

慈濟

Tzu Chi

Buddhism
in Action



Free Clinics for
Syrian Refugees

November 2018

Delivering Care to Flood Victims

Translated by Teresa Chang



A Tzu Chi volunteer wades through floodwaters to extend care to flood victims and learn about what Tzu Chi can do to help.

HUANG XIAO-ZHE

Heavy rains caused severe flooding in southern Taiwan in late August. The situation was especially dire in some rural villages in Chiayi and Tainan, where many young people had left for work in the cities. The older people left behind watched helplessly as the water levels rose. Many had to handle the aftermath alone, without the aid of young people nearby. Whenever I heard about the situations of the villagers and their helplessness, my mind seemed to suffer a deluge too.

Thankfully, we live in a world in which there is no lack of selfless love. Wherever there is a disaster, we see people rushing to the aid of those in need.

Tzu Chi volunteers mobilized immediately after the floods to provide hot meals for flood victims. Nutritionists and other staffers from Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital, in Chiayi, pitched in to help prepare food too. However, many areas were still flooded at the time—how could they deliver the food they had made to those who needed it? Thankfully, the food was safely delivered via vehicles provided by the military to areas inaccessible by ordinary vehicles. We are really grateful for the help of the military. In some areas, Tzu Chi emergency response boats came to the rescue and helped volunteers complete the mission.

Many people came together after the flood to make sure that people affected by the deluge had hot food to eat. If they had to wade through water to reach the victims, they did so. I heard an elderly victim say in a news report, “This was the best meal I’ve ever had. The food was soft enough for my teeth.” She was referring to the food prepared by our volunteers. My heart was warmed to know that even in an emergency, our volunteers took into consideration the special needs of the victims, most of whom were older people, and prepared food suitable for them. Many older people do not have strong teeth, so volunteers made the food softer to make it easier to chew. Their thoughtfulness touched a chord in me.

In the aftermath of a flood, emergency response workers and volunteer helpers often have to wade through mud or water to deliver aid or help clean up. Sometimes they get hurt by sharp objects hidden in the water—for example, when they inadvertently step on a nail. To help prevent such incidents, DA.AI Technology [a social enterprise affiliated with Tzu

Chi] developed puncture-resistant insoles and gloves for aid givers to wear. This time after the flood, when our volunteers went into the disaster area to help flood victims clean up their homes, the protective gear came into good use. Our foundation also donated some of these gloves and insoles to the military so that soldiers helping restore the disaster area could also be better protected. A military officer thanked Tzu Chi for the donation. He said that no soldier had been injured again in their relief operation after Tzu Chi provided the protective gear for them.

In addition to hot food distributions and cleanup efforts, Tzu Chi set up free clinics in the disaster area with staffers from Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital providing medical treatment to flood victims. Staffers from the hospital not only manned the free clinics—they also joined volunteers in conducting home visits to flood victims. Our volunteers in Chiayi planned 36 home-visit routes. Along with volunteers from other areas, they visited household after household to learn how people were doing after the flood, and to see if they needed any help from Tzu Chi.

Some flood victims received gift cards from us this time. This was the first time Tzu Chi distributed such cards in Taiwan in place of emergency cash. With these cards, recipients can purchase goods they need, barring alcohol and tobacco, at the designated supermarket chain. If recipients don’t know how to use the cards, our volunteers can go with them to a store to help out. We hope that with all this aid, we can help make the victims’ path to recovery smoother.

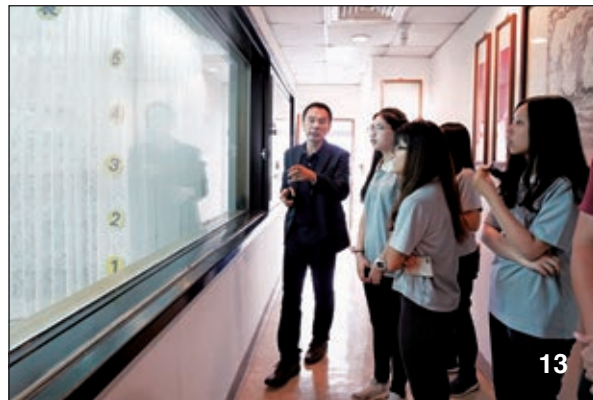
This flood saw many living bodhisattvas springing into action—medical professionals, volunteers, police officers, and soldiers all pitched in to serve the needy. I am full of gratitude and touched by these aid givers who put in so much hard work to help the victims. At the same time, my heart goes out to the victims. Aside from help with cleanup, they may need further assistance as well—especially older people who live by themselves. I hope our society will continue to give them love and care.

In a world beset by disasters, we need love to soothe the suffering. I hope everyone puts their love into action and lives with pious sincerity and vigilant care. Let’s pray sincerely for a world free from all kinds of calamities. ❀

Tzu Chi

Bimonthly

November 2018



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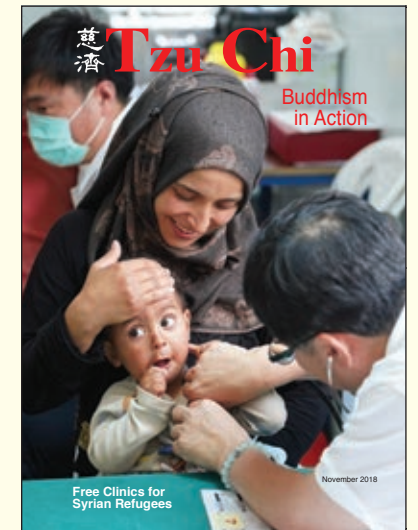
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The *Tzu Chi Bimonthly* welcomes contributions of personal experiences or reports of Tzu Chi activities. We also welcome letters to the editor containing personal comments or opinions on matters of interest in the Tzu Chi world. We reserve the right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

A Learning Curve Buster

By Ye Wen-ying

Translated by Tang Yau-yang

Photos by Hsiao Yiu-hwa

Specially preserved corpses offer medical students and physicians an opportunity to build up their skills and confidence by offering them life-like surgical experiences.

A train bound for Vienna, Austria, sped along the Rhine. One of the passengers was Dr. Lin Shinn-zong (林欣榮), then a professor at the National Defense Medical Center and a neurosurgeon at Tri-Service General Hospital, both located in Taipei. He was deep in thought, oblivious to the scenery outside, reviewing in his head what he had just learned at a three-day seminar in Germany about keyhole skull base surgery.

This was more than 20 years ago, and keyhole, or endoscopic, skull base surgery was unavailable in Taiwan at the time. Lin had traveled from Taiwan to Europe to learn about the technique.

The traditional standard surgical procedure in Taiwan at the time was inherently invasive and high-risk, and it resulted in large incision wounds and a long recovery. To remove a tumor from the brain, for example, a surgeon had to saw open the skull, remove the tumor, tie the skull pieces back together with steel wire, and then suture back the muscles and skin. The endoscopic skull base surgery, in stark contrast, was less risky with smaller incisions and quicker recovery.



Physicians bow to body donors, reverently referred to as “silent mentors” in Tzu Chi, to thank them for donating their bodies for medical education.

Eager to learn this endoscopic surgery technique, Lin had signed up for the workshop in Germany and paid the fee of 150,000 NT dollars (US\$5,000). Air fare, lodging, and other items had cost him even more.

After a three-day session in Germany, the five-day workshop continued at the University of Vienna, where neurosurgeons from around the world learned to operate endoscopically on the heads of formalin-preserved corpses. This allowed the physicians to gain experience in safely executing skull base surgery for meningioma, angioma, pituitary gland tumors, etc., without disturbing intricate nerves and capillaries.

After the workshop, Lin returned to his post in Taipei and began to put his new experiences and knowledge to work. Far from keeping the new skills to himself, he taught other surgeons what he had learned. In 1998, he hosted the first skull base surgery workshop in Taiwan, in which he trained 40 neurosurgeons. They each paid just 20,000 NT dollars (US\$670) to participate, a fraction of what Lin himself had had to fork over for his European workshop.

Due to a lack of human corpses to use, Lin had to import 12 heads. Ten of those were used by the participants, with four surgeons sharing one head. The remaining two heads were used by instructors. With the silent help of the imported heads, Lin was able to teach the novel technique to local surgeons and bring the benefits of endoscopic skull base surgery to local patients.

Lin's efforts brought to the fore not just the novel endoscopic surgery technique but also the importance—and availability—of corpses for the training of physicians.

At around the time Lin conducted the workshop, the Tzu Chi Foundation established a medical school. In response to Master Cheng Yen's appeal to "Let your body be put to good use by donating it for medical education after you have passed on," many people, especially Tzu Chi volunteers, signed up to be body donors. The Tzu Chi medical school has therefore been able to use donated cadavers in all of its teaching programs. Chinese culture traditionally holds that it is necessary to preserve a whole body in order for the deceased to rest in peace, but the Master's appeal went a long way toward making many people in Taiwan embrace the concept of body donation.

The Tzu Chi medical school started a simulated surgery program in 2002, in which donated bodies are used to help medical students learn

and practice surgical skills. In 2003, an operating room with eight operating tables was opened for simulated surgery classes. In 2008, this facility was upgraded to a full-fledged operating room, with additional facilities for surgeons' dressing rooms, instrument cleaning, storage of instruments and supplies, and interactive classrooms. Surgical simulation training sessions are now conducted eight times a year at the Medical Simulation Center. Participants include medical students at the Tzu Chi University College of Medicine and its sister medical schools abroad, as well as surgeons within or outside the network of the six Tzu Chi hospitals in Taiwan.

Dr. Lin Shinn-zong, who had visited Europe to learn the novel surgical skill in that workshop over 20 years ago, joined Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital in 2001. Barely one year later, he became the superintendent of the hospital. His office is now a five-minute walk to the Tzu Chi University Medical Simulation Center, where no corpses have ever needed to be imported from abroad for use and where physicians can learn and practice advanced surgical skills without having to travel abroad.

The Medical Simulation Center

University administrators have continued improving the facilities of the Medical Simulation Center. In the last two years, they have installed X-ray and high-end ultrasound machines so as to give surgeons real-time imagery necessary to execute precise operations.

"The resources at the Medical Simulation Center have enabled us to develop many surgical procedures, including minimally invasive heart surgery that spares patients open-chest trauma," said Dr. Chang Jui-chih (張睿智), a cardiac surgeon at Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital. He was trained entirely within the Tzu Chi medical system, and he has worked at the hospital since he graduated from the Tzu Chi University College of Medicine in 2002.

"I'm confident in operating on a patient so long as I've done it on a 'silent mentor,'" Chang said, referring to the cadavers on whom he had practiced simulated surgery. People who donate their bodies to the Tzu Chi University College of Medicine for use in anatomy classes or surgical

At the Tzu Chi University Medical Simulation Center, a team works on the lower body of a cadaver while a physician, right, works an endoscope to look inside the body.



simulation training are reverently called “silent mentors” because they teach students and doctors without words. At the Medical Simulation Center, Chang has been able to practice procedures such as endoscopic heart valve surgeries and bypass surgeries on these silent mentors.

Practicing with simulated surgery has evidently gone a long way toward helping Chang build up his surgical skills. Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital is equipped with a da Vinci robotic surgical system. Chang once used it to perform coronary artery bypass surgery, and the day after the operation, the patient was already able to sit up and eat breakfast. The patient couldn’t believe that recovery could happen so quickly—it was as if he had never had that surgery on his heart. “Incredible!” he exclaimed.

It took Lin Shinn-zong a 13-hour flight from Taiwan to Germany—and great expense—to learn his endoscopic surgery skills; Chang Jui-chih was able to take a five-minute walk from Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital to the Medical Simulation Center at Tzu Chi University to learn his. The paths that Lin and Chang took illustrate the evolution and improvement of learning environments for surgeons in Taiwan over the years.

Chang pointed out that surgeon-trainees can learn about surgery through many conduits, such as books, journals, videos, professional medical websites, and surgeon-teachers, but the real key is hands-on experience. That’s why the simulated surgery on silent mentors offered at the Medical Simulation Center is so precious. Not only can surgeon-trainees learn existing techniques but even veteran surgeons can explore novel or tricky ones at the facility too.

Unaffiliated learners are welcome

In 2010, medical associations in Taiwan began applying for their members to use the resources offered at the Medical Simulation Center. Surgeons in urology, ENT, colon and rectal surgery, spinal surgery, skull base surgery, etc. have since taken advantage of the center’s service.

It’s not only Taiwanese doctors that take advantage of the center’s resources—physicians from abroad do too. When Tzu Chi physicians Drs. Chen Ing-ho (陳英和, orthopedics) and Kuo Hann-Chorng (郭漢崇, urology) were serving as chairmen of their respective professional societies, they invited attendees of medical conferences held in Taiwan to workshops at the Medical Simulation Center. As a result, physicians from more than ten countries visited the center to share

their expertise with one another, and in turn learn medical skills and practices they could apply in their home countries. Through such workshops, the simulated surgery program benefits more than doctors and patients in Taiwan. It helps doctors and patients outside Taiwan too.

In August 2016, members of the Taiwan Urological Association came to the center to learn and practice endoscopic bladder neck suspension surgery, a procedure that can be used to treat stress incontinence (the leakage of small amounts of urine when pressure increases on the bladder—for example, when a person sneezes, coughs, or laughs.) Instructor Dr. Tsai Yao-chou (蔡曜州), director of minimally invasive surgery at Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital, demonstrated the procedure to participants. Jiang Yuan-hong (江元宏), head of urologic oncology at Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital, was a student in the simulated session. He commented that though the surgical procedure didn’t take much time to finish, it required great attention to many details to ensure that a patient would be relieved of urine leakage after surgery. He praised Tsai for his excellent skill in this surgery, and he was grateful for the opportunity to learn from him through simulated surgery.

In September 2016, members of the Taiwan Association of Endocrine Surgeons (TAES) used the center to practice transoral thyroidectomy, a new technique to remove the thyroid gland. A traditional thyroidectomy, through a neck incision, leaves a permanent scar. Some female patients wear scarves year-round just to conceal it. The previous alternative to this was to make the incision in the armpit or areola. The resulting scar might not be visible, but the cut had to be quite large and the path to the thyroid gland very



Medical students, some of them from Singapore, the United States, and Poland, take part in a silent mentor inauguration ceremony in June 2018 at the Tzu Chi University Medical Simulation Center. Simulated surgery courses are conducted four times a year at the center for medical students at Tzu Chi University and from other schools.

long. The advent of minimally invasive surgery brought about a new alternative: transoral thyroidectomy—the surgical removal of the thyroid through the mouth.

Wu Hung-sheng (吳鴻昇), chairman of TAES, pointed out that Police General Hospital in Bangkok, Thailand, had performed transoral

thyroidectomy hundreds of times, while that number for Taiwan was about a hundred. The incision for this endoscopic procedure is inside the mouth. Consequently, this surgery leaves no scars on the exposed skin. The procedure can be used to remove tumors up to four centimeters (1.6 inches) in size. The surgeon must take care to avoid oral infections or damaging the nerves though—two goals made easier to achieve when the surgeon has gained experience with practice. That’s why TAES members applied to use the Tzu Chi center’s service.

In June 2018, more than 60 members of the Asia Pacific Spine Society visited the Medical Simulation Center to practice cervical spine sur-



Dr. Wu Chao-chuan, second from left, teaches in a simulated surgery session. Dexterous and quick in actual surgery, he slows down in such sessions to teach medical students the basics of surgery.

gery. Chen Yen-jen (陳衍仁), deputy superintendent of the Taipei branch of China Medical University Hospital and the head of the visiting group, had taken part in simulated surgery at the center several times before. He pointed out that cervical spine surgery was rarely performed because it was particularly risky among operations to correct deformity. Simulated surgery allowed surgeons to explore such procedures, thus helping build up their confidence in performing this kind of delicate surgery.

Silent mentors, by offering their bodies for physicians to practice on, allow surgeons—rookies and veterans alike—to avoid making mistakes on real patients. Each mistake on a cadaver may mean one less mistake on a real patient.

Those who donate their bodies for medical education after they pass away are indeed letting their bodies be put to good use through this admirable act.

A local touch

Facial reconstruction has been depicted in dramatic or theatric productions, such as the movie *Face/Off*. In November 2016, such “face changing” surgery first appeared at the Medical Simulation Center when a plastic surgery team from National Taiwan University Hospital (NTUH) attempted a whole-face transplant using the resources at the center.

Dr. Hsieh Mon-Hsian (謝孟祥), an NTUH plastic surgeon, pointed out that patients with most of their faces surgically removed—be it due to burn injuries, automobile accidents, or tumors—would need this delicate and complicated surgery. With the help of simulated surgery, surgeons can acquire first-hand and in-depth

knowledge about the anatomical details of the nerves in the face. Only a silent mentor would allow surgeons to peel layer after layer off their face for such close observation.

At the same workshop where the whole-face transplant practice took place, a team of plastic and orthopedic surgeons from Chang Gung Memorial Hospital in Linkou, northern Taiwan, performed a simulated arm transplant. A patient had signed up with the hospital for such an operation and had undergone the necessary medical and psychological evaluations. The transplantation could take place as soon as there was a suitable donor, but of course the team of surgeons had to practice the procedure first. So, they were here at the center to run through the process on a cadaver.

At the end of a simulated surgery course, students carefully prepare a silent mentor, whose picture hangs on the far wall, for the funeral service soon to follow.

“Tzu Chi silent mentors have a special significance because of their local touch,” said Liu Chih-Ho (劉致和), who was at the time the secretary-general of the Taiwan Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery. Liu indicated that similar dissection courses in the past in Taiwan, whether in neurosurgery, general surgery, or ENT, almost always had to import specimens such as heads or necks from abroad for use. The imported specimens were most often of Western origin, and the anatomical differences between Caucasian and Asian people could become a problem.

Take reconstruction surgeries of the nose, for example. Western and Eastern noses are anatomically different in height, volume of flesh, and even distribution of blood vessels. These differences, though minuscule, may have consequences in shaping the knowledge of learners and their ability to safely perform plastic surgeries, in which the aesthetics of appearance is often judged in seemingly minuscule measurements.

Liu was therefore grateful to the Medical



Simulation Center for providing plastic surgeons such as himself with an opportunity to work on local specimens and to find answers to some problems that had bothered them for years.

Technical aspects aside, Liu mentioned how in Tzu Chi the donated bodies are treated with a touching reverence. This is shown for example in the holding of funeral and memorial services for the donors. Such reverence for the silent mentors touched a chord in many participants and prompted them to cherish the opportunity to work on the donated bodies.

Caring teachers

Wu Chao-chuan (伍超群), a general surgeon at Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital, has often taught in simulated surgery courses since they were first offered at the Tzu Chi University College of Medicine.

Dexterous and quick in his surgeries on real patients, Wu works slowly and patiently at the Medical Simulation Center when he teaches the basics of surgery to medical students who are just beginning to learn to work with scalpels and sutures.

In one such session, a student practiced on opening the abdominal cavity. Being a novice, he failed to cut in a straight line and couldn't control how deep his scalpel went under the skin. As a result, he accidentally cut the intestines underneath, causing air to slowly enter them.

Seeing this, Wu discussed with the students around how to avoid damaging organs when cutting the abdomen open. He first gave them a quick review of anatomy, a course that they had taken in their third year in medical school. Then he took over the scalpel with one hand and showed them how to use the other hand to lift up the abdominal skin to create a little extra space as a buffer zone to avoid cutting into the organs underneath.

Then Wu showed them how to take care of the cut that the first student had accidentally inflicted. "The safety of the patient is more important than anything else in an operation," Wu observed. He pointed out that if that cut was not quickly treated, the patient might be back in the near future for another surgery to treat peritonitis or other conditions caused by the inadvertent wound.

Later, students practiced suturing, which is another fundamental surgical skill. As they sewed together what they had opened, Wu pointed out the mistakes the students had made and the possible consequences of such errors—including infections and a longer recovery time for the incisions.

"Hold your head high, shoulders relaxed, hands gentle," Wu told the students. "Face the patient and suture elegantly."

Dr. Li Pei-zhen (李佩蓁), a physician of obstetrics and gynecology at Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital, taught Pap smear and gynecologic examinations in another simulated surgery session. Among other things, she showed students the correct way of using instruments to collect specimens and minimizing patient discomfort during an examination. She also covered some common OB/Gyn diseases, such as ovarian tumors, and gave students opportunities to gain hands-on experience.

"When you examine patients at the hospital, be sure to tell them before your every move what you are going to do next so as to prevent them from feeling uneasy," Li said to the students.

At the Medical Simulation Center, students can learn a lot by observing carefully and performing procedures in person. The curriculum on simulated surgery is not yet available in any other medical school in Taiwan.

The Tzu Chi University Medical Simulation Center is open four times a year to medical societies and associations in and outside of Taiwan, and it charges no fees for using the center's resources.

"If it were up to me, I would certainly charge for the simulated surgery program," Lin Shinn-zong said. In his mind, it is a matter of course that users of services pay. "But Master Cheng Yen thinks differently," he said. Participants pay out-of-pocket for food, lodging, and the cost of course instructors, but the center's services are offered completely free.

"The center not only doesn't charge participants anything—it even provides general medical supplies," said Tseng Guo-Fang, Ph.D., (曾國藩), director of the Medical Simulation Center and a professor of anatomy at Tzu Chi University. "Participants only need to bring special-purpose supplies that they need for their surgeries."

Tseng tries to explain Master Cheng Yen's rationale for making the program free. He pointed out that most body donors had been the Master's monastic disciples or lay followers. They had donated their bodies without asking for anything in return. The spirit behind their actions was selfless; the gift of their bodies will benefit countless patients and hopefully plant a seed of love in the participants. "Silent mentors are priceless," Tseng said. How could one put a price tag on that? ❀



Tseng Guo-Fang, director of the Tzu Chi University Medical Simulation Center, checks an operating table before a simulated surgery. He pays close attention to every detail to make sure that the program runs as smoothly as possible.

A Medical Program with A Human Touch

By Ye Wen-ying

Compiled and translated by Tang Yau-yang

Photos by Hsiao Yiu-hwa

"Behind every donated corpse is the concern and care of many loved ones. We mustn't allow anything to go wrong or else we'll let many people down," said Tseng Guo-Fang, director of the Tzu Chi University Medical Simulation Center. He and center staff do their best to make the simulated surgery program at the university run as smoothly as possible.

Tseng Guo-Fang, Ph.D., a professor of anatomy, leads the Tzu Chi University Medical Simulation Center. The center, which is Tseng's brainchild, uses frozen cadavers for medical students and surgeons to learn and practice surgical techniques and skills.

Tseng didn't start out as an expert in the art of cold storage of human bodies. He knew that cadavers were frozen for future clinical exploration by physicians outside Taiwan, but there is more to freezing bodies than simply putting them in a freezer. How do you freeze a body so that it remains soft and supple after being thawed? He began his research by studying anything that might expand his knowledge base related to the field.

He knew that the structure of things containing moisture can be significantly altered when they are frozen and later thawed. Vegetables, for example, become dehydrated and wilted after being stored in a refrigerator for some time. Tofu becomes porous when frozen and thawed. But these are relatively simple items. He needed to dig deeper.

Based on his research, he explained the pores in frozen tofu.

When tofu freezes slowly in a freezer, some of the water in it first solidifies into small ice crystals. These crystals are slightly colder than the surrounding water, which causes another layer of liquid water to freeze on the surfaces of the seed crystals. This incremental freezing continues, and the ice crystals in the tofu grow increasingly larger for as long as there is liquid water in the tofu.

When the frozen tofu is thawed, the ice particles melt and flow from the place they once occupied, leaving empty spaces—pores—in the tofu. The larger the frozen particles, the larger the pores they leave behind.

Tseng pointed out that a human body is 70 percent water, so slow freezing a human body would result in pores in the tissues after thawing, just like tofu. Such porous cadavers exude fluid and are not as supple as the original bodies, so they are not good for use in learning and practicing surgical techniques.

"Rapid freezing, on the other hand, produces frozen particles so small that they are visible only under a microscope," Tseng continued to explain. "When thawed, these minuscule particles leave only minuscule pores, rendering the body closer to what it was like when alive. Cadavers that are frozen quickly are suitable for simulated surgery after being thawed."

Tseng said that corpses are most ideal for use in simulated surgery if they are delivered to the Department of Anatomy at Tzu Chi University for processing within eight hours of death. Such corpses can then be rapidly frozen and kept at -30 degrees Celsius (-22 degrees Fahrenheit).

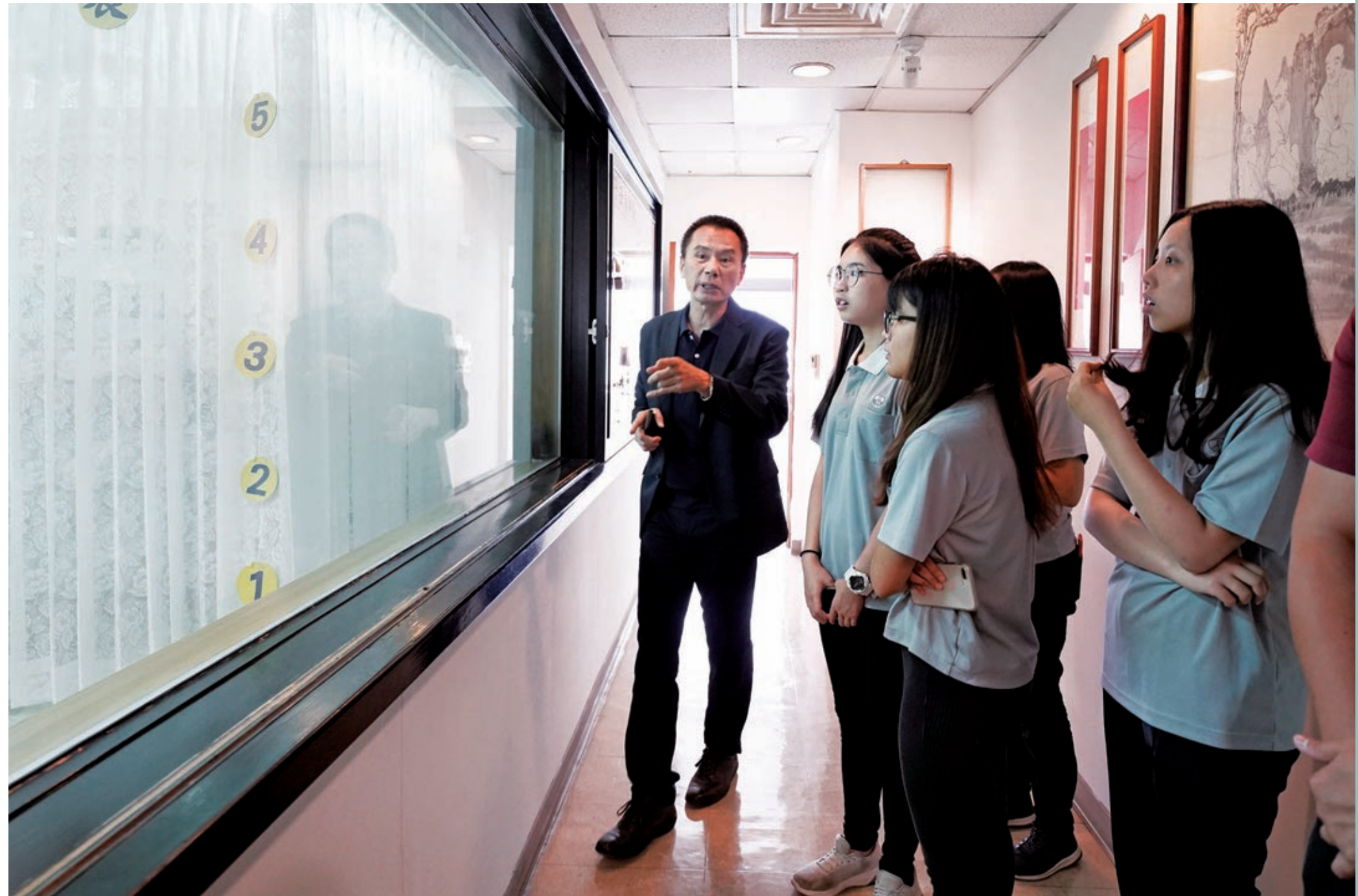
However, there is more to keeping corpses at that constant temperature than meets the eye. A

power outage, a tripped circuit breaker, or an equipment malfunction could interrupt the operation of the freezer, causing the freezer temperature to change. Tseng has bent over backwards to avoid such incidents.

Dr. Tseng Guo-Fang talks to medical students about the storage facilities for donated bodies.

A change in freezer temperature may render the cadavers unsuitable for use in a simulated operation. "Behind every donated corpse is the concern and care of many loved ones. We mustn't allow anything to go wrong or else we'll let many people down," Tseng explained.

To that end, Tseng places small temperature probes inside the donated corpses and monitors



freezer temperature closely. Whenever a temperature deviation is detected, whether on a workday or holiday, the system triggers an emergency notification mechanism that alerts the security guards and sends a message to the cell phones of two cadaver handlers.

Details, details

Tseng and his team do everything they can to ensure that each frozen cadaver is in the best condition possible for use in training. Attentive care and special handling have made the human cadavers at the center a cut above those at other institutions.

For example, freezing eyeballs require extra care. Because eyeballs contain water, they expand when frozen, and this expansion pushes the crystalline lens in the eyeballs out of place. Therefore, eyeballs require special handling before they can be used in simulated surgery.

Families of body donors, nuns from the Jing Si Abode, physicians, medical students, and Tzu Chi volunteers take part in a silent mentor inauguration ceremony, after which the corpses will be used for simulated surgery.

Laparoscopic surgeries are often simulated at the Medical Simulation Center. These are operations performed in the abdomen or pelvis through small incisions with the help of a camera. Some of these laparoscopic surgeries require air to be injected into the abdominal cavity—like blowing air into a balloon—so as to create enough space inside for the surgeon to conduct the surgery. If the skin of the cadaver is insufficiently elastic, the injection of air and increased pressure may cause the skin to crack, which results in deflating the abdominal cavity and hampering the procedure. Thanks to the efforts and body preservation skills of Tseng's team, such deflation has never occurred at the center.

Hsieh Mon-Hsian, a surgeon from National Taiwan University Hospital, has taken part in simulated surgery at the Medical Simulation Center. He has also participated in body dissections elsewhere, using imported bodies. Those bodies lasted only one day, compared to four days for corpses from the Medical Simulation Center. Once they even found that the side of an imported head had collapsed because the head had been placed on one side during the long transit to Taiwan.



SILENT MENTORS

A cadaver that is slated to be used for an anatomy class needs to be delivered to Tzu Chi University within 24 hours of death. Bodies donated first are used first. Generally, they will be used within four years after donation. Each corpse is used for one semester and is then cremated.

To be used for simulated surgery, a body needs to be delivered to Tzu Chi University within eight hours of death. Like bodies used in anatomy classes, those donated first are used first. Generally, they will be used the year following donation. Each corpse will be used for four days—the duration of a simulated surgery session at the Medical Simulation Center—and be cremated on the fifth day.

The anatomy class is for third-year medical students. The simulated surgery program is for sixth- and seventh-year medical students and surgeons. Of the eight simulated surgery sessions held at the Medical Simulation Center every year, four are for medical students and four for surgeons.

"Those corpses were clearly inferior to those used at Tzu Chi University," Hsieh said. He affirmed that, of all the places he knew about, Tzu Chi does the best job in cadaver preservation.

Transparency

Tzu Chi has advocated body donation for medical education for more than 20 years. Many people have donated their bodies in response, leading to an adequate supply of cadavers for use in anatomy classes and simulated surgeries at Tzu Chi University.

Corpses donated to the university are treated with the utmost reverence. Tzu Chi handles

donated bodies with respect, keeping in mind how family members might feel if they witness how their loved one, the body donor, is treated after being delivered to Tzu Chi.

Because the silent mentors are treated with such care, a donor family can inspect the body donation program at any stage, from the moment the body of their loved one is delivered to Tzu Chi, to how it is stored, to when the body is inaugurated for use.

Once delivered to the Department of Anatomy at Tzu Chi University, a body is processed according to whether it will be used in anatomy class or simulated surgery. For use in anatomy class, corpses are injected intravenously with preservatives, as opposed to being soaked in formalin for preservation. For simulated surgery, corpses are rapidly frozen as described earlier.

Eight simulated surgery sessions a year are conducted at the Medical Simulation Center, with each session lasting four days. A ceremony is held to inaugurate the bodies for use before the beginning of each session. Each time, Tseng explains to families of the silent mentors before the inauguration ceremony how things will unfold in the simulated surgery session, much as a surgeon talks to his patient and family before surgery. "We are transparent enough for families to supervise us directly," Tseng said.

Tseng makes a point of explaining to families the extent of cutting that the bodies will undergo. "The cutting will be more thorough than in a typical anatomy

class for a third-year medical student," he says. He explains why this is necessary: "Thanks to your loved ones, physicians and medical students can learn and become more experienced with surgical techniques. They won't need to practice on living patients to gain experience, and so they will minimize the potential damage that they may cause their patients in the future."

Family involvement

To the students and physicians who use the cadavers donated to Tzu Chi, the corpses are not nameless objects. Instead, they are revered as "silent mentors." In fact, participating students



The entire staff of the Medical Simulation Center poses on the campus of Tzu Chi University.

and physicians even visit the silent mentors' families to learn more about the donors themselves, and they compose brief biographies about them. These actions connect students and physicians with their silent mentors, and inspired respect and gratitude when they practice on them. Such visits also make family members feel that they and their deceased loved ones are valued and respected.

Li Hui Er (李慧兒), a medical student from the National University of Singapore, took part in a simulated surgery class at Tzu Chi University. She said, "In Singapore, we don't know anything about the corpses we work on. As a result, we have no feelings for them. But here at Tzu Chi University, we meet the donors' families before working on the silent mentors. The families even thank us and ask us to make the best use of this opportunity to learn from their loved ones. They hope we can become better doctors by practicing on their loved ones."

Li was also impressed by how much everyone involved—medical students, physicians, Tzu Chi volunteers, and staff at the Medical Simulation Center—respect silent mentors and their families.

Yu Liang Lim (林宇亮) was another medical student from the National University of Singapore. He was awed by the fact that body donors are willing to give away their bodies and allow them to be dissected and practiced on by utter strangers, learners like Lin and himself, in the hope of advancing their surgical skills. "I may forget some of the surgical techniques I learned here if I don't use them for a long time," Lim said. "But I'll never forget the selfless giving shown by the body donors and their families."

The center

In the early days, there used to be just two corpse handlers and a staffer in charge of funeral and memorial services for body donors at the Department of Anatomy at Tzu Chi University. After the simulated surgery program was launched, two senior nurses from the operating room of Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital—Lin Zi-ling

(林姿伶) and Ou Ting-fang (歐庭芳)—were recruited to help the program run more smoothly. They were experienced professionals, intimately familiar with running an operating room. Their experience would come in very handy for the program.

Cadavers are used as fully as possible in the program. Therefore, each cadaver is usually operated on by participants from different medical specialties, each working on their respective area of the body. Lin and Ou schedule and arrange the order of simulated operations by specialties and according to the body parts to be worked on so that the surgery sessions run better.

"Treat silent mentors like living patients in every way," Lin reminds medical students who are about to start a simulated surgery course. "Pay attention to patient positioning on the operating table. If the surgery is lengthy, take special care to avoid damaging the corpse from extended compression." She adds that if the corpse is laid on its side, care must be taken that it doesn't fall off the table, even though the silent mentor won't cry out in pain if it does drop to the floor.

Before trying their hand at simulated surgery, these students have had no prior experience in an operating room, so Lin, like a mother, patiently talks to them about things to pay attention to.

Surgeons who take part in simulated surgery at the Medical Simulation Center are also reminded, among other things, to suture all parts of a cadaver back together at the end of a session so the silent mentor is kept whole. Suturing a cadaver together is another gesture of respect for the silent mentor.

The center currently has a staff of eight working under Tseng. They take care of everything during a simulated surgery session, such as organizing food and lodging for the families of body donors, filming the surgeries, and arranging hearses for the silent mentors. They also edit video footage to be shown at the memorial service, which is attended by participating students, physicians, and donors' families. The staffers also clean up the operating room during recess. Cleaning duties outside of the surgery sessions are outsourced to cleaning companies.

Tseng praised his team: "Were it not for their willingness to cover for each other in doing all the things that have to be done, we could not have such a strong team. Our staffers are inspired by the spirit of giving that is demonstrated by the body donors, so they do their very best in doing their jobs."

Tseng also thanked nuns from the Jing Si Abode and Tzu Chi volunteers for helping out. "We couldn't have done it time and again without their support," said a grateful Tseng.

The Medical Simulation Center offers a valuable service unavailable in many other institutions around the world. Participating learners include medical students and physicians within or without the Tzu Chi medical system, from Taiwan and other countries.

Tseng points out that many doctors in other countries may not have access to the type of training offered at the center, or they may not be able to afford it. That's why they come to benefit from the center's service. But he believes that what is offered here surpasses mere technical training. The human touch of the program, for example, provides an experience completely different from what a physician goes through in their dissection courses when they are training as doctors.

"Although a doctor may appreciate the meaning and value of life," said Tseng, "it's not uncommon for them to become burnt out after practicing for a long time. But when he experiences how much human lives are respected here at the center, it might touch a chord in him and trigger a change, [helping him rediscover his original aspirations]."

Altruism is at the core of the Medical Simulation Center, Tseng added. "Through June 2018, 80 percent of our body donors were Tzu Chi volunteers. They gave of themselves to the service of others when they were alive, and when they passed on, they gave their bodies to the service of medical education." He lauded the spirit of these silent mentors. Because of them, the center is not simply a place for medical learning but also a place where acts of love and altruism unfold.

Dr. Diderot Parreira is a Brazilian physician who took part in simulated surgery at the center in August 2016. He resonated with the spirit of giving of the silent mentors so much that he donated money to the center. He said that he was even willing to volunteer at free clinics that Tzu Chi offers in Brazil. Dr. Christian Dinu, from Klinikum Oldenburg, Lower Saxony, Germany, served as a course instructor at the center in April 2017. Moved by the spirit of the silent mentors, he also donated the fees that he had received for his instruction to the center.

Such a cycle of goodness is exactly what Tseng hopes to see.

Free Clinics for Syrian Refugees

By Zhang Jing-mei

Translated by Tang Yau-yang

Photos by Hsiao Yiu-hwa

More than 600,000 Syrian refugees currently live in Jordan. Given the uncertain future of the Syrian civil war, they don't know when, if ever, they will be able to return to their home country. It has been more than seven years since the war started, and outside assistance for them has dwindled with passing time. In addition to other problems, refugees have had a tough time getting medical care. Tzu Chi volunteers offer them free clinics.

Located in a desert and encircled by barbed wire fences, the Azraq refugee camp is a community of 40,000 residents.



These Syrian refugees who do not live in a refugee camp work on a farm to support themselves. The work, picking tomatoes, was temporary, with a daily wage of eight to ten U.S. dollars. Tzu Chi volunteers visited the farm to see if they could help the refugees in any way.



In July 2018, Tzu Chi volunteers provided five free clinics for Syrian refugees and needy people in Jordan.





Under the scorching sun, the Azraq refugee camp in northern Jordan is shrouded in dead silence. One wouldn't expect that tens of thousands of Syrians live within the camp, but the barbed wire fences that run along the perimeters are cruel reminders of their sad situation. Fleeing their homes and the violence of the Syrian civil war, they have become virtual prisoners in another country.

While the Syrian civil war has dragged on year after year, assistance from all sides for Syrian refugees has receded like a waning tide. In early 2017, the United Nations ceased assisting Syrian refugees living outside a refugee camp. Refugees in Jordan started to be treated just like any other foreigners. The registration fee for a hospital visit alone costs ten American dollars, and that doesn't include the cost of medicine.

Towards the end of 2017, the Syrian government announced that refugees could return to Syria, but that they would need to live in refugee camps on the national borders.

In June 2018, fighting resumed in southwestern Syria, forcing many people to flee their homes and attempt to escape to neighboring Jordan. However, they were not allowed to cross

Patients seek medical help at the Tzu Chi free clinic in the Azraq refugee camp.

the border. They couldn't go back to the unrest and fear in their hometowns, but they couldn't go forward either. About 60,000 Syrians were caught in a bind, stuck in the scorching desert heat at the border.

Residents in Ramtha, Jordan, tried to help the refugees by giving them whatever daily necessities they could. The Jordanians squeezed the necessities through gaps in the barbed wire fences to the refugees. The Syrians ran the risk of their bodies or arms being injured by the barbed wire in their rush to reach out and receive the proffered goods.

Despite an appeal from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Jordanian government in July 2018 refused to temporarily take in more Syrian refugees. Jordan made it plain that it had no intention of reopening its border crossings with Syria.

A little boy sat in the examination chair of Dr. Zou Mu-fan (鄒牧帆), a doctor of traditional

Chinese medicine (TCM). The boy had been injured in a traffic accident, and he limped because of a stiff left leg.

The treatment tools in the TCM area—for cupping therapy and acupuncture, for example—unnerved the boy. The last straw was when Dr. Zou began to insert an acupuncture needle in him. At that point, the boy began to wail and struggle, and his mother tried to hold him down.

"Dr. Zou, stick the needle in my arm to show him that it doesn't hurt, and then he won't be afraid," volunteer Hong Xiu-mei (洪琇美) said urgently, offering her arm. Several other volunteers did the same, sticking out their arms. All the volunteers there just wanted to help make sure that the little boy would be treated and receive some relief for his injuries.

This scene kicked off a free clinic provided by Tzu Chi at the Tarabot Social Center in Amman, the capital of Jordan, in July 2018.

Back again

In the winter of 2016, Tzu Chi had held free clinics at the Quran & Hadith Science Center in Mafraq and at the Azraq refugee camp. Though volunteers served a large number of people, they really would have liked to do more.

Their wishes were fulfilled in July 2018. Volunteers from Taiwan and the United States once again traveled to Jordan to treat patients in five large-scale clinics at the Tarabot Social Center, the Quran & Hadith Science Center, and the Azraq refugee camp. Services were offered in internal medicine, surgery, pediatrics, gynecology, and

2018 TZU CHI CLINICS IN JORDAN



TCM. Twenty-four hundred Syrian refugees and needy Jordanians were served by the end of the final clinic.

Before the 2018 trip to Jordan, Dr. Ye Tian-hao (葉添浩), of Taiwan, thought back to the trip in late 2016. As images of the previous visit flashed through his mind, he recalled warming the diaphragm of his stethoscope before applying the instrument to a patient's chest. To this day he remembers the beat of the patient's heart that he heard through his stethoscope. With these thoughts in his mind, he began packing the equipment and instruments he wished he had taken to Jordan in 2016.

Later, Ye and his wife, Chen Hong-yan (陳紅燕), a pharmacist, tried to hail a cab to take them to the Taiwan High Speed Rail station in Zuoying, Kaohsiung. They were surrounded by their luggage and black metal trunks of medical equipment, including an abdominal ultrasound machine, an electrocardiogram (ECG), an automated external defibrillator (AED), and a pulse oximeter. It's no wonder the first cab driver refused to take them: Their luggage was too bulky and way too heavy. Another cab driver kindly called a van taxi for them, but the delay caused them to miss their train.

The couple finally arrived in Taoyuan, but then the vehicle taking them to the Taoyuan International Airport got stuck in a traffic jam caused by a heavy downpour. Finally, after a lot of hassle, the couple joined other Tzu Chi delegates at the airport.

Ye's instruments would come in handy to help him and his fellow physicians better care for the refugees. The ultrasound machine could help physicians in OB/Gyn, internal medicine, or even dermatology make more rapid and accurate diagnoses. The ECG machine would be indispensable for cardiologists. The pulse oximeter could provide an extra layer of information should anybody faint (a number of people did faint during a 2017 free clinic in Mexico). Though Ye prayed that nobody would need the AED, he wanted to have it ready to serve should the need arise.

Ye knew that a one-time free clinic could not solve patients' problems once and for all, but he could at least give them the best service he could while he was there. That's why he was determined to take these instruments to Jordan, regardless of their weight.

Now, finally at the airport, Ye was ready to start an 8,200-kilometer (5,095-mile) journey to Jordan.



Dr. Ye Tian-hao (left) and Dr. Jian Zai-xing serve a patient together.

head of the emergency department at Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital in southern Taiwan, asked Mohammad Khwaileh, a volunteer interpreter, to interpret for him. He told the crowd that everyone had to come to him first. He would triage and assign each patient to the appropriate clinic, depending on the patient's complaint and the patient load at each clinic. He had learned this approach for handling a large crowd when he volunteered in a free clinic in Mexico in December 2017 after the country had been struck by multiple earthquakes.

Besides performing triage, Lee prescribed medicines for patients who had minor problems. The frequently-prescribed medicines were within easy reach, and he could hand them over right away. Though he didn't know Arabic, he looked intently at every patient while listening to Mohammad. He paid close attention to their facial expressions and movements, which also helped him make judgments. His aplomb calmed people down. It wasn't too long before the sign-

in area calmed down, and patients sat quietly in the waiting area.

Off in the dental clinic, a young man sat in a dental chair, his uneasiness obvious despite his effort to suppress and disguise it. Instead of treating him straightaway, Dr. Hsia Yi-jan (夏毅然) gently said to him, "You haven't eaten, have you?" Without waiting for a response, he gave the patient some biscuits he had brought from Taiwan and asked him to eat them first. The dentist was concerned that the patient might become dizzy from low blood sugar when he pulled his tooth. The young man was surprised at first, but he did as he was told.

After treatment, the patient asked the interpreter to relay a message to Dr. Hsia: "Because of Tzu Chi, I was finally treated like a person." The patient's words made Hsia's eyes moist with tears. "Master Cheng Yen tells us to respect patients," Hsia said. "A patient's response makes everything I do here worthwhile."

The ultrasound and ECG machines that Dr. Ye had taken so much trouble to bring to Jordan were in great demand. A long line of patients at the gynecology

clinic and physicians from different specialties waited for their turns to use the machines.

Ye worked all day operating on patients. His operating room consisted of nothing more than a small table and a plastic chair in a corner of the internal medicine clinic, but the makeshift facilities didn't seem to bother him at all. He squatted down to inject anesthetics into his patients. He excised from a patient a sarcoma that had hindered him from walking normally. He removed bloody gauze and closed incisions. Lots of people moved around, but they all slowed down and tried to make as little noise as possible when they walked by this surgical area, as they knew that serious medical care was underway.

The Azraq refugee camp

The winds blew across the desert near the Azraq refugee camp, raising sand and giving everything a pale yellow tinge. There was silence all around, despite the fact that about 40,000 Syrian refugees were living here.

As the Syrian civil war ground on, outside aid dwindled. Every month, the camp gave each refu-





Pediatrician Lin Yu-ying (林玉英) examines a child at the free clinic at the Quran & Hadith Science Center.

indicating that they worked for the IMC. They were there to seek medical care, too. Their embarrassment was apparent, as they sought help from volunteer doctors from other countries in, of all places, their own hospital. The look on their faces explained the tight spot their hospital was in.

A soldier dressed in a camouflage uniform sat like an obedient child in front of Wu Sen (吴森), a TCM doctor. As Dr. Wu inserted acupuncture needles in him, the soldier felt his stiffness and aches disappear. His earlier uneasiness about this ancient Chinese treatment technique turned into awe, and he looked with admiration at the 76-year-old doctor.

An aching lower back had bothered Hla Fhasan Musa for some time. On this day, he had pedaled a bike for three kilometers (two miles) in the hot sun to reach the clinic (the Azraq refugee camp stretches 15 kilometers [over nine miles]). Dr. Hong Qi-fen (洪啟芬) examined him and determined that he had urethral stones, a condition that could not be

treated with the limited equipment at the hospital. Hong consulted with his fellow physicians about what medicines to prescribe for the patient to alleviate his suffering.

Hla Fhasan Musa and his two wives had fled Syria and ended up in this refugee camp in Jordan. They had been here for 240 days. Though he and his family no longer had to worry about their safety, he felt stifled by their confinement in the camp. Now at the free clinic, the attention of several doctors prompted him to tell them of his every pain and discomfort. Dr. Hong tried his best to help him, and he prescribed medicines based on his complaints. Afterwards, with the prescriptions in his hand, Hla Fhasan Musa mused, "What am I going to do when you're gone?"

Naima Alali waited anxiously at the dental clinic. Her daughter, Sarah, had had a toothache for more than a year. She had been in excruciating pain day and night; sometimes the pain was so bad it made her throw up.

Naima Alali had taken Sarah to the camp hospital several times for treatment, but they were turned away each time. Though the hospital had dental equipment, there were no dentists around to operate it. Now the free clinic from Taiwan

would offer dental care. Naima was hopeful that her little girl would get relief.

"Have you eaten?" Dr. Li Ming-ru (李明儒) asked Sarah. He had noticed that the little girl looked pale. Sarah shook her head, her thin, raised shoulders seemingly bespeaking her helplessness and fear. Li gave her some biscuits and waited for her to finish eating them. Then he quickly pulled out the tooth that had tormented her for so long.

Biting down on a cotton ball to stop the wound from bleeding, Sarah was still in a bit of shock, but her mother looked relieved. Looking at the volunteers who had accompanied the two of them every step of the way, Naima Alali said, "I can't even begin to express how nice you've been to us. I can only thank you for your medical expertise and tender care."

Two and a half years ago, Naima Alali and six family members came to Jordan to flee the fighting in their native Syria. The war had destroyed their home and killed her younger brother. She and her family were now safe in the refugee camp, but that came at a price: Every child of hers was malnourished, victims of dwindling aid.

"If I could, I would return to Aleppo," said Naima Alali. "Even though my home is in ruins, I'd pitch a tent there. That's where I can really call home." She was blind in her right eye, but her longing to go home loomed brightly in her left eye.

The afternoon ticked away, but the stream of patients waiting to be seen remained steady. The sign-in had to close at 3:30, and the volunteers had to exit the camp promptly at 4:00, when power would be cut off.

Thronged of people were still gathered outside the administrative center of the IMC hospital as closing time neared, hoping for a chance to see a doctor. The hospital staffers explained to the crowd at the top of their lungs that the clinic would be closed soon. Their explanations seemed to fall on deaf ears, though; the crowd continued to grow bigger and, worse, restless. The staffers could only fight their way through the crowd back into the administrative center and close the doors behind them.

People banged on the door and begged the workers to let them in. On the other side of the door, volunteer doctors shed tears over their inability to help more patients.

Mafrq

Mafrq, one of the governorates of Jordan, is located to the northeast of the capital city of Amman. Bordering Syria to the north, the gover-

norate is largely in a desert. Some Syrian refugees escaped here several years ago. They put up tents in the midst of the endless sand and scraped together what they could to live on, waiting for the day when they could return to Syria. They were still waiting, their tents now worn and shabby. What's worse, the landowner could ask them to leave at any time, forcing them to move again. As big as the desert was, they could not find a spot to really call home. Living on the fringe of society, they were all but forgotten by the world.

But Tzu Chi volunteers did not forget them. The volunteers shuttled the refugees by bus from their homes to the free clinic at the Quran & Hadith Science Center. It took six round trips to transport all the participants from that area to the clinic.



Though sharing no common tongue, a mother and a doctor can communicate adequately through an interpreter to help bring about a meaningful treatment for her child.



Most patients coming to the Tzu Chi free clinics were women with children. An abdominal ultrasound machine from Taiwan offered more precise diagnosis for the female patients.

The Quran & Hadith Science Center, located in Mafrq, was founded by the Jordan Relief Organization in a rented house. The center offered courses in subjects including the Quran, science, math, and English to Syrian refugee children ranging from six to 14 years of age.

On the day of the free clinic, the center was packed with a large number of patients. Jian Zai-xing (簡再興), a family medicine doctor from Yilan, northeastern Taiwan, wore many hats that day, at

times helping in the pediatric clinic, at times helping in surgery. He had a way with patients; his enthusiastic smile and easy-to-understand facial expressions and hand gestures quickly won them over. For example, one woman was comfortable enough with Jian to pull down her stockings to show him a problem that had bothered her for a long time: a swollen leg. This was all the more remarkable given that Arabic women are usually very conservative around males.

A man sitting near Chien Sou-hsin (簡守信), superintendent of Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital, smiled at him. Dr. Chien smiled back, but before he could utter a word, the man hugged him and kissed him on the cheeks. Chien didn't know

what to make of all this until he saw the chubby boy beside the man—the scars on the boy's round face took Chien back to 2016, when he had first seen the boy at a Tzu Chi free clinic in Jordan. The boy had come to that clinic, and Chien had treated the shrapnel wounds on his face.

This was a warm reunion, a nice surprise. Who would have thought that their paths would cross again?

In the TCM clinic, Ali sat quietly in a chair as Dr. Wu Sen treated him with acupuncture. He stared ahead, the melancholy expression in his eyes a stark contrast to the bright sunlight splashing into the courtyard.

Ali's life lately had been almost too rough for him to bear, to have any hope. He suffered from chronic back pain, and his child was afflicted with a contracture as a result of injuries in a traffic accident. An impoverished refugee, Ali had been unable to tend to their medical needs. A few days before the clinic, his son, a student at the center, brought home an announcement about this free event. A slight glimmer of hope flashed through Ali's mind, and they decided to go.

Ali used to work in construction in Syria before he and his family fled to Jordan in

2013. To make a living, he peddled beverages and bottled water, which he carried around on his shoulder. The heavy burden day in and day out over an extended period had resulted in his back pains.

Remembering the better days in Syria had made the current toil that much more unbearable for Ali. The seemingly never-ending civil war in his homeland had all but dashed his hope of ever returning there. He had lost heart and was in total dejection.

Now in the clinic, Dr. Wu administered acupuncture on Ali, who had not expected much in the way of relief. To his great and pleasant surprise, however, he began to feel his tight muscles

relaxing and his back pain diminishing. He looked at Dr. Wu with appreciation. The gray-haired doctor patted him on the shoulder and urged him to be strong.

During this trip to Jordan, Wang Zhi-min (王智民), a pharmacist from Tainan, southern Taiwan, met Lugain Omer, an eight-year-old Syrian girl. Though it was their first meeting, the girl had been on Wang's mind for some time.

Lugain had been diagnosed at age four with a severe deficiency in growth hormone. There were injections on the market for her condition, but the family could not afford them. They sought help from the UNHCR and all the aid organizations that they could find, but none of them was able to help.

A Jordanian dentist, Zaid B. Al-Vitae, told Tzu Chi about the family's situation. In response, the Jordan Tzu Chi chapter began providing medical assistance to the girl in early 2018.

As fate would have it, Wang learned about Lugain's story. He found a supplier of the hormone injection that would sell the medicine for a lower price, and he bought a year and a half's worth of injections. Wang then asked volunteer Chen Chiou Hwa (陳秋華) to take the medicine back to Jordan when Chen visited Tainan from Jordan in April 2018.

When Wang met Lugain in Jordan, the girl, now 112 centimeters (3'7") tall, stood shyly in front of Wang. She didn't know that the man in front of her had purchased the hormone injections for her, and Wang said nothing about that. He was glad the girl had grown taller and stronger and that she was even taking a Taekwondo class. He stayed by her side like a father when she drew pictures. He couldn't stop himself from saying to the girl, "Make sure that you grow taller than me!"

Dr. Jian Zai-xing asked himself at the beginning of the free clinic mission, "What is the meaning of a free clinic? What can I do to really benefit the refugees?" His questions were answered when he met a refugee who had come to one of the free clinics. The man had been unable to straighten his arm due to a contracture caused by a gunshot, but he was able to do so after treatment. This episode helped Jian see the value of the clinic. "A free clinic gives the patients not just medical care but also hope," Jian said. "The refugees really need people to care about them, and we do really care."

A Syrian Boy

Text and photo by Hsiao Yiu-hwa

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

If it weren't for the civil war in his mother country, this Syrian child wouldn't have come to Turkey. If Tzu Chi weren't holding aid distributions for Syrian refugees in Turkey, I wouldn't have shown up in Istanbul at this time either. Both of us were foreigners in Turkey, but karmic affinities led to our encounter.

We met at a learning facility for Syrian refugee children near the end of 2014. The facility had been set up in Istanbul by a handful of Syrians worried about the education of Syrian children displaced by the civil war. The makeshift school was located in a building space provided without

charge by kind-hearted people. The Syrians who had established the facility hoped to bring a ray of hope to refugee children from their own country by providing them with a free education.

The boy, still very young, probably didn't understand the worries of the adults and the effort they had expended to set up the school and keep it afloat. What was happening in his home country was likewise beyond his comprehension. With an innocent expression, he looked out into the world with big, lucid eyes.

I wonder if I'll ever meet him again. If we do, I hope it won't be in Turkey, but in Syria, his own motherland. ❀



After the Floods

Aid After a Dam Collapse in Laos

By Zhu Ying-yan

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Photos by Hsiao Yiu-hwa



On July 23, 2018, a hydroelectric dam under construction in Attapeu Province, Laos, collapsed amid heavy rains, sending massive torrents of water into nearby villages. More than 6,000 people were displaced by the dam failure.

Over one month later, on August 30, an aerial shot of the disaster zone showed that floodwaters still had not completely receded from some areas.



A country road in the disaster area is still flooded in many places even more than a month after the dam collapse. It is often difficult to get around, so residents rely on vehicles like the one pictured here.



Some victims were evacuated to higher mountain areas after the dam failure. Transportation to these areas was difficult, and daily necessities had to be airlifted in via military helicopters. On August 30, 2018, Tzu Chi had 1.2 tons of instant rice and other supplies airlifted into the mountain areas.



The disaster

The Mekong River flows through Southeast Asia, providing a vital lifeline for tens of millions of people in half a dozen countries, including Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. Located almost entirely within the lower Mekong basin, Laos has in recent years invested heavily in hydroelectric power. There are currently one hundred finished and ongoing dam construction projects in the nation in accordance with the government's aim to make Laos the "battery of Southeast Asia." According to reports, Laos now exports about two-thirds of the hydropower it generates.

However, recent dam failures have put dam safety under the spotlight. In September 2017, a dam reservoir in northern Laos burst its banks following heavy rains. Less than a year later, on July 23, 2018, a greater calamity hit when a dam in Sanamxay, Attapeu Province, collapsed, leading to flash flooding that swamped villages and caused widespread destruction.

Victims of the recent catastrophic dam failure were evacuated to makeshift camps, many of them taking shelter in tents. With their farmlands submerged and their homes ruined, the villagers really needed help to get through the difficult times.

Tzu Chi volunteers in Thailand, which borders Laos, quickly took action. An advance team of volunteers arrived in the disaster area in late July to assess the damage. They were followed in mid-August by another delegation of volunteers from

Tzu Chi volunteers visited victims of a dam collapse in late August 2018 in Sanamxay, Attapeu Province, southeast Laos. They were at a secondary school that had been serving as a shelter for nearly 300 displaced families from four villages. Some villagers took shelter in classrooms while others were in tents set up on open space in and near the school. This was still during the rainy season, and it had been raining on and off.

A woman around 60 greeted the volunteers with a smile. A farmer all her life, she had been living in the school with her family for over a month. Almost everything she had owned had been washed away by the floods caused by the dam failure. All she had managed to save were a

few articles of clothing. "I feel like crying because my life's work was lost in an instant," the woman said to the visiting volunteers.

Even though she had lost everything, she still found the strength to muster a smile. Volunteer Luo Mei-zhu (羅美珠), from Taiwan, felt her heart go out to the woman. Luo couldn't help but give the woman a big hug, a universal expression of care, concern, and warmth.

A few days later, on September 2, Tzu Chi held two distributions of folding beds and blankets for over 2,000 displaced people. The villagers had had to endure the inconvenience of living in a makeshift shelter for over a month. Volunteers hoped the relief items would help make their lives at a shelter easier.

Despite the rain, Tzu Chi volunteers visit victims of the dam collapse living in tents.

A volunteer hugs a woman displaced by the dam disaster.



Taiwan and Thailand who brought in 1.2 tons of instant rice and 3,000 sets of reusable tableware. However, road conditions in the disaster area were bad due to heavy rains from the rainy season, hampering the delivery of aid.

Volunteers continued to work on getting aid to victims. On August 30, with the help of the Sanamxay government, the instant rice and tableware were airlifted to shelters in higher mountain areas. By this time, folding beds and blankets had also arrived in the disaster area, waiting to be distributed to victims sheltering in three locations.

The rice

To make sure that recipients of the instant rice knew how to prepare the food, volunteer Luo Mei-zhu showed representatives from three villages how to do it. Then they would be able to go

A villager on her way to a Tzu Chi water station set up in Baan Tha One village, where residents were in need of safe drinking water after the dam collapse. Two portable water purification systems supplied potable water to people who needed it.



back to the mountains and teach their fellow villagers what they had learned.

Luo explained at a measured pace how to prepare the rice, while Peng Qiu-yu (彭秋玉), a volunteer from Thailand, served as an interpreter. Luo first poured filtered water into a large cooking pot and boiled the water. She added some vegetable oil to the seasoning powder to enhance the aroma. Then all the ingredients, including the rice and dried vegetables, were stirred together and steeped in boiling hot water for 25 minutes. After that, the rice was ready to eat. “If there is no hot water, the instant rice can also be prepared with cold water.” Luo also didn’t forget to mention that the bags holding the rice could be recycled.

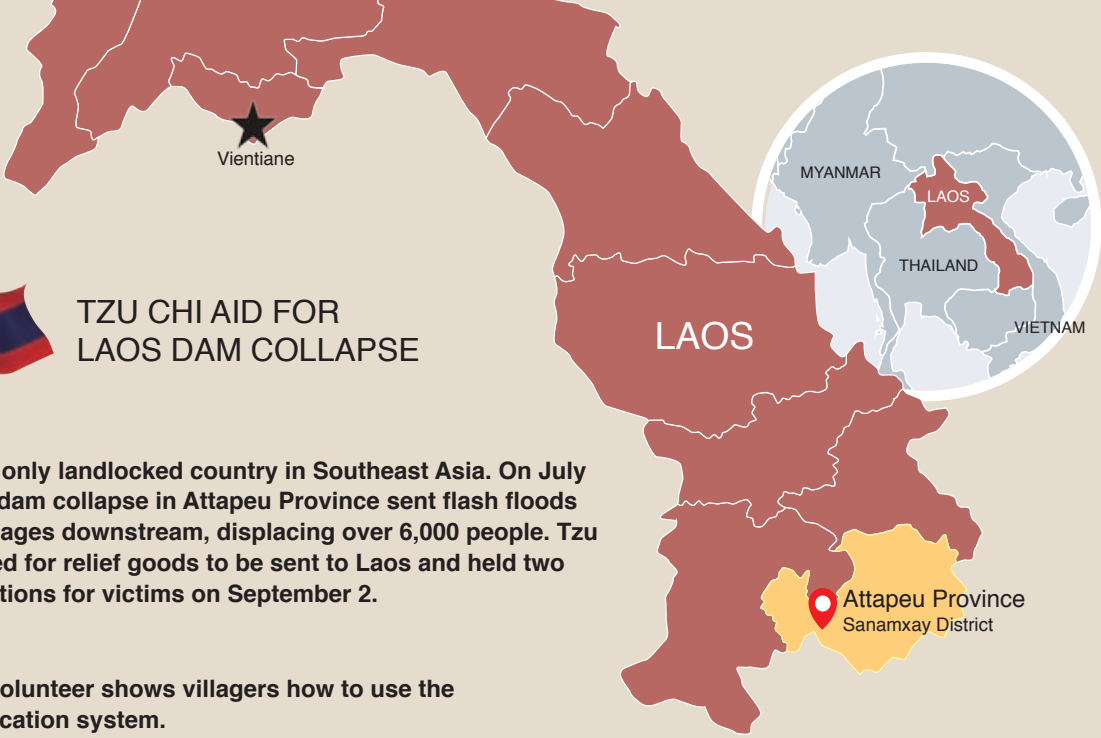
The representatives sampled the cooked rice and gave a thumbs up. They said cheerfully that the instant rice, so easy to prepare, would come in very handy. The aroma of the food drew some soldiers stationed nearby to the group. The soldiers also joined in and learned how to prepare the rice. Seeing how popular the food was, some local media personnel asked Tzu Chi volunteers, “How much are 1.2 tons of instant rice and 3,000 sets of tableware worth?” Volunteer Peng Qiu-yu answered, “They are priceless, because they come with love.”


The distributions

Before the distributions on September 2, Tzu Chi volunteers visited victims to distribute claim checks with which they could receive relief goods. Volunteer Xu Jia-ming (許家銘) was very excited. “The purpose of our trip is to bring relief to the victims,” he said. “I feel so happy to distribute the claim checks to the villagers in person.”

The two distributions benefited survivors sheltering in a kindergarten, a primary school, and a secondary school. All told, 2,027 people from six villages received 1,151 folding beds and 2,315 blankets. Lin Yao-wen (林耀文), Chen Zheng-hua (陳正華), and Chen Zheng-hui (陳正輝) were entrepreneurs in Laos who had helped Tzu Chi negotiate with responsible parties and transport the relief goods. They were also among the volunteers serving at the distribution venues. All of them were happy that their month-long efforts had come to fruition. Tzu Chi also donated medical instruments and supplies at one of the distributions to the Ministry of National Defense and the Women’s Union of Attapeu Province.

Tzu Chi volunteers witnessed the goodness of the local people at the events. Because there was a large number of items to be distributed, volun-





**TZU CHI AID FOR
LAOS DAM COLLAPSE**

Laos is the only landlocked country in Southeast Asia. On July 23, 2018, a dam collapse in Attapeu Province sent flash floods through villages downstream, displacing over 6,000 people. Tzu Chi arranged for relief goods to be sent to Laos and held two aid distributions for victims on September 2.

A Tzu Chi volunteer shows villagers how to use the water purification system.

LAOS

**Attapeu Province
Sanamxay District**



teers asked younger, stronger villagers to help out. The younger people kindly helped other villagers carry their folding beds back to their tents. Only when all others had received their distribution goods did they get their own.

Villagers used all sorts of vehicles to take their beds home, including trucks, hand trucks, and motor scooters. A little boy came alone to a venue with a hand truck bigger than he was. Because he was so small, two volunteers accompanied him home in case he needed a hand, but he deftly pushed his bed home himself.

Huang Xin-dong (黃新棟), chairman of the Council of Taiwan Chambers of Commerce in Laos, said while helping distribute goods: "I've never felt this touched before. I feel a strong sense of fulfillment. Love does transcend the language barrier. I feel that the villagers can sense our love and care for them through the simplest body language."

Some volunteers visited recipients at their tents after the distributions to check that their folding beds had been properly set up. Seeing the visitors, a mother and her two children, sitting on the folding beds they had just received, folded their palms and thanked the volunteers. This family did not have a tent, just a simple canopy. With the beds, they now no longer had to sleep on grass.

Tzu Chi volunteers distributed folding beds and blankets to 492 families affected by the dam collapse.



Volunteers found that some recipients had set up their beds in the shade of trees and were chatting sitting on the beds. Their hearts were especially warmed when they saw children lying comfortably on beds laid with blankets distributed by Tzu Chi. They were comforted to know that the villagers could now sleep better at night.

Clean water

Clean water can sometimes be hard to obtain in a disaster area. Baan Tha One was a village with 180 families where the floodwater was receding very slowly. The roads leading in and out of the village were difficult to navigate as a result. Transporting goods into the village was a challenge, and villagers there were especially in need of clean drinking water.

After learning about the situation, Tzu Chi volunteers transported two portable water purification systems provided by Taiwan's Water Resources Agency and Industrial Technology Research Institute to the Baan Tha One village activity center, where electricity was available 24 hours a day. They then connected the systems to a water source to provide filtered, clean water for the villagers.

The village had been without water for over a month when Tzu Chi set up the water station. Before that time, villagers had to leave the village to buy water, and that could happen only if road conditions were better. Each trip took three hours, which could be disrupted if heavy rains made the roads impassable again.



A little girl sits smiling on a folding bed her family has just received from Tzu Chi.

Therefore, when local residents learned about the free supply of clean water, they came one after another carrying containers. From August 28 to September 1, the water station supplied over three tons of potable water for the villagers. A side benefit was a substantial reduction in the amount of used plastic bottles in the garbage.

Many children came to the activity center to get water for their families. One day a barefoot 11-year-old girl, carrying a younger brother piggyback, arrived in a pouring rain at the center. Volunteer Liu Zong-yan (柳宗言) immediately filled her bucket with water and put candy, biscuits, and instant noodles into a bag for her to take home. When the girl lifted the ten-liter (2.6-gallon) bucket to go home, Liu asked, "Will you be able to carry it home?" "Yes!" the girl answered. Liu added, "Be sure to change out of your wet clothes as soon as you get home."

The local villagers queued up at the water station early every morning, even before the Tzu Chi team arrived. They were simple, honest, and kindly people. Even if there was water left over from the day before, they wouldn't simply take the water and leave. They waited for the volunteers to arrive.

Villagers lauded the quality of the water. "The

water tastes good and clean!" they said. There was underground water in the village, but no one dared to drink it. The water produced at the station, on the other hand, had earned their trust. They had no qualms about drinking it, even if it had not been boiled first.

When the Tzu Chi delegation left Laos, they left behind one of the water purification systems. With the help of the village head, they had found four people and taught them how to operate the system, which was easy to run. Volunteer Liu said to the village head, "We'll visit again. Next time we come, we hope to find that the purifier has served the villagers well." The village head responded with a cheery "Okay."

Water is an important resource. Without clean water, people's health and quality of life are at risk. The portable water purifying system is a great example of how technology can be used to serve people in need.

The dam collapse had displaced many people who wouldn't be able to return to their own villages in the near future. Even so, they accepted what had come to pass. Sadness rarely appeared on their faces. As the rainy season came to an end, they looked forward to the completion of temporary houses planned by the government.

Injury Prevention for Post-Disaster Cleanups

By Ye Zi-hao

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Photos by Huang Xiao-zhe

When Tzu Chi volunteers enter a disaster area to help clean up, there might be dangers lurking....

In August 2018, days of heavy rains coupled with high tides caused serious flooding in southern Taiwan. In some areas, the floodwaters persisted for a week. Tzu Chi volunteers mobilized immediately after the flooding to serve hot food to victims and, after the water had receded, to help clean up.

On August 29, I arrived at Zhangtan, a village in Dongshi, Chiayi County, to record Tzu Chi volunteers taking part in a cleanup effort in the disaster area. I was accompanied by Huang Xiao-zhe (黃筱哲), my photographer colleague at the *Tzu Chi Monthly* magazine.

When we arrived, we saw furniture and other household items that had been soaked in floodwa-

ters piled up on the sides of roads for pickup. At a local temple, staff from Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital had set up a free clinic for flood victims. The volunteers there were also serving soldiers who were helping clean up and restore the disaster area. We saw servicemen from the army and the air force, clad in green and blue raincoats respectively, assembling in neat files and getting ready to clear away discarded household items.

Before long, a tour bus arrived and let off 42 Tzu Chi volunteers. They headed straight for households that had been referred to Tzu Chi for help with cleanup.

Soon the volunteers were bustling in and out of houses despite the rain. It clearly wasn't a good time to ask any of them for an interview. Then the question occurred to me: "Since I don't want to interrupt them, why don't I join them in their work?" With this thought, I put my pen, notebook, and cell phone into my pockets and entered a traditional courtyard house to help out. Most of the furniture and other objects had already been moved out of this house, so I worked with some volunteers in clearing water from the indoor area.

"Where are you from?" I asked the volunteers near me.

"We're from Yunlin!" one of them answered. Yunlin is the next county to the north of Chiayi. I thought to myself that the homeowner's heart would be warmed if he knew that the volunteers had come from outside Chiayi County to help.

Just when everyone was busy cleaning, some ripples appeared on the surface of the muddy water. "Those are fish! They're still alive!" someone exclaimed. Just then I saw several finger-sized fish struggling in some shallow water. We immediately swept them outside into some deeper accumulated water to save their lives. The fish must have come from fish farms in the area. Days of heavy rains had caused the farms to overflow, allowing the fish to escape and swim all over.

However, there was more than innocuous live fish in the muddy floodwater. There was something more dangerous.

"Careful! There's broken glass on the floor," I called out to warn the others.

Soldiers clear out water-soaked objects in Zhangtan, one of the areas most heavily hit by the flooding. The village population consisted mostly of older people, so outside assistance for cleanup was especially important.





The military sent out personnel to disinfect the disaster area to prevent outbreaks of disease after the flood.

As I swept up the shards of glass, a chill ran through me—it could have hurt someone. Some heavy object being pushed around by the floodwaters had knocked against a windowpane and broken the glass. I thanked myself for the foresight to have brought two puncture-resistant insoles developed by the nonprofit DA.AI Technology. I had put them in my rain boots the day before I came down south. They had helped me work with an easier mind.

But not everyone had come as well prepared as I. During a break from the cleanup, I visited the Tzu Chi free clinic at the temple to see how things were going. While I was there, an air force serviceman came in for medical attention. He sat down and pulled off his left rain boot, revealing a pierce wound on the bottom of the foot. He presented the wound to Dr. Tsai Tou-yuan (蔡斗元) for examination.

Dr. Tsai was from the emergency department at Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital. He carefully checked the wound while the soldier's supervisors examined the boot to figure out what could have penetrated it. I moved closer for a look and saw some barely discernible blood stains in the bottom of the boot where it had been damaged.

Seeing everything I did that day, I came to realize more deeply why Master Cheng Yen had asked DA.AI Technology, a social enterprise founded by some entrepreneurs who share Tzu Chi ideals, to develop puncture-resistant insoles in 2017. Tzu Chi volunteers often take part in

post-disaster cleanup events, so the Master had wanted the volunteers better protected when they are out helping others.

After the short break, I followed some volunteers to another house. This time, we needed to help move some items out. Every volunteer put on puncture-resistant gloves for protection. Though their hands were a little less dexterous with the gloves on, they were able to work more freely without feeling bound by the fear that their hands might be injured.

The day after that air force serviceman was hurt, Tzu Chi donated 250 pairs of puncture-

resistant gloves and 300 pairs of puncture-resistant insoles to the military so that soldiers helping clean up could be better protected from serious injuries.

When a disaster happens, we often see people rushing to the aid of those affected. Seeing soldiers and Tzu Chi volunteers giving of them-

Tzu Chi volunteers give a flooded home a good wash. It's likely they will be injured by sharp objects when taking part in such a cleanup effort, so the volunteers wore puncture-resistant insoles in their rain boots for protection.

selves in Zhangtan village, I felt that this must be a major reason why Taiwan, a place often hit by typhoons, floods, and earthquakes, had never been defeated and could always get back on its feet after each disaster. We know that love can soothe the pain caused by calamities and speed up recovery. I was happy to be part of that too. Besides recording the clean-up effort, I was able to do a little something for flood victims. I was also happy that protective gear developed by DA.AI Technology, like the puncture-resistant insoles and gloves, would protect our volunteers for their service into the future. ❀



After a Quake and Tsunami

Aid to Palu, Indonesia

By Willy Johan, Arimami Suryo Asmoro, Anand Yahya, and Metta Wulandari
Translated by Tang Yau-yang
Photos by Anand Yahya

In September 2018, a shallow earthquake in central Sulawesi, Indonesia, generated a tsunami and led to soil liquefaction. The area was devastated. Tzu Chi delivered aid to the disaster area following the catastrophes.



A resident leaves a Tzu Chi distribution site in Palu with a smile. A major earthquake and tsunami resulted in heavy devastation in the city in September 2018. Tzu Chi volunteers promptly mobilized to help those affected.

A magnitude 7.5 earthquake struck central Sulawesi, Indonesia, on September 28, 2018. The temblor resulted in soil liquefaction and a devastating tsunami. Combined, the calamities resulted in more than 2,000 deaths and displaced over 80,000 people.

Palu, the capital and largest city of the province of Central Sulawesi, was hit especially hard. It sits at the end of a long, narrow bay, located a mere 78 kilometers (50 miles) from the quake's epicenter. The tsunami devastated coastal areas of the city. Mudflows, caused by the soil liquefaction, toppled many buildings in the villages of Petobo and Balaroa in Palu.

As long as two weeks after the quake, workers operating heavy machinery were still hurrying to clear damaged thoroughfares and remove debris in the city

Makassar, Sulawesi

Makassar, located in South Sulawesi, is the most populous city on the island of Sulawesi. Tzu Chi volunteers have long carried out charity work in that city. On September 30, two days after the quake, volunteers there learned that many injured people from Palu, about 300 miles to the north, had been delivered to hospitals in Makassar. Eight volunteers jumped into action to offer care and help to the injured and their families from out of town. Members of the Tzu Chi International Medical Association (TIMA) from Jakarta arrived in Makassar soon after. Working with local volunteers, they visited two hospitals, RS Sayang Rakyat and RS Wahidin.

"The ground seemed to roll when the earthquake hit," recalled Silvana, a woman from Palu, as she recounted her harrowing experience to visiting Tzu Chi volunteers at RS Wahidin. "My husband and I ran for our lives with all our might. As we were running, we saw a section of the asphalt road right next to us crack open and then close again, like a mouth opening and closing. When my husband stopped to help me, a power pole fell on him. His head was injured, but luckily the wires were not live. We got up and continued to run."

A military aircraft had flown Silvana and her husband to Makassar, where the latter, seriously injured, was quickly treated. Silvana thanked all the people who had helped them, including the Tzu Chi volunteers who were visiting them. "Thank you for the emergency cash," she said to the group. "It is a big help for us."

Slightly injured people each received a million rupiah (US\$66) from Tzu Chi, and those who were

seriously injured received twice as much. Volunteers bought and distributed to victims such necessities as food, drinking water, toiletry items, and clothes. Powdered milk and diapers were also provided to those with children.

Volunteers met Muhamad Salle at RSUD Kota Makassar, another hospital. "My wife and I had just finished our prayers when the quake struck," he told the visitors. "We immediately rushed out the door. I went back home later to salvage some belongings, but the ground shook again. People outside shouted that a tsunami was coming. I ran for my life again, but due to a leg injury, I didn't get very far before the waves caught up with me. I thought I was as good as dead, but, Allah be praised, I survived."

Muhamad Salle thanked the volunteers for the emergency cash. He knew no one in Makassar, so he was particularly grateful for the volunteers' care and help. He said that the money would come in very handy for him and his family.

Palu, Sulawesi

Palu was essentially cut off from the outside world in the immediate aftermath of the quake and tsunami because of damaged roads and infrastructure. Military aircraft became the sole means of delivering supplies into the area and bringing the injured out. Tzu Chi volunteers in Jakarta immediately prepared relief supplies and 200 kilograms of medicine for the victims, and after much effort they had them delivered to the disaster area.

Volunteers in Taiwan sprang into action too. Nuns at the Jing Si Abode, eastern Taiwan, rushed to pack instant rice. At two Tzu Chi facilities in Neihu and Sanchong, both in northern Taiwan, volunteers packed blankets into shipping boxes. Those supplies—ten thousand blankets and 8.4 tons of instant rice—were flown to Jakarta on October 4 and then delivered to Palu, 1,650 kilometers (1,030 miles) away, via military aircraft, by trucks, or even by hand, carried by Tzu Chi volunteers.

After the instant rice had arrived in Palu, volunteers from Jakarta, Kota Medan, and Biak joined local volunteers and began providing hot food for victims. Volunteer Jhony Rao (饒金華), a chef, led the group in preparing the food. When the food was ready, they delivered it to hospitals and shelters for survivors to eat for lunch and dinner.

"If we gave them raw rice, they would have had to find liquefied gas, cooking oil, and other ingredients to cook—all hard-to-find things now,"



1. Nuns at the Jing Si Abode, in Hualien, eastern Taiwan, prepare boxes of instant rice for delivery to the Taoyuan International Airport in northern Taiwan to be flown to Indonesia.

HUANG SI-JIA

2. The first Tzu Chi group arrived on military aircraft in Palu on October 3.

COURTESY OF TZU CHI INDONESIA

3. A woman received hot food at a temporary kitchen set up by Tzu Chi volunteers in the disaster area.

KHUSNUL KHOTIMAH

4. A cluster of tents where disaster victims live on the outskirts of Palu



Rao said. "That's why we cook our instant rice, dish it out into individual servings, and distribute it to them while the food is still hot."

The food was welcomed by recipients. Children in a shelter in Petobo ate up the food volunteers distributed and exclaimed, "This really tasted good!"

Most shelters consisted of nothing more than structures made of tarpaulins and wooden poles. Despite makeshift living conditions like this, Nur Fatimah was content and grateful. Her daughter, living in Petobo, had been due to give birth when the earthquake hit. When soil liquefaction triggered by the quake toppled the daughter's home, Nur Fatimah thought that she had lost her daughter to the calamity. Fortunately, the daughter and her family escaped, and she gave birth to a baby boy the day after the quake. When Nur Fatimah rushed to Petobo after the quake to seek out her daughter and her family, she was happily reunited with them. She also learned to her immense delight and relief of the birth of her new-born grandson.

When Tzu Chi volunteers visited their tent, they saw that the ground in it was bare, so they gave them carpets to put on the ground. The family had nothing except the clothes on their backs, so they were very grateful for the gift. They also thanked the volunteers for the hot food and said that it was the best they had eaten since the quake.

More than 500 aftershocks followed the strong earthquake. Most people were too scared to stay indoors, and they preferred to take shelter outside. Many houses were too damaged for habitation anyway. Tzu Chi volunteers set up care stations to accompany the victims during this hard time.

When it was mealtime, volunteers boiled water, put instant rice in cooking pots, and everyone began to wait expectantly. When the rice was ready and the covers lifted, the fragrance filled the area. "Delicious. Tastes just like fried rice," one of the residents said. "This hot food is proper for us Moslems. Thank you."

Free medical services

In addition to distributing hot meals and supplies, Tzu Chi provided free medical services to victims in the disaster area. A group of TIMA physicians, pharmacists, nurses, and support volunteers pitched the tents they had brought and began treating the needy in Palu. Some of them also broke into small groups and visited different shelters to care for those who had been injured



TIMA members provided free medical services in the village of Peboya.

ARIMAMI SURYO ASMORO

and were less mobile. As they did this, they were often approached by people who led them to additional people in need of treatment.

Most patients the physicians saw at shelters had injuries, such as bruises or open wounds. The medical professionals also noticed that diseases that tended to spread in a crowd, such as colds, had begun to emerge. Some people with chronic conditions were short on medication. The TIMA members tended to these people's needs and provided medicine.

The TIMA volunteers also served the villages of Kumbasa and Sumari in Donggala, an area that was closer than Palu to the epicenter of the 7.5 magnitude quake. Most of the homes of the 600 families in the two villages had been destroyed by the quake. The volunteers found that villagers needed more than just medical assistance, so they visited the villages again on October 12 with relief supplies. They gave each family instant noodles, dry food, bottled water, rice, and personal hygiene products. They also gave big tents and solar power panels to the villages because their power had not been restored.

In all, volunteers held more than ten aid distributions in the disaster area; by October 18, 2018, they had provided 5,071 packets of goods. TIMA members served 1,554 patient visits.

But many more victims still need help. The road to recovery is long.

Tzu Chi Indonesia and the Indonesian military have signed a memorandum of understanding to build, with the help of local entrepreneurs, 3,000 permanent housing units in Palu, Donggala, Kabupaten Sigi, and Lombok. (The last area had been badly damaged in an earlier quake, in August). Hopefully, with everyone's help, the disaster areas will soon be back on their feet.





Say “No” to Inflammation

By Wu Yan-ping

Translated by Tang Yau-yang

Graphic by Lin Jia-sheng

It's not hard to do things at home to ease rheumatoid arthritis or ankylosing spondylitis. Keeping a regular schedule, exercising, staying cheerful, and seeing your doctor regularly can help boost your immune system and lower the impact of these diseases.

Fatigue, fever, swollen joints, joint pain, or chronic lower back pain have sent many sufferers to see their doctors seeking relief, often in vain. Many are eventually diagnosed by doctors specializing in rheumatology with rheumatoid arthritis (RA) or ankylosing spondylitis (AS). Both RA and AS are diseases of chronic inflammation caused by problems with the immune system.

In the past, many sufferers believed that their rheumatic disease, though not fatal, was incurable. As a result, they put off treatment year after year, until their pain became unbearable or their joints were badly deformed. That course of action is misguided.

Treating RA and AS, both long-term afflictions, depends on more than pharmaceuticals alone. Keeping regular hours and eating correctly are also important keys to managing the diseases. Eating plant-based foods, for example, is a very good way to fight inflammation.

Plants can be anti-inflammatory

Gao Yun-jun (高韻均), a nutritionist at the Taiwan Vegetarian Nutrition Society, pointed out that people in pursuit of gastronomic pleasure often unwittingly ingest many food additives and a lot of refined food. Diets with prolonged intake of saturated or trans fats, excessive omega-6 fatty acids, refined carbohydrates, sugar, MSG, and aspartame or other artificial sweeteners tend to induce inflammation. Even cigarettes and alcohol can make symptoms worse.

Gao recommended that RA and AS sufferers eat anti-inflammatory foods, such as colorful vegetables and fruit, citrus, food rich in polyphenols (like turmeric, grapes, and green tea), oils rich in omega-3 fatty acids, nuts, plant-based proteins, whole grains, root vegetables, and spices. She recommends choosing whole foods that are seasonal and locally produced.

“Medical literature has shown that plants possess beneficial properties that can reduce inflam-



Regular exercise benefits people suffering from rheumatoid arthritis or ankylosing spondylitis.

HSIAO YIU-HWA

mation in joints, increase good gut bacteria, promote a balanced immune system, protect the cardiovascular system, and reduce the complications of arthritis,” said Dr. Liu Chin-hsiu (劉津秀) of the department of immunology and rheumatology at Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital.

“Let food be your medicine, and medicine be your food,” Liu said, quoting Hippocrates (460–370 BCE). He uses the quote to urge sufferers of rheumatic diseases to cut back on inflammation-inducing foods to effectively reduce their chances of being further afflicted by arthritis. It may take some time to get accustomed to this change in diet, but the beneficial effects of anti-inflammatory food will surely emerge if one is willing to make the change.

Keep moving, even if it hurts

Rheumatoid arthritis usually affects joints in the limbs, and often symmetrically (on both sides equally), causing the joints to swell, ache, feel

warm, and stiffen. Liu advises patients to relieve such symptoms not only by taking medicine and eating properly, but also by reducing stress, smiling, and slowing down. Referring to one medical study, the physician explained that mental stress affects the nervous and endocrine systems, which in turn affect the immune system. Therefore, positive thinking and stress reduction can help the immune system stay in balance.

For RA and AS sufferers, exercise is also a very important tool in managing their disease. Liu Jian-ting (劉建庭), a physiatrist at Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital, stressed that only medications and exercise together can help restore a patient’s physical functions. He reminded sufferers to go to bed early and exercise more. He said, “However painful you may feel, keep moving.”

It is to the benefit of RA and AS sufferers that they heed these important pointers from experts—they will help reduce the risk of inflammation and lead to a healthier life. ❦



Living Bravely

By Lin Yi-ru and Wang Mei-ya

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Drawings by Xie Liang-ji

On Christmas Eve, 1951, a sprightly baby boy was born into the Xie family in Tainan, southern Taiwan. He was born at an auspicious hour, so his father named him “Liang-ji,” which literally means “good and auspicious.”

Being the youngest child of four, Liang-ji was doted on by his parents, who ran a laundry shop. His dad often took him along when he went out to deliver clothes to his customers, and Liang-ji was more than happy to tag along. He liked to be out and about; besides, on such trips he often got to drink a glass of store-bought iced black tea. However, being the center of his parents’ love and affection resulted in his having a bad temper.

Liang-ji joined his school’s baseball team when he was in seventh grade. He practiced diligently every day. An uncle who was once a pitcher gave him private lessons. Liang-ji’s own efforts, coupled with his uncle’s coaching, made him a skilled pitcher and a major player on his team. When the team won a national championship, Liang-ji and his teammates paraded through downtown Tainan, enthusiastically waving their baseball caps through the windows of taxis to cheering onlookers on the side of the roads. That was one of the most glorious moments of Liang-ji’s life.

After graduating from an industrial high school, 18-year-old Liang-ji began his compulsory military service. He could throw a grenade as easily as a baseball. He only needed to throw one as far as 30 meters (33 yards)—but his grenades were flying 70 or 80 meters. He even coached

many fellow soldiers so that they could meet the requirement too.

Liang-ji’s military experience had been smooth sailing until he began experiencing health issues. It seemed to begin one day when he accidentally became soaked in water. After that he started feeling sore and weird in his lower body, and there was often no strength in his legs. After seeing many doctors, he was diagnosed with ankylosing spondylitis, a debilitating inflammation of the spine.

Liang-ji turned to taking painkillers and drinking to ease the pain from the illness, but this only made life worse for him. After he was discharged from the military, he was unable to land a steady job due to his bad temper and illness. People around him assumed he was just being lazy. His neighbors even teased him: “Why can’t a fine young man like you go find a job?”

After his dad passed away from cancer, the custom had it that he had to get married within a hundred days or wait three more years before doing so. The elders in his family urged him to get married quickly, so Liang-ji tied the knot with a girlfriend he had been seeing for some time. The wedding was very low-key due to his dad’s recent death. There was no wedding banquet, nor photos taken by professional photographers to mark the occasion. The hasty affair seemed to augur ill for the couple’s future.

One day Liang-ji and his wife had a fight, and in a fit of anger he slapped her face. She packed a



Xie Liang-ji currently lives in a nursing home in Tainan. An older man now, his strength has dwindled and his eyesight has deteriorated, but he faces it all with a philosophical attitude.

GUO MING-JUAN

suitcase, grabbed their bank passbook, and left home, leaving behind a son not yet one month old. She never came back.

With his wife gone, his health doing poorly, and no steady job, Liang-ji left the care of his son to his own mother. As a result, his son was never close to him. Divorced with an estranged son, Liang-ji’s only constant companion was his illness. He worked when he could, but as his condition continued to deteriorate, he began to spend more time at home. By the time he turned 42, his back had become so bent he could not look ahead when he stood—all he could see was his own feet. He preferred staying home to going out and drawing stares from people. Though he was home a lot, he wasn’t completely isolated. He had a few friends who visited him, and together they would drink and shoot the breeze.

As if his illness and bent back weren’t bad enough, Liang-ji had a stroke when he was about to turn 50. His family sent him to a nursing home afterwards. He worked hard on rehabilitation to restore his physical functions, but just as he felt he was getting stronger, he noticed that his head was drooping lower and lower and that his tongue would stick out uncontrollably, making it difficult for him to eat. In the end he could only eat through a nasogastric tube. He struggled to live, even though life was a torture for him.

Drawing as rehabilitation

In 2001, a doctor who had previously agreed to operate on Liang-ji decided not to operate on him. After obtaining consent from Liang-ji, the doctor transferred him to Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital in Chiayi, southern Taiwan. Dr. Chien Jui-Teng (簡瑞騰) of the orthopedics department became Liang-ji’s attending physician.

Dr. Chien was shocked the first time he laid eyes on Liang-ji. The patient’s spine was bent over 100 degrees. His chest and abdomen were pressed together, and his chin hung close to his chest. His tongue stuck out, causing him to drool non-stop. Chien couldn’t imagine how a person could allow himself to deteriorate to such an extent before seeking medical help.

What Chien didn’t know was that Liang-ji had been waiting for a long time for a physician who was willing to operate on him. Chien treated him with halo traction and performed seven operations on him. In three short months, Liang-ji was able to lie flat, stand, and walk with the help of a walker.

Liang-ji endured unspeakable pain during the process, but what awaited him was another big challenge—rehabilitation. Volunteer Chen Ying-ying (陳鶯鶯) and others accompanied and supported him during this time. They filled a void in his spirit and helped him open up his closed heart. Liang-ji told himself that the pain he was undergoing was only temporary, that if he could pull through he would come out on top. He remembered what he had said to himself when he was transferred to Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital: “I’ll endure

Liang-ji loves baseball. He drew on his childhood memories to create this picture, in which he depicts children playing baseball using a bamboo stick as a bat and slippers as home plate.



In August 2018, Liang-ji (front row, first from left) attended an exhibition at Tainan Jing Si Hall, where his artworks were displayed. The woman standing behind him is Tzu Chi volunteer Chen Ying-ying, who uncovered his artistic talent by encouraging him to draw.

ZHONG YI-RUI



anything to be relieved of this pain and to walk upright like a normal person again."

Liang-ji lamented his hard-knock life. If he hadn't fallen ill so young, his life would have turned out completely different. At the same time, however, he was grateful to everyone who had helped him. Out of a grateful heart and wanting to give back, he said to the volunteers who helped care for him, "When I'm able, I'll volunteer like you."

Those words weren't just empty promises. After he was discharged, he checked into a nursing home ten minutes by car from the hospital, and he visited the hospital every day to undergo rehabilitation. During such visits, he would go to the volunteers' room to help out. He enjoyed it, even if all he was doing was putting stamps on hospital forms or pasting name tags on patient identification wristbands. He also liked to visit wards to encourage and cheer up low-spirited patients.

Liang-ji's grandmother used to raise chickens when he was small. He remembers she would pick plants from the fields and collect river snails to feed them.



Liang-ji was faring better than expected after treatment, but sadly his improvement didn't last long. He suffered another stroke and his motor skills became worse. To raise his spirits and to help his hands move, volunteer Chen encouraged him to write his autobiography and to take up drawing.

Thus Chen unexpectedly uncovered Liang-ji's artistic talent: She found he could draw pretty well. Though at first his right hand was weak and he couldn't straighten his fingers, he used all his strength to improve. By and by his crooked lines became straight and his shapes and forms looked better and better. He drew unceasingly—except for eating and sleeping, all he did was draw. Guan Yin Bodhisattva, children playing hopscotch or jumping ropes (from his childhood memories), cartoon figures such as Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck—one lively figure after another emerged from his colored pen. He loved drawing because when he was absorbed in this creative activity, time flew by instead of hanging heavy on his hands.

Chen was surprised that someone who had not received any training could draw so well. The proportion, composition, and use of light all felt just right. Liang-ji's works brought great pleasure to those who saw them.



A little boy who tries to approach a goose that is hatching eggs is chased away by a gander.

Another scene from Liang-ji's childhood: an ox cart full of watermelons.





An exhibition showcasing his drawings was staged in April 2009 at Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital. Liang-ji donated all the proceeds from selling his artworks—more than 40,000 NT dollars (US\$1,400)—to the Tzu Chi Foundation to help the needy.

Keep going

Liang-ji later moved from the nursing home in Dalin to another one in Tainan, his hometown. Volunteer Chen Ju (陳菊) took over from Chen Ying-ying and began visiting Liang-ji at the nursing home. She also drove him to the Dalin hospital for follow-up visits or to volunteer.

Some time later, the nursing home staff finally reached Liang-ji's family. An older sister started dropping in on him every once in a while. Later, when the staff got in touch with Liang-ji's son, he also started bringing his wife and their two children to see Liang-ji. Only then did Liang-ji know

The lotus is one of Buddhism's most recognizable icons. It represents non-attachment as it is rooted in mud (which symbolizes worldly attachment and desire), but its flowers bloom on long stalks untainted by the mire below.

that he was already a grandfather! However, every time they visited, Liang-ji's son just waited at the entrance to the nursing home. He never went in to see his father. Only his wife and children did. Even so, Liang-ji was happy. Sadly, their visits dropped off over time, and he eventually stopped expecting them.

Life at the nursing home was uneventful. Liang-ji was most happy when Tzu Chi volunteers visited, and he always chatted cheerfully with them.

He continued to draw, lying in bed with his back propped up with pillows. His lines were simple and his colors straightforward. He said he especially liked to draw lotus flowers. In part, this was because of a saying by Master Cheng Yen: "A field of blessings awaits cultivation by all benevolent people in the world; ten thousand hearts as pure as the lotus flower create the world of Tzu Chi." Another reason he liked drawing lotus flowers was because they looked serene and graceful, and they grew unsullied out of the mud. Every time he drew the flowers, he felt especially peaceful.

When the staff at the nursing home learned that he had created many drawings, they hung up some of his works in some of the rooms, which greatly livened up the space.

However, Liang-ji's eyesight, which had been affected by his strokes, continued to deteriorate with age, to the extent that he could only see as far as five to ten centimeters [two to four inches]. Also, his ankylosing spondylitis made him unable to sit for long stretches. As a result, he stopped drawing in November 2017.

Falling ill and taking up drawing were nothing Liang-ji expected to happen in his life, but both made deep imprints on his life's path. Despite his tribulations, he said, "My illness didn't knock me down. I'll continue to live bravely." Coming from someone who has been through so much, those words packed a punch. Taking inspiration from him, none of us seems to have much reason to whine and complain when things don't quite go our way. ❀

The JING SI Aphorisms Illustrated



The Buddha says:

Health is the greatest blessing, contentment is the greatest good fortune, trust is the greatest relationship, and nirvana is the greatest joy.



Ordinary people seek material fortune, while saints pursue the truth.

Money does not necessarily bring happiness. The greatest peace of mind comes with a clear conscience. Giving, helping others, and saving lives bring the most happiness!



A couple just got married at the Jing Si Abode.

Master Cheng Yen said, "The wedding ceremony is not the most important thing. The most important thing is that from today on, both the bride and groom have an additional pair of parents, and the parents on both sides have an additional son or daughter. Man and wife are "two birds in the same tree." Since you have the deep karma to get married, from now on you should cherish this meaningful relationship. With one mind and one will, you should build a bodhisattva family together.

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



Mexico

Mexico was hit by a powerful earthquake on September 19, 2017. Tzu Chi volunteers provided free medical services and distributed aid to victims in December 2017. As the first anniversary of the quake neared, volunteers from the United States and Taiwan went to Mexico again to conduct four free clinics in Tlaquiltenango and Xochimilco, near Mexico City, from September 1 to 4. Volunteers also held three distributions of gift cards for more quake victims who hadn't received help from Tzu Chi the first time around.

After Tzu Chi conducted free clinics and distributions in Mexico in December 2017, volunteers from the United States continued to visit the nation to offer free clinics. But whenever volunteers asked local people what assistance they needed the most, most of them said medical care. This strengthened the volunteers' commitment to continue offering medical aid there. They hoped during their trips to Mexico to inspire local medi-

Dr. Deng Bo-ren (鄧博仁) sees a patient in a free clinic Tzu Chi held in Tlaquiltenango, Mexico, on September 2.

cal professionals to join their efforts as care providers in free clinics. Perhaps one day they could form a Mexico chapter of the Tzu Chi International Medical Association to serve their own countrymen.

This was the second time that Dr. Ye Tian-hao (葉添浩), from Taiwan, had traveled to Mexico for free clinics. While treating patients, Ye saw some people still suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. The earthquake was a thing of the past, but its impact still lingered. Moved by compassion for the locals, Ye was happy he could do something to help.

Huang Bao-yan (黃寶燕), a nurse from Kaohsiung, southern Taiwan, had served in free clinics in Nepal and the Philippines, but this was the first time she had volunteered in Mexico. She was surprised that people there gave her big hugs

every time she took their blood pressure. Impressed by their love and passion, she appreciated even more the opportunity to serve the Mexicans.

Zheng Wen-kai (鄭文凱) is a traditional Chinese medicine doctor from the United States. He too was impressed by the local people's friendliness. During this visit, he was very happy to relieve the pain of people who had suffered from illness for ten years or even longer. "Seeing my treatments make a difference really buoyed me and increased my sense of self-worth," said Zheng. "Very often what makes you happy isn't making money."

In addition to medical professionals, local translation volunteers were also required to make these free clinics possible. Without their services, the medical care providers from foreign countries would not be able to communicate with their patients. Alexandro was a local student and one of the interpreters. He said that he liked to help people, but there weren't many occasions for him to volunteer at school. He was glad that he could help his fellow countrymen communicate with medical providers at the free clinic.

Adan, a local resident, brought his ailing wife to one of the free clinics for treatment. He was touched by how Tzu Chi extended aid to the needy without regard to their race or religion. As a result, he asked for two coin banks from volunteers to save money to help the underprivileged. The day after the free clinic, he received a gift card at a Tzu Chi distribution. Feeling once more the love of Tzu Chi volunteers, he was moved to ask for another coin bank. He hoped to fill up the banks quickly and donate them to Tzu Chi.

The foundation will continue to help local underserved people. Many Mexicans have begun to volunteer for Tzu Chi since the quake. With everyone's help, Tzu Chi hopes to reach more local needy people in the future.

United States

Dozens of explosions, triggered by a rupture in a natural gas pipeline, rocked three communities north of Boston on September 13, killing one person, injuring dozens, and forcing the evacuation of thousands of families. Tzu Chi volunteers from Boston and New York quickly took action to help victims.

Volunteers contacted the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency and other emergency agencies the day after the accident to learn about the situation. After making sure that the danger had passed, five volunteers arrived in the area on September 15. They visited Red Cross shelters at Arlington Middle School and Parthum Elementary School, both in Lawrence, to offer help and care. They learned that some older, overweight, or mobility-limited victims needed more solid beds to sleep on. They soon arranged to have some Tzu Chi folding beds transported from the Tzu Chi New York office to serve the need.

An aid distribution was arranged to take place on September 29 at the Lawrence Senior Center for impacted residents in Lawrence, which is a predominantly Latino city, with more than a quarter of the residents under the poverty line. People began arriving early in the morning on the day of the distribution. Volunteers talked to the people who had lined up and provided them with refreshments. Volunteer Wu Jian-fa (吳建發) gave gifts of appreciation to the police who were helping maintain order.

The opening ceremony got underway at ten in the morning. Lawrence city councilor Pavel Payano, who was at the venue assisting with the distribution, told the attendees that he too was among those who were evacuated when the accident happened.

A volunteer serves a recipient at an aid distribution held by Tzu Chi after dozens of explosions, triggered by a natural gas pipeline rupture, rocked three communities near Boston in September.



Tzu Chi volunteers from Taiwan and Malaysia joined their counterparts in Myanmar in holding a mung bean seed distribution in Jar Gan, Yangon Region, on October 15 for flood-affected farmers.



In the midst of the chaos, he felt warm seeing people helping one another. “There’s a sense of community, a sense of love that I felt,” he said. He then expressed appreciation for Tzu Chi and told the audience that the volunteers had brought them love and care from around the world.

Martha Velez, executive director of the senior center, also spoke during the opening ceremony. She affirmed Tzu Chi’s contributions to the community. She had managed her center with the same kind of dedication. She was more than glad to see Tzu Chi and other groups working together to help the victims.

One hundred and twenty-five households benefited from the distribution, in which 125 debit cards (with a total worth of US\$39,800), 129 blankets, and 100 scarves were given out. Close to 80 volunteers worked together to serve the affected and bring them good wishes from Tzu Chi volunteers around the globe.

Myanmar

Myanmar was hit by severe flooding in July and August, leading to tremendous agricultural loss. Since it was too late after the flooding to plant new crops of rice, Tzu Chi decided to distribute mung bean seeds to help affected farmers through this difficult time. Myanmar is known for the rice it produces, but not many know that the nation is also the world’s second-largest exporter of beans and pulses.

On October 15, volunteers from Taiwan and Malaysia joined local volunteers and held a distribution of mung bean seeds in the village of Jar Gan, Kayan Township, Yangon Region.

Huang Qiu-liang (黃秋良), leader of the Taiwanese delegation, read a letter from Master Cheng Yen in a ceremony preceding the distribution. Daw Thida Khin, head of Tzu Chi Myanmar, translated for Huang.

Local volunteer U Thein Tun shared with participating farmers these words: “Speak kind

words, think good thoughts, and do good deeds.” He explained that the words were from Master Cheng Yen, founder of Tzu Chi, and encouraged everyone to practice them in their daily life. Then volunteer U Mya Aye shared his experience of changing from an aid recipient to a help giver, and of how he now saved 50 Burmese kyat (US\$0.031) every day to help the needy. Their sharing must have hit a chord in many of their fellow countrymen because when volunteers mentioned the recent earthquake in Indonesia, many farmers donated money to help the victims.

Before the ceremony concluded, everyone prayed for the earthquake victims in Indonesia and also for a world free from disasters. Then recipient farmers had lunch prepared by volunteers and villagers before receiving their seeds and returning home with the gift from Tzu Chi. Volunteers also visited the homes of some recipients.

U Than Han has 14 acres of farmland. From July to August, he planted rice seeds three times, but his rice plants were destroyed by flood each time, landing him deeper and deeper in debt. Eventually, he owed 3,100,000 Burmese kyat (US\$1,940), a substantial sum for him. While he was at the most difficult point in his life, Tzu Chi delivered aid to him. For that he was very grateful. He said in December he would plant the bean seeds, which would be ready for harvest in February or March next year.

Tzu Chi volunteers continued to hold more distributions for affected farmers in early November. It was their sincerest hope that this help from the foundation would help local farmers’ lives return to normal as soon as possible.

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*If we are spiritually rich and fulfilled, we will be happy,
even if materialistically our life is basic and simple.
—Master Cheng Yen*

PHOTO BY HUANG XIAO-ZHE