp Fire almost destroyed the town of Paradise. Survivors were allowed to return to their homes for the first time in early December. Nothing could have adequately prepared them for the devastation that they witnessed upon their return.**

COURTESY OF TZU CHI USA

Early in the morning of November 8, 2018, a fire started in Butte County, northern California. It grew to become the deadliest and most destructive wildfire in the state's history. It was named "Camp Fire" after Camp Creek Road, its place of origin.

Soon after the fire started, residents in the eastern part of the town of Paradise were ordered to evacuate. An hour later, that order was extended to the whole town.

Skyway, the main evacuation route out of Paradise, quickly jammed up with cars as people fled in the direction of Chico, about ten miles to the west. One woman recalled that the road was so congested that a five-minute trip in normal times had taken her three hours in the big escape.

With flames spreading quickly, people were terrified. After escaping from the fire that had engulfed his home, a man in his pickup truck drove down the road. He saw a few youngsters



**The Camp Fire raged for 17 days before it was fully contained. Over 50,000 people were evacuated. Police and firefighters worked hard to save lives and put out fires.**

COURTESY OF TZU CHI USA

standing beside the road. He invited them to hop into his pickup, but they refused to board a stranger's vehicle. Fire and smoke were coming toward them. He had no choice but to leave without the teens. He floored the gas pedal in an anxious rush to escape danger and luckily made it out. But as he looked at the burns on him and his half-charred shoes, he couldn't get the youngsters who had stayed behind in the fires out of his mind.

The sudden influx of evacuees soon emptied supermarket shelves in Chico. Evacuees formed long lines at gas stations. They sheltered in churches and community centers where welcoming Chico residents cooked for them.

Shelters had their TVs on around the clock, broadcasting news about the devastating conflagration. The numbers of deaths and missing people kept rising. People shared their escape stories. Heroic acts, close calls, horrors, and deaths played out at the same time.

Information from *Tzu Chi World U.S.A.* and volunteers in the United States.

Bulletin boards in shelters were covered solid with notes about missing people and their photos. The mood was one of hope, worry, and anxiety as people waited for news of their loved ones.

#### Distribution of blankets

The deadly Camp Fire reduced most of Paradise to ashes. More than 18,000 structures were burned down, and over 50,000 people were forced to evacuate. Eighty-nine people perished in the fire.

California governor Jerry Brown said after he visited the charred area, "It looks like a war zone."

The day after the fire broke out, Tzu Chi volunteers in northern California delivered 550 blankets to three shelters. Night temperatures were often below 50 degrees, so the blankets would add a little warmth to the evacuees' sleep—and perhaps to their hearts as well. Blanket recipients held volunteer's ice-cold hands and thanked them for their warm-heartedness. After receiving a blanket, a woman asked a volunteer again and again the pronunciation and meaning of the words "Tzu Chi" printed on the blanket because she didn't want to forget the people who had brought warmth to her in the coldness of winter.

Gail Munro was not allowed to stay in a shelter because she had a pet with her, so she slept in a

car. In fact, she had slept outdoors in the cold for a whole week when she finally received a blanket at a Tzu Chi booth where she applied for aid. "You're an angel," she said tearfully to volunteer Chen Bi-hui (陳碧惠). Chen hugged her and gently soothed her.

A wildfire had occurred in Paradise ten years ago. Donna Montgomery had received a blanket from Tzu Chi volunteers back then. She said she had always covered her bed with it so she could see it every day, to remind herself of the blessings from Master Cheng Yen. Sadly, her house burned down again ten years later.

She cried as she recalled the horrible moments when fire on all sides closed in on her car. She thought she would die, but miraculously she made it through the flames and escaped. She even picked up two young men on her way out who had sustained burn injuries when they tried to help others.

In a mere ten years, Donna was hit by two big fires. People came to her aid both times. "I keep saying that the brotherhood of man still works," she said. She had seen the bright side of life. She felt good to be alive.

**Tzu Chi volunteers distributed cash cards to fire victims at the Disaster Recovery Center in Chico, California.**

JIAN GUO-AN

#### With the Feds

A Disaster Recovery Center (DRC), jointly operated by the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services and the Federal Emergency Management Agency, opened in Chico on November 16 to help Camp Fire evacuees. Long lines of people formed outside the DRC each day. There were older people, children, parents holding infants, mobility-restricted folks, and pets.

Many people came from out of town to help. Alejandra's family of seven set out from their home at five in the morning of November 21 and drove two hours to reach the DRC to offer donuts and hot tamales to people waiting in line. Alejandra pointed out that it had been her father's idea to bring food there. She said that coming to the DRC to help people in need on Thanksgiving Eve was the true spirit of Thanksgiving.

Tzu Chi volunteers were granted permission to set up a service station in the DRC, where fire victims could apply for cash cards from the foundation. Keiley Elliott was one of the people who sought help from Tzu Chi. She told volunteers about her close brush with the fires.

On that fateful day, she and some family members who lived nearby drove separately in their desperate rush to get out of harm's way. The cars on the road were moving too slowly, and fierce fires were not far behind. Her car made it to safe-



ty, but the other car containing her family—just two vehicles behind—was engulfed by the churning flames. Six family members of hers were in that car, one just three months old.

Now Keiley and 12 people in her family were living in a trailer in the parking lot of a shelter. They survived, but she had no idea what tomorrow would hold for them.

Zhang Yongxia (張永俠), another survivor, said to volunteers, “Now whenever I close my eyes, I see fire rushing toward me.” She recalled that she and her husband had rushed out of their home when the fire came, but their car had already caught on fire. Soon they were surrounded by heavy smoke when someone pulled them into a vehicle and drove away. They looked back and saw their home burning. It was the police who had saved the two of them.

Chris was another cash card applicant. A walking stick in one hand and the hand of his son in the other, he walked slowly toward the Tzu Chi service station. Volunteers at first thought that he had been injured in the fire. When they handed him a cash card in the amount of 600 U.S. dollars, based on his family size, he

**Close to a hundred volunteers raise funds in Flushing, NY, for fire victims.**

COURTESY OF TZU CHI NEW YORK



choked up. He told the volunteers that he had been unable to work for three years because of a spinal injury. He had been on welfare, and now the fire had consumed his house, gravely adding insult to injury.

He said that the cash card meant a lot to him. School would soon start, and his son would have had to go to school without any supplies were it not for the financial aid. He thanked Tzu Chi for giving them such warm assistance when they needed help. “My son and I will be strong to face the future,” he said.

Shiana Chamness, 25, looked at her two children in strollers, her eyes red with tears. Her husband had not been home when the fire made its way toward their house. In a panic, she hurriedly grabbed her kids and fled. He was still unavailable to help her when she tried to find a place to stay, nor was he there when she visited the DRC for financial aid.

Although he was not there to help her, he was always nearby—he was one of the firefighters working to bring the blaze under control. When she and her children were getting out of harm’s way, trying to find a temporary residence, and seeking assistance, he was putting out fires, looking for survivors or uncovering the dead, and helping families return to some sort of order or normalcy.

**Fires burned down the house of Donna Montgomery (right) twice in ten years. She is thankful for help that she has gotten from strangers.**

DUAN DAI-JIA

Volunteers held Shiana’s hands as they listened to her recount her story. They hoped to help her feel less alone.

After the fire, volunteers went along when some recipients went back to their homes. But sadly their homes were no more.

“Front door was right here,” Mark Price told volunteers who had followed him home, “and we had our living room, and then a wall, and then two more bedrooms.” Standing in the ruins, he added, “Life is what it throws at you. What you live through just makes you tougher.”

Mark was beginning to plan to rebuild his home. He said he had a few carpenter friends who would help out. “When times are hard, everybody helps each other out, out here.” He said that it was just like the spirit demonstrated by Tzu Chi: “The foundation helping me was great because what they stand for is giving, sharing, and helping the needy people. It’s a beautiful thing.... The compassion of people has been unbelievable.” He stated that just like Tzu Chi helping the needy, he would help other people rebuild their homes.

Firefighters fought furiously for 17 days before they fully contained the Camp Fire. Coincidentally the Woolsey Fire in Los Angeles and Ventura counties also started on November 8. It was one hundred percent contained on November 21. Tzu Chi volunteers likewise distributed blankets and cash cards to victims of that fire.

Through December 18, Tzu Chi volunteers worked 1,788 shifts to provide 5,087 blankets and 7,993 cash cards ranging from US\$500 to \$800 to fire survivors.



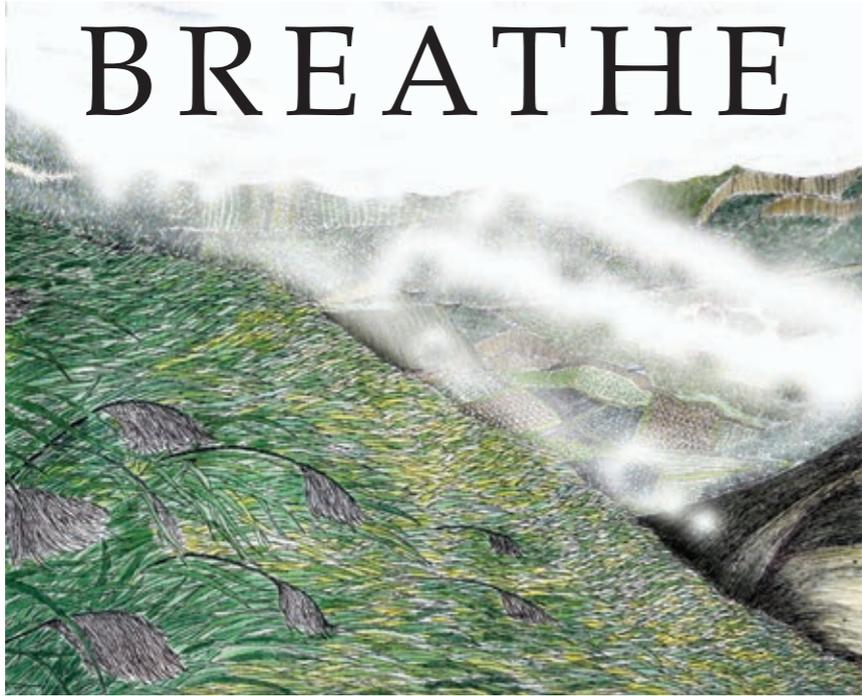
**One for one**

Tzu Chi volunteers from more than 200 locations in 20 American states took to the streets over two weekends in November to raise funds for fire victims. On November 27, many businesses and individuals participated in a “Giving Tuesday” fundraiser where the donations of individuals were matched by funds from businesses, effectively doubling their goodwill.

On November 29, the foundation kicked off another fund drive, “Hope Heals,” to recruit donors who would each sponsor one victim family of the Camp Fire. Tzu Chi planned to help 10,000 families that were impacted by the disaster.

Be Thankful That You Can

# BREATHE



By Lin Jian-de    Compiled and translated by Wu Hsiao-ting    Graphic by Su Fang-pei

People afflicted with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS, also known as Lou Gehrig's disease or motor neuron disease) endure suffering beyond imagination. An ALS victim once said that if there were 18 levels of hell, with each level more severe than the previous one, patients like him must be living on the 19th level.

Another patient had deteriorated to such an extent that he couldn't move at all. Because he couldn't breathe on his own, he was put on a ventilator via tracheotomy, which made it difficult for him to speak. His communication with the outside world was thus greatly constrained. He said in an interview, "Be thankful that you can breathe." How he must have suffered to reach such a poignant conclusion.

"Be thankful that you can breathe." This level of gratitude is something that rarely occurs to us. We often take the simple act of breathing for granted—after all, breathing requires almost no effort at all for most of us. But not everyone can breathe easily. Some can't breathe easily because of external factors. Underground coal mine workers, for example, might die from a lack of air if a mining disaster happens. Some can't breathe easi-

ly because of health reasons, for example respiratory problems.

Life can be very fragile, and death comes when you can't take in air. If you can still breathe, it means that at least you are still alive. To be alive is itself the greatest blessing. With every breath, there is new opportunity and new hope. As you breathe in and out, feel the joy of life in each breath. *Anapanasati*, a Pali word meaning "mindfulness of breathing," is a form of Buddhist meditation. Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh said, "Breathing is a means of awakening and maintaining full attention in order to...see the nature of all things, and arrive at liberation." If you practice *Anapanasati* mindfully, you will reap its benefits.

If, in doing everything in life, we can constantly return to the fact that we are breathing, if we can be content and grateful for even minor things we have, our life will be very rewarding. Try to reduce your desires to the minimum and return to the basics of life instead of constantly craving for more and more things. Use your breath as an anchor. In so doing, you will be able to feel more deeply the joy of being alive and appreciate more profoundly the gift of life. ❦

# Half the Brain, Twice the Life

Narrated by Lin Shinn-zong

Written by Tu Xin-yi

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Photos by Zeng Xiu-ying

Can you live with only half your brain? Can you still function in life? Lin Shinn-zong (林欣榮), a renowned neurosurgeon in Taiwan and the superintendent of Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital, recounts a story that testifies to the resilience of the human body and spirit.



Dr. Lin Shinn-zong implants a microchip into the brain of a patient.

I came to know Xie Rui-teng (謝睿騰) when I was chief resident physician at Tri-Service General Hospital, Taipei. That was more than 30 years ago, when he was just 23 years of age. He had been in an accident that had injured his spine and deprived him of his ability to walk. I operated on him and helped him regain his mobility. He was an outgoing and warm person, so we stayed in touch after his surgery.

Years later, I left Tri-Service and joined Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital in eastern Taiwan. Rui-teng was strong, healthy, and 11 years younger than I, so I was surprised when he came to seek my help again one day in 2004. By that time, he had started a family and had had two kids.

As soon as he sat down with me in an outpatient clinic, he said to me, "Something is wrong with me, Superintendent. Several doctors have



### An-qi and Hong-chang undergo physiotherapy.

diagnosed me with a stroke or cerebral embolism, but..." He extended his arms in front of him, his fingers trembling slightly. "I feel that their diagnoses aren't right."

I had seen countless patients with his symptoms, so I was pretty sure what his problem might be. "You're likely suffering from Parkinson's disease," I said, "but yours seems to be a mild case. Medication will probably be enough to ease your condition." I then arranged some tests for him to confirm my suspicion.

A few days later, Rui-teng, accompanied by his wife, Chen Li-feng (陳麗鳳), checked into Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital for the tests. After he had gone through the first day of examination and was back in his ward, his cell phone rang. His mother's anxious voice was on the other end of the line: "Your dad rode a scooter to pick up the two kids from school, and on their way home they were hit by a drunk driver. The children are undergoing emergency treatment now. I don't know what to do. Please come back quickly."

The two kids were Rui-teng and Li-feng's daughter, An-qi (安琪), and son, Hong-chang (宏昌). An-qi was in ninth grade and Hong-chang in sixth.

Li-feng said to Rui-teng, "You stay here and finish the tests. I'll go home first and see how things stand now." Li-feng checked the time and saw that she could still make the last flight from Hualien to Taichung, central Taiwan, where they lived. She grabbed her purse and rushed out to hail a cab for the airport.

Later, Li-feng called Rui-teng from Taichung and updated him on their kids' condition. "An-qi



had a cerebral hemorrhage," she said. "The doctors said that her condition isn't very critical. They're putting her under observation. They said her body might absorb the bleeding itself." Their son's condition, however, was more touch-and-go. "When he arrived at the hospital, blood was trickling from his ears and nostrils and his pupils were dilated. The doctors are operating on him now."

The news threw Rui-teng into a frenzy. He couldn't find a single moment's peace. When I was making my rounds that night, I found him looking very upset and stressed. I thought he was worried about the test results, so I tried to comfort him. It was then he told me what had happened to his children.

"Can I be discharged now?" he asked. "I want to go back to Taichung and check on my kids."

It was late. The last flight had already left, so I tried to ease his mind by saying, "Don't you worry so much. At least wait until daybreak."

By five the next morning, he had completed the discharge procedure. I couldn't share his worry, and so I just offered before he took his leave: "If there's anything I can do to help, just call me, okay?"

### Heavily injured

By the time Rui-teng arrived at the hospital where his two children were being treated, Hong-chang had already left the operating room, but he was not out of the woods yet. An-qi, originally thought to be in better shape, was being taken into the operating room for emergency surgery. All the hair on her head had been shaved off. The doctors told Rui-teng that her head was full of blood.

The surgery began immediately. The doctors had barely cut An-qi's head open when blood

began spraying like a fountain all over the doctors and nurses. Afterwards, An-qi's attending physician told her worried parents, "I've seen two patients like this before—one died and the other ended up in a vegetative state. Please be prepared for the worst."

Rui-teng was so shaken he passed out on the spot.

When he came to, he found himself lying in a bed in the emergency room, his arm attached to an IV drip. He pulled the needle from his arm and, disregarding the drops of blood scattered over his arm, he walked unsteadily, aided by his wife, towards the intensive care unit. Not knowing how to soften the blow, Li-feng said straight to her husband, "They removed the entire left side of An-qi's brain."

Moments later, as Rui-teng looked at his two children in the ICU, lying on beds next to each other and both in a deep coma, my words flashed through his mind: "If there's anything I can do to help, just call me, okay?"

Like one freshly awakened from a dream, Rui-teng dialed my number on his cell phone. He was certain this time that the tremor in his hands was not caused by Parkinson's disease, but by an overwhelming fear.

I was in a meeting at the time, but when I saw Rui-teng's name on the screen of my vibrating phone, I picked it up. "How are the kids doing?" I asked.

"They're not good," answered Rui-teng feebly, "but I don't know how to describe their condition." No sooner had he finished than I heard the phone being passed to another person. A different voice came on the line: "Hello. I'm An-qi and Hong-chang's attending physician."

"Hello, I'm Lin Shinn-zong," I said. After briefly introducing myself, I asked the doctor about the condition of the two children. While I listened to his reply, I pondered how to best help the kids through this crisis. I was very lucky because the physician trusted me enough to note down every treatment method I suggested. He even borrowed medicine from another hospital to use. He tried the best he could to comply with my suggested regimen.

A week later, the kids were still in a coma. I urged Rui-teng not to lose heart. I taught him and his wife how to read the numbers on the machines, and I told them to be sure to alert the care team if the kids' heart rates or blood pressure dropped below a certain number.

Over ten days later, Hong-chang finally woke up. An-qi woke up too, but not until over 40 days

after the traffic accident. They were both in a poor state, but they displayed completely different symptoms. Hong-chang became violent, hitting, kicking, or even biting others. He wouldn't stop his attacks even when his hands and feet were bound. An-qi, on the other hand, became like a soulless doll. She laid motionless in her bed with her eyes open, never smiling, moving, or saying a word.

Hong-chang's condition was easier to treat—medicine would alleviate the problem. An-qi's condition, on the other hand, would be more of a challenge. I encouraged Rui-teng and Li-feng to have patience and to continue talking to their daughter. "If possible, try to help her recover her deepest engraved memories. Try to help her rediscover her passion and love for life. Does she especially love any songs or does she have any idols?"

"Yes, she loves two very popular boy bands," said Li-feng.

"Then play their songs to her every day," I suggested.

To do that, Li-feng purchased a cell phone that could play music and played An-qi's favorite songs to her day after day. Slowly, An-qi broke free from the shackles that imprisoned her and was able to interact with her parents, even though her spirits and mobility were still worse than those of an infant.

After An-qi and Hong-chang were discharged from the hospital and admitted into a rehabilitation hospital, Rui-teng drove for 12 hours and brought the two of them to Hualien to see me. At the time, An-qi could only walk at a painfully slow pace. Without her left brain, she didn't rec-

**An-qi didn't admit defeat despite the loss of her left brain. She worked hard to regain her ability to talk, write, and walk.**





**The Xie family has been through a lot. They have been there for each other all along the way. From left to right, Chen Li-feng, An-qi, Hong-chang, and Xie Rui-teng.**

ognize people, nor could she speak. I prescribed some medicine for her and told Rui-teng again, “Don’t lose hope. Be sure to continue to let An-qi undergo physiotherapy.”

Hong-chang was as agitated as ever. I showed him the medicine I had prescribed for him and smiled warmly as I told him: “Here are two pills. The red one is a compassion pill; it will keep you from getting angry and make you feel happy. The white one will make your brain strong; you will become very smart after you take it.”

The boy settled down upon hearing my words. A smile narrowed his eyes into two slits; he seemed to have found what I had said very amusing. “I’ll be good and take my meds every day,” he said.

#### **A college student with half a brain**

After that, Rui-teng brought An-qi and Hong-chang to see me every month. He continued to do so after I had left Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital and served at China Medical University Hospital in Taichung for some years. Along the way, I witnessed the two kids’ condition improve. Hong-chang did better. An-qi, minus her left brain, had a tougher time recovering, but she still made progress. She even regained her ability to speak.

Somewhere along the line the kids stopped calling me “Dr. Lin” and started calling me “Daddy Lin.”

“Daddy Lin,” An-qi said to me one day in an outpatient clinic, “I used to dream of being a nurse, but now in my condition is my dream even possible?”

I seemed to hear a broken heart behind those words, as if she felt that her fate had been sealed by that tragic accident.

“If you want to help others, you don’t necessarily have to be a nurse,” I responded. “There are all kinds of work in a hospital.” I then told her that in addition to a specialty in neurosurgery, I had a master’s degree in hospital management from Tulane University in the United States. “You can study hospital management, too.”

My words seemed to give her hope. From that day on she began to study very hard. When she encountered problems in her studies, she would come to me for help. Even though I had told her she was welcome to drop by my office at any time, she never did because she didn’t want to disturb me in my private time. Instead, she would make appointments like a regular patient and wait outside my consulting room until it was her turn to see me. Then she would come in, open her book, and ask me to help her solve her problems.

Later, in 2010, she gained admittance into the Department of Healthcare Administration at the Chung Hwa University of Medical Technology, and she also won the Presidential Education Award for her courage and perseverance in overcoming hardships.

When I heard the good news, I bought a notebook computer for her as a gift. I was as happy for her as if I were her real father. “I’ve won many awards in my life,” I told her, “but I’ve never won the Presidential Education Award. You’re so much better than me.”

Those were not just words of comfort, but the truth. An-qi once said that the traffic accident was the greatest pain of her life. However, that accident also allowed me to take part in a medical miracle. An-qi lost her left brain—which performs tasks that have to do with language, logic, numbers, etc., and is responsible for controlling the right side of the body—but her right brain took over and performed those left-brain functions. Along the way, An-qi displayed outstanding resilience in working hard to regain those abilities.

I’ve witnessed countless deaths in my long medical career, but I’ve also seen countless lives bounce back after being almost crushed. An-qi and Hong-chang were two great examples. Their calling me “Daddy Lin” was my greatest reward. ❀

# My Three Weeks at Tzu Chi University

**By Joy F. Morrison, Ph.D.**

Photos courtesy of Joy F. Morrison



I was asked to be a visiting professor at Tzu Chi University in Hualien, Taiwan, in November 2018. My task was to give talks on pedagogy and do teaching observations. I had visited Hualien briefly in November 2016 while on a two-week Fulbright visit to National Taiwan University in Taipei. During that first time in Hualien, I gave a three-hour workshop at Tzu Chi University on Active Teaching Strategies. The faculty members who attended enjoyed this so much that I was invited back two years later—as the now retired director of an office of faculty development in Alaska.

During that second time at Tzu Chi University, I was assigned to the College of Education and Communications, which is comprised of the departments of Teaching Education, Child Development and Family Studies, and Communications. I began by doing teaching observations in the Department of Communications and in the Department of Child Development and Family Studies. I knew nothing of the latter, but my doctorate is in communications so I was at home in the former. During the remainder of my visit, I gave talks about teaching, had interactions with students, attended meetings with departments to discuss a variety of topics, and presented a slide show about my life (which was requested at the last minute).

Tzu Chi is a private university founded by the Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation. It is relatively small, with a teaching faculty of 370 (200 of which are affiliated with the College of Medicine) and over 3,000 students. It offers undergraduate and graduate degrees, specializing in

medicine and biomedicine, and its research is highly regarded internationally. I encountered many international students who are drawn by the high standards of education and the low costs. The campus is gorgeous with the magnificent Jing Si Hall in its midst, citrus trees and flowers everywhere, and unusual, interesting buildings. Much of the campus is made of marble, which is abundant in the Hualien area. Marble is a big export, along with concrete, which is also used in the construction. The Tzu Chi logo abounds, including on student and faculty uniforms. Foundation volunteers are on campus, so the meal hall is filled each day with a mixture of elderly volunteers and youthful students. All meals are vegetarian, and one arrives with one’s own bowl and chopsticks in order to minimize garbage. I found the food very tasty, if often unidentifiable. You get all you can eat for 45 New Taiwan dollars (\$1.50)

My accommodation was in one of the five enormous but very attractive apartment buildings on campus, just above a lovely day-care center. The eighth floor is for Tzu Chi University visitors. My apartment was spacious with two balconies and a view of the beautiful mountains which are the backdrop of Hualien. The rest of the building is for faculty members, their families, and visitors to the Tzu Chi Foundation.

November was a good time to visit because the weather was agreeable, with only a few rainy days. Mornings in Hualien were lovely, with blue skies and sunshine. Temperatures were in the 70s, and the humidity was low. Each afternoon it clouded over, got muggy and usually resulted in a short rainfall. I learned to always have an umbrella

with me! I quickly found a few tiny restaurants near campus, my favorite being a dumpling shop where I would pick up dumplings for NT\$5 each, add some soy or other sauces, and take home to eat. My apartment had two large flat screen televisions, so I was entertained by Taiwanese television stations. At 9:45 each night the Public Television station provided ten minutes of news in English, which I tried not to miss. A national election was held on November 24, and the reportage building up to this was interesting. Ten controversial referenda were on the ballot, and the visual advertising for candidates and the referenda blanketed the city. I was taken to a voting site by a faculty friend to witness democracy in action. I also hiked through the awesome Taroko Gorge, and I was driven to hot springs further south.

During my first visit in 2016, I found out about the Tzu Chi Foundation, its international relief work, and its large recycling program, and I wanted to learn more. A tour of the beautiful Jing Si Hall reveals extensive educational displays of all the Foundation activities, which are very affecting. At the mid-point of the tour, there is a short introductory film, and another one about the founder, Dharma Master Cheng Yen. It is emotionally exhausting and very impressive. Tzu Chi means "compassionate relief," and it lives up to its name. When I got to the section on aid and relief to my own country, South Africa, it was all too much for me to handle without tearing up. I

**One of the Child Development classes that Dr. Morrison (back row, second from left) observed**



vowed then and there to become a Tzu Chi volunteer. I am not Buddhist (nor am I a member of any religion), but the work this Foundation is doing is quite amazing. Volunteers of any denomination, or none, are welcomed.

I was particularly impressed with the recycling program. Around three percent of recyclable materials in Taiwan are collected by Tzu Chi volunteers and rendered useful in one way or another. A shop at Jing Si Hall sells all manner of products such as clothing, socks, blankets, luggage, dark glasses, shoes, scarves, cosmetic bags, etc. A brochure about the manufacturer, DA.AI Technology, states:

DA.AI has developed recycled textile raw materials, such as recycled poly chips, recycled polyester fibers and recycled fabrics. These recycled raw materials are then used to produce eco-products such as clothing, beddings, and other everyday textile products.

The university has its own recycling center, which is large and very active. Senior citizens make up the workforce, and they are provided lunch each day. They get to socialize and feel useful, an aspect I liked. I discovered that the vans that come around each night at 7:10 to the dorms and campus apartments are to collect either trash or recycling. They are heralded by a music-box sound that reminded me of the ice-cream trucks that used to visit the neighborhood where I grew up.

I am very grateful to Dr. Ingrid Liu, vice-president of Tzu Chi University, for inviting me to Taiwan, and to Walter Huang, chairman of DA.AI Technology in Taipei, who arranged a tour in Taipei of Da Ai Television, the Neihu Recycling Education Center, and DA.AI Technology. He also arranged for me to meet Master Cheng Yen, which was a great honor.

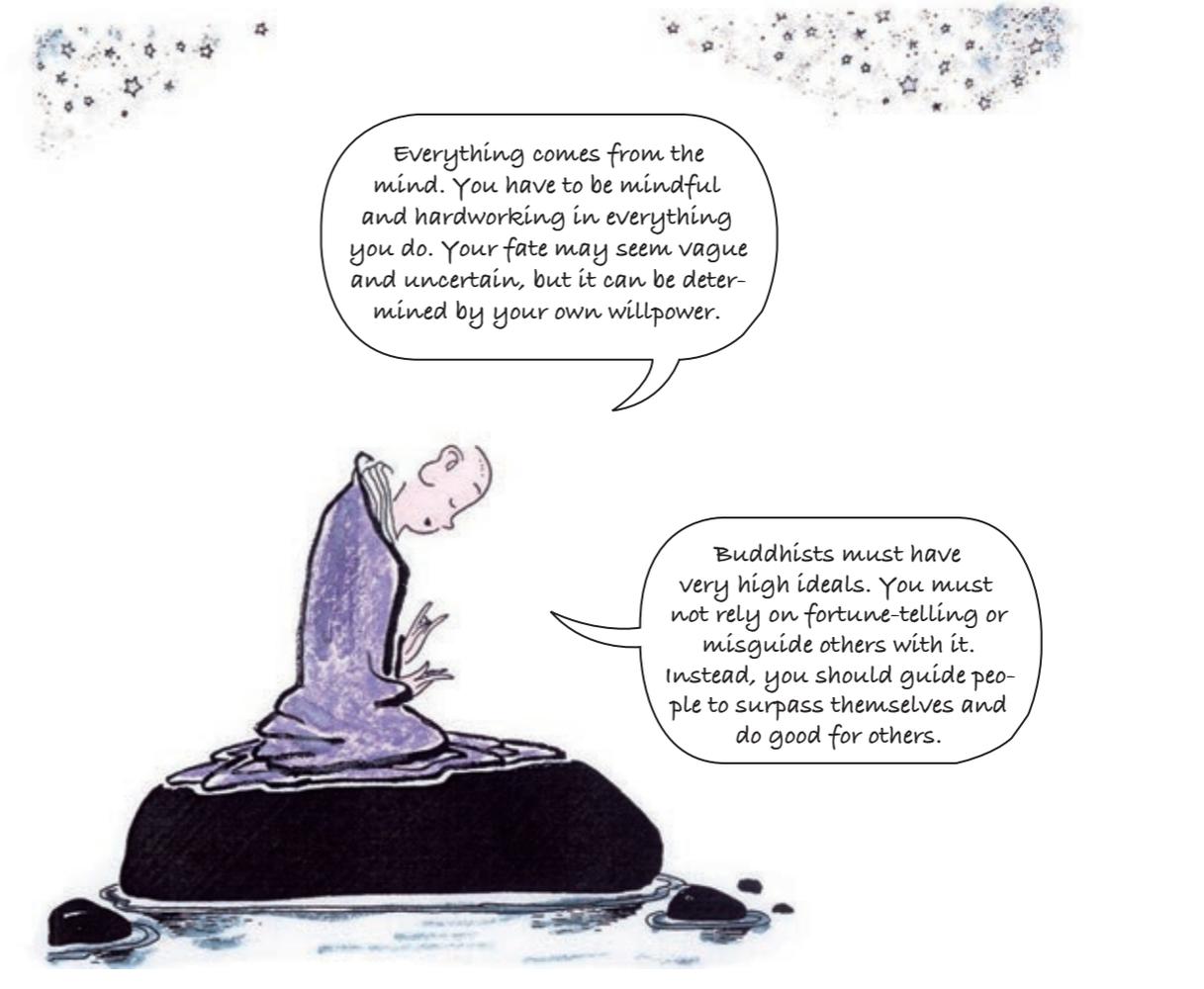
On my return to Portland, Oregon, I filled out a Volunteer Application form and attended an evening of Tzu Chi short films and panel discussions. There I learned even more about the Foundation and its work in prisons in the USA, and I met the local Tzu Chi staff and volunteers. I now await the start of my training with eagerness! ❀

# The JING SI A Illustrated APHORISMS



## The Buddha says:

Knowledge, skills and talents will make you successful. They, not the stars and planets in the sky, are true harbingers of future good fortune.



An overseas Chinese scholar said: "I would like to return to Taiwan and be of service, but I don't want to leave everything that I have overseas. This is a very difficult choice."

Master Cheng Yen replied: "Only when you let go of something can you pick up something else."

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



LUO RU-KUN

## The Philippines

The Tzu Chi Philippines branch office held a free medical clinic in Tacloban, the capital of Leyte Province, in late October 2018. This was the fourth year in a row that Tzu Chi had conducted such an event in Tacloban. The foundation began providing aid to residents in the city after Typhoon Haiyan ravaged the central Philippines on November 8, 2013.

The latest free clinic was staffed by 108 medical volunteers and 341 support volunteers from Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, and the Philippines. They offered services in surgery, dentistry, pediatrics, ophthalmology, internal medicine, and traditional Chinese medicine from October 26 to 28 at Leyte Progressive High School.

People started arriving after midnight for the first day of the clinic. They arrived so early because they were anxious to receive treatment at the free event. Many locals are too poor to afford medical care, so they didn't want to miss this good opportunity to see a doctor. Just pulling a

## A pediatrician sees a small child at a free clinic that Tzu Chi held in Tacloban in late October 2018.

tooth can set them back a month's salary. Given that, it was no wonder that a woman who came to the event had suffered from a toothache for two years without seeking medical attention.

The clinic served over 6,000 patient visits in three days. The massive throngs of people needing treatment each day kept the doctors and nurses so busy that they didn't even have time to take a break and have some water. Despite that, they felt hugely rewarded whenever they saw a patient break into a smile after having his or her illness treated.

Due to the limited space and time of the event, Dr. Antonio Say, of the Philippines, led a team to hold a two-day eye clinic ahead of the three-day event. That clinic was offered on October 23 and 24 at Divine Word Hospital, where Say and other ophthalmologists performed surgery on 152 patients. People who had their cataracts removed were thrilled to be able to see clearly again.

Volunteer Rowena Rempillo hustled about at the free clinic at the local high school. She was a victim of Typhoon Haiyan. Five years ago that devastating disaster badly damaged her home, and she herself nearly drowned in the floods. She was so badly traumatized from her brush with death that she sought psychological therapy and couldn't return to Tacloban. Some time after the disaster, she heard from her sister, who had returned to Tacloban, that she had received aid from Tzu Chi and that the foundation had implemented a work relief program to help bring the disaster area back to normalcy. In 2015, Rowena finally returned to Tacloban, where she saw that Tzu Chi volunteers were still helping her fellow townspeople. She was deeply moved and delighted.

When Tzu Chi held a free clinic in Tacloban that year, she signed up as a volunteer. For three years after that she continued to help at such clinics. She is now the coordinator for people in the city who have started training to become certified Tzu Chi volunteers. She thanked the foundation for helping Tacloban pass the hard times after the typhoon and for changing many people's lives.

Many people are still in need of help in Tacloban. Tzu Chi volunteers will continue to

provide care and assistance and inspire more local people to join their ranks to serve their own fellow townspeople.

## Cambodia

Tzu Chi volunteers in Cambodia held a rice distribution at the Dangkor landfill in Phnom Penh on November 20, 2018. The event was aimed to provide relief for families who scavenge garbage for a living.

The volunteers have been helping local residents for some time, so the two sides interacted very warmly at the distribution. Many residents brought their coin banks to donate to Tzu Chi. They said that saving one hundred riel (two US cents) a day would not affect their lives, and that the money could be used to help other people, so they were happy to contribute what they could.

When volunteers announced at the venue that they needed people to help unload and move rice,

**On November 20, 2018, Tzu Chi volunteers distributed rice provided by the Taiwanese government to 500 needy families in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Thirty aid recipients volunteered to help unload and move the rice.**



COURTESY OF TZU CHI CAMBODIA



SHI ZHIFU

**Volunteers work to repair some areas of pavement at Da Ji Junior High School in Chiayi, Taiwan.**

30 residents quickly stepped up. Volunteer Chen Ni Bi-yun (陳倪碧雲) remarked at how warm-hearted the residents were. Despite their difficult lives, they were quick to render a helping hand.

Five hundred families received rice at the event. The Cambodian Water Festival, an important local holiday, was coming up; volunteers hoped to help the recipient families have a better holiday by providing them with the aid.

Three residents had died earlier in the same month from an accident with a garbage truck while they were scavenging. A group of volunteers decided to visit the bereaved families the day after the distribution to determine if they needed any assistance.

The volunteers first visited 44-year-old Oeung Arm, whose husband had died in the accident. The couple had five children, and Oeung Arm was pregnant with their sixth. The volunteers decided to help this family by giving them rice and powdered milk every month for half a year. They will evaluate whether to continue with the aid when that time is up.

After that, the group went to 37-year-old Srin Sitha's home. Her husband had also died in the accident. Now she was the only one working in her family of seven. The volunteers decided to give this family 40 kilograms of rice every month for half a year before assessing the need of further aid.

Volunteers then visited 47-year-old Mut Thon, whose wife was another victim of the fatal accident. The couple's son and daughter were both grown, and they scavenged with their father to make a living. Since the family was able to get by on their own, the volunteers decided just to visit them regularly to extend care to them.

During their visit to the landfill on this day, volunteers learned that five local children were in need of school uniforms and supplies. On November 28, volunteers visited the area again to bring newly purchased uniforms and school supplies to the children.

**Taiwan**

On November 17, 2018, over 80 Tzu Chi volunteers gathered at Da Ji Junior High School in Chiayi, southern Taiwan, to repair some pavement on the campus. The volunteers intentionally

chose a weekend to carry out the project so as not to disturb the school faculty and students.

Tzu Chi's connection with the school started 19 years ago, in 1999. On October 22 that year, a magnitude 6.4 earthquake heavily damaged most of the school buildings, rendering them unfit to be used again. After an on-site inspection, the foundation decided to help the school rebuild.

Lush green trees had abounded on the campus; during reconstruction, the trees were carefully preserved. Over the 19 years since the school was completed, the trees had grown bigger, denser, and more eye-catching. However, their roots had grown as well, not just deeper into the ground but also wider around. Under the trees and around the campus was a 350-meter-long walkway laid with interlocking pavement bricks. The overgrown tree roots had damaged the pavement and caused protrusions in many spots. The school parking lot was laid with paving bricks too. After years of being run over by vehicles, some areas had also become uneven and bumpy. Out of a concern for the safety of teachers and students, school administrators asked for help from Tzu Chi in October 2018 to fix the bumps in the pavement on campus.

Volunteer Xiao Zhi-cheng (蕭志成), who has years of experience of laying interlocking pavers, was put in charge of the project. He drafted a plan to remove protruding bricks, locate the spots to cut off the tree roots that had gotten in the way, smooth out the ground with gravel and sand, and then re-lay the bricks. The job was more difficult than it looked. If the beginning pavement section wasn't properly laid, there would be irregularities in the later parts, and then everything would have to start all over again. Volunteer Lin Shi-feng (林世豐) said, "We divided the participating volunteers into three groups, each of which was supervised by experienced volunteers who were good at this to make sure nothing would go amiss."

Volunteer Huang Chun-xiong (黃春雄), who has a background in construction, carefully evaluated where to saw off overgrown roots without hindering the growth of the trees. The aroma of camphor wood filled the air as he sawed off one root after another.

Volunteer Wang Shou-rong (王壽榮) went about the campus helping to take out bricks and transport gravel and sand with a wheelbarrow. He was one of the volunteers who had visited the school to check out the pavement after Tzu Chi had received the request to fix it. He said that they had originally estimated a required workforce of 15 volunteers, but when they sent out the

message to enlist volunteers for the project, over 80 people signed up. The extra hands were a god-send because tree roots had spread under many paving blocks, making the project more difficult than anticipated.

The volunteers' clothes soon became drenched with sweat under the autumn sun. Everyone mindfully went about their job, and by the time they finished, at two-thirty in the afternoon, the re-laid areas looked perfectly even and smooth. Volunteers had even taken care to brush clean the bricks before laying them down!

Principal Shao Bing-ying (邵冰瑩) thanked the volunteers for a job done so well and quickly. The volunteers, on the other hand, were more than happy that the students now have a safer environment to learn in.

**Honduras**

In early October 2018, heavy rains lashed parts of Central America, resulting in flash floods and landslides. Honduras was among the countries most severely hit. Most damage in the country was reported in Francisco Morazán, Valle, and

**Honduras was hit by floods in early October 2018. Tzu Chi Honduras distributed aid to help victims.**



COURTESY OF TZU CHI HONDURAS



PHOTO: TAIWAN

was the head of Tzu Chi Honduras; his voice was hoarse after helping maintain order for three consecutive days at the venues.

Volunteers felt for the flood victims, who had to stand and wait for several hours to receive their goods. They prayed for a world free from disasters so that there would be less suffering in the world.

#### Guatemala

Tzu Chi Guatemala held its second winter distribution in 2018 on December 2 at a Palencia city government activity center. The aid recipients consisted of 61 families with disabled children and 30 families that make a living by

salvaging garbage at a landfill.

The families with disabled children had been referred to Tzu Chi for help by the Palencia city government. Volunteers had personally visited these impoverished households in February 2018 to assess their needs. As for the other 30 families, volunteers had been providing aid to them since 2016.

Distribution items included folding beds provided by a Taiwanese chamber of commerce, blankets made from recycled plastic bottles, black beans, and biscuits. More than the material aid, volunteers hoped to convey warmth and care to the recipients in the coldness of winter.

Beralba Celeste Morales, 20, suffers from a medical condition that affected her spinal cord. Despite her disability, she was upbeat and thoughtful. She warmed the hearts of the volunteers who interacted with her.

Their poverty notwithstanding, recipients deposited small change into the coin banks that volunteers held out at the venue. No matter how poor, everyone has the ability to help others. What matters is not the amount of a donation but the heart to give. Just as Master Cheng Yen says, "It's not just rich people that can help others. If you sincerely want to help others and have only one dollar to give, that one dollar will be as powerful as one million dollars."

The city government arranged for vehicles to help the recipients take their distribution goods back home. Everyone worked together to help the needy families have a warmer winter. ❁

#### Tzu Chi Guatemala conducted its second winter distribution in 2018 on December 2.

Choluteca departments in the central and southern parts of the nation.

Tzu Chi volunteers living in the flooded areas were victims themselves, but they quickly put their homes in order and began surveying damage in the disaster area and compiling rosters of victims who would receive aid from Tzu Chi.

Distributions were held on October 24 and 25 in Marcovia, Choluteca Department, and on October 26 at the Tzu Chi Great Love Village in Choluteca, the capital city of Choluteca Department. The events on the three days benefited nearly 5,100 families, each of which received 12 items, including spaghetti, corn starch, red beans, cooking oil, laundry detergent, chlorine water, and a large plastic washbasin. The food could last a family of four seven to ten days.

Volunteers at the venues carefully checked the recipient lists and the IDs of the attendees to make sure that the aid went to the right people. The weather was hot; two physicians from the local chapter of the Tzu Chi International Medical Association were on hand to provide medical services to anyone who might suddenly feel unwell in the heat.

Many attendees, worried that they might not receive their share of the distribution goods, pushed forward in the lines, and volunteers had to work hard to restore order. Jorge Chang (張鴻才)

# Directory of Tzu Chi Offices Worldwide

#### TAIWAN

**Hualien: Headquarters**  
Tel: 886-3-8266779  
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**Taipei: Tzu Chi Humanitarian Center**  
Tel: 886-2-28989000  
Fax: 886-2-28989994

#### ARGENTINA

Tel: 54-11-48625770  
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#### AUSTRALIA

**Brisbane**  
Tel: 61-7-32727938  
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**Gold Coast**  
Tel: 61-7-55717706  
Fax: 61-7-55717703

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

**Perth**  
Tel/Fax: 61-8-92278228

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

#### BRAZIL

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

#### BRUNEI

Tel/Fax: 673-3336779

#### CANADA

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

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

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

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

#### DOMINICAN REP.

Tel: 1-809-5300972

#### EL SALVADOR

Tel/Fax: 1-503-7293905

#### FRANCE

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

#### GERMANY

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

#### GREAT BRITAIN

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

#### GUATEMALA

Tel: 502-22327648  
Fax: 502-23675872

#### HONG KONG

Tel: 852-28937166  
Fax: 852-28937478

#### INDONESIA

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

#### JAPAN

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

#### JORDAN

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#### LESOTHO

Tel: 266-28312566  
Fax: 266-22313897

#### MALAYSIA

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

**Kedah**  
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Fax: 60-4-7321013

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

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

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

#### MEXICO

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

#### MYANMAR

Tel: 95-1-541494/541496

#### NETHERLANDS

Tel: 31-629-577511

#### NEW ZEALAND

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

#### PARAGUAY

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Fax: 595-21-310588

#### PHILIPPINES

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#### SINGAPORE

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Fax: 65-65829952

#### SOUTH AFRICA

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

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

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

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

#### SWEDEN

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#### THAILAND

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#### TURKEY

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#### UNITED STATES

**San Dimas**  
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Tel: 1-770-4581000

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

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

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

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

**Cleveland**  
Tel/Fax: 1-440-6469292

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

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

**Detroit**  
Tel/Fax: 1-586-7953491

**Fresno**  
Tel/Fax: 1-559-2984894

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

#### Houston

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

#### Indianapolis

Tel: 1-317-5800979

#### Kansas

Tel: 1-913-3976517

#### Long Island

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

#### Madison

Tel: 1-608-2687692

#### Miami

Tel: 1-954-5381172  
Fax: 1-317-6459907

#### New Jersey

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

#### New York

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

#### Los Angeles Northwest

Tel: 1-818-7277689  
Fax: 1-818-7279272

#### Los Angeles West

Tel: 1-310-4735188  
Fax: 1-310-4779518

#### Oakland

Tel: 1-510-8790971

#### Orlando

Tel/Fax: 1-407-2921146

#### Phoenix

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

#### Pittsburgh

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

#### San Diego

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

#### San Francisco

Tel: 1-415-6820566  
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#### San Jose

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

#### Seattle

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

#### St. Louis

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#### Washington DC

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

#### VIETNAM

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



*Everyone has a buddha nature, and a bodhisattva's  
strength and spirit.*  
—Master Cheng Yen

PHOTO BY HSIAO YIU-HWA