

慈濟

Tzu Chi

Buddhism in Action



**After the
Mexican
Quake**

January 2018

The World Needs Great Love

Translated by Teresa Chang



A quake victim hugs a Tzu Chi volunteer at a Tzu Chi aid distribution in Tláhuac, Mexico, in December 2017.

A massive 7.1-magnitude earthquake struck central Mexico at 1:14 p.m. local time on September 19, 2017. In an instant, many historic buildings were damaged and countless homes crumbled. Possessions big and small were suddenly gone. How unbearable it must have been for survivors to cope with the painful reality of losing everything.

Tzu Chi volunteers arrived in Mexico soon after the temblor to assess damage and formulate relief plans. Group after group of volunteers from Taiwan, America, Argentina, Ecuador, as well as from Mexico itself, took turns visiting the disaster areas. The volunteers saw donated relief goods from all over, including food, daily necessities, and used clothes, piled all over the streets. They realized that if they wanted to help survivors, they would have to give the kind of aid that was needed and not add to the burden of the survivors or the local communities. After evaluation, it was decided that Tzu Chi would distribute gift cards so that victims could purchase what they needed the most.

To find the families most in need of help, our volunteers visited household after household to compile rosters of recipients for the distribution. This proved to be difficult because the volunteers did not know anyone in the disaster areas, nor were the survivors familiar with Tzu Chi. To facilitate their work, the volunteers realized that the best way would be to inspire local people to join them.

When volunteers made house calls, they extended care to the victims they met and invited those who seemed especially warmhearted to join them on their home visits and help record the number of people in each family and their living conditions. They tried to bring out the love in people by letting them know that despite being victims, they too could reach out to help others. Gradually, the people who joined our volunteers came to see that although they had taken a hit from the earthquake, there were others who were suffering even more and needed help. Reaching out to give them love, the new volunteers discovered what a blessing it was to be able to help others.

At first, our volunteers weren't sure if they could win the trust of the local people. The locals had their doubts too—they didn't know if this group of foreigners was really there to help them. By and by, however, the locals could feel the sincere love and goodwill of our volunteers. Some even began training to learn how to conduct home visits. With time, more and more people could be seen on the streets wearing our volunteer vests—they had all joined in to help make home visits. From people waiting to receive aid, they had turned into people who gave help.

Our foundation has helped many countries over the last five decades, but what happened in Mexico was the first in our history: Even before we distributed aid there, our volunteers bonded deeply with the local people. The hundreds of Mexican people who volunteered for our foundation might have practiced a different religion, but they still identified with Tzu Chi's philosophy and ideals. Some even hope that one day they might come to Taiwan and visit the birthplace of Tzu Chi.

The most valuable things in life are not material goods, but sincere love and inspiring words that can help people open their hearts, overcome sadness and afflictions, and find courage to keep going. The survivors might have lost valuable possessions to the earthquake, but once they began to help others with love and empathy, they could transcend their loss and become rich again—in spirit. Such intangible spiritual wealth is not something anyone or anything can take away. It's very uplifting to see the survivors stick out their chests and smile brightly. They have truly tapped into their inner strength and transformed suffering into happiness.

As fellow human beings, we all live under the same sky and on the same Earth. We should all pay attention to what is happening in the world and join hands with other like-minded people to spread love. Wherever there is a call for help, we must remember that all human beings' fates are intertwined, and so we must extend a helping hand. Many people are in need in this world, and many living bodhisattvas are doing their best to help relieve suffering. If we can give in a timely matter, we can all become life changers. ❀

Tzu Chi

Bimonthly

January 2018



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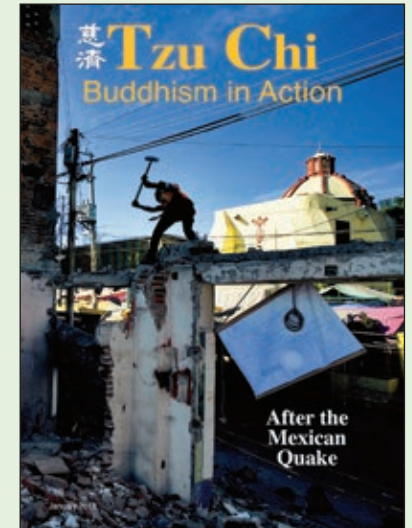
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The *Tzu Chi Bimonthly* welcomes contributions of personal experiences or reports of Tzu Chi activities. We also welcome letters to the editor containing personal comments or opinions on matters of interest in the Tzu Chi world. We reserve the right 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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Love Crosses the Fault Line

After the Mexican Quake

By Huang Hsiu-hua

Translated by Tang Yau-yang

Photos by Huang Xiao-zhe

Mexico was struck by three earthquakes over magnitude 6 in September 2017. The one that hit on the 19th with a magnitude of 7.1 near heavily populated Mexico City resulted in the most fatalities and injuries. Three months after the temblor, some disaster areas remain virtually unchanged, with rubble still waiting to be cleared away. The road to recovery will be long and hard.

Tzu Chi volunteers arrived in the disaster areas within a week after that earthquake. They assessed damage and determined how best to help survivors. It wasn't easy, but with care and a sincere desire to help, they were able to reach and aid people in need.

A man hacks away at a damaged structure in Xochimilco, a borough in Mexico City, in preparation for rebuilding. It was mid-December 2017, about three months after the September 19 earthquake, yet rubble and debris could still be seen everywhere in some disaster areas. Tzu Chi kicked off its relief operations in Mexico at the domed structure in the background, a hundred-year-old Roman Catholic church.

The Power of Religion

Father Francisco Efran presides over Mass inside this century-old church in San Gregorio Atlapulco, Xochimilco. A wall of the church was damaged during the September 19 temblor, but other than that the church is still serviceable. Father Efran, a 28-year veteran, offered his church after the quake as a site for charitable organizations to serve quake victims. He called for everyone to help and love each other.

Tzu Chi aid distributions and free clinics in Mexico, December 7-16, 2017

Mexico City

Five distributions and four free clinics in the boroughs of Coyoacan, Xochimilco, and Tláhuac

State of Morelos

Four distributions and four free clinics in Jojutla, Tlaquiltenango, and Zacatepec de Hidalgo.

Totals

Cash cards and blankets (made from recycled PET bottles) were distributed to a total of 10,355 families. The free clinics served 4,491 patient visits.



Major earthquakes in Mexico

Mexico is located in one of the world's most seismically active regions. On September 19, 1985, an earthquake struck Mexico City and killed 10,000 people. Thirty-two years later to the day, another quake hit with the epicenter just 120 kilometers (76 miles) from Mexico City, killing 370 people and injuring more than 6,000. More than 44,000 structures and 12,700 schools were damaged in the nation's capital and in states including Morelos, Puebla, Guerrero, and Oaxaca.

This recent quake was sandwiched in the same month by two others: a magnitude 8.1 tremor that struck on September 7 with the epicenter in the Pacific Ocean, south of the state of Chiapas, and a magnitude 6.1 temblor that hit the state of Oaxaca on September 23. The quake on the 19th resulted in the greatest number of fatalities and people injured.





Three Months After the Quake

This woman stands in what was once the living room of her house in Jojutla, a hard-hit area, hanging clothes up to dry. Her house was heavily damaged by the earthquake and is no longer fit for habitation. She and her granddaughter, her legs injured in the quake, now live in a tent.

Jojutla, located in the state of Morelos in southern Mexico, is an important city for commercial activities. Historic sites and commercial districts in the area were heavily damaged in the tremor. Even though it has been three months since the quake, many people are still living in tents.



Footprints of Love and Care

On September 25, just six days after the powerful quake, an advance team of Tzu Chi volunteers from Mexico and America arrived in Jojutla to assess damage. Afterwards, visits were made to survivors to establish a distribution roster in preparation for upcoming distributions.

On December 10, 2017, a delegation of 140 Tzu Chi volunteers and medical professionals from 13 countries arrived in Jojutla to distribute aid and provide free medical services. Before they set about their work, local volunteers guided them to look at the quake-damaged city.



Promise Delivered

Mexico is a Catholic country. On December 15, at a distribution venue at a church in San Gregorio Atlapulco, Father Francisco Efran sprinkled holy water to bless Tzu Chi volunteers and others. Although the volunteers were primarily Buddhists, they were completely at ease during the blessing. When the gathered crowd sang the Mexican national anthem, volunteers saluted under a Mexican flag. When Tzu Chi volunteers deliver aid, differences of religion, race, and nationality are of no concern to them.

Stephen Huang (黃思賢, first from right, opposite page), director of Tzu Chi global affairs, told the gathered crowd that he had visited the local area with an advance team as early as September and had worked with Fr. Efran then. "Time and distance did not stop Tzu Chi's love; we're back here again," he said. "We will come back yet again—with more love and care."





Face to Face With Aid Recipients

The first distribution was held on December 7 in Tláhuac, Mexico City. Recipients were admitted by distribution notice. Family size determined the amount on the gift card and the number of blankets for the family.

Armed personnel were on the scene to ensure order and to protect the safety of the recipients and volunteers.



Sincere Care Is the Best Medicine

Argentine volunteer Hong Liang-dai (洪良岱, center, opposite page), came to Mexico on October 12 and left on December 18. For two months, she led home visits to families affected by the earthquake and trained Mexican volunteers.

Guided by locals who had joined Tzu Chi volunteers in conducting home visits, Hong and other volunteers were able to navigate the labyrinth of streets to visit needy families. A mother, pushing a baby carriage with one hand and holding a list of families to visit in the other, was among the local people who helped out. She obviously had her hands full, but she still took the time to help her fellow countrymen by helping the visiting volunteers. Hong was very moved.

She said that sincere care is the best medicine in the disaster areas. When they visited survivors, the latter would sometimes cry on their shoulders. Volunteers did their best to soothe the survivors as they poured out their sadness.



Healing Body and Mind

An old woman came to a Tzu Chi free clinic to seek help. Her hand had been fractured but the dressing over the wound had not been changed for some time. Doctors at the clinic treated her. They sang to her while they worked on her to distract her from the pain of the treatment.

Many patients showed up at the free clinic, some for chronic conditions like kidney disease, hypertension, and diabetes, and quite a few others for post-traumatic stress disorder. The latter group complained that they couldn't eat or sleep, and some told the doctors their fears that they would not be able to rebuild their homes.

Treatments in both Western medicine and traditional Chinese medicine were offered at the Tzu Chi clinics in Mexico. There was little direct dialog on the scene because of a lack of a common language, but with body language, lots of TLC, and help from Spanish-speaking volunteers, the medical workers were able to relieve pain all the same.





Thumbs Up

Just before going home from a distribution, an aid recipient gives a thumbs-up to Tzu Chi volunteers.

The distributions in Mexico were made possible with donations and love from people around the world. Volunteers in Taiwan rushed to prepare 12,600 blankets for the distributions this time; the blankets arrived in Mexico in two cargo containers after almost a month on an ocean liner. With the help of *Iniciativa Solidaria por la Alimentación A.C.*, a nonprofit organization, Tzu Chi volunteers quickly cleared the goods through the customs duty-free and had them delivered to a warehouse of Fang Tai-sheng (方台生), a Taiwanese businessman in Mexico. The blankets were repacked before they were delivered to the different distribution venues. ❀

Project Disaster Reduction for Six Schools

Tzu Chi's Project Disaster Reduction has undertaken to construct new buildings to replace aged or damaged ones at 26 schools in Taiwan, including six in Hualien County. After 18 months, the work at these six schools was completed, and Tzu Chi turned the new buildings over to the schools in October 2017.

By Yang Shun-bin
Translated by Tang Yau-yang
Photos by Yan Lin-zhao



The recorder orchestra of Guo Feng Junior High School performs at a ceremony during which Tzu Chi turned over newly constructed buildings to six schools in Hualien.

On the morning of October 24, 2017, things seemed a little different from usual at the gate of Guo Feng Junior High School in Hualien, eastern Taiwan. Teachers from the school and students in scout uniforms greeted their counterparts arriving on school buses from Ming Yih, Chung Yuan, and Jia Min elementary schools, and Hua Ren and Yuli junior high schools. Some distinguished guests rounded out the crowd that day.

Tzu Chi had launched a project to rebuild dangerous buildings for 26 schools in Taiwan. On this day, a ceremony was being held at Guo Feng to officially turn over completed buildings to six schools in Hualien.

Even the weather added to the event—the rain and dark clouds that had persisted for several days were gone. The bright sunny day at hand seemed to reflect the cheerfulness and high spirits of the occasion.

The ceremony

The Ming Yih Elementary School string orchestra kicked off the ceremony with a performance of the finale of St Paul's Suite, by the British composer Gustav Theodore Holst. The choice of the composer and music was very deliberate for the occasion.

Teacher Li Rou-ling (李柔玲), who directs the orchestra at Ming Yih, explained that Holst was the director of music at St Paul's Girls' School in London, England, from 1905 to 1934. The suite was composed by Holst in gratitude to the school, which had built a soundproof studio for him.

Though the music had been written halfway around the world and a century before today's event, the symbolism of the piece was clear. Tzu Chi had built a five-story building for Ming Yih, in which most of the space was dedicated to the performing arts. Li and her students played the finale of the suite to express their gratitude to the

foundation, just as Holst had composed the music in gratitude to his school.

The performance by the Ming Yih Elementary School orchestra was followed by an equally moving performance by the Guo Feng Junior High School recorder orchestra, which had won first place at a national contest just the year before. Like Ming Yih Elementary School, Guo Feng Junior High had been in dire need of safe or adequate facilities. With Tzu Chi's help, the school is now better able to carry out its mission to educate students.

Dangerous classrooms

Compulsory education in Taiwan was extended from six years to nine in 1968. Many new schools, including Guo Feng Junior High, were built at that time to accommodate the influx of students.

Guo Feng has graduated nearly 30,000 students since the school first opened its doors half a century ago. Though low birth rates have shrunk the student population all over the island, Guo Feng, with almost 1,500 students, is the leader in Eastern Taiwan in number of classes and student enrollment.

Guo Feng's principal, Zhong Yi-zhi (鍾宜智), is a Guo Feng alumnus who graduated in 1988. Zhong recalled his days at the school as a student and the problems that had most bothered him: water in the classroom during rainy season or after a heavy storm. His classroom was sometimes inundated with water as deep as halfway up his calf.

The land which the school now occupies once consisted of rice paddies and a swamp, which were drained and filled with dirt for the construction of the school. That was one reason why the campus was so susceptible to flooding. More serious

than that was that the ground was sinking; subsidence over the years had reached more than 50 centimeters (20 inches).

One school building was skewed out of shape because of the sinking, causing all sorts of problems. People routinely bumped their heads when using first-floor stairwells, which later compelled school administrators to downgrade first-floor classrooms to storage space.

The distortions made for unsafe conditions and a horrible sight. Zhou Zhi-tong (周芷彤), a ninth grader, remembers thinking her old classrooms would tumble at any time and that walking on the uneven steps of the staircases was like stepping on waves of water.

Lin Min-chao (林敏朝), director of Tzu Chi's construction department, could not believe his eyes when he saw the building. It was not even level, yet it was still in use. Lin found this amazing, especially since the sinking school was right in the middle of the city.

The administrators at Guo Feng, including the previous principal, Wu Bi-zhu (吳碧珠), had tried for years without luck to obtain funding to rebuild. She said that rebuilding costs had been estimated to be 200 million New Taiwan dollars (US\$6.7 million). Given the financial constraints of the county government and the priorities assigned to schools competing for reconstruction funding, Wu estimated the wait time for Guo Feng to receive funding would be ten years or longer.

Over her eight-year tenure at Guo Feng, she had been very concerned about the safety of her school. She lived in constant fear of earthquakes, which are commonplace in Hualien. She could not bring herself to imagine the consequences of a strong earthquake during the day, when students were in school.

"When I felt an earthquake at night," Wu said, "I sometimes wished that the temblor would take down my school. That way, funds would have to be allotted for rebuilding it."

Old buildings couldn't retire

Half a century ago, earthquake resistance was not something that architects thought much about when designing buildings. Many school buildings constructed to accommodate the influx of students as a result of the extended compulsory education featured exterior corridors without pillars for support, or exterior walls that includ-



A new five-story building stands tall on the campus of Ming Yih Elementary School, breathing new life into the nearly 80-year-old campus.



Tzu Chi's Project Disaster Reduction gives primary consideration to safety, from design to construction. Every month professionals check up on engineering and construction, so that every student can learn without worry.

ed many windows. Structural weaknesses in terms of earthquake resistance were commonplace back then.

Even worse, some schools simply added floors on top of existing buildings when they needed more room. Stacking extra floors on existing structures was less expensive than building new buildings from the ground up, so in an age of scarce funds, this was a path of least resistance.

When a big temblor shook Taiwan on September 21, 1999, several hundred schools on or near fault lines in the western half of Taiwan were toppled or badly damaged. On the eastern side of the island, where the quake was weaker, many schools, including the six schools featured

in this article, suffered less damage. As a result, many aged school buildings in this area continued to be used.

The central and local governments were all aware that the old buildings were not strong enough to withstand the force of earthquakes, but they were unable to do much about it, not quickly anyway. Even though the budget for school building improvements was limited, it wasn't too small—it was just that so many structures needed improvements. The problem simply dwarfed the budget.

Lin Ming-hui (林明輝), an official at the K-12 Education Administration at the Ministry of Education, pointed out that the central government had schools in Taiwan inspected by the National Center for Research on Earthquake Engineering (NCREE) after the 921 Earthquake to identify structures that would not likely withstand future earthquakes. Over the last eight years alone, 47 billion New Taiwan dollars



(US\$1.57 billion) were spent on rebuilding or reinforcing dangerous school buildings identified by the NCREE. That expenditure, though quite sizeable, has unfortunately been just a drop in a bucket.

In the 125 elementary and junior high schools in Hualien County, over 200 buildings were recommended by the NCREE to be rebuilt or reinforced.

Reinforcement, including enlarging columns and installing steel-reinforced concrete wing walls and shear walls, costs just one tenth as much as rebuilding and takes just one tenth the time to complete. Yet some buildings needed more than reinforcement; even with earthquake-resistant enhancements, some buildings still fell short of the required quake resistance. These structures remained in the queue for rebuilding and were projected to be there for at least ten years, if not 20, before it was their turn to be rebuilt. The waiting line was very long.

That was an unsettling situation, not something any concerned citizen could bear to see and not take action. After all, the lives of children were at stake.

Tzu Chi construction commissioners and construction department personnel inspect a school building under construction. They make sure the workmanship of each building under Project Disaster Reduction is up to par.

Shrinking the queue

After learning of the situation, Master Cheng Yen, the founder of Tzu Chi, decided to help. In 2014, the foundation initiated Project Disaster Reduction, whose goal was to help improve dangerous school buildings. It subsequently underwrote the construction of new buildings in 26 schools in Pingtung, Kaohsiung, Taitung, Hualien, and Miaoli counties. This was the largest campus rebuilding project the foundation had undertaken since Project Hope, an endeavor Tzu Chi embarked on to rebuild schools badly damaged in the massive earthquake of 1999.

According to Tsai Ping-Kun (蔡炳坤), CEO of the Tzu Chi Education Mission, the main point of Project Disaster Reduction is prevention. It is much better to prevent a disaster than to engage in disaster relief. This is especially important in Taiwan, an area prone to earthquakes and typhoons.

Yen Po-wen (顏博文), CEO of the Tzu Chi Charity Mission, admitted that the project was not without its critics, but Master Cheng Yen had held firm. "The future of our country rests on our children," Yen said. "It's vital that we give them safe places to learn."

Safety, environmental friendliness, and functionality are among the primary principles that guide all Tzu Chi construction projects. This disaster reduction project originated from the fear of destruction from earthquakes, so the project has paid extra attention to the quake-resistant ability of the buildings it has undertaken to build. "The government-mandated safety factor for buildings is 1, but Tzu Chi demands all school buildings it helps rebuild attain a safety factor of 1.2," said Hu Sheng-yong (胡勝勇), from Tzu Chi's construction department. "We strengthen the buildings even further if the school is situated near a fault line."

The buildings in this project are not just strong but also environmentally friendly. For example, rain collection systems are installed to supply water to irrigate the landscape and flush the toilets. Buildings are designed to optimize natural lighting and ventilation.

Take the multi-purpose activity center built for Yuli Junior High for example. Two walls feature ample windows, which, coupled with vents on the roof, allow hot air to quickly escape the building. The design leaves the interior cool even without air conditioning, which the building does not have.

There is another feature worth mentioning about this activity center: A railway runs right past it. To dampen the noise from passing trains, the side of the building facing the railroad was made windowless and the wall thickened. That relieved a problem that had plagued the old gymnasium that used to sit on this site. Back then, when someone was giving a speech in the gymnasium, his or her words were often drowned out by passing trains.

In addition to the thoughtful design of the buildings, the quality of construction and workmanship has been assured by Tzu Chi construction commissioners. Each month they visit the schools still under construction to ensure that the contractors have done their work according to the blueprints. They also help solve problems encountered during the building process.

Wang Ming-de (王明德) has volunteered as a construction commissioner for 33 years. He began in 1984, when Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital was

under construction. He commented that when it came to inspecting a building, "the higher up it is, the easier it is for quality to slip, so we make a point of checking high places." Though he is getting up in years, he's still quite healthy and often goes with other construction commissioners and Tzu Chi construction department staffers to examine construction in progress. They go high and low to check and ensure that the construction crew has carried out every fine detail according to the design and Tzu Chi standards.

"I actually go to the construction sites of my own company less often than I do Tzu Chi sites," Wang said with a chuckle. "After all, I've turned my company business over to my children and my employees. Yet I check on every building that Tzu Chi is constructing, at my own expense and on my own time. This is more like my full-time job."

Tzu Chi construction commissioners are all loving entrepreneurs like Wang. They care more about their volunteer work than about their personal businesses, and they do much more than inspecting and consulting.

For example, a music hall at a school under Project Disaster Reduction had been completed, but it was just a bare concrete shell with no acoustic equipment. The school would have had to wait another year to submit a budget for the equipment, but one of the dozen or so construction commissioners on the project happened to be an expert on acoustics. When he learned about the school's situation, he decided to pay for the equipment himself. Another commissioner did a similar thing except that this time it was for curtains. At yet another school, the playground was old and dilapidated and looked out of place on the rebuilt campus. In response, several commissioners pooled their money together and spruced up the playground.

Accommodating their needs

Some of the schools in Project Disaster Reduction offer special curricula or extracurricular programs to their students. Tzu Chi does its best to accommodate the needs of the schools when constructing buildings for them.

For instance, Ming Yih Elementary School is well known for its performing arts curricula. It offers classes dedicated to cultivating students talented in music or dance. Tzu Chi built a five-story building at Ming Yih that houses, among other



things, six ensemble classrooms, 22 small practice rooms, a dance classroom, and a concert hall.

"Students used to have to practice in a basement, which didn't have a tall ceiling," said dance teacher Huang Jun-wen (黃俊文). "They couldn't jump as high as they wanted to. But now in this tall, new dance classroom, they can get as high as they want. When their bodies stretch upward as freely as they want, they look so beautiful."

Over at Hua Ren Junior High School, Wu De-huan (吳德煥) teaches aboriginal dancing. He has coached and led the school aboriginal dance team to national championships. Despite the need for an indoor space for activities such as dance practice or sports during rainy days, the school never had such a facility in all of its 18 years in existence. Now thanks to Project Disaster Reduction, a new building is available for them to dance indoors. They quickly found an occasion to use it. The dance team had been scheduled to perform during the inauguration ceremony mentioned at the beginning of this article, so the dancers needed to rehearse. Though it rained nonstop during the days leading up to the ceremony, the

A teacher and students at Jia Min Elementary School walk on a sidewalk made of interlocking pavement bricks in front of a new school building.

team happily practiced in the new multi-purpose building. "Were it not for the new building, they couldn't possibly have practiced the way they did," Wu commented. "We appreciate the help of the foundation."

Tsai Ping-Kun, CEO of the Tzu Chi Education Mission, is happy to see the students at the recipient schools pursue their diverse interests. He hopes that each school, in addition to helping their students cultivate their talents and enhance their academic performance, can also work on nurturing their character.

Every brick and tile of the new school buildings was possible because of the donations of many loving people. The foundation hopes that the buildings will be like fertile soil for seedlings, supporting and sustaining every child as they pursue their dreams.

Help Them Shine

In the past, they lived in converted classrooms and on rainy days practiced soccer in the basement. Now they live comfortably in a dormitory, part of a new multi-purpose building that includes space to engage in different activities, including a basketball court and dance classrooms.

By Yang Shun-bin
Translated by Tang Yau-yang
Photos by Yan Lin-zhao



Students at Hua Ren Junior High School dance in a properly equipped new classroom.



Hua Ren students gather in a three-story multi-purpose activity center that boasts a basketball court, dance classrooms, and a dormitory.

With this new building, athletic students can now train indoors properly when it rains, and the school can hold large events without having to borrow the use of a nearby Hakka cultural center.



well in track and field, baseball, and soccer. Zhang Bo-ya (張博雅), for example, finished second and third in the women's 200-meter and 100-meter dash respectively at a national athletic contest for junior and senior high school students in 2017.

Other students have graduated from Hua Ren and gone on to become good professional athletes. Shao-Ching Chiang (江少慶) now pitches professionally for the Cleveland Indians in the United States, and Lin Guo-yu (林國裕) and Zheng Kai-wen (鄭鎧文) play professional baseball in Taiwan. They had all taken the athletics curriculum while in school at Hua Ren.

How did the school train and turn out so many good athletes without the benefit of a gymnasium? Where did they train on rainy days or during the annual monsoon?

When it rained, athletic students used hallways or basements to practice. Even then, they had to compete with students from social clubs and work out a schedule for use of the limited space. To add more covered space, the school had galvanized metal sheets installed between some classroom buildings—not quite ten meters (33 feet) apart—to serve as roofs under which students could exercise on rainy days.

“Don't forget the classmates around you—they might become important companions on your journey in life,” said Huang Qi (黃琦), an OB/GYN physician at Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital, speaking at the commencement ceremony at Hua Ren Junior High School on June 16, 2017. He himself had been among the first batch of graduates from the school in 2002.

The graduation ceremony was being held in a new multi-purpose activity center Tzu Chi had built for the school under Project Disaster Reduction. When Huang was a student at Hua Ren, he thought that a new gymnasium would surely be built before he graduated, but the land

slated for the gym had stayed vacant year after year, weeds growing unrestrained long after he had graduated.

He was very glad that a new activity center, and a nice one at that, was finally open to the students of his alma mater, presently enrolling about 360 students in 16 classes. Students and faculty had been dreaming of their own gym or activity center for 18 years.

Athletes without a gym

Hua Ren Principal Liang Zhong-zhi (梁仲志) said that a gymnasium had been in the original budget when the school was founded, but during

the construction of the school, a major earthquake struck on September 21, 1999, destroying many school buildings around Taiwan. Hua Ren was not damaged, but the budget for the gymnasium was moved elsewhere. Principals over the years had repeatedly requested that the gym budget be reinstated, but they had met with no success. The school had therefore been without a gym since its inception.

That was surprising—and perhaps a little painful—because the school was well-known in Hualien for nurturing excellent athletes. Hua Ren has a special curriculum for students who want to concentrate on athletics or sports. They compete



After practicing hard during the day on the school soccer field, athletic students can now get a good night's rest in their spacious dorm rooms.



None of those were ideal places for practice. The basements were poorly lit, and the confined space made people feel shut in. Worse, students coming in from the rain would invariably track in water on their shoes, and the terrazzo floors would become hazardously slippery. When the school soccer team practiced there, they had to control their kicks so that the balls would not break lights.

Athletic students typically lived on campus, but Hua Ren did not have a dormitory for them. Instead, they were put up in an old, unused classroom. All 30 of them lived in one classroom, like a military barracks, only worse.

"Those arrangements might have given the students fond memories after they left the school," said Liu Yi-chuan (劉義傳), the school baseball team coach. "But they weren't good for training."

All this inadequacy would vanish once a new facility opened.

A more ideal arrangement

Tzu Chi started the construction of a multi-functional activity center for Hua Ren in March 2016, as part of its Project Disaster Reduction. The three-story structure was completed in April 2017 and granted an occupancy permit in mid-June.

Just inside the building through the main entrance is the new basketball court, with unobstructed overhead space three stories high. This large space doubles as an auditorium for large crowds, so the school will no longer have to borrow the use of a nearby Hakka cultural center when they hold large events. An equipment room and a weight room are also on the first floor.

Access-controlled doors on either side of the building lead to spacious dance classrooms on the second floor and a dormitory for athletic students on the third floor.

In addition to the athletics curriculum, Hua Ren offers a special dance curriculum. Students taking the curriculum eagerly awaited the completion of the dance classrooms even while they were still under construction. According to Jiang Jia-jia (蔣佳珈), director of academic affairs at the school, the three classes—for seventh, eighth, and ninth graders—used to share two poorly equipped classrooms converted from counseling offices, a far cry from ideal for the students. The new multi-purpose activity center now provides dance students properly equipped spaces in which to practice. Each grade even gets its own classroom.

The dance curriculum, now in its fourth year, enrolls 31 students, most of whom had no formal dance training before they came to Hua Ren. Folk dance teacher Hu Yi-hui (胡依慧) said that the kids had worked hard and built their way up from the very basics. Little by little, they had learned enough to perform smoothly through a piece.

Hu grew up in Hualien. As a young student, she experienced firsthand the extreme shortage of resources in the area for people who wanted to study dancing. After she graduated from the National Taiwan University of Arts in New Taipei City three years ago, she returned to her home county to help aspiring dance students. They remind her where she was a few years ago.

It was a struggle for Hu and the students at the outset, but the teacher did not lower the bar. Now

The Hua Ren aboriginal dance team performs at the joint inauguration ceremony at which new structures built under Project Disaster Reduction were turned over to six Hualien schools.

the students are learning fast, and occasionally they can even improvise choreography during a piece.

The soccer program

The student dorm on the third floor has a capacity for 36 athletic students. On August 18, 2017, 30 athletes moved in, five to a room. That is a far better arrangement than before, when all 30 kids lived in one makeshift classroom. Zeng Yunhao (曾昀浩), who is on the school soccer team, said, "Before the dorm was finished, I liked to imagine that it would be like a high-end hotel. I really looked forward to moving in."

His teammate, forward Shen Wei-lun (沈緯綸), is the soul of the team and key to scoring. Surprisingly, he is reserved and shy in private. He won a filial piety award in 2017 from the Hualien County government for taking good care of his grandmother, who had raised him. He cherishes his private space in the new dorm, especially compared to the old one. Each night before going to bed, he makes a point of tidying up his room.

Zeng and Shen, graduates of Hua Ren and Nanhua elementary schools respectively, became interested in playing soccer in elementary school. They both wanted to continue playing in middle school to hone their techniques.

Meilun Junior High School used to be the only school in the county that offered a soccer curriculum. Because there wasn't enough space for all the students interested in that program, some had been forced to quit soccer when they moved on to junior high. That was one reason why Hua Ren Junior High established their soccer program, which, according to Principal Liang, has become a welcome outlet for interested graduates of elementary schools in the area.

The soccer program at Hua Ren offers its students more than training in ball handling, game strategies, and the like. It helps them build their character, too. Soccer coach Yin Chen-you (伊宸宥) remembered that his team once traveled to Taichung for a tournament. When they arrived, he asked the students to put themselves in the shoes of the housekeeping staff at the guesthouse where they were staying, and he told them to keep their



rooms clean. Listening to their coach, the students tidied up their rooms and made their beds each day before going out to compete so that the cleaning personnel would have less work to do. Surprised and touched by what they had done, the proprietor of the guesthouse refunded them 10,000 dollars (US\$333) to compliment them for such thoughtful behavior.

More than "I"

Principal Liang pointed out that while the education system in Taiwan for grades 1 through 12 used to focus more on students' academic

performance, the current education system encourages students to cultivate their talents and pursue their interests while continuing to nurture their academic abilities. At Hua Ren, they believe in the importance of character building, too. Starting this year, the school has sent new students to tour a Tzu Chi facility and work at an attached recycling station, making this experience a part of the orientation program for new students. School administrators believe this will help cultivate altruistic values in the students.

Student Lin You-rong (林佑容) said that the

tour had helped him learn more about Tzu Chi and appreciate that it is a joy to help others. He was thankful to the foundation for helping people in other countries on behalf of the people in Taiwan.

In the same spirit of nurturing kindness in students, each class at Hua Ren has a coin bank into which students can deposit their pocket change to help others.

"Other people have helped us," Liang said to his students. "We must keep that in mind, and when we have a chance we must in turn help those who need help too." ❦

Cool Under Pressure

By Huang Hsiu-hua

Translated by Tang Yau-yang

Photos by Yan Lin-zhao

Burn patients are advised to wear pressure garments 23 hours a day, for one to two years, to reduce scars. Now a consortium of organizations has developed a new compression fabric to make these garments more comfortable to wear.

With 60 percent of his body burned at the water park explosion accident in June 2015, Lin You-xuan is now well on his way to recovery. But he still needs to wear compression garments to reduce his scars. Here he is wearing the latest-version compression garment developed by DA.AI Technology and partners.





On behalf of their respective organizations, Wu Zhong-yong (second from left), chairman of Gwo Jyh Warp Knitting, Lee Kuei-chi (third from left), president of the Taiwan Textile Research Institute, and Walter Huang (黃華德, fourth from right), chairman of DA.AI Technology, donate 2,000 yards of compression fabric to the Sunshine Social Welfare Foundation. Ma Hai-hsia (fourth from left), chairperson of the Sunshine Foundation, received the fabric on behalf of her foundation.

COURTESY OF DA.AI TECHNOLOGY COMPANY

On the evening of June 27, 2015, throngs of young people flocked to the Formosa Fun Coast water park in Bali, New Taipei City, for a “Color Play Asia” party. Colored corn starch powder was sprayed into the air during the event to add to the excitement, but the good times instantly turned to tragedy when the powder exploded. Fifteen people died, and almost 500 people were burned. Most of the victims were between 18 and 29 years of age.

The number of fatalities was much lower than experts had predicted, thanks to the skill and dedication of countless medical caregivers, but the survivors nevertheless faced a daunting, painful, and long road to recovery.

After the initial period of urgent care—wound cleaning, skin transplantation, and infection control—patients entered a period of rehabilitation for the restoration of function. Pain and itching were their constant companions.

Along with daily massage and physical therapy, they also had their dressings changed every day and they had to wear compression garments to minimize the development of scars. Their most unbearable torture during this time was itchiness. New skin is extremely delicate; it is tender, sensitive, and itchy. The patient cannot scratch the itches since he must not break the skin and run the risk of infections.

Master Cheng Yen met many victims of the water park explosion and their families during her regular tour of Tzu Chi facilities around Taiwan in September 2015. She noticed that the victims, who were trying hard to keep still to show their respect, could not stop scratching or slapping their wounds. They appeared miserable. The Master really felt for them.

Upon her return to Hualien, she asked the DA.AI Technology Company, a social enterprise founded by some entrepreneurs who share Tzu

Chi ideals, to look into ways to improve the material used in compression garments so that they would be cooler, more breathable, and more comfortable to wear.

SERVICE

Mission impossible

In October 2015, Li Ding-ming (李鼎銘), the executive director of DA.AI Technology, and a few of his coworkers visited the Master at the Jing Si Abode, the Tzu Chi headquarters in Hualien. They had come with their minds made up to tell the Master that their company could not possibly comply with her request on technical grounds.

They explained to her that most pressure garments are made of nylon, entirely outside of their company’s area of expertise, which is making fibers from recycled PET bottles. They did not have what it took to make, much less improve, compression fabric.

After listening to their explanations, the Master said, “Try to look at this matter from the perspective of the young victims. If they were members of your own family, wouldn’t you do your utmost to try?”

Who could argue with that reasoning? The Master’s compassion moved Li and his team. DA.AI Technology subsequently decided to commit the necessary funds and personnel to the improvement of compression garments.

Lin Zheng-xiong (林正雄), who worked at DA.AI Technology, was assigned to lead the project. He had once worked at Academia Sinica, the foremost academic institution in Taiwan, which supports research activities in a broad variety of disciplines. His expertise was in biomedical sciences. After Lin received the assignment, one of the first things he did was visit the Sunshine Social Welfare Foundation, which has worked with burn patients since the 1980s, to better understand the material used in compression fabric.

First, Lin wanted to solve the heat-trapping problem of the material. He searched for fine, cool yarn to use, and he found it. Since warp-knitted fabric is typically used in making compression garments, he visited the Gwo Jyh Warp Knitting Industry Company in Longtan, northern Taiwan, and talked to its chairman, Wu Zhong-yong (吳中庸), about the project. Impressed by the Master’s compassion, Wu promised to do all he could to help with the project.

DA.AI Technology and Gwo Jyh thus began

their collaboration. Lin and his team at DA.AI researched how compression fabric was to be woven and spelled out the product specifications, which Gwo Jyh followed. They succeeded in producing cloth that was cool and highly breathable.

But then Lin came upon some important information when he was researching pressure garments: This kind of garment must provide compression of 25 mmHg or higher to effectively flatten and improve the appearance of scars.

Lin asked the Sunshine Social Welfare Foundation and several Taiwanese manufacturers of compression garments, but he found that none of them possessed an instrument to measure the force of compression for pressure garments. Eventually he found a maker of compression socks that owned the needed instrument. He asked the maker to measure the fabric they had produced and found that it was capable of delivering only 12 mmHg.

Lin bought a compression measuring instrument from Australia and purchased fabrics domestically and from abroad to study. Finally, after testing eight fabrics, he found one that produced the required pressure and had good breathability.

Lin studied this fabric in great detail and went to Gwo Jyh frequently to bounce ideas around. His energy and enthusiasm turned He Jia-mou (何佳謀), Gwo Jyh’s plant manager, into an active supporter of the project.

Lin realized he had to start with the yarn to boost the therapeutic efficacy of the resulting compression garment. For this, the Formosa Chemicals & Fibre Corporation (FCFC), which had long worked with Gwo Jyh in the textile industry, was enlisted to help. The corporation helped develop a customized cool yarn for the project, which was then woven into fabric by Gwo Jyh.

The fabric the team produced was cool, breathable, and comfortable to wear. Most importantly, it met the 25 mmHg requirement.

DIFFICULTY

The 25 mmHg challenge

Why is that number so important?

The heart contracts to circulate blood rich with oxygen and nutrients to the body. The blood starts out at a high pressure, but that diminishes as the blood travels farther away from the heart. The pressure drops to about 25 mmHg by the time the blood reaches the terminal capillaries just under the skin—where most burn scars are located.

If no external pressure is applied to restrict the blood flow, then oxygen and other nutrients reach the scar tissues. As a result, the scars grow, become more pinkish, and protrude. The bumpy and unsightly scar tissue often causes victims to withdraw from social interactions.

Compression garments that deliver 25 mmHg of pressure to the skin keep blood from reaching burn scars and thus deprive them of the opportunity to grow. The scar tissues starve, wither, and shrink, which in turn makes the skin smoother.

It took Lin seven months to research all the fabrics, from all that they had purchased to their own design. With each fabric, he made a tight sleeve for his own arm and then measured the force the sleeve exerted on his arm. He came to the conclusion that the tensile force of a fabric had to reach 3.8 pounds to deliver the goal of 25mmHg pressure. He also concluded that the longitudinal and latitudinal tensile force of the fabric had to be vastly different: 4.0 pounds and 0.6 pound respectively. The greater tension was necessary to efficiently suppress scar growth and the lesser tension to allow free bodily movement for the wearer.

Lin also made adjustments to the typical pattern for making a compression garment so that the tension a garment exerts on the skin is tailored to local needs. A physical therapist usually needs to feel the fit of a typical compression garment on the patient, and then he either takes in a quarter of an inch here or loosens a half inch there to reach the desired compression at as many locations as possible. Lin's compression garment has such adjustments largely built in.

Lin addressed another issue: Whether or not the wearer notices it, garments and skin rub against each other. Such rubbing becomes a problem for the ultra-sensitive skin of burn patients. Lin worked with Gwo Jyh in designing their fabric so that the skin-touching side would create a lot less friction than a traditional fabric and be smoother on the skin.

Before testing their compression fabric with humans on a greater scale, DA.AI Technology recruited five burn patients with the help of the Sunshine Social Welfare Foundation to do preliminary testing. One of the testers was once a competitive swimmer. The right sleeve of his test garment was made with traditional fabric; the left sleeve was constructed of DA.AI fabric. He underwent physical therapy diligently every day. The frequent motions caused the right sleeve to slack-

en and lose compression so that the team had to take in the sleeve almost every week to keep it taut on his right arm. Eventually, the sleeve lost its elasticity altogether. On the other hand—or shall we say, “on the other arm,” (pun intended)—the left sleeve, made of the new fabric, received high marks from the swimmer for both maneuverability and compression.

Though the new fabric worked very well, some testers complained that its flesh color was downright ugly. That took Lin by surprise. It never occurred to him that this would be an issue. “What color they wear matters to these young people,” Lin said, “For them, even compression garments must have a sense of fashion.”

Listening to this feedback, he and the Gwo Jyh team got busy again. Gwo Jyh carefully chose a non-toxic dye that would not hurt the skin. Then they subjected it to allergy reaction tests. After much work, they were successful in producing the new compression fabric in black.

NUMBERS

Efficacy by the numbers

The compression fabric developed by DA.AI and its partners began formal testing on June 2, 2016. Twenty-nine burn patients were recruited to participate in the testing. After drawing lots, some testers wore regular compression fabric on their upper body and the DA.AI fabric on their lower body; some wore the opposite; and some wore the new fabric for both upper and lower bodies.

DA.AI Technology purchased a device that could measure changes in the color of the testers' scars. Tzu Chi volunteers were recruited to help do the measuring. To prepare for this assignment, more than 70 volunteers learned from DA.AI R&D staffers Wang Yan-wen (王妍文) and Huang Yu-jin (黃毓瑾) how to use the instrument. The two staffers also taught the volunteers how to measure the pressure applied by a compression garment. In addition, the volunteers learned about burn scars from Song You-li (宋有礪), deputy director of the Taipei rehabilitation center of the Sunshine Social Welfare Foundation. Then the volunteers gathered at a Tzu Chi office to try on compression garments so that they would know how to better help burn victims put on or take off the garments.

Many of the volunteers were already familiar with burn injuries. Most of them had helped care for victims of the water park explosion. For the garment test, the volunteers measured and record-



Compression garments must provide a pressure of 25 mmHg or higher to effectively reduce scars.

Measuring the color of a scar provides a scientific way of understanding the efficacy of a compression garment.

COURTESY OF DA.AI TECHNOLOGY COMPANY

ed garment pressure and scar color twice a week for a month, and then once a week for the remaining five months of the experiment.

Volunteers also took the opportunity to massage the burn scars of the victims to help soften or loosen them. Volunteer Lin Chun-jin (林春金) visited the New Taipei rehabilitation center of the Sunshine Foundation every week to work with the compression garment testers. She said of the young people under her care, “I can’t bear to see them so badly injured, so I do as much as I can to help them.” She knew that the parents of the testers had already worked exceedingly hard to care for their children after they were burned, so she wanted to take some of the load off their shoulders, if only for a little while. She gave shiatsu massages to the victims’ burn scars, focusing on each scar for about three minutes. It took her one to two hours to massage all the scars for just one patient, and the

patient often enjoyed it so much that he or she would fall asleep. Some even exclaimed, “This feels really good!”

The relief had come to them free, but at a cost to Lin: Her hands or arms often hurt from overexertion. Like the other volunteers, though, she did not think much of her own pain. “Some of the children came in here on tiptoes because the scars on the backs of their knees were so tight that they couldn’t put their feet flat on the ground,” she said. “But after we massaged them for two hours, they were able to walk out of here normally. That gave us such a great sense of accomplishment that no words could ever adequately describe it.”

Six months of measuring, recording, and caring passed and the test came to an end. The test participants were asked to rate the volunteers who had cared for them, and every one of them gave a perfect score.



The measurement logs that the volunteers had kept were jam-packed with useful numbers, which, after being analyzed, proved that the compression garments used in the test were indeed effective. “The redness of the scars decreased to about 60 percent of what it was at the outset of the test,” said Lin, the project leader.

DONATION

A newer version

Besides the data that was collected, the volunteers also provided Lin lots of information that they had acquired from the test participants while working with them. It included the following: The garment tended to slip downwards during workouts, which made the fabric pile up; the threads in the fabric tended to break after the garment had been altered and sewn multiple times; and extended wearing of compression masks might lead to folliculitis, an infection in the hair follicles.

The feedback led Lin and Gwo Jyh to critically review their fabric, including the flexibility and range of motion it allowed its wearer. They revised the patternmaking and manufacturing process and created a newer, improved version.

Compression garments made of this fabric have received good marks from people who have tried them on. Lin You-xuan (林佑軒) wore the older version for half a year, but now he has moved on to the latest. “The new version has kept the good characteristics of the old one, like good breathability, the cooling effect, and the high compression. But it has improvements too, including being less tight and more durable. It’s really comfortable to wear.”

User feedback like this was music to the ears of the developers. The participants in the project—DA.AI Technology, Gwo Jyh, the Sunshine Foundation, and FCFC—had spent 21 months to get this far and receive such positive feedback.

On June 23, 2017, the project team held a pre-

Lin Zheng-xiong (right) often visited Gwo Jyh Warp Knitting during the compression fabric project. He has become very good partners with two Gwo Jyh employees, He Jia-mou (left) and Jian Jin-cheng (簡進成).

Gwo Jyh keeps an old machine that can make highly elastic compression fabric. Though there is no profit in the project, the company doesn’t mind at all.

sentation of the product at the Taiwan Textile Research Institute (TTRI). Lee Kuei-chi (李貴琪), president of TTRI, piled accolades on the fabric, whose success he attributed to the close collaboration of the project participants. His talk was followed by a donation: Gwo Jyh, TTRI, and DA.AI jointly gave 2,000 yards of the latest compression fabric to the Sunshine Foundation to be made into a thousand compression garments. The finished garments would be given to 500 burn victims, each receiving two garments so they could have a change of clothes.

Ma Hai-hsia (馬海霞), the chairperson of the Sunshine Foundation, thanked the three parties for their donation and promised to keep improving the foundation’s services so that burn victims could be more comfortable during their rehabilitation.

Shu Ching-hsien (舒靜嫻), Sunshine CEO, observed that the explosion at the Formosa Fun Coast water park, though most unfortunate, had brought out the most beautiful scenes in the world—people working together to relieve the suffering of the victims.

DA.AI Technology obtained two patents in May 2017, one for a compression garment and the other for a highly elastic, breathable, warp-knitted fabric. The patents signify that the DA.AI expertise in this area has won affirmation and surpassed its competition. Lin pointed out that the market for compression garments is very small, limiting the size of the profit. As a result, little effort had been devoted to developing them. He attributed the successful development of their new fabric to the desire on the part of the participating organizations to do something for burn victims. The partners in the project did not do it for profit, so costs were of little concern. The Sunshine Foundation helped recruit burn patients to try on the garments and provide feedback, which led to modifications that resulted in a successful product.

Lin is also proud that the project team has captured the detailed steps of making such a fabric and can tailor the garments in standardized and scientific models that can be applied repeatedly to produce the same satisfactory product. He sincerely hopes that their compression fabric will ease and shorten burn patients’ journey to recovery.



She Kept Going

By Huang Xiao-zhe and Cai Yu-xuan

Translated by Tang Yau-yang

Photos by Huang Xiao-zhe

We dedicate this article to the memory of Jiang Liu-mei, who passed away on October 8, 2017.

Jiang Liu-mei

Many older volunteers in Tzu Chi are simple, down-to-earth, and endearing people. Responding to Master Cheng Yen's call to recycle, they throw themselves into the work with a dedication that is nothing short of admirable. They may not speak eloquently about their task, but they surely do it with determination.

My photographer and I first met Jiang Liu-mei (姜流妹) in early June 2017 at the Tzu Chi Shuanghe Recycling Station in northern Taiwan. Her face, though roughened by age, was adorned with a beautiful smile. She said little as she tore apart piece after piece of paper to separate the printed portion from the rest—paper sorted this way fetches more money when sold to recyclers. My eyes were immediately drawn to her wrinkled hands as they went through the monotonous, repetitive motions. Such seemingly simple yet monotonous work is the best test to one's patience.

Jiang was born in 1924. At age three she was sent to another family as a bride-in-waiting; in other words, she was adopted as a child bride by her future in-laws—a prevailing custom at the time. She started helping with house chores when she was five, and began caring for children younger than herself at age seven. She married at 18. Her husband died in an auto accident when she was 47, leaving her the heavy burden of supporting her family.

She fought back her tears as she recalled those hard days, but she regarded her lot in life with a sense of resignation. She was born at a time in Taiwan when boys were preferred to girls. It was just the way life was for many women of that era. However, the difficulty and toil of her past had strengthened her spirit. Despite being advanced in age, despite all her aches and pains, she still worked hard on recycling every day.



Dedication

Jiang joined Tzu Chi's recycling work in 1999. She was 75 then and very agile in her work. She picked up recyclables in her community and at traditional marketplaces. No matter how big the load was, she could handle it.

During that time, she walked and then took a bus to the Jinhe Recycling Station every day to sort out reusable garbage. She only stopped going there after the new Shuanghe Recycling Station opened in 2011. She was 87 then. She had become much less nimble, but her devotion to recycling remained as strong as ever. She began volunteering at the Shuanghe station every day. Since she was old, her son did not feel it right to let her make the daily trip alone, so he took her to the recycling station in

the morning and picked her up in the late afternoon. She worked there about eight hours a day, but she always wanted to work longer.

Age eventually caught up with her. She became markedly more feeble, especially after she turned 90. Her aches and pains became more obvious, and she spent several stints in the hospital. Despite all that, she kept up her work at the recycling station.

But in a recent visit to the station, we did not see her. We learned that she had been hospitalized for more than a month. The other volunteers at the station had kept her seat, hoping that she would return and join them soon, and continue doing the Earth a good turn.

A treasure of the world

One day we went to the hospital to see Jiang. We went with Xie Su-zhen (謝素珍), who also volunteered at the Shuanghe station.

At the hospital, we found Jiang lying in her bed, looking very frail and emaciated. She seemed too weak to even open her eyes and talk. Xie held Jiang's hand tight and said softly to her: "Hang in there. Everything will be all right. We're waiting for you at the recycling station. Return and join us soon, okay?"

To everyone's surprise, Jiang's eyes suddenly popped open and she answered with all her might, "Okay." Everyone's heart lifted, and hope was reignited that she might eventually recover. We took out the photos that we had taken of her at the recycling station. She opened her eyes again to look at them. When she saw herself in the photos wearing her recycling volunteer uniform, she broke into a smile that people around her hadn't seen in a long time. It became crystal clear to us in that instant how much she loved recycling.

"When she wakes up, the first thing that comes to her mind is recycling," Jiang's son said of his mother. He told us that even after coming out of a lengthy coma, the first thing she asked was, "Where are my scissors? I need them to cut paper for recycling."

Though tormented with illness and pain, she never complained or whined. She realized that her time in the world was dwindling, but still she didn't given up recycling. She hoped to live her remaining days to the utmost by dedicating what little time she had left to a meaningful cause. She identified with a worthy goal, devoted herself to it, and stayed true to her commitment, never wavering for any reason.

It is no wonder that Master Cheng Yen deeply cherishes Jiang Liu-mei and other volunteers like her. In her eyes, they are the living treasures of the world. ❀



A Son's Love

By Guo Feng-yi and Wang Yunxiu
Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting
Photos by Wang Yunxiu

He couldn't visit his mother's grave on his own because he was blind, so Tzu Chi volunteers took him there. He said to his mother, "Mom, don't worry about me. Look how many kind-hearted people are here to help me."



As soon as Liu Aimin (劉愛民), close to 60, heard the Tzu Chi volunteers' footsteps, he hurried out of his home to greet them. In his excitement he even forgot to grab his walking stick, which he relied on to get around. "Come on in, come on in," he called out cheerfully to his visitors.

A drizzle was falling, but the light rain made the kitchen garden in front of Liu's home look all the more lush and green. He smiled at the volunteers, looking very happy.

Liu had lived his entire life with his mother, Qiu Yulian (邱玉蓮), until she passed away over three months earlier, in June 2017. When volunteers learned of Liu's situation, they decided to visit him and see if he needed help. A group of volunteers from Beijing and Yixian, Hebei Province, China, arrived at Liu's home in a mountain village in Yixian in early October 2017.

The visitors greeted Liu and entered his home. As soon as they stepped in, they were surprised by how clean the house was—it was spotless. It was hard for them to believe that the house belonged to a blind man who lived alone and who had no one but himself to rely on to keep the house in order.

The volunteers helped Liu sit down on a small sofa where his mom used to sit. He reminisced about her to the volunteers, telling them what a loving mother she had been. Then he said with a sigh that because of his blindness, he hadn't been able to visit her grave. He missed her and often felt lonely, but without help it wasn't possible for him to make the trip to the gravesite.

When they heard Liu's dilemma, the volunteers jumped into action. Some went to prepare fruits they could take as offerings to the grave. Others sought help from neighbors who knew the way to the grave. When everything was ready, they set off.

The mountain trail leading to the grave was littered with fallen leaves, which crunched under their feet. The falling drizzle bounced off the perennials that grew on some trees along the way.



Liu and his mom at a Tzu Chi winter aid distribution in 2011.

LIU YI

Two volunteers flanked Liu, each taking one of his arms and carefully helping him along the trail so that he wouldn't slip and fall. Though the grave was just a short distance from Liu's home, it was an unmanageable trek for someone without the benefit of sight.

The volunteers arranged the fruit they had brought in front of the grave, lighted some incense sticks, and handed them to Liu, who knelt down to pay his respects to his mother. Taking their place behind him, the volunteers lightly chanted the Buddha's name.

"Mom, do you hear that?" said Liu. "So many good-hearted people have come to see you. Don't worry about me. I'm doing very well. You can rest in peace."

He continued: "Mom, you used to like to listen to songs. Let me sing your favorite song for you...."

Liu's loud, bright voice rang out in the mountains. His love and longing for his mother moved those around him to tears.

Fending for each other

Tzu Chi volunteers first met Liu and his mother in 2011 when they were visiting some needy families in Yixian before a winter aid distribution. When they arrived at the Liu home that first time, they were impressed by the well-tended kitchen garden in front of the house. The mother was old and frail and the son visually impaired, yet they gave the garden such good care that the vegetables flourished vibrantly.

After talking to the mother and son, they learned how Liu had lost his sight. When he was 12, he was playing at school one day when a small piece of rock from a nearby construction site hit his right eye. Blood instantly streamed down his face. He was rushed to a hospital in Beijing, but his eye was beyond saving. His left eye then became infected and subsequently went blind too. His world was plunged into darkness, and its exuberant colors became just a memory.

The volunteers were sorry for what had happened to Liu, but at the same time they were touched by the love between mother and son and how well they took care of each other. Qiu was petite, just 150 centimeters (4 feet 9 inches) tall,

and a little hard of hearing because of her age. Her son served as her ears and she as his eyes, the two of them fending for each other in their indigent life.

Liu lavished care on his mom. Every morning he brought her water in a basin so she could wash her face. Then he fixed breakfast. His mom only needed to build the fire; Liu took care of everything else, from washing vegetables and cooking to scrubbing pots and pans. He did the other chores around the house too: washing clothes, fetching water, mopping the floor, tending to the garden—he was always one step ahead of his mom when it came to doing the chores.

Winter was the hardest season for them. It was freezing cold, but they were too poor to buy coal. Being sightless, Liu couldn't chop firewood either. As a result, he visited the nearby woods every day and collected fallen leaves and branches to use as fuel to keep his mom warm.

One day in the winter of 2010, Qiu's body temperature suddenly plummeted. Liu shook her lightly to wake her up, but she remained uncon-

scious. Scared, Liu burst into loud wails and yelled to his neighbors for help. Together they took Qiu to the hospital. They saved her life, but her condition was at one time so critical that Liu even had her coffin ready in a storeroom at home.

The sun rose and fell, rose and fell. Night followed day, winter gave way to spring. Soon, seven years had passed. The coffin containing the remains of Liu's mother was now six feet under. She passed away on June 18, 2017, at the age of 88. The mother who had kept him company for nearly 60 years had departed to another world. Liu could no longer hear her calling his name. All he could hear from his house now was birds chirping and the wind rustling through the trees.

A warm gathering

After Liu and the group returned home from the gravesite, a few volunteers began bustling around the kitchen. Some built a fire to cook, some chopped vegetables, some kneaded dough. Each was busy and everything proceeded in good order.



The son served as his mother's ears and she as his eyes. GUO FENG-YI



Tzu Chi volunteers led Liu to his mother's grave to pay his respects.



Volunteers make dumplings at Liu's home.

A volunteer puts some dumplings into boiling water to cook.

Liu ate over 30 of the dumplings.



Liu Aimin, Tzu Chi volunteers, and neighbors pose for a photo.

The volunteers were making dumplings. The filling consisted of cabbage, shiitake mushrooms, and other things, all purchased from a farmer's market that very morning. A group of volunteers went to invite some neighbors to the gathering too, hoping that they would help take care of Liu in the future.

Soon, Liu's small house was packed with more than 20 people. Many hands made light work. With everyone's help, over 600 dumplings were made in short order and put into water to boil.

"The dumplings are ready. Come eat, everyone," someone yelled. The steaming hot dumplings were brought to the table. They looked yummy, accompanied by red peppers and carrots contributed by the neighbors.

As they dug into the dumplings, Liu recalled how his mom used to love this food. In June 2017, a short time before her birthday, he asked someone to buy some frozen dumplings for him to celebrate her birthday. Sadly, just a couple of days after the celebration, she died of a heart attack.

This was the first time Liu had had dumplings since his mother passed. He enjoyed the food so

much he ate over 30 of them, over twice as much as Chinese usually eat at one sitting. "The dumplings smell so good—so much better than those store-bought dumplings we used to have. It's a pity Mom couldn't have some." In each fully stuffed dumpling, he tasted not just the delicious flavors of the ingredients, but also the sweet, rich warmth of people caring for people.

Before they left, the volunteers helped sort Liu's clothes into categories by season. They also patched his torn clothes, and gave him a few woolen caps and warm trousers they had purchased for him. They gave Liu a radio too, hoping that it would keep him company and help fill the void left behind by his mom's absence.

The volunteers told Liu they would come back in a month to visit him. Liu reluctantly said goodbye to them, and then he heard their footsteps fading as they left. Though he had lost his mom, the volunteers would come back again and again to continue her love. ☸

We Just Want to Say **THANK YOU**

Over six years have passed since a massive earthquake and tsunami hit Japan in 2011, but a group of Japanese haven't forgotten the Tzu Chi volunteers who brought them aid after the catastrophe.

By Xu Li-xiang

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Photos by Wu Hui-chen



In March 2011, northeast Japan was devastated by a major earthquake and tsunami. In the aftermath of the catastrophe, Tzu Chi volunteers distributed emergency cash aid to over 90,000 families in the prefectures of Iwate, Miyagi, and Fukushima. Six and a half years later, a group of volunteers returned to one of the disaster areas—Natori, Miyagi Prefecture—where a thank-you party was awaiting them.

Kozo Ono was a resident of Natori. Though he and his family emerged from the disaster unscathed, his mother's and brother's houses were damaged. As a result, they both received cash aid from Tzu Chi.

In 2015, Ono's daughter, Ai, came to Taiwan to study, but she died in an accident. When Ono visited Taiwan after the tragedy to put things in order, Tzu Chi volunteers extended care and assistance to him. Their kindness reminded him that a group of survivors in Natori had been looking for the Tzu Chi volunteers who had delivered aid to them after the 3/11 earthquake, but they had had no success. This planted the seed of an idea in his mind: He would help bring about a reunion.

For over six years, Setsuko Sato had kept the envelope that the Tzu Chi emergency cash aid had come in. She said that these words on the envelope had brought her a lot of encouragement: "Nothing is impossible with confidence, perseverance, and courage."

On August 13, 2017, Ono visited the Tokyo Tzu Chi office. He told the staff there that some residents in Natori who had received help from Tzu Chi volunteers after the 3/11 earthquake wanted to thank them for giving them a hand, but they had no idea how to make contact. The residents had made some traditional rag dolls to express their gratitude, and they hoped to deliver them personally to Tzu Chi headquarters in Taiwan, but they hadn't been able to fulfill that wish yet. Ono said he would like to help the two sides meet.

His idea became a reality on October 22, 2017. Nine volunteers from Tokyo and Ishinomaki, Miyagi Prefecture, arrived at an activity center in Sugigafukuro Minamimachi, Natori. They were greeted with the warm applause of more than 40 residents. The venue was gaily decorated, with



tables laden with locally grown fruits, homemade cuisine, and pickled vegetables.

Tetsutoshi Sato was the head of the local neighborhood association when the disaster struck in March 2011. He said that his heart ached when he saw the physically and mentally fatigued survivors living in shelters after the earthquake. He talked with his wife, Setsuko, about how to help his fellow villagers carry on, but at the same time he realized that he had to take care of himself first. He started growing all sorts of fruits and vegetables. In fact, he had grown much of the food served at the thank-you event.

Sato said that he had been moved after the calamity in 2011 when he learned that a charity group from Taiwan was distributing cash to survivors. After the distribution,

Tzu Chi volunteers held a cash distribution in Natori, Miyagi Prefecture, on October 23, 2011, for victims of the 3/11 earthquake and tsunami.

A performance at the thank-you party



he knew that he and his fellow villagers should thank the group, but he didn't know how. His wife came up with the idea of a thank-you party, and that was how this event came to be.

Speaking at the event, he said that he was very thankful for the timely help delivered by Tzu Chi that year. He remarked that he had been overwhelmed with emotion when he toasted the volunteers a few minutes before. He expressed hope that the friendship between the villagers and Tzu Chi, forged during a difficult time, would continue.

Handmade rag dolls

During the event, Setsuko, Sato's wife, led a team of residents to present to the Tzu Chi volunteers some traditional rag dolls they had made. She commented that after searching for six years, their desire to thank Tzu Chi had finally come true.

Setsuko once taught a community calisthenics class, but she stopped after the earthquake. She said that she still had the envelope that had contained Tzu Chi's cash aid. Whenever she had felt down over the last six years, she'd read the aphorism by Master Cheng Yen printed on the envelope: "Nothing is impossible with confidence, perseverance, and courage." She drew strength from the words to keep going. "I keep the envelope in my bedroom. I keep it close to me," said Setsuko.

After the disaster, she taught calisthenics and Japanese dance to villagers for free, just to add some cheer to their lives. She also rounded up 19 fellow villagers, and together they made *sarubobo* dolls in the activity center. They bonded with each other through this activity and helped each other through the difficult time. Some people who couldn't come to the center made dolls at home.

Sarubobo dolls are amulets, particularly associated with the Hida region of Japan. They are said to bring good fortune to those who receive them. They are traditionally faceless, but Setsuko and the other women in the community added facial features to their dolls to make them look cuter. The dolls they presented to the Tzu Chi volunteers embodied their deepest gratitude.

In appreciation for this gift, Xu Li-xiang (許麗香), CEO of Tzu Chi Japan, gave the villagers some coin banks with ant-shaped dolls attached.

Sarubobo dolls like these were presented to Tzu Chi volunteers at the thank-you party as a token of appreciation.

She explained to them the meaning of a Tzu Chi coin bank: Even though an individual's strength may be as limited as an ant's, there is the power to change the world by pooling together everyone's strength. The money that Tzu Chi distributed after the 3/11 earthquake was a perfect example—the huge total amount of money was possible only through countless small donations from around the world.

After the party, everyone deposited some money into coin banks brought by the volunteers to donate to Tzu Chi. Kazue Takaku said that she was amazed by how little bits of strength here and there could accumulate into a powerful force. She felt that this was very meaningful.

Tears of joy

Keiko Kikuchi couldn't take her eyes off volunteer Wu Hui-chen (吳惠珍). She wanted to make sure that Wu was the one from whom she had received her cash aid six years before. When she was certain she was the one, she grew very



Natori Mayor Shiro Yamada puts money into a Tzu Chi coin bank at the gathering.

emotional, hugging Wu and crying and laughing at the same time.

Kikuchi said she never imagined that she would meet Wu again. She told Wu that though her family's life wasn't yet back to what it had been before, they were all doing very well and they were back to growing vegetables again.

Kazuo Aihara, the current head of the local neighborhood association, said that he was incredulous when he first heard back then that a Taiwanese charity organization was coming to their area to distribute cash. Such monetary aid was much needed at the time. What's more, the good intentions and best wishes behind it served to make the victims less scared and anxious.

The 3/11 earthquake had inflicted deep wounds, Aihara said. While it might take a shorter time to rebuild the physical infrastructure, the mental wounds would take longer to heal—five years, ten years, or even longer. When he recalled the devastation of the earthquake and the difficult time after, he choked up. He

humbly emphasized that the thank-you party couldn't even begin to repay Tzu Chi for its help. However, it was at least a token of their utmost, sincerest gratitude.

Shiro Yamada, mayor of Natori, thanked the foundation for their aid and for bringing warmth to those affected by the disaster. He said that his city had worked hard on reconstruction, which was finally nearing completion. That they could successfully rebuild was due to the love from Taiwan, Tzu Chi, and all over the world.

In addition to the local cuisine, the volunteers were treated to a Japanese dance performance and harmonica concert. When the event had come to an end, the villagers made arches with their arms which the guests walked through. Everyone said goodbye amidst warm laughter. They were planning to have another meeting soon.

Before the volunteers set off on their way home, they visited the home of Kozo Ono, who had brought about the reunion. Though the passing of his daughter was a heartbreaking event, it had reconnected the local people and Tzu Chi volunteers. It provided some comfort to the father that so much good had come from tragedy. ♣

The Illustrated JING SI APHORISMS

The Buddha says:

It is not the people who resent or hate you...
Your own mind is your worst enemy!
The evil things you do because of your bad thoughts
harm you much more than your enemies.



The worries in your own mind are much more fierce than any enemies outside you. Therefore, you should constantly stay alert. Don't let your conscience fall asleep.

Once your conscience falls asleep, you will start to commit all kinds of evil deeds—killing, stealing, adultery, lying...



Many teachers feel a sense of helplessness in trying to teach their students to be good people.

It is not enough to just educate students. We must also educate the families of these students. Problem students usually come from problem families.

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



Malaysia

In early November 2017, flash floods caused by hours of torrential rain resulted in severe devastation in Penang, killing seven people and forcing 6,000 into shelters. Tzu Chi volunteers promptly mobilized to render aid.

On November 5, before the floods had even receded, volunteers began distributing hot meals in disaster areas and temporary shelters. Medical volunteers joined in the relief effort by providing free medical care to survivors. After the floodwaters had subsided, volunteers from all over Malaysia put in 8,000 shifts to help clean up flooded neighborhoods. Volunteers also went from door to door to distribute emergency cash cards to affected families to help them through this difficult time.

Tzu Chi volunteers in Malaysia hit the streets to raise donations to support the relief effort. Volunteers in Melaka, for example, held over 50 fundraising events at shopping malls, night markets, schools, and scenic sites from November 15 to

Tzu Chi volunteers distribute hot meals to flood victims in Penang, Malaysia.

18. Donation boxes in hand, volunteers appealed to passersby to give to the flood victims. Many people deposited money into the boxes. One man said that whenever he saw a donation box, he would drop money into it to help those in need.

By November 26, volunteers had provided 10,015 hot meals, handed out 5,893 bags of relief goods, distributed cash cards to 5,858 families, and treated 881 patients.

Chen Jia En (陳家恩), a victim, said with a sob that the first group that came to their aid after the flood was Tzu Chi. Volunteers came to her home and helped move soaked mattresses, cupboards, and other furniture out of her home. Later, she and her family received a cash card from the foundation. She said that when her family's financial situation improved, she would donate the same amount on the card to Tzu Chi to help other needy people.

Myanmar

Tzu Chi volunteers and members of the Myanmar chapter of the Tzu Chi International Medical Association (TIMA) conduct a free clinic in a different remote village in Myanmar every month. On November 11, such a clinic was offered at Aung Theik Monastery School in Bago Region. Six doctors, eight nurses and 34 volunteers worked together to serve people in need.

Villagers living in areas near the temple have to travel a long way to see a doctor. Volunteers hope to save them some trouble by providing free medical care to them. At the event on November 11, a medical worker also gave a talk on health and hygiene to some students at the school. This was the second time Tzu Chi had held a free clinic at the temple school.

At the venue, volunteers noticed that many students' fingernails were long, jagged, and rimmed with black. They knew that it was because the youngsters didn't have nail scissors and could only chew their nails short. A volunteer took out her scissors and began cutting the students' nails for them. This shows the type of loving care volunteers try to provide.

Dr. Khin Mar Thu carefully examined every patient. She had attended the 2017 TIMA conference in Taiwan in October and learned how other TIMA doctors treated patients with love and care. She returned home with a renewed dedication to serving her fellow countrymen the best she could.

Over 400 patients were seen on this day. Having six doctors on hand really made a differ-

Tzu Chi Myanmar held a free clinic at Aung Theik Monastery School in Bago Region on November 11, 2017.



Tzu Chi volunteers distribute cash cards at the Santa Rosa Local Assistance Center.

ence. Dr. Tin Mar Htet said that if there had been only two doctors, the event could have extended well into the evening. But with six doctors, they were able to finish seeing all the patients by two o'clock that afternoon.

After the free clinic had concluded, the Tzu Chi team donated some medicine to the temple to further help villagers in need.

United States

Tzu Chi volunteers mobilized to help victims after a series of wildfires started in Northern California in early October 2017. Volunteers set up desks at Local Assistance Centers in Santa Rosa and Napa and distributed cash cards to help families affected by the fires.

By November 12, Tzu Chi had distributed cash cards to over 1,100 families. Julie, an aid recipient who received a cash card on October 22 at a distribution in Santa Rosa, said, "I can't even begin to tell you how much it means to me. More than the money...that people care. That meant more than anything to me."

Another victim, JP, received a cash card from Tzu Chi volunteers on November 12 at the Santa Rosa Local Assistance Center. He told volunteers that he had lived in his home for over 40 years until the wildfires rendered him homeless overnight. Even though he had not cried over the loss of his home to the fires, the generosity and love from Tzu Chi moved him to tears on this day. Their support helped rekindle his confidence to keep going and to rebuild his home. ♣

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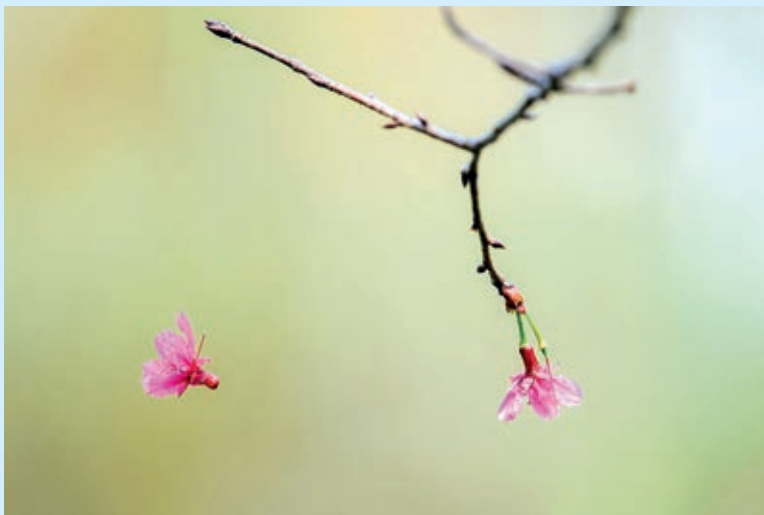
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The key to doing good is not the amount done but doing whatever should be done.

—Master Cheng Yen

PHOTO BY LI BAI-SHI