

Tzu Chi



**Buddhism
in Action**

Summer 2017

慈濟

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Mozambique**

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Love and Care in Action

Text and photo by Liu King-pong

Sun Weili (孫薇麗), a colleague of mine at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is so devoted to her work that she seldom takes any days off. Her impressive record was finally broken a few weeks ago when she took a few days off following a long weekend. I finally bumped into her in the hallway of our office a few days ago.

"Hey, you've seemed quite 'busy' recently. What's up?" I asked.

She replied, "My son, Qiu Zhengbiao [邱正標], had to have an operation. My husband and I took turns staying home from work to look after him." She then remarked how grateful and sweet her son had always been ever since he was a kid. The 16-year-old was self-disciplined and well-behaved, never created any trouble for the family, and brought nothing home from school but honors and good grades.

"Right before the operation, he even apologized for causing so much trouble for me and my husband," Weili said with tears glistening in her eyes.

I could tell just how proud she was of her son. However, this heartwarming scenario reminded me of a less pleasant episode a few months ago when a frustrated mother, May, approached our office for help. Her daughter Beatrice, 26, who was living in Los Angeles, was mentally ill. May asked helplessly if our diplomats based in LA could help her.

It turned out that May and her husband, Robert, a successful businessman, decided over 13 years ago to send Beatrice to live with her aunt in New York City. They were happy to spend a great deal of the money that they had painstakingly earned on Beatrice, hoping she could achieve something great after receiving a quality education and growing up in the cultural and financial capital of the world. To their dismay, the colorful American dream they had hoped for became a nightmare.


Inexperienced and timid, Beatrice became a target for attacks by some ferocious classmates and companions in the U.S. Ironically, most of these bullies were from Asian nations, including Taiwan, whereas non-Asian people seemed

indifferent toward her and left her alone. This unpleasant experience caused Beatrice to develop a strong mistrust of Asian people, especially Taiwanese. She began to display symptoms of paranoia, constantly suspecting that the people around her wanted to hurt her. Suspicious and defensive, she gradually became unpopular among her schoolmates and friends. Unable to deal with the pressure and setbacks over the years, she finally dropped out of college.

Seeing Beatrice's mental problems, her parents tried very hard to persuade her to come back to Taiwan for treatment, but she always turned a cold shoulder. Twice she even threw away airplane tickets her father sent her from Taiwan. Her mother also took action to soothe Beatrice by flying to Los Angeles to visit her every now and then. Still, May told me with tears welling up in her eyes, her efforts to bring her daughter back home were in vain.

After mulling over her situation, I introduced May to Antony Ho (何敏滄), a Tzu Chi volunteer in Kaohsiung, and he helped forward the case to the Tzu Chi Los Angeles chapter. Volunteers there tried many times to talk to Beatrice, but they failed their mission of offering help—she simply refused to be helped by any Taiwanese. However, they've kindly promised to stay in touch with her and to forward her case to other American charity organizations when appropriate. Beatrice's stubbornness reminded me of a well-known Buddhist saying: "Even the Buddha can only help those who are fond of him."

Pondering these two scenarios, I can tell just how important it is to take action quickly to help those in need. Weili and her husband immediately took action to help their son by taking time off from work to take care of him. The feedback that Zhengbiao gave was positive and touching. The concept of providing prompt aid can also be applied to Beatrice's case. Although she seems unwilling to accept any help from her parents and Tzu Chi, she can more or less perceive their loving kindness and may eventually change her mind as time goes by. After all, love conquers everything! ❀



A sculpture of the Great Compassion Guan Yin Bodhisattva—a being that compassionately refrains from entering nirvana in order to help all living beings attain buddhahood

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

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THE GO-ANYWHERE CLINIC

A TIMA team conducted a home visit in Pingxi, New Taipei City, northern Taiwan, on February 19, 2016.

CHEN LI SHAO-MIN

In October 1996, a group of medical care providers in Taiwan established the Tzu Chi International Medical Association (TIMA). They started offering free clinics to needy people in 1997, and they have been at it ever since.

Over the last 20 years, TIMA has developed into an international association of more than 17,000 like-minded volunteers. They typically offer free clinics to poor people in remote areas where medical resources are few and far between. They even make house calls, as some patients may be too old, too weak, or too sick to leave their homes. Association members also travel to areas afflicted by natural disasters to help victims.

Association members have conducted over 11,000 free clinics and served more than 2.5 million patient visits.

—Compiled by Tang Yau-yang



Fifteen Years in Nanzhuang

For most people, Nanzhuang, Miaoli County, in northwestern Taiwan, is a scenic spot for sight-seeing. For Tzu Chi volunteers who go there regularly, the town attracts them for a different reason altogether.

By Zhang Li-yun

Translated by Tang Yau-yang
Photos by Huang Xiao-zhe



The town of Nanzhuang is nestled in the mountains in Miaoli County, located in northwestern Taiwan. Although tourists flock to the area seeking its serenity and natural beauty, the place has been unable to keep its own sons and daughters from moving away for better livelihoods elsewhere. As a result, Nanzhuang's population consists mostly of the elderly and young children.

The town has only three clinics, one public and two private, for its 12,000 residents. Residents' access to medical care is further hin-

dered by the mountainous terrain. For some people in the Sanwan area, for example, a 90-minute car ride down the mountain is necessary to obtain medical services. The difficulty in getting to a clinic, coupled with factors such as limited physical mobility, have caused some folks to put off seeking medical help, resulting in minor illnesses growing into major ones.

Witnessing their quandary, Tzu Chi volunteers in Miaoli sought help from members of the TIMA Taichung chapter, who consequently started providing free clinics in Nanzhuang in

2002. Though the very nature of being a monthly mobile clinic has limited the scope of their care and precluded them from treating acute or serious conditions, the TIMA volunteers have been able to care for patients with chronic conditions. They are also able to educate local residents in matters of health.

The TIMA volunteers' monthly visits to Nanzhuang have evolved over the years. Presently, each visit entails a free clinic at one fixed location, Donghe Elementary School, as well as four fixed routes for home visits.

Like family

Dr. Ji Bang-jie (紀邦杰), head of the TIMA Taichung chapter, almost never skips a visit to Nanzhuang. He is always ready to help the disadvantaged solve their medical problems.

His patients used to include Zhang, who was diagnosed with osteogenesis imperfecta (OI) when he was still in elementary school. OI, also known as brittle bone disease, is a genetic disorder characterized by bones that break easily. An aunt looked after him and his younger brother, who also had OI but whose condition was far

better than his brother's. Each time Dr. Ji went to Nanzhuang, he made sure to visit the family.

He gently cared for the bedsores that afflicted Zhang. Bedsore care is no easy task, and Ji racked his brains for ways to improve the brother's condition. At the suggestion of volunteer Liao Ju-zhen (廖菊珍), the doctor had a multi-function wheelchair customized for Zhang. This wheelchair allowed him to adjust the height of the footrest and was easy to maneuver.

Whatever Dr. Ji did, he had Zhang and his family's best interests at heart. They were on his mind a lot and like family to him. The feeling was mutual. When Zhang died abruptly, the aunt immediately called Ji. She and the brothers had grown to trust the doctor.

In addition to the Zhang brothers, Dr. Ji has cared for and become close to many other patients and their families in Nanzhuang. Feng De-jin (風德金), 56, is one of them.

When Feng's parents both died in 2002, he had no choice but to quit his job as a hairdresser and return home to care for his kid brother, who suffered from cerebral palsy.

That was a big change for Feng. Not only did he have to leave behind the work he loved, he was now tasked with caring for his bedridden brother day in and day out. He felt alone and helpless.

The TIMA team learned about their situation and visited them once a month. Dr. Ji, along with a group of medical workers and support volunteers, infused liveliness, energy, and warmth to this otherwise sparsely occupied house.

Besides the regular visits, Ji always phoned Feng a couple of days after each home visit to check on them again. The calls, however short, really warmed Feng up on the inside. "Dr. Ji's visit every month was support enough for me and my brother. He really didn't need to call us afterwards, but he always did." The doctor made him feel safe and cared for. Feng often said he owed Ji a huge debt of gratitude.

Feng lived with and cared for his brother for over ten years. He tended to his needs, slept with him, and watched over him carefully. Then one day in December 2013, his brother died in his sleep. Dr. Ji visited Feng soon after to offer his condolences. "It never occurred to me that my brother would die such a sudden death," Feng said to Ji with his voice catching in his throat.

Since then, Feng has himself become a volunteer at the TIMA free clinics. When Ji and other volunteers come to town, Feng joins them at



A TIMA doctor carefully listens to a patient's chest at a free clinic in Nanzhuang, Miaoli.

Donghe Elementary School and serves as an interpreter between patients and the TIMA members. Feng is a member of the Saisiyat, one of the indigenous peoples in Taiwan. When his fellow Saisiyats come to be treated at the free clinic, they may need help communicating with the TIMA care providers.

Feng thinks that is the least that he can do to pay back his debt to Dr. Ji.

"Would you be my son?"

Xiangtianhu is a small village in Nanzhuang higher up in the mountains. Old, low homes dot the surrounding hills. Some roofs have collapsed and have been patched up with makeshift metal sheets to keep out the rain. Mostly only older people live in these homes because their children have moved to the cities for work.

Dr. Chen Cheng-jin (陳成金) walked along a path in the village, trailed by a team of other TIMA volunteers. By the way he traversed the mountain paths, it was obvious he was very familiar with the area. Someone behind him asked, "How many times have you been here, Dr. Chen?"

Jiang Zhao-rong (江昭蓉), a nurse, responded before Dr. Chen could answer: "Dr. Chen rarely misses the monthly free clinics, and he always works this route. He's familiar with every case family on this route, and he's very popular with them."

Smiling and nodding, Chen added, "I've been with some of the families since their cases were first opened, going as far back as 2003."

As they approached the home of Xia Yu-jiao (夏玉嬌), Chen hollered to announce their arrival. Xia, 107, knew the TIMA team was visiting her this day, so she had groomed herself early in the morning and then sat waiting for them in her living room.

Born in 1910 into the home of a Saisiyat chief in the area, Xia is the last Saisiyat princess in the region. She is multilingual—she can speak Saisiyat and is conversational in Mandarin, Taiwanese, Hakka, and Japanese. Dr. Chen grew up speaking his native Hakka, so he often talks to Xia in that language. "Dr. Chen has cared for me for almost ten years," Xia said. "I really appreciate his help. He's kept me in such good shape."



Dr. Ji Bang-jie often visits patients in remote communities. He spares no effort in serving elderly citizens and people with limited mobility who have difficulty obtaining medical help.

Tzu Chi volunteers started visiting Xia and her family in 2002. Her granddaughter-in-law had just passed away, leaving behind three small children, the youngest of whom was just a first grader. Xia's only son had long been bedridden due to a stroke. His veteran's pension had been hardly enough to pay his medical bills. Xia's family was in bad financial shape and needed help.

Chen usually brings medications, artificial skin, and nutritional supplements when he visits Xia and her family. He also talks to her. It seems mundane, but she often does not have anyone with whom she can talk.

Chen recalled one day in July some years back. He was reviewing Xia's medical record in preparation for an upcoming trip to Nanzhuang when he suddenly noticed that she would turn 101 in August. Waiting till their visit in August to celebrate would be too late, so he brought a cake on their July visit, and the group gave the centenarian a surprise birthday celebration. Since then, he has celebrated her birthday every year on their July trip.

When they visited Xia in July 2016 to celebrate her 106th birthday, they also wheeled her son out of his room to join the festivity in the living room. Xia broke into a big smile upon seeing her son; she was so happy she forgot to swallow the bite of cake still in her mouth.

Why was she so thrilled to see her own son?

Though she and her son lived under the same roof, they did not see each other often. Both were unable to move about freely, and their rooms were some distance apart. Her son's daughter-in-law looked after him, but she had other responsibilities to tend to, and so she could not get him out of his room very often. As a result, Xia saw her son only a few times a year.

Now both of them were in the living room eating cake. The sight of him eating one bite of cake after another—an indication that he was in reasonable health—made Xia quite relieved. He swallowed another bite, and she, happy and pleased, also ingested the cake that was still in her mouth.

As the team was leaving, Xia took Chen's arm and, with a shade of shyness crossing her face, she said, "Dr. Chen, would you be my son?"

"Gladly," Chen replied. How many people ever have a centenarian mother? How could he not jump at the offer?

Like Xia, all the old people in Nanzhuang look forward to the TIMA visits, and when their favorite doctors do not show up on a visit, they are often disappointed. The bonding and the longing to see each other are shared between the seniors and the volunteers, who value their interactions with the old folks. "One trip a month is hardly enough for us to do very much for them," said Dr. Chen, "and yet we've all learned so much from them. We see how they face pain and suffering without complaining, and that has really taught us to be more grateful in our lives."

Beyond the obvious points that the healthy and the better-to-do are helping the sick and the

worse-to-do, they have developed family-like bonds—warm, caring, and inextricable.

"It is true that we've given them medical services," reflected Chen. "But in substance they have, through their own circumstances, given us an education, an opportunity for us to be more perceptive of blessings that envelop us. By treating them like family, we also help the elderly or sick people feel less lonely."

The visitors care for the hosts, the hosts love them back, and the story continues.

Not a matter of cost-effectiveness

Dr. Zhang Dong-xiang (張東祥), also on the TIMA team, made the wish while he was still in medical school that he would one day serve the disadvantaged in remote locations. He took the

A TIMA team consists of medical professionals and support volunteers. Through regular home visits, they build up bonds with care recipients.



Dr. Chen Cheng-jin chats with centenarian Xia Yu-jiao at her home.

WEN YU-JIAO

first step toward that goal in 1995 when he left his work in Taipei, his hometown, and moved to Toufen, Miaoli, a town far less endowed with medical resources than Taipei. He began practicing there as an orthopedic surgeon.

One day in 2003, a Tzu Chi volunteer went to his clinic and asked him for a diagnosis report on a patient who was a Tzu Chi care recipient. The volunteer needed the report to pay off the medical bills that the patient had incurred. Zhang provided the report and asked the volunteer about TIMA. The next day the volunteer gave him an application form and invited him to join. That's how Zhang became the first TIMA doctor in the Miaoli area.

One day Zhang went with other TIMA members to Nanzhuang. As they approached a care recipient's house, they smelled a strong stench

coming from it. Everyone entered the house, but a nurse, distracted by the abhorrent odor, dropped a blood sugar monitor she was holding. Without delay and without a word, Zhang squatted down and, despite the foul things on the floor, helped her find the monitor.

"In hospitals, many surgeons, particularly hot shots, tend to arrogantly order nurses around," the nurse said afterwards, recalling that incident. "I was amazed by Dr. Zhang's humility."

Some young aborigines in the mountain communities that the TIMA team visits are given to habitual drinking, smoking, and betel nut chewing—a lifestyle that has led many of them, despite their young ages, to develop chronic diseases such as cirrhosis, high blood pressure, or high blood sugar. Often they persist

in their harmful habits even though TIMA members repeatedly urge them to quit. Faced with such stubborn patients, some medical workers feel frustrated and question the value of their home visits.

Once a nurse, disheartened by one such patient, asked Dr. Zhang, “Should we go see him again? Isn’t it just a waste of our time and resources?”

Zhang answered, “Undoubtedly some people are set in their ways, but if we keep up our efforts, then some day when the time is ripe we may bring about some change.”

Zhang once had doubts about their work too. When he first started his monthly TIMA visits to Nanzhuang, he noticed that each visit usually involved 60 or so physicians, pharmacists, nurses, and support personnel, often outnumbering the patients that they went to care for. He questioned the cost-effectiveness of these activities, and so he asked Dr. Ji, the head of the TIMA Taichung chapter, about whether the benefit of the project really justified the efforts of the whole team. Ji did not give him an answer.

More than a decade has passed since that time, and Zhang has finally found the answer himself. He has come to a deeper realization of the meaning of their work: Helping others brings more joy to you than the joy you bring to them, and the helpers actually learn a lot about life from the very people whom they help. The fulfillment from helping others keeps you happily going. At the same time, you cannot put a price on the positive differences that you make in some people’s lives.

A dinosaur party

Zhang brought Dr. Lian Jin-chang (連進昌) into TIMA.

Lian used to work as a pediatrician in a large hospital in Taipei. Deep down he remembered what his mother had always wanted him to do: “Come home and care for your townsfolk.” He therefore quit his job 26 years ago and returned to his native Zhunan, Miaoli, to start his own clinic.

In 2006, Lian took his mother to Zhang’s orthopedic clinic for treatment. Upon learning

that Lian was a physician like himself, Zhang, already a TIMA member, invited him to join the association. Zhang told him he went with members of the TIMA Taichung chapter to Nanzhuang to hold free clinics every month, and that he hoped more local doctors in Miaoli could join up and serve. The invitation fell on fertile soil. Lian not only joined up—he also got his mother and wife to serve as support volunteers.

Yonghe Mountain, located in a particularly remote part of Miaoli, features a reservoir, and cultivated citrus plants cover much of its slopes. Tourists flock there for the scenery and the experience of picking fruit right from the trees.

Zhang Yong-qi (張永錡) used to live near the top of the mountain with his mother, who hails from Indonesia, before he passed away in 2016. No other families lived with them. Zhang suffered from ALS, otherwise known as Lou Gehrig’s disease, a progressive nervous system disease that destroys nerve cells and causes disability. His mother had to turn him once an hour through the night to relieve him of the pain of sleeping on his bedsores.

Their struggle led TIMA members to visit them every month. The volunteers gave them medications, cared for Zhang’s bedsores, and taught his mother how to help him do rehabilitation exercises.

Dr. Lian’s mother, now 86, really felt for the family. She worried most of all about their being all alone at home in a sparsely populated area. She was concerned that nobody would be able to give them a hand in case of an emergency, and she grew to love Zhang and his mother as if they were her own grandson and daughter. Despite the fact that she had bone spurs in her legs and had to endure pain walking uphill to reach their home, she insisted on going with the TIMA team to visit them month after month.

Zhang, usually a taciturn young man, occasionally uttered “Grandma” when he saw Mrs. Lian. That was more than enough to thoroughly wipe away her pain or discomfort from the hike.

Besides the monthly visits, Dr. Lian and his mother, along with the nurse and pharmacist from his clinic, made additional visits. They brought pharmaceuticals and medical supplies and changed dressings for Zhang. In the face of his irreversible condition, Lian knew how limited their help was. The best that they could do for him and his mother was to be there for them as much as they could and to give them some relief.

When Zhang was turning 20 in 2015, Lian decided to stage a surprise birthday celebration for him. On October 23, 2015, a group of “dinosaurs” bustled into the Zhang residence: a triceratops (Mrs. Lian), a tyrannosaurus rex (Dr. Lian), a pterodactyl, and a corythosaurus (other volunteers). The doctor had known that Zhang loved dinosaurs, so they dressed up as different kinds of dinosaurs and howled and yowled as they marched into his home.

Recognizing the triceratops, Zhang excitedly but slowly uttered, “Grand...ma.” Mrs. Lian happily rubbed him.

“Here, we also brought a dinosaur cake,” someone said. Mrs. Lian held Zhang and his mother by the hand as they cut the cake. Zhang was all smiles, grinning from ear to ear, but his mother was moved to tears as she said to the visitors, “Thank you for throwing a birthday party for Yong-qi. Thank you for loving him so much.” Mrs. Lian put her arm around the mother’s shoulders and said, “You’re not alone here in Taiwan. You have us.”

Zhang passed away in May 2016, just as the citrus trees on the mountain were putting out buds for a new season. By that time, TIMA members had cared for him for eight years. Though Zhang’s passing concluded TIMA’s medical mission for him, non-medical volunteers have continued to visit the mother regularly. She in turn frequently visits Mrs. Lian at her home as a daughter would return home to see her mother.

Members of the TIMA team in Taichung started their visits to Nanzhuang, Miaoli, in 2002. Over the years, many physicians and nurses in the Miaoli area have joined them in this on-going effort. Some of them bring their spouses along, and some even bring their whole families.

Although the Nanzhuang project has been running smoothly, Dr. Ji continues to go on almost every trip there, taking with him young students, physicians, and nurses so that they can experience the need and the joy of helping the less fortunate.

Master Cheng Yen says, “If suffering people cannot come to us, we must go to them to relieve them of suffering and give them joy.” It is the mission of TIMA members to help ease the afflictions of the world and bring sunshine and hope to those tormented by illness.

A TIMA team prays before a free clinic gets under way.





Medicine For Deportees

They were caught for staying illegally in Taiwan and were detained at the Nantou Detention Center pending deportation back to their home countries. Taiwanese people have tried to soothe their anxiety and treat their illnesses.

By Zhang Li-yun

Translated by Tang Yau-yang

Photos by Hsiao Yiu-hwa



One day, Hong Qi-fen (洪啟芬) received a letter. Postmarked in Japan, the letter didn't flow so well in some places, but it was neatly hand-written. Part of the letter read:

"During my stay at the Nantou Detention Center, you gave me medications to lower my blood pressure and sleeping pills to help me sleep better. I felt shy to receive such kindness, but I had nothing to give back.

"After returning to Japan, I looked for work in Kyushu and Shikoku. For two months now I've worked as a laborer on

construction sites, trading my toil for a small wage. With the pay I've saved, I can now pay you back for the kindness you and your countrymen showed me.

"I made a small donation to the Japan Tzu Chi branch in return for your warmth, friendship, and help. I don't believe I will ever be able to return to Taiwan, and that makes me feel lonely."

Attached to the letter was a receipt that the Japan Tzu Chi branch in Tokyo had issued to the letter writer for his donation of 40,000 Japanese yen (US\$360).

The author of the letter, Michiru Igawa, while detained in Nantou, central Taiwan, had been a patient of Dr. Hong.

A Japan connection

Despite the cold weather early one morning in February 2011, patients already packed Dr. Hong's clinic when another pair walked in. The younger was propping up a sickly man, as they entered. The latter, looking haggard and about 60 years of age, had his hands cuffed and feet shackled. The younger man was Liu San-xian (劉三賢), a staffer from the Nantou Detention Center.

A TIMA team visits the Nantou Detention Center every month to provide free medical care to the illegal foreigners detained there.

"Dr. Hong, he's been edgy for a few days, his face swollen and red," Liu said. "We're worried that he might have a stroke, so we decided to bring him here for an examination."

Hong judged from experience that the patient was probably suffering from hypertension. He checked the old man's blood pressure and discovered it was exactly what he had sus-

pected—way above the normal range. “It’s dangerously high,” Hong declared. “Luckily, there’s no sign of a stroke or a heart attack. I’ll give him drugs to lower the pressure. Bring him back another day on an empty stomach for blood and urine tests.”

“Do you feel any discomfort?” Hong asked the patient when the latter had become more emotionally settled. He found that the gentleman couldn’t speak Chinese, so he began speaking to him in English.

The staffer from the Nantou Detention Center gave the doctor some more information about

the patient. “He’s from Japan; his name is Michiru Igawa. He had drifted around Taiwan for three months when the police picked him up and sent him to our detention center. He had overstayed his visa. We’re in the process of sending him back to Japan.”

Still thinking of Igawa the following day and concerned about his health, Dr. Hong said to his wife, Chen Mei-hui (陳美惠), “Perhaps you and I should get an interpreter, bring some food, and pay him a visit at the detention center?”

At the center, the couple saw a neatly dressed and combed Igawa. He was already looking

much better than he had the day before, after just one night’s rest. He bowed and thanked Hong the moment he saw him. “*Arigato* [thank you]!” Through the interpreter, Hong learned more about the man.

Igawa was once a construction worker in Chiba Prefecture, home of the famous Narita International Airport, but he lost his job and started to drift. After one family member after another died, he was struck by life’s impermanence. He took it hard and felt like drifting away to a foreign country. With a few essentials in a backpack and a sleeping bag, he wandered through China, Vietnam, and some other Southeast Asian countries. Several times he overstayed his visitor visa, was caught by authorities, and was deported back to Japan.

He eventually landed in Taiwan in October 2010, with his entire savings of 100,000 Japanese yen (US\$900) on him. He passed through Hsinchu and made his way southward.

When he found no suitable place to spend the night, he slept on the street, for which he was taken to a police station twice. But since his papers were still in order, the police didn’t make things difficult for him. Instead, they treated him to some noodles and let him go.

By the time he reached Tainan, he had all but run out of money. Driven by hunger, he stole a seaweed sushi roll at a supermarket and was caught red-handed. Though the store later dropped all charges against him, the police detained him because his visa had expired. He was sent to the Nantou Detention Center of the National Immigration Agency to be processed for deportation.

“Of all the countries I’ve been to, Taiwan is my favorite,” Igawa said to Dr. Hong and his wife. “Taiwanese people are so warm. I planned to live here for the rest of my life, but that doesn’t seem likely now...” His voice caught as he trailed off.

“We brought you some snacks and thermal underwear,” Hong said. Bowing respectfully to Igawa, he handed over the things that they had brought for him.

“*Arigato!*” Igawa, obviously touched, thanked the Honges.

After learning that Igawa had been a vagabond for some time, Hong was concerned that such a lifestyle might have affected his health. He suggested to people at the detention center that they bring the Japanese back to his clinic for a more thorough checkup. A more comprehen-

sive examination revealed that Igawa, in addition to hypertension, had an enlarged heart, myocardial ischemia, weak kidney function, and elevated cholesterol.

Hong cared for him for four months, and Igawa got better. His health stabilized, and he looked a lot more spirited than when he first arrived at the detention center. When his deportation process was completed and he was about to be sent home, Hong and other Tzu Chi volunteers went to the center to say goodbye.

“Dr. Hong, how much do I owe you for the care, medications, and tests that you gave me in the last four months?” he asked shyly through an interpreter.

“Please don’t worry about that,” Hong replied. “All this is free, courtesy of Tzu Chi.”

“Tzu Chi?” Igawa asked, his eyes wide.

“Yes, we’re all Tzu Chi volunteers. Physicians in the Tzu Chi International Medical Association offer free clinics to the needy, including people of other nationalities who are working here,” Hong said. Then he took out a *Tzu Chi Monthly* magazine. He showed Igawa photos inside that featured Tzu Chi volunteers carrying out relief work in Iwate Prefecture, Japan, after the 2011 Japan earthquake and tsunami.

“These people in blue and white uniforms are Tzu Chi volunteers. They arrived in heavily hit areas soon after the tsunami to deliver food, supplies, and blankets to victims,” Hong explained. Igawa touched the photos, carefully read the Chinese captions, which he could partially recognize and comprehend, and felt tears fill his own eyes.

“After returning to Japan, feel free to contact the Tokyo Tzu Chi office if you ever need any help,” Hong said, pointing to the contact information of the office in a directory at the end of the magazine. “When you can, you may also be able to help other people in need.”

Hong gave him a Japanese language set of *Jing Si Aphorisms* by Master Cheng Yen as a farewell gift. Igawa carefully held the books in his hands. With no family in his own homeland now, he cherished even more the care he had received in Taiwan. He could not properly express himself in Chinese, so he bowed deeply to the volunteers and said, “*Arigato*, Taiwan.”

Three months after Igawa returned to Japan, Hong received the letter mentioned at the beginning of this article. In the letter, Igawa said that he had worked as a construction laborer since his return to Japan and had put away 40,000 yen

Dr. Hong Qi-fen started taking part in the TIMA free clinics at the Nantou Detention Center in 2009. Outside the monthly free clinics, he also treats detainees brought to his own clinic by center personnel free of charge. He does this in the name of Tzu Chi.



(US\$360), which he had donated to the Tokyo Tzu Chi branch. A receipt for the donation was enclosed in the letter.

Holding the letter, Hong was deeply moved but ambivalent. While he was comforted by the rippling effect of love, his heart went out to Igawa. The Japanese man was already 60, but he had done heavy labor to save money in order to pay back the people who had helped him.

A China connection

The Nantou Detention Center was opened in April 2009 to accommodate illegal aliens in cen-

tral and southern Taiwan. Lin Yi-jun (林貽俊) was its first warden. While serving at a similar center in Yilan, northern Taiwan, Lin had worked with a TIMA team to bring free clinics to the center's detainees. Soon after assuming his post at the Nantou center, he got in touch with the TIMA team in central Taiwan. Wasting no time, the two sides launched their first free clinic at the Nantou center on May 3.

Lin pointed out that before foreigners ended up at such a center, they were wary of visiting doctors or hospitals because they did not have valid passports or visas. Being ineligible for

national health insurance was a further deterrent. Therefore, they often put their health on the back burner. When they did come to the center and were waiting to be sent back to their country, they unavoidably felt stressed. That wasn't conducive to good health either. Lin was concerned about their health, so he really hoped that TIMA could offer regular free clinics at the Nantou center.

After evaluation, the TIMA team recommended visiting the center once a month. The center agreed to this arrangement.

The monthly visits to the center began in earnest. Volunteer Peng Xiu-zhen (彭秀蓁) later organized other volunteers to offer additional activities, such as vegetarian cooking and handicraft classes, to help detainees pass the time as they waited to be sent home.

Besides the monthly free clinic, Dr. Hong offered his services on other days. He told the administrators of the center that when TIMA volunteers were not on site, they could take sick detainees to his clinic, just over a mile away. "I will treat them free of charge," Hong said.

When Hong sees detainees, he not only tends to their physical illnesses but also keeps an eye on their mental and emotional health, and he guides them towards positive thinking. He plants seeds of goodness in their minds, hoping that the seeds may sprout one day.

Hong met Xiaolin after she had been sent to the center in June 2010.

Xiaolin hails from China. After graduating from high school, she married a Taiwanese man in 2005 and settled in Kaohsiung, southern Taiwan. She had banked on the marriage to bring her happiness, but it had not worked out that way. Her husband lost his job and began using illicit drugs. Unable to resist the temptation, it wasn't long before she started taking drugs too.

Her husband was later arrested for drug use. Xiaolin petitioned for a divorce and moved out.

Though she was away from her husband, she could not afford the rent anywhere and began living on the streets. Two months later, police picked her up and sent her to the detention center.

Two days later, she developed a high fever. A center staffer took her to Hong's clinic for treatment. In light of her drug history, Hong was particularly cautious. He ordered to have her blood drawn for a test, but his staffers could not find a vein that produced enough blood for the tests.

Even Dr. Hong himself was unsuccessful. After trying a total of four times, they just could not draw enough blood from her.

"Dr. Hong, please allow me," Xiaolin offered. She took a syringe and stabbed it in her own arm, apparently knowing exactly what to do and where to do it. Blood flowed into the tube without hesitation, and in no time they had the needed specimen for the lab.

Test results showed a white blood cell count of 18,000, as well as marked heart murmurs. Hong suspected infective endocarditis, which could induce sepsis, a life-threatening condition. He asked center personnel to take Xiaolin to a big hospital nearby for further examination.

The diagnosis there was sepsis induced by infective endocarditis, exactly as Hong had suspected. Xiaolin was hospitalized for two weeks before being released back to the detention center. The center continued to take her to Hong's clinic for regular follow-ups.

Dr. Hong did much more than care for her health. He also counseled her on quitting the drug vice and kicking her cigarette habit. Six months later, she had regained her health, quit drugs, and stopped smoking.

Before her scheduled deportation to China, Hong and his wife bought 250 cupcakes in Xiaolin's name to treat all the people held at the center. Everybody wished her the best in her new endeavors in her homeland. Immersed in the happy atmosphere and feeling loved, Xiaolin said with a sigh, "I had the worst of luck marriage-wise, but the best of luck at the center. I have met really great people here."

The Hongs stayed in contact with Xiaolin after her return to China. They have exchanged emails with her, and they informed Tzu Chi volunteers in her hometown of her situation so that they could continue caring for her.

In her emails, Xiaolin repeatedly thanked the Hongs for their help, and she vowed to help others when she is able.

Hong's Tzu Chi tie

Over the years, countless heart-warming stories like these have unfolded at the center. Without health insurance, locked up in a strange land, the detainees really appreciate Hong's help, but Hong thinks nothing of what he has done for them. He feels he is merely doing what he should do.

Hong grew up without a care in the world. He did very well in school, and his life was

Hong, center, and Igawa Michiru, of Japan, left, at the Nantou Detention Center, where the latter is being held pending deportation for an expired visa.

HUANG YU-REN





TIMA members work in a free clinic at the Taipei Railway Station for foreigners working in Taiwan. By the end of 2016, in a span of 13 years, TIMA had held 65 such clinics at the station.

HUANG MING-CUN

largely easy. He did not really know what suffering was. He had no idea about the hunger, adversity, and hardship that prevail in many corners of the world.

He came to know Tzu Chi after a strong earthquake struck central Taiwan on September 21, 1999. In its wake, Tzu Chi funded the

rebuilding of Qiaoguang Elementary School in Caotun, Nantou County. Hong's daughter was a student there at the time, so he learned about the foundation.

He occasionally helped out at TIMA free clinics after that. He thought of his help as nothing much more than a routine service for free—he

would go to a free clinic and see some patients, and then go back to his old life and carry on living as usual. His involvement with Tzu Chi was superficial then, and his understanding of the foundation was limited.

Then came another earthquake, this time in Wenchuan, Sichuan Province, China, in May 2008.

Team after team of Tzu Chi volunteers traveled to the disaster area to help the victims. At the strong urging of other volunteers, Hong joined in to help provide free medical services in Sichuan.

When he arrived in Luoshui, one of the areas badly damaged in the quake, he was totally unprepared for what he saw. The massive devastation and destruction of things as far as his eyes could see really shook him up and opened his eyes to a world of misery and suffering that he had not known existed.

One day in Luoshui, a dozen quake victims who had missed the free clinic that morning asked Hong to check on them. However, Hong had to go with his group to another free clinic site. If he obliged, he would open the door to similar requests, which would undoubtedly mess up the team's tight schedule. He painfully declined their request, and he went with his team to do what had been scheduled for that afternoon.

He later learned that those people just waited there until the next morning when another free clinic would start on that spot.

What he saw and experienced in the disaster area had a huge impact on him. The physical destruction and the helplessness of the victims shocked him to the core. After he returned to Taiwan, he became an active participant in TIMA free clinics, and he also started training to become a certified Tzu Chi volunteer. One year later, his wife also became a Tzu Chi volunteer and began caring for the foreigners housed in the detention center.

Hong reflected on his life journey over the years. "I used to work hard and take great comfort in seeing my bank accounts swelling. My life was like a money-printing machine, seemingly exciting at first but, like that machine, lacking spiritual fulfillment or any vibes of life." He was once of the mindset that since he had worked hard, he deserved to travel to different places in the world every year and indulge himself. But now all that has changed. Now the focus of his life is helping others. Seeing patients is no longer just a job to him; instead he is driven by a sense of mission. He puts himself in the shoes of his patients as he works to lessen their misery and add to their joy.



Free Medical Services For Street People

If you have a chronic illness, you need to stay on medication. If you have a wound, you need to have it cleaned regularly to stave off infection. Both are hard to do for street people. Seeing a need, Tzu Chi began working with the Zenan Homeless Social Welfare Foundation to take care of the health of street people.

By Gao Yu-mei
Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting



It was nearing noon. Leaning on a walking stick, Yi-yuan (not his real name), tottered along a street in Taoyuan, northern Taiwan. The vagrant had been walking around for most of the morning, peddling chewing gum. Business was bad this day and he hadn't sold a single package. His stomach growled with hunger. The half of a steamed bun he had eaten for breakfast had long been digested. He knew he had to hurry to the local homeless station set up by the Zenan Homeless Social Welfare Foundation to get something to eat; otherwise he might pass out on the street as his blood sugar kept going down.

The Zenan Foundation provides two meals a day to street people, using ingredients that are mostly donated. Thanks to the compassion of these kind-hearted people, some vagabonds are saved from starving. "Yi-yuan, how's business today?" a fellow vagrant, A-feng, asked half teasingly and half out of concern. "Uhhh," Yi-yuan sighed. "Don't even mention it. Poor me... Have you eaten? I'm ravenous." Short of breath, Yi-yuan settled down on a stool at the Zenan Foundation's Taoyuan station. At the sight of him, Zhang Zi-wen (張子文), the head of the station, asked, "Yi-yuan, have

you stayed on your medication? Dr. Chen is coming tomorrow. If you haven't taken care of yourself, you'd better brace yourself for a good scolding from the doctor." "Yes, yes, I've been taking the medicine, but I can't help it if my blood pressure has a will of its own," said Yi-yuan, a little slurred in his speech. A previous stroke had impaired his speech and mobility. **A good doctor** The doctor that Zhang was talking about was Chen Yang-lin (陳仰霖). Dr. Chen has practiced in Yingge, which neighbors Taoyuan, for nearly

At the Taoyuan station of the Zenan Foundation, Dr. Chen treats physical illnesses and acts as a psychological counselor for homeless people. By listening patiently to them, he helps ease their anguish and worries. XIE JIA-CHENG 30 years. He is a caring physician. Nowadays not many doctors make house calls for patients, but he still goes to the homes of people who have difficulty moving around. Mr. Zeng, bedridden due to a spinal cord injury, lived near Chen's clinic. It was hard for him to have bowel movements, and he was



extremely uncomfortable. His wife called Chen's clinic for help.

At Zeng's home, Chen carefully examined him by pressing on his abdomen. Then he said to the wife, "It'll be better if I get it out." When he was done, Mr. Zeng's face visibly relaxed. Mrs. Zeng thanked Chen over and over. He simply replied, "I just did what I should do."

Chen has a busy practice at his clinic, but he still sets aside the second Tuesday morning of every month to see street people free of charge at the Zenan Foundation's Taoyuan station. He started serving there at the invitation of Tzu Chi volunteer Wang Shu-hui (王淑惠).

Wang has long been a support volunteer at TIMA free clinics. That's where she learned about the Zenan Foundation and its commitment to serving underprivileged people, including the homeless. The foundation provided food, shelter, and shower facilities for street people. It also offered them psychological counseling and helped them find jobs. But at the time, it was in no position to provide free medical services.

Having cared for disadvantaged people for a long time, Wang knew the helplessness of people who had ended up on the streets and how difficult it was for them to get medical attention. In 2008, she invited a group of loving medical professionals to work with the Zenan Foundation and conduct regular free clinics and health checkups for the homeless.

In response to her appeal, Dr. Chen and his wife, Lin Su-ling (林素玲), who is a nurse, started visiting the Taoyuan station every month to render services.

Continuous care

Ye-zi, also a vagrant, showed up at the monthly free clinic at the station. His face was yellowish and covered in stubble, his eyes vacuous. Dr. Chen could tell by looking at him that something was wrong with his health.

"You've lost quite a lot of weight," Chen said to Ye-zi. "Are you still drinking?"

Ye-zi sighed. "I know what you're getting at, Dr. Chen. I was in pain all last night. If I

Staff from the Zhongli station of the Zenan Foundation and Tzu Chi volunteers from Longgan, Zhongli, invite a street person to a Dragon Boat Festival event that was held jointly by the TIMA Northern Taiwan chapter and the Zenan Foundation.

QIU TING



Dr. Kao Yee-hsin (高以信) cleans a diabetic patient's wound at the Tainan Station of the Zenan Foundation. TIMA members from southern Taiwan pay monthly visits to the station to offer free medical care to street people.

ZHONG YI-RUI

hadn't drunk some alcohol, I wouldn't have slept a single wink."

Chen was about to advise Ye-zi to cut down on booze, but when he saw his vacuous eyes, he swallowed the words. The doctor knew that some street people use alcohol to numb themselves and to temporarily forget what they once had in life, the pain of being separated from their families, and the anguish they have inflicted on their loved ones. Only in an alcohol-induced stupor can they imagine themselves to be different people, the people they want to be.

Knowing there is probably a sad story behind every street person, Chen refrains from admonishing them when they do not follow his advice and continue to drink and smoke to the detriment of their health. He feels that scolding won't do any good and that instead he should use his

expertise as best he can to improve the quality of their lives. He often reminds himself and the people around him: "Try putting yourself in their shoes. Then maybe we'll be able to come up with a better way to help them learn to take better care of themselves."

Chen moved his stethoscope to various parts of Ye-zi's body and listened closely; then he slightly knitted his brows. He judged that the reason for the patient's weight loss needed further study. "I'm going to arrange for you to have a thorough examination at a big hospital," he said to Ye-zi.

Through a free clinic like this, Chen and other TIMA volunteers guide the homeless to pay more attention to their health and help them get proper care when they are diagnosed with major illnesses. Only with good health will

the homeless have a chance of getting back on their feet again.

Wang recalled an episode that had stuck in her memory. It happened one day when she was arriving at the Taoyuan station to volunteer at a free clinic. Before she could go through the entrance door, a man stopped her and told her he wished to donate to the station two bags of rice he was holding. He said he had once received care from the Zenan Foundation and through their help had found a steady job. Though his income was not much, he had been able to leave behind his life as a bum and move on to a better life. Those two bags of rice were a token thank-you from him to the foundation and embodied his wish to pay back to society.

Wang remarked, "Whenever I see any of the street people regain their footing as a result of our help, I feel renewed energy to keep going. By giving them a hand when they are down and out, we hope to help them feel some warmth from society."

Medicine for physical illness, an ear for mental pain

"Raise your left foot a little higher. Use some more force. Hold on steady to the banister. Take your time. Very good." It was Yi-yuan's turn to see the doctor. A nurse helped him up a flight of stairs to the second floor.

Dr. Chen observed Yi-yuan closely as he walked towards him, then said to him, "You're walking a lot better now! Do you still peddle chewing gum every day?"

Winded from the climb, Yi-yuan answered, "Yes, I do. But I often don't earn enough money to buy food. When I don't have stuff to eat, my blood sugar goes haywire."

Having been a "family doctor" for street people for a number of years, Chen is well aware of the effect irregular meals have on the homeless and how it compounds the difficulty of getting their blood pressure and blood sugar under control. At the same time, he knows that it is a situation the homeless cannot do much about. "I can only adjust their medicine the best I can to help their conditions stay as stable as possible." Chen often puts himself in the shoes of the homeless, and he has earned their trust as a result.

He thought back to the days when he first began seeing the homeless. "When I talked to or examined them, I could often feel them sizing me up." But their wary, skeptical attitudes have

long faded. Chen's continuous care of them and thoughtfulness have won them over.

After he finished seeing Yi-yuan and went on to the next patient, Yi-yuan sat off to one side and didn't leave. Chen occasionally glanced at him from the corner of his eye and knew that he was waiting for him.

When Chen was done with the last patient of the day, he pulled a chair over to where Yi-yuan was sitting and said, "Yi-yuan, do you have something to say to me?"

Yi-yuan had once studied abroad. After he finished his studies and returned to Taiwan, he went into business and made a lot of money. Unfortunately, the good times didn't last. Some investments went awry. He was scammed at a casino. Then his business partner ran off with their money. The fatal blow came when his wife and children left him. Once on top of the world, he fell into an abyss of misery. The successful businessman became deeply mired in debt.

Devastated, Yi-yuan took to drinking to drown his sorrows. He eventually ended up on the streets. At the Taoyuan station, he encountered Dr. Chen and other volunteers. Their sincere care led him to trust them.

His eyes never leaving Yi-yuan's face, Chen listened attentively as he poured out his sorrows to him, and he nodded every now and then to acknowledge something he had said. "We must help them feel that there are people in the world that still care for them and are willing to listen to them," said Chen. He is not a psychiatrist, but at the station he listens to his patients as though he is. "Having an audience helps them to let off some steam, so I lend an ear when they open up to me. I may not be able to solve their problems, but I know it can be quite therapeutic to have a sympathetic person listen to you."

Even though he receives no material rewards for his work at the Taoyuan station, Chen continues to see the street people. "The patients who come to my clinic in Yingge can afford medical care and they have family to care for them when they return home, but the street people here have neither of these luxuries. They need care from us even more. I'll keep at this, at this job which few people want to do."

Chen and the other TIMA volunteers deem it their responsibility and mission to help the underserved. In the next month and the months after that, they will continue to show up at the free clinic to safeguard the health of the homeless.

AFTER THE STORM

Text and photos by Tzu Chi documenting volunteers in Mozambique
Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Cyclone Dineo hit Mozambique in February this year following a dry year in 2016. The prolonged drought and then the storm made the lives of impoverished people even harder. Tzu Chi volunteers sprang into action to help those in need.

A SUMMER STORM IN THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE

Tropical Cyclone Dineo battered Mozambique, southeastern Africa, after making landfall in Inhambane Province on February 15, 2017. The storm left a trail of destruction in its path, taking seven lives and injuring 55 people. More than 650,000 people were affected, and nearly 1,000 classrooms, 70 health centers, and over 20,000 homes were destroyed.

Over 3,000 Tzu Chi volunteers live in Maputo Province, about 600 kilometers from where the storm landed. After three consecutive days of heavy rainfall came to a stop, volunteers from 24 communities split up into groups and visited

Tzu Chi care recipients to see how the disaster had affected them.

Celeste, a 76-year-old woman who lives alone, sat staring into space outside her house in Matola. Her sheet-metal roof had been blown apart in the storm. In its stead she had cobbled together a makeshift roof with a few blankets and plastic bags. Though she herself had emerged from the cyclone unscathed, she was running out of food. Volunteers sang the Tzu Chi song "One Family" for her to soothe her nerves. Then when they left they told her, "We'll be back to see you soon!"





NO WATER, THEN TOO MUCH WATER

Walking across muddy ground and sometimes wading through standing water, volunteers helped each other along the road to Santos.

Alexandre, an old man who lived in a low-lying area, was very happy to see the volunteers. "Our tribal chief told us to get prepared for the big storm. I did as he said and fastened my roof." His house was happily not damaged as a result.

But many other people did not fare so well. Most impoverished residents in the suburban areas live in simple sheds built with thatch and metal sheets, which did poorly in the storm.

The heavy rains resulted in standing water in many places, but a silver lining was that they helped relieve a water shortage problem. People put out all kinds of containers to catch the rain, and now they finally had water to wash themselves and do the dishes.

Mozambique had a dry year in 2016. As a result of that, a water rationing program was launched in the Greater Maputo area in January 2017. Yet just about a month later, Cyclone Dineo struck, causing serious flooding. The pendulum swings of weather really showed volunteers the power of climate change.

AN AID RECIPIENT'S SMILE

Poor infrastructure made it hard for floodwater to drain. That, coupled with the hot weather, led to an increase in cases of cholera and malaria. Food prices also escalated, making the lives of destitute people even harder. To help out, Tzu Chi volunteers held two large-scale rice distributions on February 20 and 27 at the Tzu Chi office in Mahotas, Maputo City.

In addition to the large distributions, volunteers also delivered relief goods to the homes of people who had difficulty moving around. Some roads were still impassable, so they often had to take detours, leaving them without time for lunch. But they did not mind at all. The happiness that came from helping others made them forget their hunger or fatigue.

Celeste knew the volunteers were visiting her again before they reached her home because she heard their singing from some distance off. She went to sit in front of her home to wait for them. When the volunteers arrived, they surrounded the elderly woman and warmly asked how she had been doing. Then they handed over a bag of rice and a mosquito net.

"Do you still remember the song 'One Family' we sang to you the last time we visited you?" the volunteers asked. Then they burst into the song: "Because we are family...."

Celeste broke into a happy smile. Whatever sadness she might have had due to the storm was dissolved in laughter and the cheerful, warm atmosphere.





BECAUSE WE ARE FAMILY

Isabel Langa, another cyclone victim, was surprised to see the volunteers visiting her so soon again. Barely two days had passed since their last visit, and they even brought her rice and a mosquito net this time.

Volunteers also went to the home of Joana Macuacua, a Tzu Chi volunteer whose house had also been damaged in the storm. Some time ago, Joana introduced a neighbor, Marcia, into Tzu Chi, and on this day it was Marcia who handed her the rice and mosquito net. Joana was

so happy to see the effect of love relayed from one person to another.

The Tzu Chi mission of charity has really taken root locally. Every day so many people visit the Tzu Chi office that a bus stop has been set up right in front of it to make it more accessible. Volunteers and care recipients no longer have to walk 20 minutes from the office to the bus stop. The office—which local volunteers call the “Tzu Chi Home”—has become a center of love.

Free Clinic in Cambodia

Wars, natural disasters, and poverty have hollowed out Cambodia in the past half century. Medical resources, among other things, are sorely scarce. The first large free clinic hosted by Tzu Chi was like a sweet rain in the arid medical landscape of this Indochinese nation.

By Zhang Li-yun Translated by Tang Yau-yang



A volunteer holds the trembling hands of a dental patient to give her courage.

LIN LING-LI

“They’re so very poor that I worry about them. What can they do when they fall ill?” asked Dr. Soo Lin Hoe (蘇聯和), of Malaysia. He had just participated in a Tzu Chi free clinic held in Cambodia in March 2017, and he was referring to destitute Cambodians and the scarcity of medical resources in the nation. He has been a practicing doctor for 25 years and has successfully tackled the most severe or baffling of diseases, but faced with the lack of even basic medical necessities in Cambodia, he felt completely powerless.

“We brought ultrasound equipment, but we weren’t sure whether to use it,” Dr. Liao Kuan-fu (廖光福), a gastroenterologist from Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital in central Taiwan, also lamented. “Even if the ultrasound revealed a terminal condition in a patient, what could the patient do about it?”

Liao recalled an experience during the free clinic. On the screen, the ultrasound machine showed that a disease had already spread throughout the body of a Cambodian patient, so Liao advised him to go to a large hospital for treatment. The patient replied calmly, “I can’t afford the transportation. I’m not going to a big hospital.”

Information provided by Xu Ya-ling, Lin Ling-li, and Da Ai TV

Five countries joining forces

In March 2017, members of the Tzu Chi International Medical Association (TIMA) from Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Taiwan traveled to Cambodia and joined forces with the local Samdech Techo Voluntary Youth Doctor Association (TYDA) in providing a three-day free clinic held at Chamkarleu Referral Hospital and Bosknor Primary School in Kampong Cham Province.

Back in June 2016, Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital had offered to donate to TYDA some dialysis machines that it had scheduled to retire. After evaluation, TYDA declined the offer because they would not have been able to properly maintain and repair the machines. In November that year, TIMA Singapore donated wheelchairs and hospital beds to the association.

TYDA is a non-governmental medical group comprised of more than 4,500 members, 500 of whom are physicians. The group rotates monthly free clinics throughout the provinces of Cambodia. Aware of Tzu Chi’s work in providing care around the world, the association expressed a desire to collaborate with the foundation. The result was the joint free clinic that took place from March 10 to 12, 2017.

Chamkarleu Referral Hospital, one of the venues, was quite old. It had no air-conditioning and



lacked basic medical equipment. The buildings were dusty and infested with flies and mosquitoes. To prepare the site for the clinic, an advance Tzu Chi team from Singapore arrived on March 7, three days early, and set to work. They installed a power generator, air conditioners, and dental air compressors. They cleaned up the place, and in particular they carefully scrubbed the walls of one room, sealed the windows, added five portable surgical beds, and transformed the room into an operating room.

In the afternoon of March 10, TIMA members from Singapore and Malaysia ran a half day clinic. They served 247 patients in internal medicine, surgery, dentistry, ophthalmology, and Chinese medicine.

By the morning of March 11, the full complement of the TIMA delegation was in place and ready. They split into two groups: One group continued seeing patients at Chamkarleu Referral Hospital. The other joined a TYDA group for an opening ceremony at Bosknor Primary School before starting their medical services there.

A volunteer carries an elderly patient out of a clinic to take transportation home.

CHEN XIE-MING

Many local people seized the opportunity to see a doctor at the first Tzu Chi free clinic in Cambodia.

HONG WEN-QING

The school site

It was already hot at eight o'clock in the morning. People had arrived at Bosknor Primary School for the free clinic on oxcarts or motor scooters. They sat quietly in the seats that had been neatly lined up on the campus and waited for their turn to see the doctors. The Cambodian people were friendly; when they saw Tzu Chi volunteers, they immediately broke into humble and amiable smiles.

The operating room at this venue was really just a space formed by encircling drapes. Dr. Chien Sou-hsin (簡守信), a plastic surgeon and



the superintendent of Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital, and Dr. Ye Tian-hao (葉添浩), also a plastic surgeon from Taiwan, took this makeshift operating room in stride. They deftly and calmly operated on five patients in three hours, while young Cambodian physicians looked on to learn from the two experts.

Chien later talked about one of the more difficult operations that day. A tumor had grown in a patient for a very long time, becoming entangled with some nerves. Chien had to conduct the surgery extremely carefully and avoid making big incisions. "Since surgical instruments that simul-

taneously cut and cauterize tissues were unavailable to us, we couldn't use general anesthesia. We could only anesthetize locally, and we had to apply the anesthetics very precisely to prevent bleeding from getting out of control."

Fortunately for the patient, he did not need to worry about those issues and precautions. He needed only to show up to be served. Were it not for Dr. Chien, he very likely would have spent the rest of his life living with the tumor.

Dr. Chien's mother had just recently passed away. Her funeral was held on March 8. He would really have liked to spend more time with



Local Cambodian volunteers help patients take vision tests. HONG WEN-QING

Two local volunteers, center, interpret for a doctor and a young patient. During the free clinic, nearly a hundred local volunteers interpreted for care providers from Taiwan, Singapore, Vietnam, and Malaysia. CHEN XIE-MING

his father through this sad time, but he knew that the sick people in Cambodia needed him more. So he set out with his team members on March 10.

"Every time I operated on a patient, I felt as if Mom was talking to me. I believe that she'd have approved of my Cambodia trip," Chien said. His father was actually glad and proud that he had gone to help the less fortunate.

Local helpers

Many young physicians and medical school students who were members of TYDA volunteered at the site too. They assisted with tasks such as taking blood pressure readings, ushering patients to their doctors, conducting health education, assisting dentists, and sterilizing instruments.

Cambodian dentist Sreng Heng had organized 45 dental school students to help at the venue. They learned to assist dentists and sterilize instruments.

All six dental chairs were occupied. Some patients had never seen a dentist in their lives and knew practically nothing about oral hygiene. It was therefore not surprising that they had dental problems. After the free clinic, they could finally smile and rejoice—their pain and discomfort had been relieved. They pressed their palms together and bowed to thank their dentists.

Vorn Chanchivoan would soon become a full-fledged dentist. He said of his experience at the free clinic, "It brought me great joy when patients happily thanked me." He had done as much as he could to save patients' teeth. He had also taken the opportunity to teach his patients proper dental hygiene routines. At his invitation, friends of his had worked in the free clinic as well. "More than 90 percent of Cambodians are Buddhists, and we all take pride and pleasure in helping others," he added.

Young volunteers abounded at the Chamkarleu Referral Hospital venue too. Some ushered patients, served tea, soothed patients, or did whatever else needed doing. Others served as interpreters between doctors and patients, translating between Cambodian and Chinese or between Cambodian and English.

Hu Mei-ling (胡美玲), a Tzu Chi volunteer in Cambodia, pointed out that she and her fellow volunteers had assembled a group of interpreters who could speak English or Chinese when they had previously helped conduct Tzu Chi

rice distributions for needy people. For the free clinic this time, many young people called on their friends to help with interpretation. Some of them even got their whole families to take the three-hour ride from Phnom Penh, the national capital, to take part.

The hospital site

At Chamkarleu Referral Hospital, the exam rooms for internal medicine and Chinese medicine were in a tent, where temperatures soared to 37 degrees Celsius (99 degrees Fahrenheit). A mobile air-conditioner kept the space more comfortable, but it broke down on the third day. In its place, two industrial-grade electric fans kept the place less stuffy, but not much cooler.

Doctors sweated as they saw patient after patient, but the long lines waiting to be seen never seemed to get any shorter. Dr. Lin Chin-lon (林俊龍), CEO of the Tzu Chi Medical Mission and a cardiologist, walked from one area to the next, checking on how things were going and helping out where he could, including joining in consultations.

The lines at the pharmacy were long as well. Su Fang-pei (蘇芳霈), Wang Zhi-min (王智民), Chen Xing-ji (陳幸姬), Chen Hong-yan (陳紅燕), and four Vietnamese nurses staffed the pharmacy. This team was hardly adequate for the large crowd, and dispensing drugs kept the team hopping.

"Mebendazole [an anti-worm medication] for five days and multivitamins three times a day for two weeks. Should we really give out so much for a patient?" Chen Hong-yan asked Su Fang-pei to double-check.

"The prescription says the patient is 48 years old and weighs 15 kilograms [33 lbs]," replied Su, pointing to the prescription. She was overwhelmed with sympathy for the patient and could barely keep her tears from falling. But she knew she had no time to cry now. She had more pressing matters to attend to.

Destitute Cambodians cannot always eat their meals on a regular schedule. This 48-year-old patient, for example, might have been in almost constant hunger while the worms and parasites inside her sucked up what nutrients they wanted, depriving their feeble host of even the most basic nourishment. Considering that, the two pharmacists didn't question the prescription anymore. They dispensed everything that Dr. Tang Kiat Beng (陳吉民) had prescribed for this cadaverous patient.



TIMA surgeons operated in this makeshift operating room, originally a recovery room in Chamkarleu Referral Hospital. Volunteers had converted the room into a temporary operating room by cleaning the walls, sealing the windows, and adding air-conditioning. XU ZHEN-FU

The doctors

The large number of patients completely filled the time slots on the schedules of Drs. Tang Kiat Beng, Liao Kuan-fu, Soo Lin Hoe, and Chang Heng-chia (張恒嘉). They had to see patients non-stop.

The portable ultrasound machine that Liao had brought from Taiwan proved to be of great value. With it, the doctors were able to get a much clearer view of patients' conditions and make more accurate diagnoses. For example, it helped identify cases of terminal cancer and active pulmonary tuberculosis. Patient Sun Heak, 48, came to have his feet checked. He walked with a limp, and he thought that he had a foot problem. Further examination with the ultrasound revealed heart valve problems too.

Drs. Lin Chin-lon and Chang Heng-chia consulted and recommended that Sun Heak go to a big hospital for treatment. Sun Heak was worried, but not so much about his illness. He was more concerned about the cost of transportation to and from the hospital. TYDA and Cambodia Tzu Chi volunteers rose to the occasion: The latter would take care of transportation while the former took care of his health. Sun Heak was relieved.

In the operating room, surgeons dealt mostly with patients with cysts, tumors, and warts. The room was really nothing but a makeshift space that volunteers had improvised shortly beforehand for use in the free clinic. Though they had done their best to make the space suitable, they could not keep the omnipresent flies out and lighting was insufficient. Despite that, the surgeons plugged away, giving their all without the benefit of advanced surgical instruments, such as Harmonic scalpels that can simultaneously cut and cauterize tissues. Five surgeons completed 126 operations in two and a half days.

One patient had a two-inch tumor on his neck and a huge one on his elbow. His case challenged the patience and skill of the surgeon, Dr. Chien Sou-hsin. "Dr. Chien calmly adjusted the surgery to whatever situation that he needed to solve," recalled Dr. Lin Wei-you (林威佑), of Yuli Tzu Chi Hospital, eastern Taiwan. "He finished the operation beautifully. There was just minimal bleeding throughout the procedure."

This was Lin's first involvement with a TIMA international free clinic. "When we solved patients' problems and saw the joy that spread over their faces, our fatigue evaporated."

Make them laugh

In the Chinese medicine area, Dr. Nai Keng Hak (賴金和) of Malaysia saw a woman with a face of woe. The woman complained that she had had pain in her back and waist for 30 years. Nai concluded after examining her that she was suffering the consequences of not having received proper rest and care after a childbirth. Sure enough, her son was exactly 30 years old.

Nai suggested through an interpreter that she eat black bean and ginger soup to help alleviate the pain. The trouble was that the woman could not even afford three regular meals a day—how could she possibly fork out money for this recommended diet? She did not even know what black beans looked like.

In response to the recommendation, she just shook her head. Dr. Nai took out three moxa

sticks, lighted one of them, and held it close to her knee cap. He was treating her with moxibustion therapy, a kind of fire acupuncture. "One stick stands for ten years," Nai said to her. "Three sticks stand for 30. After all three sticks are burned out, your pain will be all gone." The woman finally broke into a smile.

"We're here at the free clinic for just three days," Nai explained. "That's not enough time to give the patients much help. Many people fall sick because they are unhappy, so I try to ease their minds and make them laugh—one of the best therapies around."

Nai, 70, has seen countless patients in his long medical career. Experience has taught him how unhappy minds can lead to illness and led him to use humor to supplement medication.

Nai also saw a 57-year-old patient whose husband was blind. Their oldest son and his

wife worked in Thailand, leaving two children for them to care for. Their three other sons worked in other provinces and came home just once or twice a year, if at all.

The woman helped look after a cow for its owner, who, instead of paying her for her service, gave her a promise: If the cow gave birth, the owner would keep the first calf and she would own the second one. As a result, she worked not for pay but with the hope that she might one day come

into possession of a cow. At first she would see to it that the cow could graze properly, but she later found out that all around them the fields were dotted with dry grass, and the situation was even worse during the dry season. The animal ended up being nothing but skin and bone.

Two years had gone by since the woman had started caring for the cow, and it had not yet given birth. All the woman had gotten for her time, effort, and trouble were aches and pains, and she complained as much to Nai.

"I'll give you a shiatsu massage," Nai said to the woman, who was 13 years his junior. "If you'd like, you can curse me or hit me as if I were your son." That remark dissolved the frown on the woman's face and made her laugh. She opened up to the volunteers and told them about the things that had been bothering her.



A patient cheerfully thanks the doctor after receiving care at the Chinese medicine clinic.

ZHANG LI-YUN

We'll be back

On the heels of a protracted civil war that had lasted over 20 years, Cambodia was afflicted in 1994 with droughts and floods, making food supplies severely scarce in the nation. The Tzu Chi Foundation sent water pumps and food to Cambodia from 1994 to 1997, but then political turmoil in the country forced the foundation to halt further aid.

Tzu Chi's connection with Cambodia was reestablished more than a decade later because of Yoshikazu Shaku. Shaku fled his native Cambodia during the civil war and later became a businessman in Japan. He first encountered Tzu Chi in Singapore in 2007. One year later, following a visit to Tzu Chi headquarters in Hualien, Taiwan, he began training in Singapore to become a certified volunteer. He received his certification in 2010.

His love for his home country and his father eventually led him back to Cambodia to look for his father. He witnessed the poverty there, and he took pity on the destitute. In 2011, he invited David Liu (劉濟雨), then CEO of the Singapore Tzu Chi chapter, to give a series of talks in Cambodia. This inspired some local people to join Tzu Chi.

Though there are currently fewer than ten certified Tzu Chi volunteers in Cambodia, they helped pull off the large-scale free clinic mission in March. It was a feat that impressed even Dr. Chien, a veteran of TIMA international events in many countries. In three days, 2,880 patients were served in ophthalmology, internal medicine, surgery, dentistry, and Chinese medicine. In the ophthalmology clinic, patients also received free eyeglasses if they needed them.

Despite the large number of people served, the volunteers knew that for every patient that they had treated, there were probably many more suffering Cambodians who needed medical care but had no access to it. Dr. Lin Chin-lon said, "TIMA has developed very well in the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia, where poor people can usually get medical care, but the same can't be said of Cambodia. There's still much we in Taiwan can do for this country in the future."

Dr. Chien Sou-hsin urged TIMA members to do what they could to help this country, and he made a promise to Hsieh Ming-hsuan (謝明勳), head of Tzu Chi Cambodia, his wife, Hu Meiling, and their fellow volunteers in Cambodia: "We'll definitely be back."



Working Together to Benefit the World

By Dharma Master Cheng Yen

Translated by Teresa Chang

From April 7 to 11 this year, over 400 Tzu Chi volunteers from about 20 countries gathered at the foundation headquarters in Hualien, eastern Taiwan, for an annual overseas board of directors meeting. Participants reported on the work that Tzu Chi had carried out in their respective countries and listened attentively to their counterparts talk about their own experiences. Through the sharing, participants learned from each other's good experiences, as well as what pitfalls to avoid.

Volunteers from Hong Kong shared how they care for street people in their fast-paced, densely populated city. Rents are very high in Hong Kong. Many people can't afford a place and end up having to live on the streets.

Volunteers in Hong Kong began caring for the homeless in 2014. They visit them, listen to them, and give them supplies. They put themselves in the shoes of the street people and treat them with gentle consideration. Instead of providing merely sporadic or temporary help, our volunteers sincerely want to make a difference in the street people's lives, so they encourage and guide them to enrich their wisdom-lives [as opposed to physical lives] by giving to society. Such genuine care has touched some vagrants and inspired them to volunteer and do recycling work for Tzu Chi.

Four years ago, in 2013, Typhoon Haiyan wreaked havoc in the Philippines. Ever since

then, Tzu Chi volunteers have never stopped caring for victims in Ormoc, Tacloban, and Palo. They have helped many survivors of that terrible disaster get back on their feet.

After the typhoon, the foundation built houses for people who had lost their homes. Residents of these Tzu Chi villages have taken care to beautify their environments with trees and flowers. Living in such nice surroundings, they have left the sad memory of the disaster behind, and they have worked hard to carve out a better future. Their lives have improved, and some have even begun training to become certified volunteers. They abide by the Tzu Chi precepts, abstaining from smoking, drinking, and gambling, and they visit the needy and do other charitable work.

It was not long ago that they had to receive help from others, but now they can help others. They have demonstrated how sincere and unconditional love can transform people. By giving selflessly to them, Tzu Chi volunteers have helped bring out the love in them and have inspired them to give.

Spiritually rich

Suffering abounds in this world. Thankfully, we have real-life bodhisattvas who help relieve that suffering. Tzu Chi volunteers help the less fortunate and inspire the rich to give. They take action instead of just talking.

Even countries with good social welfare systems like Singapore need the love of living bodhisattvas. Our volunteers in that country not only mindfully absorb my teachings, but they



HUANG JIN-YI

This article is excerpted from a series of speeches delivered by Master Cheng Yen from April 1 to 20, 2017.



LIANG CHANG-CAI

Tzu Chi volunteers in Hong Kong visit a homeless person.

actively apply them to benefit society. They nurture good values and character in small children in the preschool they have established, they visit prisons to extend care to inmates, and they provide long-term care to patients who need help. They have done a good job of putting love into action in their society.

Our volunteers in Africa have also written moving chapters with their altruistic actions. Early this year, Zimbabwe and Mozambique suffered severe flooding. Tzu Chi volunteers there immediately mobilized to assess the damage and distribute aid, including portable beds and blankets. Some roads had been made impassable by the floods, but instead of backing off, volunteers took detours and overcame other difficulties so that they could reach the needy.

We saw the harsh living conditions of the local people from the pictures taken by our volunteers in Mozambique. The houses of some vol-

unteers had collapsed in the floods too, but they put the needs of others before their own and joined their fellow volunteers to care for other flood victims. Since the volunteers were flood victims themselves, they received aid from Tzu Chi too. But knowing how scarce resources were in that country, they took only the items they needed, insisting that the other items be given to those who needed them more.

Even though many of our volunteers in Africa live materially deprived lives, they are content and grateful for what they have. They keep their material needs to a minimum and focus their lives on helping others. Their hearts are big and their thoughts pure. The smiles on their faces are so touching and inspiring. They are very rich in spirit indeed.

There are seeds of kindness hidden in every person's heart. If we can help those seeds to sprout and grow, they can grow into large bodhi

trees and form vast forests. If we do our best to give and further motivate others to do the same, our world will truly benefit indeed.

My heart felt so full and warm as I listened to Tzu Chi volunteers from outside Taiwan talk about their work in their countries. I hope everyone continues to nurture roots of goodness in their hearts and hold firm to their vows to give. I hope that all our volunteers are united in heart and mind and work together in harmony, for only then will we have the power to help bring about a better world. We will be able to overcome all kinds of difficulties in our work if we can treat one another with sincerity and give without expecting anything in return. Let us exercise both compassion and wisdom and never slack off in cultivating ourselves and contributing to the welfare of mankind. This is how we can help our wisdom-life to grow and live full, meaningful lives.

Soothing the suffering

In April, days of torrential rain pummeled northwestern South America, resulting in mas-

sive flooding in Columbia, Ecuador, and Peru. The areas affected were vast. Tzu Chi volunteers mobilized to help.

The wellbeing of all living creatures is constantly on my mind. Never does a day or an hour go by without me praying for the safety of the world. But I also know that with the imbalance of the Four Elements [earth, water, fire, and air], natural disasters are bound to occur with a greater frequency. When a disaster hits, we should do as a bodhisattva would do and reach out to the victims to give comfort and relief. We should learn to count our blessings, be grateful that we are safe and sound and leading a good life, and do our best to sow more blessings.

Our world is beset not only by natural disasters but by man-made ones as well. As a result of such man-made disasters as war, a great multitude of people have been forced to leave their countries, creating a grave refugee problem for the international community over the past decade. Whether stranded at national borders or struggling to eke out a living in a host country, many of these people are having a very tough

Students in class at El Menahil, a school Tzu Chi established in Turkey for Syrian refugee children



YU ZHONG

time. To help out, Tzu Chi volunteers have been providing long-term care to some refugees. Our volunteers in Thailand and Malaysia have been working with the United Nations and providing regular free clinics to refugees in their countries. Volunteers in Jordan too have been doing what they can, and now they are raising funds for temporary schools and basic medical equipment for Syrian refugees.

Turkey has accepted two million Syrian refugees but prohibits adults from working. As a result, many refugee children have had to quit school and go to work to help support their families. Knowing how important education is, Tzu Chi volunteers have, with the help of local government authorities and Professor Cuma Serya, a Syrian refugee, overcome a myriad of obstacles and established El Menahil, a school for Syrian children. Tzu Chi also provides financial aid to some of these students' families so that the students do not have to work and can attend school without worries. More than 3,000 Syrian children are currently enrolled in the school.

El Menahil is officially registered with both Turkish and Syrian education authorities, and its

graduates are awarded diplomas. Children cherish the chance to be students again and, having received such kindness, they pay it forward by giving what little money they save to help other needy people. Love has grown in their hearts.

Tzu Chi has also set up a free clinic in Turkey, so refugees can receive free medical care. The clinic employs Syrian doctors. This has at least two benefits. First, the doctors, being refugees themselves, benefit by earning stable incomes. Second, patients can talk to the doctors in their own language. With no language barrier between them, it is easier for them to communicate and patients feel more at ease seeking medical attention.

A kind thought leads to a kind word or action, whereas an unkind thought can lead to an irreparable disaster. Only when people's minds are purified can disasters be kept at bay.

There is a folktale that goes like this:

A woodcutter worked hard every day to make a living. He did the backbreaking work of chopping down trees and cutting wood so that he could put food on the table for his family. One day when he returned home exhausted

from work for lunch, he became angry when he learned that the meal was not ready yet. He blew up at his wife, who in turn hurried into the kitchen and rushed their daughter to get lunch ready. The pressure from the mother flustered the daughter, who got nervous and salted the food twice without noticing.

When lunch was finally served, the woodcutter dove into the food and immediately found that it was too salty. The ruined dish made him even angrier, and he left the house in a huff to go back to work. Back with his fellow woodcutters, he vented his anger about his family. The more he talked, the madder he got and the more wildly he gestured. He forgot that he was holding an ax, and in the middle of one particularly expansive gesture, he lost his grip on it. It flew out of his hand and struck and hurt a person who was passing by. The passerby turned out to be the prince of a neighboring kingdom. The two kingdoms had been on very good terms, but because of this unfortunate accident, they went to war with each other. The war resulted in countless casualties.

The story demonstrates how a small spark can start a great fire. When we harbor negative emotions and allow them to grow, they can spiral out of control. We must take care not to let such mental pollutants as anger, delusion, arrogance, and doubt grow unchecked. We have all seen how the anger of a few people has led to catastrophic consequences and triggered a global refugee crisis.

We need love to counteract hatred and animosity. Tzu Chi has held several benefit concerts in Taiwan this year to solicit love and raise funds for Syrian refugees. We hope to help everyone know that by cutting down a little on their daily expenses, we can save enough to help many suffering people. Our love can also help prevent seeds of hatred from growing in the refugees' hearts.

I believe that human nature is inherently good. Mother Earth is very compassionate to us. She has provided us human beings with abundance. We should repay such kindness by giving of ourselves lovingly and helping make this world a better place. When we can all do that, the cycle of goodness will come full circle.

Guiding people toward the good

People who wish to propagate Mahayana Buddhism in this world of spiritual turbidity are bound to come up against a lot of obstacles.

[Mahayana Buddhism, one of two main existing branches of Buddhism, is concerned with the salvation of all living creatures.] In the "Ease in Practice" chapter in the *Lotus Sutra*, Manjusri Bodhisattva asked the Buddha for his advice for those who wanted to preach his teachings. The Buddha answered that any of his disciples who wished to preach his teachings should persevere in their commitments despite all kinds of hardship and be gentle, tranquil, and nonviolent. They should remain unmoved with regard to all phenomena, perceive all phenomena in their true aspect, and refrain from discrimination. They should also be careful about the friends they make and the places they visit. In other words, they should mindfully cultivate themselves, take good care of their hearts and minds, associate with wholesome friends, and stay away from bad influences.

What is a wholesome friend? In "On Bodhisattva Lion's Roar" in the *Mahayana Mahaparinirvana Sutra*, it is pointed out that a wholesome friend of the Way is "a person who speaks well about faith and precepts, erudition, giving, wisdom, and who makes people practice the Way." In other words, a wholesome friend of the Way studies the Dharma with diligence, puts it into practice, and is happy to give to others and guide them toward the good.

On April 16, 2016, Ecuador experienced a massive earthquake that registered a magnitude of 7.8. Tzu Chi volunteers from the United States visited the country soon afterwards to help with disaster relief. They started a cash-for-work program in early May through which survivors were paid for clearing debris and cleaning up their cities. After carrying out the program in four cities, they were about to bring it to a close in late May when Angel Rojas Cevallos, the mayor of Jama, Manabí Province, came to the volunteers and asked if the program could be implemented in his town too.

Our volunteers explained to the mayor that they were wrapping up the program and entering the next phase of their work, that is, launching a mid- or long-term reconstruction project, and that they would visit Jama in their next trip and see how they could help. The mayor could not hide his disappointment as his eyes brimmed with tears.

Seeing how sincerely the mayor was seeking aid for his townspeople, the volunteers' hearts went out to him. That very afternoon, they put together a team which went to Jama to assess the

Angel Rojas Cevallos (middle), the mayor of Jama, Manabí Province, Ecuador, holds a copy of *Jing Si Aphorisms* by Master Cheng Yen given to him by Tzu Chi volunteers.





LIN JING-FANG

Mayor Angel Rojas Cevallos and participants of a cash-for-work event take part in a group activity led by Tzu Chi volunteers.

damage. The team discovered that the town had indeed taken a heavy blow from the quake. After conferring with the mayor, our U.S. volunteers decided to kick off a three-day cash-for-work event in the town on May 29. They hoped they could get a thousand people to participate.

One hundred and ninety people showed up on the first day. At the end of the day, volunteers thanked everyone for their contribution. They shared with the participants how Tzu Chi began its charity work and led them in singing the Tzu Chi song "One Family." The participants were greatly cheered up, and the gloom that had enveloped them for some time lifted.

Taking everything in, the mayor was deeply moved. He told Tzu Chi volunteers that if more than 400 people joined the cleanup event on the next day and the day after that, he would defray the additional costs. On the second day, 490 people came, and on the third day 591 people showed up. True to his word, the mayor instructed his assistant to bring him 4,200 U.S. dollars. His love of his people was so genuine and touching that the volunteers did not want

to add to his burden, so they asked him to take the money back and put it toward reconstructing his town.

When our volunteers carry out disaster relief work, they bring to victims not only material aid but sincere love as well. They exercise their wisdom to lift the victims' spirits, instill in them the faith that they are capable of rising to the challenge of rebuilding their lives, and help them head toward their future with confidence. Our volunteers play the roles of wholesome friends, inspire positive thinking in the people they are trying to help, and guide them to work together for a better future.

As Buddhists, we shouldn't just focus on attaining enlightenment ourselves—we should also help others do the same and attain peace and joy. In fact, when we benefit others, we benefit ourselves too. When everyone's mind is purified, our society will be filled with harmony, love, and warmth, and we as members of society will enjoy the peace and stability that comes with that.

Let us be ever more mindful.



Lin Min-li tells inmates that once they start to change, their families will definitely feel the difference and be comforted.

LIN SHU-HUAI



Six Lessons in Prison

How does one live ten or twenty years in jail, thousands of days behind bars? For convicts, even the end of their prison term does not mean that everything will be all right. When their day of freedom draws near, they face a lot of pressure and anxiety about rejoining society and adapting to a new life.

How do you convince these inmates who have had a rough journey in life that there is indeed spring at the end of a cold winter?



By Lin Min-li
Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting



Lin Min-li (left) and her younger sister, Ling-li, are both Tzu Chi volunteers. They said that though their late father was once imprisoned for violating the negotiable instruments law, he never let this setback in life dishearten him. Instead he worked harder to prove himself. Under his positive influence, Min-li and Ling-li have striven to do good and be contributing members of society.

LAI MING-KUN

I'm no stranger to giving talks in prison. Over recent years as a Tzu Chi volunteer, I've talked to inmates at various prisons. Each time, I tell the best stories I've gathered and I deliver them the best I can, hoping that I can at least give my listeners something to think about. Every time I leave a prison after a talk, I know as the prison doors close behind me that I will probably never cross paths with these people again. In my heart, I silently give them my best wishes.

Last year I received a special assignment. Instead of just one talk, I was asked to give a monthly 35-minute class at Taichung Prison, in central Taiwan, for half a year. It's not hard for me to give a one-time talk, but this time I'd have to talk to the same group of people every month for half a year. It would be quite a challenge to make sure that they wouldn't get tired of listening to me while at the same time giving them something that would truly benefit them. The inmates in my target audience were all serving very long sentences—ten to twenty years. They all had to endure thousands of days behind bars. Even when they were eventually released, the pressure that came with the label "ex-convict" would weigh heavily on them. What could I do for these people who had had such a rough journey in life?

To change your conduct, you must first change your mindset. To change your mindset, you must consciously decide to think differently. After deliberate thinking, a concrete picture gradually formed in my mind about what I wanted to say to the inmates: I decided to help

them realize what the Buddha said: "The mind, the Buddha, and living beings—there is no difference among these three." I wanted to help the inmates recover their innate pure nature.

Lesson one Awakening

Who are you? Do you like yourself? What kind of past did you have? What kind of future do you want? How do you face each new day? Aside from looking at yourself closely in a mirror, have you ever looked carefully at others? If you have never thought about questions like these, then "awakening" is an essential first lesson.

In my first lesson, I played an episode from the Da Ai TV program *Children of Our Planet*, which features stories of children who have faced adversity in their lives with optimism and admirable courage. The episode I played was entitled "Ways to Embrace Imperfections." The hero of that episode, Lin Yan-liang (林彦良), has cerebral palsy and cannot walk well. In order to walk better, he has endured extensive physical therapy since he was very young. His father, a very positive person, gives him foot massages every day to enhance the effects of the physical therapy. The massages hurt and sometimes cause Yan-liang to yell with pain. Nevertheless, he takes the pain with a sense of humor. Despite his condition, he is strong and optimistic.

Yan-liang once complained to another disabled child that he really envies able-bodied people who can run and jump so easily: "Why do we have such bad luck? Others can walk, but we can't."

"Well, it's the way things are," the other child answered. "We were born this way and we just have to accept it. But don't lose heart. When God closes one door, he opens another. So we mustn't easily call it quits, right?"

Suffering abounds in this world. Have you discovered that? But there is always a way out. I told the inmates: "The door of freedom may be closed to you now, but the door of awakening is waiting for you to open it. Are you ready?"

Lesson two Emptiness

I talked about emptiness in my second lesson. Of all the life's truths that the Buddha taught—suffering, emptiness, impermanence, and non-self—the concept of emptiness is the hardest to understand. And yet it also offers the greatest consolation.

Everything in this world is transient and in constant flux. Every life goes through birth, aging, illness, and death; every thought arises, stays, transforms, and disappears; every physical object also experiences a life cycle of creation, existence, deterioration, and dissolution. Everything we take pains to accumulate in our lives—wealth or material possessions—might be gone overnight. Your mood might be remarkably high today because things have gone well for you, but it can also plunge to an abysmal low in an instant, triggered by the slightest mishap. If you understand emptiness, if you realize that the phenomena you experience have no inherent, solid nature by themselves, you will be released spiritually and find immense power.

I once read a story on the Internet. A man was put behind bars for wrongdoing. When the door to his cell clanged shut and the sound of iron grating against iron boomed out, his heart sank as low as it possibly could. He felt nothing but despair.

Later when he was let out for exercise, he came to a stone wall mottled with weather and age. On it were etched these words: "This too shall pass." He gazed at those words for a long time, and he came to a realization: From that time onward, whenever he felt disappointment or pain, he told himself, "This too shall pass." Those four words helped him through the darkest moments in his life.

Eventually he was released from jail. Every time he ran into difficulties or setbacks he told himself, "This too shall pass," and that gave him courage to face life's numerous challenges.

In time his life took a turn for the better and things began going his way, but even when his circumstances were all in his favor, he reminded himself, "This too shall pass." This realization deepened his appreciation for all that was good and beautiful in his life and made him cherish them even more.

When he was older he fell ill. Again he told himself, "This too shall pass." That made his heart lighter and his days of illness easier to endure. Before he passed away, he didn't forget to tell himself, "This too shall pass." He died in peace, knowing that he had left the best gift in the form of those four words to his family. He knew that their grief at his passing would eventually pass too.

"Everything changes," I said to the inmates in my audience. "A dim, unenlightened past doesn't mean a dim, unenlightened future. The suffering you are going through now will not last forever either. Do you understand the wisdom of that?"

I then told them the story of Xie Kun-shan (謝坤山). He lost both arms and one leg in an accident at work. Then later in his life he lost sight in his right eye after it was accidentally injured by a staple. Despite his obvious obstacles, he showed tremendous tenacity and perseverance and became a famous mouth painter. Named one of the Ten Outstanding Youths in Taiwan in 1996, he provides an inspiring example for everyone, physically challenged or not.

One time he met with Master Cheng Yen, who praised him for having very sound limbs. He was bewildered. He thought, "I have only one leg and a short stump of an arm. Why did the Master say I have sound limbs?" His bewilderment was dispelled when the Master added: "Those who use their hands to do right things and good deeds and their legs to walk the right path have sound limbs and so are able-bodied."

I told the inmates, "One day when you've become a free man and we meet, please raise your hand and say to me, 'I have sound limbs.' Then I'll know that you've joined the ranks of people who do good."

Lesson three The Karmic Law of Cause and Effect

I live in the city. The only place I can grow some plants is on our balcony. One day, I suddenly noticed some vines growing out of a pot there. They looked like loofah vines, but a closer inspection left me unsure. "What on earth is it?"

I wondered. My question was answered some time later when a round, smooth honeydew melon gradually began to grow. When the fruit had ripened, I picked it and served it to my family. The melon was not very big, but it was sweet and delicious.

Around that time I happened to be rehearsing for a musical adaptation of the *Compassionate Samadhi Water Repentance*, which teaches, among other things, the law of karma. The little incident with the melon really got me thinking.

Who sowed the seed that brought forth that melon? It was me. I had buried in the soil some seeds from a melon my family and I had eaten. Who aided the growth of the seed? Me again. I had watered it every day. Who reaped the fruit? Of course, it was me again. Finally, it was me who enjoyed its delightful flavor.

A deep faith in the law of karma is fundamental to one's cultivation as a practitioner of Buddhism. The *Surangama Sutra* says:

"You owe me a life; I must repay you my debt." As a result of such causes and conditions, we pass through hundreds of thousands of eons in sustained cycles of birth and death. "You love my mind; I adore your beauty." As a result of such causes and conditions we pass through hundreds of thousands of eons in constant mutual entanglement.

If we cannot realize the workings of karma—that all that has gone before leads to this moment—we cannot understand why we suffer now; we cannot come to terms with our suffering and thus be freed from our afflictions. So, in my third lesson, I spoke about the law of karma. Life has different ways of leading us toward enlightenment. Will we be able to grasp the root of our suffering and then with tremendous courage transform our lives?

Lesson four Rebirth

If a movie scene is not filmed to the satisfaction of the director, he can re-shoot it. But can you do the same in real life? If you don't like the way your life has gone, can you start all over? The black marks on your record might make you feel like a failure in life, but is a blessed life out of reach for a convict? Actually, your life can change completely with a single shift of your mindset.

I had noticed how the expressions in the inmates' eyes had changed since the start of my

classes: empty stares had given way to looks of concentration. I knew it was time to tell them my life story.

My earliest memory goes back to when I was six. It had to do with a door. One day my mom took my three siblings and me out. After some traveling, we arrived at a large door and waited there quietly. I don't know how long we waited there. Then the door slowly opened and out came my father, whom I didn't know very well. Later we went to Shimen Reservoir and had a picnic there. Mom took out some new clothes from a bag for my father to change into.

It wasn't until much later that I learned that that large door was the entrance to a prison. My dad once spent time in prison!

Because of my background, I know that life is no bed of roses for an ex-convict. I know the pressure they are under. My dad had a tough time after he was released, but he never gave up. When one path turned out to be a dead end, he changed to another path. We moved a lot when I was young, with the result that I went to a different elementary school every year. The frequent moves helped my siblings and me develop an ability to quickly put things in place. We can unpack and put everything in order in just one day.

I think my father had a special gift. Our life was materially deprived, but with him around we never felt we lacked anything. When our family sat down for dinner, there was often only one dish in the middle of the big dining table. Even so, laughter rang out constantly during the course of the meal. No matter how hard life was, we felt blessed. Every once in a while, he would even conjure up a fairy tale book or a world classic for us. My love of reading can definitely be attributed to my father.

A positive outlook is another gift he gave me. He loved to design machinery, but he failed more times than he succeeded. Nonetheless, after every failure I'd see him hard at work again at his drawing table the very next day, with a pencil stuck behind his ear. He was nothing if not persistent.

Another trait my father had was that he always seemed able to laugh at himself. One time he was transporting some machinery parts on his motor scooter. The heavy load caused the scooter to fall over and he couldn't get it back up. Instead of getting frustrated or angry, he laughed at it. He later related the incident to us, and we all burst into hearty laughter along with him.



Lin Min-li (front row, sixth from right) visits Taichung Prison with other Tzu Chi volunteers.

CHEN QUN-CHENG

His life didn't start getting on track until he was past 50. He was already close to 60 years of age by the time he bought his first house. Though it was empty of furniture, he was a picture of bliss, happily ensconced in the new house. We kids knew that his life had not been a smooth ride, so we did our best to not give him any reason to worry about us. The same year he bought the house, I was admitted into Taiwan University [the most prestigious university in Taiwan], and my younger sister, Ling-li (玲俐), gained entrance into a top high school. I could tell that our dad was very proud of us; although he didn't say much about it, the happy tears in his eyes gave him away. To this day, I can't forget that scene.

I told the inmates in my fourth class, "My father was a former prisoner, but he was also my hero."

Are you a father too? Strive to be your kids' hero.

Lessons five and six A Living Example, Transformation

How do you show an inmate that a good, blessed life is definitely within their reach? Gao Zhao-liang (高肇良), a Tzu Chi volunteer who used to do drugs, provides a good example for every inmate who wants to start over. An ex-con, Gao received a presidential award in 2015 for his efforts to help keep people away from illicit drugs. [See his story in the Winter 2016 issue of the *Tzu Chi Quarterly*.] I invited him to be a guest speaker in my fifth class in the prison.

If you want to become a better person, when do you start? In my sixth lesson, I shared a story told by Li Wen-yi (李文義), a member of the Tzu Chi Teachers Association. Li said he

once had a student who had joined a gang. He kept urging the student to leave the gang, and though the student promised him he would, he never made good on his promise. Li did not give up on him though. He had faith the student would change.

Later Li received a phone call from him. "Mr. Li, can you come see me?" the student said. "I listened to you and told the leader of our gang I wanted to leave. He said he would let me go on one of two conditions: Either I gave him NT\$200,000 [US\$6,660] or he could have one of my fingers chopped off." The student didn't have NT\$200,000, so he chose to have a finger chopped off. Li's heart ached for the kid, but at the same time he knew how much courage it had taken him to break free from the gang.

Do you have the courage that that kid had to start over? How much longer are you going to wait to truly change?

In my sixth lesson, I also told a Zen story.

One day, a Japanese general went to visit Zen Master Hakuin Ekaku. He wanted to know if heaven and hell really existed. Master Hakuin asked his visitor, "Who are you?" "I'm a general," came the reply.

"Who was so senseless as to appoint you a general? You look more like a beggar to me," the Master taunted.

The general was so angered by those words that he pulled his sword from its sheath and shook it at the Master. The latter just said calmly, "The door to hell has just been opened."

The general immediately realized that he was acting very improperly, so he began apologizing over and over to the Master. At his apologies, the Master said to him, "The door to heaven has just been opened."

It only takes a change of mindset to transform hell into heaven. If you want to change, it also takes just a shift of your mind. My last lesson was about transformation. Now is the best moment to start if you really want to change. Take good care of your heart and mind. Even if you are facing the most adverse circumstances, you can still aspire to be and do good. Act on your thoughts of goodness; then your wonderful future will be in sight.

Thank you

My home in Zhanghua, central Taiwan, is less than a ten-minute drive from a Tzu Chi office. I had noticed how the office always bustled with people every time an event was held there. One time, my mom was in the car with me when I drove past the office. As we passed, she said to me that Tzu Chi was a good group. I remembered thinking that a man like me, who was constantly on the wrong side of the law, would probably never have anything to do with the foundation. A hooligan like me wasn't good enough to be associated with the group.

But life is unpredictable and can totally surprise you. When I was down and out, it was Tzu Chi that opened a new vista in life for me.

During the second half of 2016, Tzu Chi volunteers visited us every month in prison. They taught classes and conveyed their care and support for us. Their visits helped me reflect on many things and brought a sense of peace to my often unsettled mind. If I write to my mom about this, she will feel very comforted.

Sister Min-li, who conducted six classes, never looked at us with guarded eyes. All I could feel was sincere care from her. I used to think that people would be quick to judge wrongdoers like us and be leery of us, and that just led me to rebel even more. But after attending her classes, I realized I was wrong in thinking this way.

Now when I'm caught up in negative thinking, I snap myself out of it by reminding myself of things that Sister Min-li taught us in class. Beyond pondering the wisdom of her words, I also try to take concrete steps that will lead me down the path to a better future.

Sister Min-li's efforts will not go to waste. I believe many other inmates feel the same as me. I am something of an introvert, and I like to keep things to myself. But I really wanted to do something to thank the volunteers, so I joined other inmates in staging a surprise musical performance for the volunteers. I mindfully rehearsed the hand gestures and movements so that I could present my best side to the volunteers. Our performance might not have been perfect, but it was full of our immense gratitude.

—Tsao, inmate at Taichung Prison

A new dawn

Thank you all for unselfishly giving to us, a group of people who live on the fringe of society. Every month for half a year you traveled here to see us and guide us to be better people. You opened your arms to us as if you were our own parents.

My mom passed away last year. It was a huge blow to me. I felt so guilty and remorseful I couldn't emerge from my inner darkness. And every time my old grandma traveled all the way from Pingtung to see me, my sense of guilt deepened.

But your visits brought a glimmer of light to me. Because of you I realize that there are people who still care about us. There are many people out there for us to love and to whom we can reach out. I decided that instead of dwelling on a deplorable past, it would be better to start over and change myself.

Your company helped me realize the importance of love, whether it be from family or religion. Love carries us over the bumpiest life paths. I will nurture love in my heart and when I am released from prison and return to my hometown, I will strive to be a man of value and pay your love forward.

—Zheng, inmate at Taichung Prison

Smile at the Mirror

We often judge others too quickly, but do we reflect on ourselves enough?

By Chen Mei-yi Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting Photo by Tu Feng-mei

It was late afternoon when I arrived at the train station and went to the window to buy a ticket to Hualien. I was going to visit the Jing Si Abode, the Buddhist convent founded by Master Cheng Yen.

"A one-way ticket to Hualien," I said to the clerk.

The clerk looked glum—she didn't seem the type that warmed easily to people. I thought, "Come on, give me a smile." Then it suddenly occurred to me: I must not have looked too cheerful myself.

After I received my ticket and change from the clerk, I smiled at her and said, "Thank you."

She seemed surprised at first, but she

quickly returned my smile and answered, "You're welcome."

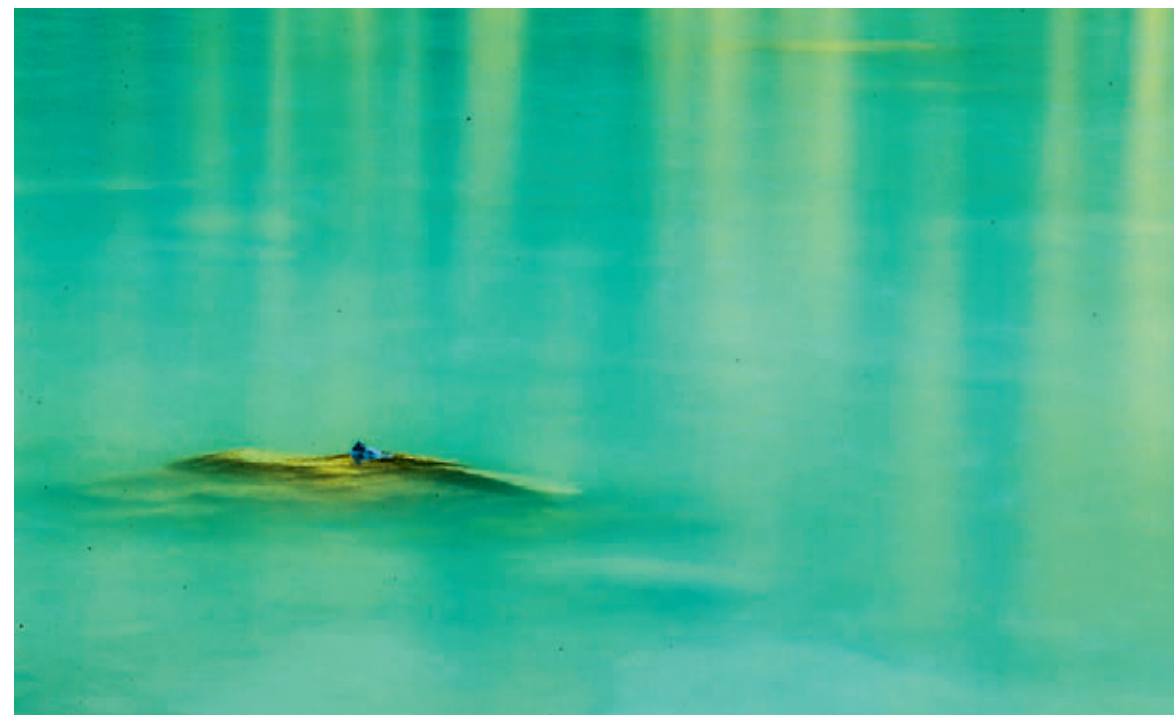
As I turned around to leave, she added, "Take care."

I gave her another smile, said "Thank you" again. "Bye-bye," I called out with a wave of my hand as I turned to leave.

"Platform No. 2." She called after me again to remind me of the right platform.

I thanked her again and then happily proceeded toward platform No. 2.

This small moment, an everyday exchange between two strangers, illustrates the deep wisdom of Master Cheng Yen when she says, "Smile at the mirror, and the image in the mirror will smile back." ☸



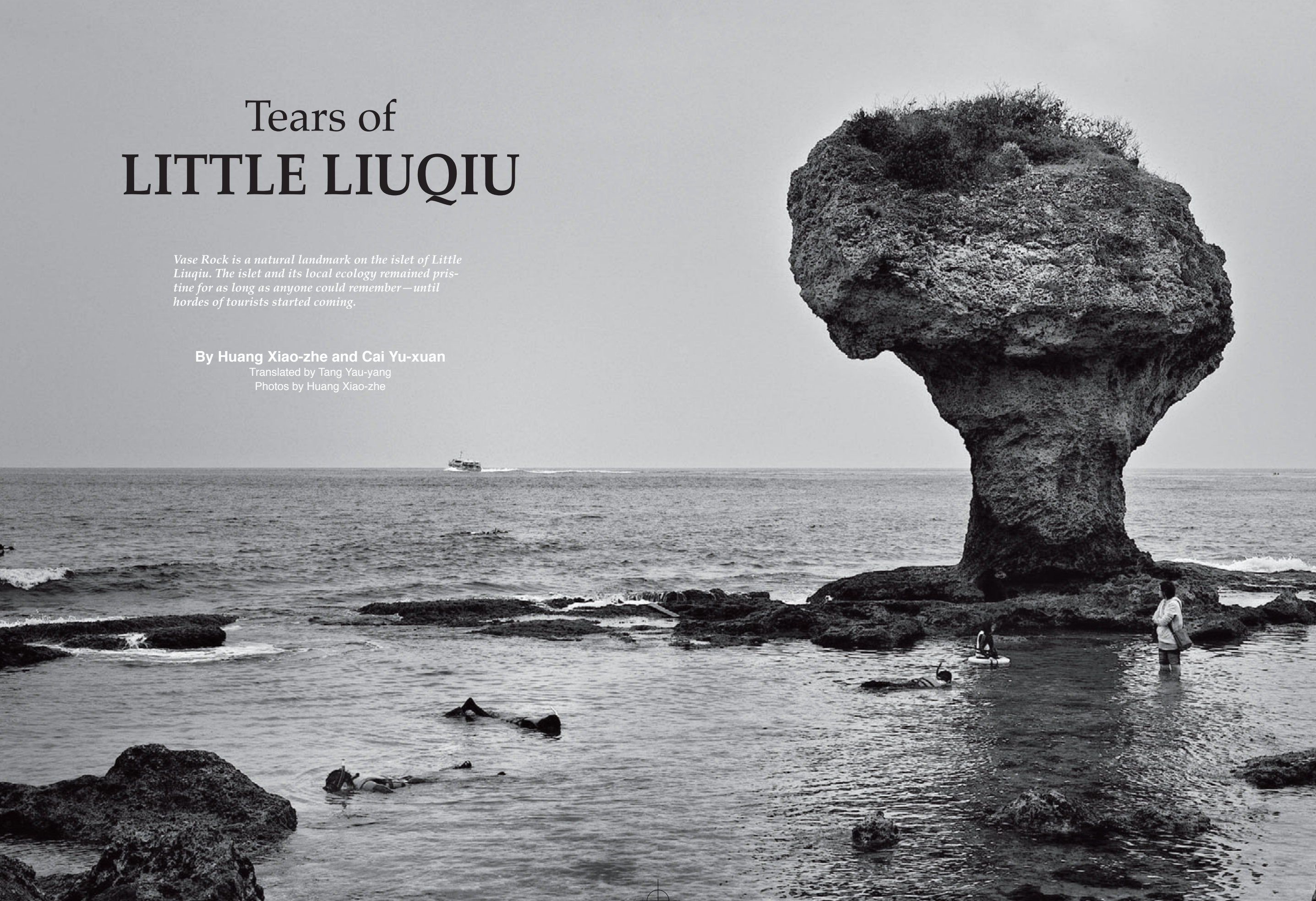
Tears of LITTLE LIUQIU

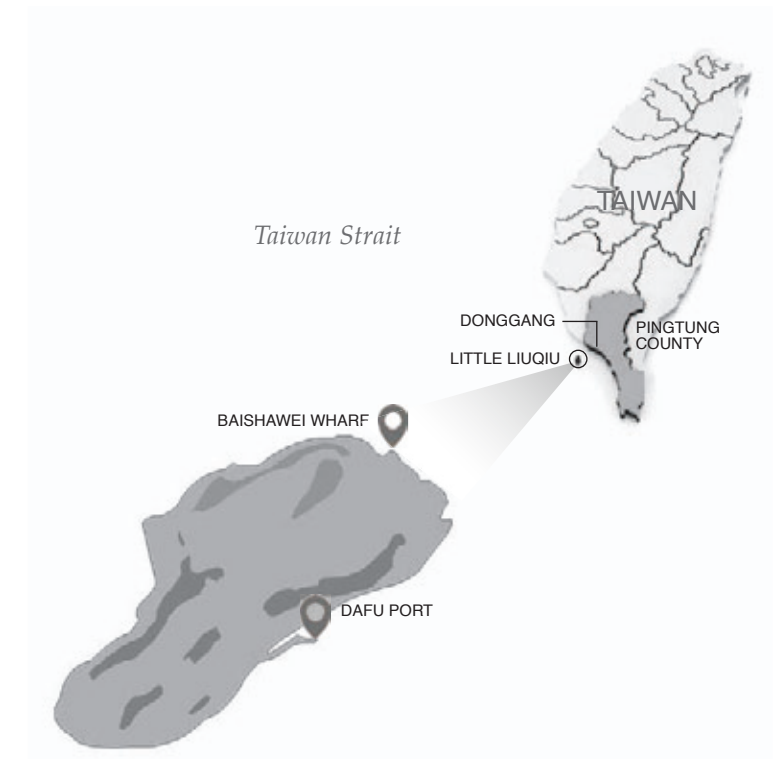
Vase Rock is a natural landmark on the islet of Little Liuqiu. The islet and its local ecology remained pristine for as long as anyone could remember—until hordes of tourists started coming.

By Huang Xiao-zhe and Cai Yu-xuan

Translated by Tang Yau-yang

Photos by Huang Xiao-zhe





Prosperity vs. Pollution

The islet of Little Liuqiu lies just eight nautical miles (9.3 miles)—or a 30-minute boat ride—from the southwestern coast of Taiwan. It is tiny, with an area of only 6.8 square kilometers (2.6 square miles) and a population of 12,000 people. The ocean that surrounds this coral reef isle is warmer than anywhere else around Taiwan. The warm water, never dropping below 25° Celsius (77° Fahrenheit), has enriched the area's oceanic ecology.

Little Liuqiu has become a vacationers' paradise in recent years. The government has been promoting tourism for the islet, which became part of the Dapeng Bay National Scenic Area in 2000. As a result, tourists have poured in: 400,000 visits in 2016 alone. That is about 7,700 visitors per week.

Commerce has always followed people. Local residents have built up lodging, transportation, food service, and all other manner of services designed to accommodate the influx of tourists. Many B&Bs have sprung up—from five establishments years ago to several hundred today—and jobs have become more available. Many young people from Little Liuqiu have given up their careers on the main island of Taiwan and moved back to the islet to work.

While tourism has brought prosperity to Little Liuqiu, it has also brought another unwelcome guest: pollution. Garbage, air pollution from vehicles, noise, and wastewater have become issues that the isle must deal with now.



A Small But Determined Group

Tourists from Taiwan and beyond board boats at Donggang, Pingtung County, southwestern Taiwan, for a ride to the fishing port at Baishawei on Little Liuqiu. From there, they disperse to their various destinations around the islet.

The multitudes of sightseers invariably create and leave behind a large amount of garbage. A small group of local people have been quietly and routinely picking up after them. They collect recyclable garbage, sort it out, and then have it shipped to Donggang for further processing. They are Tzu Chi recycling volunteers.

Compared to the large number of tourists leaving behind so much garbage, the Tzu Chi group is very small, just a couple of dozen people. Nevertheless, they have been a welcome force that has assisted municipal workers to keep their communities cleaner. They have been at it for 20 years now.

These volunteers have front row seats to view the impact that the booming tourism business has on the local environment. They see firsthand the magnitude of the garbage problem and the reality that, despite their best efforts, they can never pick up garbage as fast as the tourists can throw it away.

This realization, far from discouraging them, has strengthened their resolve to work harder and stay the course.





A Mountain to Move

Little Liuqiu used to have a garbage incinerator, but that facility was shuttered more than a decade ago. There was not enough garbage to keep it busy, it was too costly to pay a staff to keep the machinery running, and the humid, salty air corroded the equipment.

Even though the incinerator is out of commission, the rate at which garbage is generated has never ceased or decreased. On the contrary, it has only sped up with the influx of vacationers. The government has to spend about ten million Taiwanese dollars (US\$330,000) a year to ship the island's garbage to Pingtung County to have it incinerated at a facility in the town of Kanding.

A large tract of land, home to all kinds of garbage, now sits not far from the old incinerator in Little Liuqiu. The site used to be a swamp, but unceasing dumping of garbage has created a mountain of trash there. The site was intended for discarded building materials, large pieces of furniture, boats, and so on, but since there is little oversight of the area, many people go there and dump all kinds of garbage.

Volunteer Li Hong Jin-shan (李洪金善), in her 60s, visits this dump every day. She braves the foul odor and extracts, one piece at a time, useful things from the piles of rubbish.

Her efforts notwithstanding, over the last 20 years the mountain has not seemed to be getting any smaller. She knows that she will probably not live to see the day when, if ever, this site is restored to a swamp. At the pace that things are going—the incoming speed of new garbage in relation to the outgoing speed of extracted recyclables—she will probably never be able to shrink the piles, much less eliminate them. Still, she keeps at it. What keeps her coming back day after day is that she loathes the thought of leaving such an ugly site to future generations. The mountain of garbage is not only ugly but abhorrently stinky.

She has never been able to make sense of the wastefulness that abounds in modern consumerism. But still she will be here again tomorrow to move the mountain.



Guarding His Hometown

Chen Shou-shan (陳壽山) has been engaged in recycling for 20 years and has been instrumental in maintaining the Tzu Chi recycling effort on Little Liuqiu. Once a fisherman, Chen now devotes himself to the preservation of the ocean and the island.

One day we tagged along as he drove his truck to pick up recyclables at locations on a route. He had purchased it himself out of his own pocket for the purpose of collecting recyclables.

Looking out the window as he drove, he told us some of the difficulties that he and his fellow volunteers have encountered in recent years. In the past, they had been successful in engaging local residents to help with recycling. Working together, they had been able to effectively tackle the recyclable garbage on the island. But as tourism became big business, the influx of visitors threw that recycling equation out of balance. Many local residents have gone into business to cater to the needs of the tourists. They have gone into lodging, food, leisure, or entertainment services. Whatever their business, their new endeavors have effectively taken them out of recycling work, and at the same time hordes of tourists have kept adding a lot of new garbage. The increase in tourism has been a double whammy for the recycling volunteers—fewer people handling a lot more garbage.

It is easy to understand the heavy burden that Chen has had to shoulder, but he has not wavered. He just keeps doing the best he can. He knows that when he gives up on recycling, he also gives up on guarding his own hometown.





Let's All Do Our Duty

Some recyclable garbage on Little Liouiu is collected by volunteers who go around the streets looking for it, but mostly volunteers rely on local residents and businesses, such as B&B's and shops, to give them their recyclable things. Volunteers visit fixed locations to pick up recyclables when they have accumulated to a certain amount. Then they deliver them to a central location for further sorting and shipping back to Taiwan.

For eight years, that central location was a recycling station on a tract of land that the owner let Tzu Chi use free of charge. But the recycling station had to be closed down in 2015 when the owner took the land back. Since that time, collected recyclables have been stored in the garage and open vacant space at Chen's home. This constitutes yet another challenge for the volunteers as they struggle to keep doing what is good for the environment.

It is going to take more than the small number of volunteers to protect the environment of Little Liouiu. If local residents and tourists alike could alter their behavior, it would go a long way toward reducing the garbage. For example, they could cut down on the consumption of bottled water and avoid using disposable eating utensils as much as they can.

Only when as many people as possible get involved can environmental protection activities make a meaningful dent.



Reuse

The recyclables that the volunteers collect and sort out are put into large bulk bags, which are later loaded onto a boat to ship back to Taiwan. A new bulk bag costs about two American dollars. Since the volunteers need these bags on a long-term basis, the cost can add up, so they have always tried to avoid this expenditure if they can. Instead, Chen scavenges for discarded big bags to use. Often the ones he finds are tattered and dirty, but he is quite all right with that. He simply washes them and mends them like a tailor.

Chen, a former fisherman, showed us some nylon threads that are commonly used in making or mending fishing nets. He seeks out fishermen who are willing to give him the nylon threads that they no longer want. Then he uses the threads to mend the tears or gaping openings in the big bags that he has scavenged. With just a few stitches, a tattered bag becomes good enough for the job at hand: to securely hold recyclable items inside. It may not be pretty, but the outward appearance of the final product is not a concern in the grand scheme of things.

The volunteers indeed live out the true meaning of "reuse."



The Beauty and Sorrow of Little Liuqiu

All recycling volunteers are Little Liuqiu natives. They were born there and grew up there. They all knew their islet when it was still pristine, and they realize the sad extent of pollution now. They love this place, and they hope that their efforts may somehow slow the speed of the degradation.

They point out that in recent years they have collected recyclable garbage thrown out mainly by two groups of people. The first group are the tourists. They discard the most garbage, of which PET water and beverage bottles are the undisputed volume leader. The second group, B&B owners, throw out mostly empty containers of detergent, bleach, and other cleaning agents.

To the volunteers, those containers of chemicals, though already empty, may as well be full of unseen terrors. For each such empty container reclaimed by the volunteers, a whole bottle of chemicals has been discharged into the environment. There is no sewage treatment system on Little Liuqiu, so if the current situation continues, the beloved ocean will one day cease to be beautiful.



A Bodhisattva Boat

After having been sorted out and placed into big bags, the recyclables are ready to be shipped back by boat to Donggang. Usually it takes about a month for the volunteers to accumulate enough for one trip.

On the day before each shipment, volunteers truck in the bulk bags of recyclable articles to the pier at Dafu Port. Then they load the bags onto a boat there so the recyclables can be shipped to Donggang the next morning. They have always used the same boat, the *Gongcheng*, which has served the volunteers on Little Liuqiu for nearly 20 years.

Owner and Captain Huang Di-fang (黃地芳) offered this ferry service to Tzu Chi free of charge. He retired about a decade ago, and his son has continued to provide that free service. A trip between Dafu and Donggang costs about US\$300. If not for the generosity of the two captains, the shipment costs would be a large burden for the volunteers. "We wouldn't know how to carry on our recycling effort if we didn't have their free service," they said gratefully.

Good-hearted people like the Huangs have constituted a different but impressive part of the beauty of Little Liuqiu. ❀



Painting Through Adversity



It has been ten years since the accident robbed her of her mobility. Painting has helped her emerge from this adversity. She particularly likes painting landscapes. Trees, flowers, and grass, standing tall after a storm, inspire her.

By Huang Yu-ying

Translated by Tang Yau-yang

Photos by Huang Xiao-zhe

“Dad, my paintings are on exhibit at the Taichung City Seaport Art Center,” Zhou Yu-ru (周玉茹) said to her father one day. “You must come see them.” He promised that he would do so.

Later, Zhou accompanied her father, almost 80, as they surveyed her works in the vast exhibition hall at the art center, located in the coastal district of Qingshui, Taichung City, central Taiwan. The two of them moved from painting to painting, savoring the happy moments.

“They’re wonderful,” he told her. “From now on you should devote yourself entirely to painting.”

That was in 2015, around the time Zhou began painting on weekends in a large hall on the spacious, 7.5-acre campus of the art center.

Curious passersby stopped to watch her paint, sitting in a wheelchair, a sweet smile on her handsome face. Most notably, the paintbrush was not in her hand but held tightly in her mouth.

“Mom, why does she paint using her mouth?” a little girl asked. “How does she wash her face? How does she brush her teeth?”

Zhou is used to this sort of reaction from a child. The kid’s questions were par for the

course, so she paused in her painting to talk to her and demonstrate how she uses her mouth and severely weakened hands to open paint tubes, squeeze the paint out, and mix colors—slowly despite great effort. Through this interaction, she helped the little girl learn more about people like her.

“Why do mouth or foot painters all seem to have a particular penchant for painting nature scenery?” another passerby asked her.

“I like to paint nature because many plants—like trees, flowers, and grass—stand tall and prosper after a storm,” she replied. “Their resilience inspires me.”

In fact, her painting is more than just about nature. “Love from a lot of people has helped me reenter society,” she commented. She hopes to pass that love on to others by putting it into her paintings and creating beautiful works of art.

ZHOU WAS BORN in a rural area in Qingshui. At that time, her father worked in construction. He left home early and returned late every day, working hard to raise his six children. Though not formally trained, he could produce professional-grade architectural drawings. Zhou grew

Zhou paints at the Taichung City Seaport Art Center. She has regained her confidence and her footing in life through her art.



up surrounded by those drawings, and that exposure helped her develop her own concepts of drawing and structure.

She started working after graduating from high school. Blessed with a nice figure, sweet looks, and an outgoing personality, she was the belle of the office. Soon she met and married her Prince Charming. As it turned out, Mr. Right he was not.

Their honeymoon did not last very long. When he suffered setbacks at work, he took his frustrations out on her. One day outside a temple, he beat her again. "Over a hundred people watched, but not one stepped forward to help me," Zhou sadly recalled. Her parents eventually got the word, rushed to the temple, and took her to the hospital.

Later she separated from her husband, and she planned to bring her son to live with her after she had settled down with a job. But one night in 1996, when she was riding her motor scooter home after work, she jerked reflexively to avoid a pothole, the scooter lost its balance, and she flew off.

"Where am I? Am I dying?" she wondered when she regained consciousness in the ICU. Her head was in a haze. In her stupor, she seemed to hear a conversation between her father and her doctor.

"She'll quite probably be bedridden or even on a respirator for the rest of her life," the doctor said.

"I'll look after her even if she's paralyzed. Please do everything you can to save her," her father pleaded anxiously.

Zhou wanted to cry, but she was physically unable to do so. Her body was riddled with tubes, and she felt as if she were trapped under a boulder. "Now what? Now I can't get my son back. What am I going to do?"

The accident had thrown her life and future into total disarray. Her physical pain and emotional anguish made her heart so heavy that she lost the will to live. While still in the ICU she refused to be fed, which resulted in a massive acute hemorrhage in her stomach. It was as if she was intentionally torturing herself to protest against heaven's cruelty to her.

Her father was devastated too, but he toughened up for his daughter's sake and did what he could to help her cope. He put a radio by her bed so she could listen to it if she should wake up in the middle of the night and be unable to go back to sleep. Zhou had a beautiful head of

long hair. To maintain her good looks, he took the effort to wash it rather than have it cut short. He was a loving, tender dad.

In order to look after her, he rarely had a good night's sleep. One night, a lump of mucus in her throat made it difficult for her to breathe. She couldn't reach her father, who was fast asleep from exhaustion, so she tried to inch her fingers toward a plastic bag lying on the edge of her bed. She wanted to rustle the bag in the hope that the noise would wake him.

As she struggled to do that, a sight suddenly jumped out at her—her father's hair was salt-and-pepper all over. She was sobered by his aging. "Dad has been consumed in recent years with worrying about my marriage, my family, and now my paralysis. He hasn't had a good rest in a long time." Her heart went out to him, and she felt she could not continue to wallow in self-pity.

REHAB MARKED THE BEGINNING of yet another period of suffering for Zhou. Thankfully a positive force came into her life at that time to strengthen her.

One day while she was still hospitalized, a rehab physician walked into her room with a man who was also disabled by a spinal cord injury for a chat.

"Ms. Zhou, are you religious?" the man asked.

"No," she replied, shaking her head.

The visitor, a few years older than Zhou, then began sharing with her his own rehab experiences. He also read a section of the Bible to her. "Praying is very powerful," he said. "Whatever your difficulty, you can pray to God." He then led her in a prayer, which infused a warm current into Zhou's heart and soothed her anguish.

After that, other Christians often came to visit Zhou in her ward. They brought her food, prayed with her, and nourished her spiritually as well as physically. With love and kindness, they brought her dried-up soul back to life. With a new-found peace permeating her, she decided to put herself in God's hands.

Zhou moved back in with her parents after she was released from the hospital. Her father had already remodeled the house and made it wheelchair accessible. He had made sure, so far as he could, that her every need would be met.

His love, especially through the tough times, gave Zhou a haven where she could start her new journey. However, she was also fully aware of some facts at the same time: Her father was

"My Hometown at Twilight"

Zhou painted this piece to mark her move away from her family home to a nursing home. About the painting, in her own words:

Sadness actually imbues this piece.

Dad was exhausted from caring for me. To lessen my family's burden, I decided to leave my beloved home and Taichung Harbor and move into a nursing home in Taichung City. In my sadness at leaving, I put my last look at Taichung Harbor down on the canvas.

That being said, what I wanted to convey here was not sorrow. The reds and pinks are people's love and good wishes for me, and the birds in the picture symbolize me flying toward a new life.





Children gave Zhou a cup of hot soup at a year-end gathering for children in the courtyard of the Presidential Office Building in Taipei in January 2015. LIU ZHENG-MIN

getting on in years, and he had been diagnosed with cancer. Her older siblings had helped her a lot over the years, but they had their own families to tend to. Zhou wanted to become independent so she could lessen the load that she had placed on them.

Independence at that stage meant mobility independence. She had to be able to go places alone, without being chaperoned. “Dad worried about me at first,” Zhou recalled, “and he would call me on my cell phone every so often to check on me when I was out.”

Gradually she was able to go shopping, go to the post office, and go to church alone. In her electric wheelchair, she freely traversed the streets and alleys in Qingshui.

The church became her second home. The minister, his wife, and the congregation helped her where they could. Zhou was hired to take care of administrative work at the church, for which she received more than a paycheck—she also learned new skills. The minister’s wife also gave her opportunities to design the website and posters for the church. Zhou thus learned much about presentation, design, and aesthetics—skills that would prove useful in her future endeavors.

The Spinal Cord Injured Patients Potential and Development Center in Taoyuan, northern Taiwan, held an AutoCAD training class in 2012. Course graduates who met the screening criteria established by the Taoyuan Vocational Training

Bureau would be referred to potential employers. Zhou signed up for the class.

Of all the course participants, Zhou was the most seriously injured and the least physically suitable for the course, which required manual dexterity. Even her own father did not have high hope for her success in the class.

“I’ve been drawing architectural designs for 20 years,” Zhou’s father said to her. “I wonder how you could possibly draw those professional, complex lines.”

She knew that he had said those words out of concern for her, but she had made up her mind to learn so that she might improve her marketable skills. Despite long odds, she left home and went to Taoyuan to attend the course.

The class met in a computer lab. Zhou was unable to sit for long periods of time, and her hands were weak, which greatly limited her ability to manipulate the computer input devices to do her architectural drawing exercises and assignments. Still, she worked hard at it.

Each day after class, she went back to her dorm room and lay down on her bed to read her textbooks. She had to bend her neck awkwardly to hold them up between her chin and her shoulder, and she often studied till midnight. Maintaining such an unnatural posture for long stretches of time took a toll on her. She once woke up from sleep to find her neck so stiff she could not turn her head.

All this pain and discomfort, however, did not lead her to quit the class. She stuck it out.

Her computer teacher loaned her a notebook computer so that she could practice more on her own. Zhou really dug in and studied hard. When the other students took off on weekends for leisure outings, she stayed in her dorm practicing. She was determined to use time and effort to make up for her weakened hands and other limitations.

There was one major hurdle that Zhou had to clear before she could pass the certification examination: All students had to complete an assigned drawing in an allotted period of time. She would have to run against the clock.

By applied will, with a fierce tenacity of purpose, she made it. She passed the examination

and earned a Grade-III AutoCAD certification at the conclusion of the training class.

AFTER SHE HAD EARNED the certification, Zhou stayed in Taoyuan to take a pre-employment, hands-on course before going to work in Taipei. Unfortunately, the cold, humid weather in northern Taiwan caused her sinus inflammation to re-emerge in such a big way that she often suffered severe dizziness. She had no choice but to return to her hometown to treat her nose. She was admitted into Tungs’ Taichung MetroHarbor Hospital in neighboring Shalu.

Cai Qing-shao (蔡青邵), an ENT doctor and a devoted Christian, was Zhou’s physician at the hospital. After assessing Zhou’s condition, she told her that her slower blood coagulation made

Zhou paints at the Taichung City Seaport Art Center, which is an ideal location for her to paint—spacious, quiet, and air-conditioned. She does not function well in the heat outside because her capacity to perspire was adversely diminished by her accident.



her more susceptible to excessive bleeding during a traditional open surgery. Therefore, she suggested a minimally invasive surgery, even though it would not be covered by the National Health Insurance program. Dr. Cai was aware of Zhou's finances and her struggle to regain her footing, so she quietly paid for the procedure on Zhou's behalf.

Zhou's hard-earned AutoCAD certification did not bring about an easier life for her as she had hoped. Her path forward was still riddled with challenges.

One day she was boarding a shuttle bus when she took a fall and badly broke a thigh-bone. She was sent home after undergoing surgery, and her hospital social worker referred

her to the Taichung Tzu Chi branch for ongoing assistance. Zhou was against it at first. "I don't want their help," Zhou said. She was wary of Tzu Chi because she was not sure what they were up to—and the foundation was a Buddhist organization.

Nonetheless, Tzu Chi volunteers visited her soon afterwards. They were warm and helpful. When they learned that she needed an air bed for her aching body, they quickly found a used one, cleaned it up, and delivered it to her.

After seeing the volunteers a few times, Zhou gradually lowered her guard. What had impressed her most about the volunteers was that "They come to help me, but have never tried to convert me to Buddhism." She appreci-

Zhou boards a van for the disabled operated by the government. Such a van has become her primary means of transportation, whether for seeing a doctor, painting outdoors, or giving a public-service talk.



Zhou goes to church every Sunday. She met God when she was at the lowest point of her life. The ministers and fellow Christians she has met have helped guide her out of her struggles. Now she shares her life story with others to encourage them.

ated being able to be associated with her church congregation and Tzu Chi volunteers at the same time. The warmth from both groups helped her rekindle her love of life.

"However tough the going may become, I must hang in there and get going," she said. "So many people have loved me. I must work hard to pass on their love and help more people cherish their lives."

Zhou's church and the Spinal Cord Injury Association have arranged for her to share her experience at schools and other organizations. She has been a great inspiration to many people in her audiences, some of whom are also victims of spinal cord injuries.

LIFE IS A JOURNEY of unceasing learning, and as your life unfolds, you may experience different roles. After having been through so much adversity, Zhou learned to accept the role God had assigned her.

In 2014, a beauty pageant was held for women disabled by spinal injuries. Its organizers hoped the contest could accomplish two objectives. First, they hoped to draw people with spinal cord injuries out of their seclusion. Second, they hoped that through such an event, businesses would notice these people and offer more jobs and resources to help them.

Zhou's friends from church and the Spinal Cord Injury Association encouraged her to compete in this inaugural event. "It never occurred to me that I'd ever take part in a beauty pageant. I've never been one who wanted to stand out," she recalled of her initial disinclination. However, she did sign up as a contestant, along with 42 others, after she understood the good intentions of the organizers.

To prepare for the pageant, all participants sat through lessons on make-up, grooming, posture, and etiquette. Professional teachers gave them pointers and showed them the nuances



Tzu Chi volunteer Yang Mi helped Zhou obtain social resources to help stabilize her life. She also helped her enroll in a painting class. She has looked after Zhou like a mother for more than three years. She phones her often and visits her at the nursing home. Her love has helped propel Zhou forward.

about how to sit in a wheelchair, where to rest their hands and legs, and how to have a pleasant facial expression.

"Applying make-up was for me the most difficult of all," Zhou said. "Just penciling my eyebrows and applying eyeshadow would take me an inordinate amount of time and effort." Before each appearance, she had to get up extra early so she could have the time to apply her make-up properly.

All the work Zhou did beforehand as precisely as she could with her atrophied hands paid off. When people saw Zhou in public, they saw that she was beautiful and elegant. The judges appreciated her efforts, the results that she had been able to deliver, and the confidence radiating from her. She placed third in the contest.

Although the pageant is over, its positive effects continue. Having learned those lessons on self-image, Zhou now always looks nice and elegant in public.

SHE MIGHT HAVE NEEDED URGING to take part in the beauty contest, but she had never needed prodding to do something else: In her heart she had always wanted to paint.

"I'd wanted to learn to paint ever since my injury, but my family didn't think my condition would allow me to do it," Zhou said. "Furthermore, could painting help me put food on the table?" Even her father, her staunchest fan, would not support her on this, but she pressed ahead to pursue her dream.

"I tried painting with my hand at first, but my hand was too weak to exert enough pressure on the paint brush," Zhou said. "So I tried using my mouth, but that really strained my neck. It wasn't easy."

Her neck had been injured in that grave traffic accident, so a traditional easel was not appropriate for her. She needed a multi-functional easel. The only trouble was its higher price tag.

Enter Tzu Chi volunteer Yang Mi (楊密). She knew that Zhou had wanted and needed a set of painting tools and accessories but could not afford them. She wanted to help.

"If you want to paint, then give it your all," Yang said to Zhou. "Why don't we go to the store? You can pick out everything that you need so you can begin to paint properly."

Besides buying art supplies for Zhou, Yang also talked to Zhou's father and nudged him towards supporting Zhou's pursuit of her dream.

In 2014, Zhou signed up for an oil painting class in Taichung for people suffering from spinal cord injuries. Teacher Ruan Li-ying (阮麗英) led her into the world of oil painting by starting with a basic knowledge of painting tools and pigments. Zhou also learned from her classmates, fellow sufferers of spinal cord injuries who had been painting longer. In addition, she copied good art works. One stroke at a time, she gradually improved her ability to express her feelings or the images in her mind on the canvas.

"Last month I went to a reunion for that beauty pageant," Zhou said. "I took my painting 'A Road of Gratitude' there and presented it to the pageant sponsors to thank them."

The painting was a contrast of red and black. A typhoon was raging outside while she was painting that picture in her room at the hospital. The head nurse stopped by to watch. "Yu-ru, are you painting a storm?" she asked. "Why just black and red?"

Zhou answered, "Painting on a day when a typhoon hit made me feel that just as storms thunder through our land, so too do they show up in our lives. When a storm is about to strike, red clouds line the sky. That's what the red colors in my painting stand for. See the road in my painting? The love from many people helped build that road for me as I fought and made my way through the storms in my life."

Zhou has emerged from the storms in her life a stronger person.

QINGSHUI, ZHOU'S HOMETOWN, is very humid, and the chill during fall and winter often made her ache all over. With the help of Taichung City social workers and Tzu Chi volunteers, Zhou checked into a nursing home in Taichung where she can escape the humidity of her hometown and at the same time receive good care.

Though living away from home and her dear family, she enjoys regular visits from Tzu Chi volunteers, and her minister and church friends still love her like family.

She is grateful to the nursing home for rearranging a storage room on the first floor to create a painting studio for her. In this small space of about 70 square feet are easels, canvases, tubes of paint, and brushes of various sizes—everything she needs to create.

She is painting a rainbow in the calm after a storm. She is painting a new life for herself. ❀

To a Beautiful Heart, Everything Appears Beautiful

When the Wenchuan earthquake hit, I didn't try to escape for my life. I thought it would be just as well if I were killed. That I can live so happily and confidently today is all because of Tzu Chi, through which I've learned what is really important in life. Being involved in Tzu Chi has helped me to recognize that instead of losing sleep over what I have lost, I should focus on and cherish what I still have.

—Ren Shixiang

By Bian Jing

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

A mother's arms are the warmest cradle for her children. Mothers take care of their children with selfless love, and the young ones adore her. But what if a tragic accident happened that made a small child who used to be very close to her mother fear the very look of her?

In 1992, when Ren Shixiang (任時香) was 27 years old, her husband had an affair. His mistress,

out of spite, threw concentrated acid on Ren, badly disfiguring her face, arms, and thighs. Ren can no longer remember whether it was over 20 percent or 30 percent of her body that was burned; she only knows that after the attack she became blind in her right eye, her left eye couldn't close properly, and the vision in that eye was also greatly reduced. Her burns used to hurt even after they had healed, but now they no longer do.

After the attack, Ren and the adults in her family were worried that it would be too much of a shock for her little daughter, Hu Rong (胡蓉), to see her mom so disfigured, so they decided to keep the young one away for a while. They placed her in the care of a relative.

Burn care wasn't as advanced back then as it is today. The treatment process was lengthy and excruciating. Ren often felt that she would rather

die than continue with the painful treatment, but as soon as she thought of Hu Rong, she would grit her teeth and get on with it. "All I could think of was getting well soon so I could get my daughter back and take care of her," she recalled. Ren's husband was often away from home for work before the accident, so the primary responsibility of looking after Hu Rong fell on Ren. As a result, she was very close to her daughter.





Born in 1965, Ren Shixiang got married at 23 years of age. She had a daughter, and life was happy for her until tragedy befell her in 1992.

COURTESY OF REN SHIXIANG

When she returned home after her first hospitalization—she would later be hospitalized again for more treatment—Hu Rong was brought back to be reunited with her. Ren was anxious and eager to see her three-year-old, but her daughter's response on seeing her left her devastated. As soon as the little one laid eyes on her, she was so scared she immediately hid behind her grandmother.

"I endured all the pain from the treatment for my daughter so that I could be with her. But now she was afraid to even look at me. I wondered what the point of living was." Seeing her own dear daughter hiding from her, Ren felt a pain that was worse than the physical pain she had had to endure.

Worried that Ren herself wouldn't be able to accept her disfigurement, her family had covered up all the mirrors before she came home so that she couldn't see her reflection. But Hu Rong's reaction made her very curious. One night, after her family had fallen asleep, she uncovered a mirror—the first time she had looked in a mirror since she had been injured half a year earlier—and was shocked by the reflection staring back at her. "My heart sped up so fast. Even I was frightened by my own face. The severity of the disfigurement was beyond my imagination. I felt such agony in my heart, and I wondered how I could carry on living looking like that."

News of what had happened to Ren spread across the little town in which she lived. She drew stares from everyone, children and adults alike, wherever she went. The stares were like rubbing salt in a wound and made Ren feel even worse about herself. Despite the pain, she stuck it out for the sake of her daughter. "I couldn't bring myself to sever my attachment to her. Otherwise I would have gone into hiding somewhere deep in the mountains."

Ren's supervisor at work was very kind to her. After learning of her situation, he transferred her to work at the warehouse so that she didn't have to come in contact with many people. Ren began to shun people as much as she could and retreated into a world of her own. Aside from work, the only thing that could bring her out of the house was her visits to her parents' home.

"Other children were taken to and from school by their parents, but my daughter had to go to school on her own," Ren recalled. "I avoided taking her to school because I was afraid her schoolmates might mock her for having a mother like me." When an athletic event was held away from school, she struggled to decide if she should accompany her daughter to the venue. She decided to stay at home in the end, even though she was worried about her daughter's safety all the while.

Hu Rong gradually came to accept her mother's looks as she grew older, and she learned to be cautious when she was around her mother. She was careful not to broach or discuss any sensitive topics that might upset her mother.

Why wasn't it me?

People say that time heals everything, but time didn't heal the hatred and sense of inferiority in Ren's mind. The thought of taking her own life crossed her mind quite frequently in the years after the acid attack.

On May 12, 2008, a major earthquake hit Wenchuan County, Sichuan Province, China. When the earth started rocking on that fateful day, Ren, who lived on the second floor, could feel the strong vibrations. But even though she knew that she was right in the middle of a powerful earthquake, she didn't want to escape for her life. Instead, a thought rose in her mind: "It'll be all right if I'm killed. Hu Rong is in college now. She can take care of herself. She'll manage without me."

However, things didn't go as she had wished. The temblor damaged her home and rendered it unfit for habitation, but she herself emerged completely unscathed. When the quake had subsided, she went out to the street to look around. She saw the severe devastation and people injured or even killed. "Why didn't I die?" she

lamented. Statistics later showed that the earthquake killed 78 people in Hanwang, the town where Ren lived, and toppled 98 percent of the buildings there.

On May 13, the day after the temblor, the first team of Tzu Chi volunteers from Taiwan arrived in Sichuan with relief goods. From cooking food for victims, distributing emergency supplies, and conducting free clinics, that team and others that followed it provided care for survivors in a sort of relay effort. In August of the same year, after a large aid distribution, Tzu Chi volunteers visited a temporary housing community for survivors to find out whether the goods they had distributed met the needs of the recipients. Ren happened to be living in one of the temporary houses that the volunteers visited that day.

Ren had retired early from her job by that time, but she still worked as a cleaning lady in the temporary housing community to meet expenses and help with her daughter's college tuition. The volunteers who visited her looked her in the face despite her disfigurement, and they talked with her sincerely and discreetly. She shared her story with them, and they in turn shared Master Cheng Yen's teachings with her to soothe her wounded heart.

With each visit from the volunteers, Ren could feel her closed heart opening up bit by bit. They told her about Tzu Chi, about the law



Ren (left) does recycling work with fellow villagers. She took up recycling after she joined Tzu Chi in 2008. LI ZE-TIAN

of karma, and about something the Master taught: "To a beautiful heart, everything appears beautiful." They helped her understand that although life is full of suffering and we are often powerless to prevent bad things from happening to us, we can choose how we respond to whatever comes our way. As these messages sank into her mind, Ren was able to tell herself that since the tragedy had happened to her, she should learn to accept it, step out of her small world, and further reach out to help other suffering people.

After the accident, Ren almost never looked in mirrors, and she hadn't allowed a single photograph to be taken of her. But after she had

received love and care from the Tzu Chi volunteers, she decided it was about time she changed. In 2009, with the encouragement of Tzu Chi volunteers, she allowed herself to be photographed. It was the first time she had had her picture taken in 17 years.

"At that time, she had been exposed to Tzu Chi for a while, so her heart was more open," said Hu Rong. She is a witness to her mother's transformation.

"I can live so happily and confidently today all because of Tzu Chi," Ren remarked. "I've learned what is really important in life. Being involved in Tzu Chi has helped me to recognize that instead of losing sleep over what I've lost, I

In Hanwang, Ren (far left) is younger than most of the local volunteers, but she cares for them like a mom.

LIU WEN-LONG



Ren and Guo Xiuping visited Taiwan to receive their volunteer certification from Master Cheng Yen in 2012. They were the first people in Sichuan to receive such certification.

COURTESY OF REN SHIXIANG



should focus on and cherish what I still have." The volunteers have helped her understand that the secret to a good life is to come to terms with what has happened to you, to accept the bumps in your road with grace, and to embrace yourself and others with a big, accommodating heart.

Volunteering

Tzu Chi volunteers visited family after family in the temporary housing community to convey their care for the survivors. They also worked hard to promote recycling to improve the living environment in the community. Eventually, after some effort, Tzu Chi was able to set up a service center in Hanwang in May 2009. About two months later, a recycling station was opened in the town.

Two days after the recycling station was opened, volunteers carried out their first nighttime recycling activity. Wearing gloves and face masks, they went around the community collecting recyclables and hauling them back to the station.

Ren rarely missed any recycling activity. She and three former colleagues had moved into the same temporary housing community after the quake, and all of them had joined Tzu Chi. Besides doing recycling work, they visited the needy with other volunteers. Instead of shunning people like she used to, Ren now willingly went among peo-

ple and used her own example to encourage care recipients to get back on their feet.

She shared how she had felt on some of those home visits. "Sometimes I'd see young people who were bedridden due to illness and who were unable to move around on their own. I really felt for them, but at the same time they taught me to count my blessings."

In 2012, Ren and a former colleague, Guo Xiuping (郭秀萍), visited Taiwan to receive their volunteer certification from Master Cheng Yen. They were the first certified volunteers from Sichuan. Since Ren was among the few younger volunteers in her town, she learned to use a computer and a camera so that she could shoulder more volunteer duties. She took up documenting work, recording Tzu Chi events and capturing the images of local volunteers. She also led study group sessions in which they read books by Master Cheng Yen.

On April 20, 2013, an earthquake rocked Ya'an, Sichuan. Having accumulated a lot of volunteer experience by then, Ren immediately threw herself into the relief work. As a former quake victim herself, it was easier for her to empathize with survivors and offer them the consolation they needed. "After I received my certification, I felt a greater sense of mission. We must go wherever a disaster has struck and provide relief."

Love yourself and others

Because of her burns, Ren has a decreased ability to perspire. She is blind in one eye and the vision in the other eye is impaired. Still, she never allows these physical challenges to stand in the way of her volunteering.

In the summer of 2015, she helped out at a Tzu Chi cultural exchange camp for students from Sichuan and Taiwan. One morning, camp participants listened to a talk given by Master Cheng Yen via a videoconferencing link. The Master spoke about the victims of an explosion that had occurred at a recreational water park in Taiwan. As Ren listened and watched, she silently wiped away the tears that kept coming. As a burn victim herself, she knew the excruciating pain such patients must endure during the treatment and rehabilitation processes, and she was keenly aware of the impact that the injuries would have on the futures of the victims. She felt great empathy for them, and in her heart she wished them the best.

"The path ahead is difficult, but facing it bravely is the way to go," she said. "I hoped in my heart they would ride out each treatment with courage and recover as soon as possible."

When Ren sheds tears today, she sheds them not for herself but for the pain of others. However, she doesn't dwell on her sadness. She knows what is more important is to live mindfully in the moment and make it worthwhile by doing good. For example, as a documenting volunteer, she can capture images of beauty and goodness and allow them to live on or make an impact on others.

Ren feels happy as a Tzu Chi volunteer because she feels needed. The joy of giving pushes her to inspire more people to join, so they too can enjoy the great inner joy that comes from helping others. At the same time, she does her best to care for other volunteers. She has received a lot of love in Tzu Chi and she wants to pay it forward.

In Hanwang, volunteers have inspired people in 16 neighborhoods to take up recycling work. Eighty percent of the recycling volunteers are over 60 years old. Ren and her former colleague Guo conduct study groups and share Master Cheng Yen's teachings with them to help them feel more at home in Tzu Chi. During traditional festivals and Chinese New Year, Ren invites the volunteers to celebrate the festivals together. Should any of the volunteers fail to show up, she calls them to see if they are doing all right. All this effort is to help them feel warm and cared for in Tzu Chi.

Because of Tzu Chi, because of the recycling work, many older people in the town have found a happy way of spending their old age, just as Ren has discovered the value of her life.

A changed mom, a happier daughter

Ren's transformation has positively impacted her family too.

Her daughter recalled her childhood. "I was odd back then, probably because I had a strong inferiority complex [due to my mom's appearance]. To compensate, I tried to appear strong and tough to others, and I was quick to get into fights.



Before a winter aid distribution in Jintang, Chengdu, Sichuan, in 2014, Ren and other Tzu Chi volunteers visited the needy to find out about their living conditions and to extend care to them.

MIU QIN



Ren (front row, second from left) with other documenting volunteers at a Tzu Chi camp held in 2013 at Youxian Tzu Chi Experimental Middle and Elementary School in Mianyang, Sichuan

XU YI-YUN

Whenever I heard people gossiping about my mom, I blew up. I was very hot-tempered."

Now the positive change in her mom has softened her, and she has found it easier to talk to her mom. "She used to be more small-minded and tended to get caught up in negative thinking. When we had an argument, she would often burst into tears. But now she no longer does that. She's stronger now. And she is more given to displays of affection. She often sends me messages like 'I love you' and 'My dear daughter, you're awesome.'" Hu Rong broke into a happy smile talking about her mom's change.

Even her dad has become receptive to Tzu Chi's philosophy. He reads the foundation's publications and shares his thoughts about them with others.

Ren is a happy woman these days. She no longer bears grudges against those who hurt her—she has learned that to forgive is to be kind to yourself. Having let go of her hatred, she is at ease and at peace, and things seem to have all fallen into place in her life. "My family and I are getting along very well, and my husband and my daughter are doing great in their jobs. As for me, even though I'm busy every day, I feel very fulfilled and enriched. Being so busy, I don't have time to ruminate on unpleasant things, and I've become healthier as a result."

Ren's favorite quote by Master Cheng Yen says, "To a beautiful heart, everything appears beautiful." With a shift of mind, everything becomes good and beautiful. Your happiness lies in your own hands.

The Illustrated JING SI A PHORISMS

The Buddha says:

If your mind is seduced by evil or captured by desires, you should immediately put a stop to it. Do not allow the mind to do as it wishes. You should be the master of your mind.



A true loving mind is one that takes good care of itself.

Most people are careless. They neglect their minds and allow them to churn endlessly, producing greed, anger, delusion, arrogance and doubt.

Once these five illnesses of the mind start to develop, they begin to create the seeds of bad karma. Once these are planted, unimaginable results will inevitably follow.

This is all because we do not take good care of our minds.



With scientific progress, by examining the chromosomes of a fetus, we can predict the occurrence and even the time for certain traits, such as certain personality disorders, mental illnesses, and the predisposition for suicide.

This is what Buddhists refer to as the law of cause and effect. When a person dies, nothing except karmic causes follow the soul. This "karmic awareness" shows up in a person's genes.

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



Volunteers clean up at a school in Santa Ana, Ecuador. Downpours in early April caused severe floods in that country. Tzu Chi volunteers from seven countries joined local volunteers to conduct a cash-for-work program.

Ecuador

In early April, heavy rains caused serious flooding in three provinces of Ecuador. Tzu Chi volunteers from the United States and Argentina arrived there first to evaluate the damage. More volunteers from Paraguay, Canada, Brazil, Guatemala, and the Dominican Republic followed to form a 36-person delegation from seven countries. They joined 21 local volunteers and initiated a cash-for-work program on April 24 in places including Portoviejo and Santa Ana, Manabí Province.

Eight local volunteers from Canoa, also in Manabí Province, were themselves victims of a strong earthquake that had rocked Ecuador in April last year. At that time, they had received

help from Tzu Chi. This time around, they wanted to help, so they came forward to translate and care for flood victims.

Tzu Chi volunteers and the locals worked together to clear away the mud and debris on the streets. They also cleaned up local schools so that students could resume schooling. Elderly or physically challenged people were especially grateful to receive the cleanup help. Volunteers also visited victims' homes to comfort them.

Every participant of the program received 15 U.S. dollars per day for their work. In nine days, from April 24 to May 2, 57 volunteers led local people to work over 17,000 shifts. Local governments provided large machines and trucks for the project. The work relief program

cleaned up towns, prevented epidemics, and gave the participants a little money to help them regain their footing.

New Zealand

In April, Cyclones Debbie and Cook pounded New Zealand in quick succession. The town of Edgecumbe, North Island, was badly ravaged. The rains brought by Cyclone Debbie caused a river to burst through a concrete levee in Edgecumbe on April 6, forcing the evacuation of 1,600 people. Then on April 13, as people were still reeling, Cyclone Cook inflicted more damage on the same town. Many homes there were damaged or flooded, making people's lives very difficult. After visiting the area to assess the situation, Tzu Chi volunteers went there on April 21 to give out prepaid cards and soothe victims' rankled nerves.

In addition to the Tzu Chi volunteers, 500 other out-of-town volunteers went to Edgecumbe to help clean up in the aftermath of the cyclones. They donned gloves and other protective gear to clean up muddy streets and houses. Many victims also returned home to clean up.

Experts examined the damaged houses, declared 15 of them uninhabitable, and restricted the use of 250 others. Tzu Chi volunteers decided to distribute prepaid cards to 200 of the families on April 21.

On April 21, Tzu Chi volunteers in New Zealand distributed prepaid cards to flood victims in Edgecumbe, North Island.



The distribution was held at a local school. After a traditional Maori ceremony praying for a smooth recovery for everyone, Tzu Chi volunteer Tu Hao-zhong (涂皓中) explained how the distribution would proceed. Local government officials and residents wearing Tzu Chi volunteers' vests helped with the distribution.

This was the first time many victims had met after the flood. They asked after one another and cheered each other on. Tu told them how Tzu Chi had started with a small group of housewives each saving a little money every day to help the needy. The story inspired an elderly woman to donate 50 New Zealand dollars (US\$35) to Tzu Chi to be used to help less fortunate people. Her act, radiating out like ripples in water, inspired many other people to donate as well.

Tzu Chi volunteers bowed deeply and used both hands—a gesture of respect—to present prepaid cards to the flood victims. The cards were each worth 700 New Zealand dollars (US\$484). One elderly couple hugged a volunteer tightly to express their thanks. Another victim, Richard, had lost his house, where he had lived for 46 years, and he looked very downcast. A volunteer handed him his prepaid card and held his hands tightly. Another victim told volunteers, "My eyeglasses were washed away in the flood. Thanks to your gift money, now I can get a new pair."

Ani Brunet from Auckland Civil Defence was deeply touched after she witnessed how Tzu Chi volunteers conducted the distribution under the foundation's guiding principles of directness, priority, timeliness, respect, and gratitude. She said that she had heard touching stories about Tzu Chi, and that this time she had seen it for herself and had learned a lot.

At the end of the event, volunteer Zhang Wende (張文德), CEO of Tzu Chi New Zealand, conveyed to the recipients the best wishes of Tzu Chi volunteers around the world. He also expressed his wish that they would soon rise from the disaster and return to their normal lives.

USA

On April 2, Tzu Chi volunteers in Orange County, California, held a regular free clinic that is offered three times a year. Over the four years that volunteers have held these clinics, they have discovered an increase in the number of return patients and patients with chronic illnesses. This time they brought in a mobile pantry to give out fresh vegetables and fruit.



A scene at the free clinic held by the Tzu Chi Orange County service center on April 2

They also taught patients about healthy eating habits in the hope that they could become healthier and less dependent on medical care and medications.

Much of what would be needed for the event was shipped to the venue, the Boys and Girls Club of Santa Ana (B&G), the day before the event. On the morning of the free clinic, volunteers arrived at five to set up. The first patients, a couple, arrived even earlier than the volunteers. They were already there at four.

About a dozen students from the University of California at Fullerton volunteered that day. Dr. Chen Fu-min (陳福民) of the Tzu Chi International Medical Association went over the do's and don'ts with them before turning them loose to serve patients. Some B&G staffers who could speak Spanish also volunteered to help patients who spoke only Spanish fill out their forms, and they interpreted for them so that they could communicate better with their medical care providers.

Orange County Supervisor Andrew Do was on hand to see the event for himself, and he took a tour of the Tzu Chi Vision Mobile Clinic and Dental Mobile Clinic. He praised the 200 volunteers at the venue for giving their time to serve people in the community.

The Vision Mobile Clinic has a complete set of eye examination equipment, as well as equipment for making eyeglasses. Because making glasses takes a long time, the clinic accepted only 15 patients for the day. In the Chinese med-

icine clinic, many people tried acupuncture for the first time. They commended the treatment for effectively relieving their pain.

Tzu Chi volunteer Zhu Yi (朱益) had asked B&G staffers to call past patients and invite them to come to the free clinic for follow-ups. The calls helped the patient return rate to jump from 31 percent at the November 2016 clinic to 51 percent this time.

The free clinic, staffed by 35 medical professionals and 170 helpers, treated 118 people, 60 of whom were return patients. The mobile pantry gave out 113 packets of vegetables and fruit. Marisela Barcenas, a nutritionist, taught people how to properly cook or use the vegetables and fruit for healthy diets.

China

On April 22, World Earth Day, 80 people, including Tzu Chi volunteers, cleaned up part of Mount Yandun in Fuding, Fujian Province.

Mount Yandun, with lush, dense trees and plants, is a popular destination for the public. Unfortunately, many visitors leave garbage behind. Volunteer Zhao Meiqiu (趙美球) stated that they organized this event to mark World Earth Day and to raise people's awareness of the importance of keeping the environment clean. Carrying large bags and tongs, participants picked up garbage along hiking trails. They were very thorough, trying not to miss any trash.

When some of the volunteers reached the mountaintop, they saw an elderly man exercising there. The man saw what the volunteers were doing and praised them for their good deeds. "What a nice thing you're doing! You make the environment more beautiful," he said. Volunteer Zheng Erting (鄭爾婷) took the chance to share with him the importance of protecting the environment. She also suggested that he consider taking some garbage down the mountain each time he visits it. The man nodded his agreement.

A garbage can at the top of the mountain was overflowing badly. The receptacle had not been emptied for a long time. In fact, the large amount of garbage had caused the can to crack, and the trash stunk in a horrendous way. The volunteers braved the foul odor, emptied the bin, and sorted recyclables from real garbage before they took everything down the mountain.

Volunteers also promoted vegetarianism to hikers on the mountaintop. They wanted people to know that vegetarianism was a good way to



On April 22, Tzu Chi volunteers and people from the general public picked up garbage on a mountain in Fuding, Fujian Province, to mark World Earth Day.

protect the environment and reduce one's carbon footprint. They had brought along a signboard for people who wanted to be vegetarian to sign their names. Wen Keyi (溫科移), with his daughter in tow, remarked that eating vegetarian was good for one's health and helped nurture compassion, so he often took his daughter to vegetarian restaurants.

Many other parents also brought their children along. Zhang Liangyou (張良游) said that this event could help his son, Dingkai (鼎鑑), to be more aware of environmental preservation. They would take care not to litter in the future and to lead a more eco-friendly life to protect the environment.

Wu Jikun (吳繼坤), a fifth grader at Tzu Chi Elementary School in Fuding, took part in the event with his father, Zhongyou (忠友). The boy said, "Our teachers teach us to protect the Earth. If we don't protect our only home, mankind might go extinct." He added that he never littered and that he saved water for reuse; for example, he watered plants with the water he had rinsed his face with.

Towards the end of the event, participants brought down enough garbage to fill a truck. They were happy and smiling because they knew that the mountain was now a little cleaner and it could breathe a little easier.

Great Britain

On April 17, Tzu Chi volunteers from Manchester and other places in the United Kingdom held a soup kitchen at the Cornerstone

Day Centre in Manchester. The center provides services to vulnerable and disadvantaged adults, including street people and refugees. Tzu Chi volunteers started visiting the place in October 2016.

Nineteen volunteers served hot meals to 120 people, of whom 24 also received haircuts and 20 received health examinations. Volunteer Zhang Yao-hua (張堯華), who ordinarily organized cooking on their visits, was on a trip to Taiwan to visit her family, so volunteer Yang Xiao-mei (楊曉媚), who ran a takeout restaurant, agreed to prepare some of the food this time. Yang's husband, Xie Yong-sheng (謝永生), was touched by her determination, but he was also worried that cooking for so many people would be too physically demanding for her. On the day of the event, he got up very early and fixed the fried rice and noodles that would be needed for the day.

Wang Su-zhen (王素真), of Worcestershire, was concerned about Yang driving to Manchester alone and for the first time, so she drove down to Oxford to pick her up. Together they drove to Manchester, which lies to the north of Worcestershire. After the event, Wang drove Yang home before going back to her own home. She drove nine hours and 450 miles that day.

The volunteers also provided free health checkups and free haircuts. Huang Huan-yang (黃煥洋), a member of the Tzu Chi Collegiate Association, asked the people who wanted to have their hair cut to register with him first. Then they were invited to have lunch or a health checkup while they were waiting for their haircut.

When lunch was ready to be served, people lined up to receive their food. Volunteers served them with respect, sincere care, and smiles. The food the volunteers prepared had always been popular at the center.

Some of the underprivileged people at the center already knew about the bamboo coin banks in Tzu Chi's history. One of them said to the volunteers, "Your master used this kind of coin bank to encourage people to save money and help the needy," and he dropped some coins into a bank on a table.

After the event, the volunteers gathered together to reflect on the day. Although they had run into various kinds of difficulties in the process of carrying out this event, they appreciated what they had learned from the experience because they knew it would help them do a better job next time.

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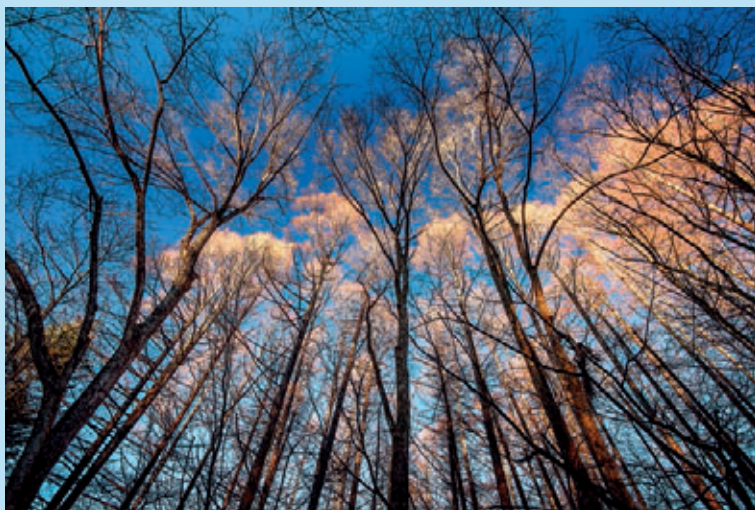
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*If we have the will to do something we need not fear,
for with conviction time can be found, and strength will
surely come.*

—Master Cheng Yen

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