

Tzu Chi

Winter 2015

慈濟

Buddhism
in Action

Medical Care for Refugees in Thailand

After the Water Park Disaster	4
Haiti: Five Years Later	30
Education for Poor Kids in Malaysia	60
Recycling Heals	74
A Second Chance	83



A Phone Call

Text and photo by Liu King-pong

Vase Rock is a popular spot for tourists and photographers on the island of Little Liuqiu, Taiwan's only coral island, which lies near the southern port city of Kaohsiung.



Last year, I was a diplomat based in Taiwan's consulate general in the sunny state of Florida, U.S.A. My six-year term of overseas service was about to come to an end, and I was scheduled to return to Taipei in a few months. I figured I was going to be assigned to work at the foreign ministry headquarters in Taipei. I can still recall my wife, Jeanny, asking me if I would ever have a chance to work in Kaohsiung, the largest city in southern Taiwan and her hometown, after we returned to Taiwan. It grieved me to tell her that I didn't think I'd ever have the chance.

I started working at the headquarters in Taipei in February 2015, but then they transferred me to Kaohsiung! Believe it or not, this dramatic turnaround in my life's journey began with a simple phone call.

One morning in April my colleague W.X. Qiu came to me and said, "Ambassador Lee asked me to say 'hi' to you." She told me she had bumped into the ambassador, an old friend of mine, in an elevator at the ministry.

Since I had not seen him in many years, I decided to give him a call to return the friendly greeting. As we talked warmly on the phone, he told me that he had been recently assigned as the director general of the foreign ministry's Southern Taiwan Office in Kaohsiung. Then out of the blue, he asked if I would like to join his team. "You can help me maintain good relationships with foreign diplomats and NGOs, such as Tzu Chi, in Kaohsiung," he stressed.

In all honesty, I was a bit taken aback by his kind, but totally unanticipated, invitation. After all, it would be a daunting job to relocate to another city with which I was unfamiliar. Lee generously gave me three days to mull over his offer. After consulting with my wife and my elder brother, I finally made up my mind. I phoned him again and told him that I had decided to accept his offer.

I've been working in Kaohsiung since July 13, helping Lee to handle all kinds of work. For example, in August 2015 I accompanied him to the offshore island of Little Liuqiu to visit the

leaders of the Fishermen Association and exchange views on how to enhance fishermen's welfare and safety. Taiwan's only coral island, Little Liuqiu is a popular place for snorkeling and diving, and it is famous for its majestic scenery, such as Vase Rock.

The longer I live here, the more I like it. There are so many things in common between Miami and Kaohsiung. Among other things, both have a huge harbor, a laid-back way of living, and a climate that produces delicious tropical fruits such as mangos. They also share many gorgeous sunny days throughout the year. I can even ride my bike to work almost every day, like I did in Miami! This is a true blessing for me!

Suddenly, the essence of Mahayana Buddhism—the interdependent arising of conditions and the void of fixed nature—popped into my mind. This tenet, frequently referred to by Master Yin Shun (印順導師), means that nothing in the universe has its own fixed nature; that is, nothing is self-created, unique, or capable of existing permanently. Since nothing has a fixed nature in its own right, everything arises from conditions and is created and terminated according to previous causes or chance meetings of certain circumstances. The moment a single change occurs in a person's life, the rest of his life will be transformed accordingly. Therefore, life essentially consists of one changing episode after another. It is a condition with no fixed nature, and is thus void.

What I have experienced over the last few months proves the truth of this tenet. A simple phone call made all of these significant changes in my life possible. In accordance with that Mahayana teaching, the moment a single change occurred, the rest of my life was transformed. Master Cheng Yen often says that life is impermanent, which is generally taken to mean that life is short and can end at any time. However, her statement also contains positive meaning. If you are not fond of your current job or life, just wait! You never know what amazing changes life may hold for you tomorrow! ❀

Tzu Chi Quarterly

Vol. 22 No. 4 Winter 2015



4



30



50

- 1 A PHONE CALL
A single small event can transform your life.
- 4 YOU'RE SO BRAVE!
After an explosion during a party at the Formosa Fun Coast water park near Taipei, Tzu Chi volunteers helped care for victims and their families.
- 6 YOU CAN'T GO BACK TO THE PAST, BUT YOU CAN CHANGE THE FUTURE
For burn victims of the water park disaster, the road to recovery will be long and painful.
- 12 LEARNING TO WALK AND ROCK AGAIN
Huang Zi-xian is moving courageously forward toward his own recovery.

- 20 BEAUTY IS IN THE MIND'S EYE
A young girl burned in an accident affirms that she herself, not others, will decide how she looks at herself.
- 26 THE MESSENGER
A Tzu Chi volunteer keeps up communications between friends who were sent to different hospitals after the amusement park catastrophe.
- 30 HAITI: FIVE YEARS LATER
Five years after a devastating earthquake, Haiti still struggles to rebuild. Tzu Chi volunteers try to help by providing food to the underserved such as people at a hospital and an orphanage.

- 42 A NEW SCHOOL, A NEW BEGINNING
Tzu Chi has rebuilt a school in one of the biggest slums in Haiti.
- 50 MEDICAL CARE FOR REFUGEES IN THAILAND
Refugees from many nations live a shadowy, tenuous existence in Thailand. Through free medical clinics, Tzu Chi volunteers hope to provide a sense of security and comfort.
- 60 A FERRY TO THE OTHER SHORE
Tzu Chi volunteers help poor children in remote villages in Malaysia to get an education.
- 66 AGONY UP CLOSE
A volunteer experiences the meaningfulness of her work with Syrian refugees in Turkey.



60



74

- 68 STAY TRUE TO THE BODHI-SATTVA PATH
Master Cheng Yen reminds us that all the suffering in the world begins in our own minds.
- 74 RECYCLING HEALS
Zhan Chun-yu discovered that doing recycling was great therapy for her bipolar disorder.
- 80 A HOLE IN THE ROOF
A small group of loving volunteers make an old house habitable again for a widow and her handicapped son.
- 82 HER MOMENT
Tzu Chi staff photographer Hsiao Yiu-hwa ponders how, in a world with so many photos, some photos might mean a lot to some people.



66



83

- 83 A SECOND CHANCE
Having received so much love and accommodation from others, a former drug addict and ex-con works to help others.
- 89 THIS IS NOT THE END
People who donate their bodies for education and research utilize their bodies to the fullest and thus make their lives more meaningful.
- 91 THE ILLUSTRATED JING SI APHORISMS
People turn on lights to see, but true light comes from the heart.
- 92 TZU CHI EVENTS AROUND THE WORLD
Tzu Chi briefs from all over.



Medical Care for Refugees in Thailand

After the Water Park Disaster 4
Haiti: Five Years Later 30
Education for Poor Kids in Malaysia 60
Recycling Heals 74
A Second Chance 83

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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You're So Brave!

After the Water Park Disaster

In a heartbeat, an explosion put many victims on the brink of death. On their blistered paths to recovery, every step they take requires courage.

A burn patient and a friend walk down a hallway in Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital in late August, about two months after the explosion.

PHOTO BY HSIAO YIU-HWA

You Can't Go Back to the Past, But You Can Change the Future

By Li Wei-huang

Translated by Tang Yau-yang

Photos by Hsiao Yiu-hwa



YANG SHUN-BIN

On the evening of June 27, 2015, a large “Color Play Asia” party was held at the Formosa Fun Coast water park in Bali, New Taipei City. Colored corn starch powder was sprayed into the air to add to the excitement. Without any warning, the powder exploded. Nearly 500 people were injured, most of them young. Fourteen victims perished from this tragic accident. As of November 3, more than four months later, 43 remained hospitalized. That number included 10 in intensive care, 9 of whom were in critical condition.

In mid-July, I went with Tzu Chi volunteers to visit victims hospitalized in Shuang Ho Hospital, Zhonghe, New Taipei City. The volunteers had visited these victims numerous times before.

Lin Chun-jin (林春金) brought some fried mushrooms that she had just prepared at her home nearby. Fang Su-zhu (方素珠) brought creamy corn soup, also homemade. We had a small get-together with patients’ families over the delicious and heartwarming food.

Nibbling on the food, a father burst into tears. Then he said to the volunteers, as if confiding in trusted friends, “I’ve never shed tears like this in my whole life.” He had thought that his daughter would have stabilized enough to be transferred out of the ICU that day, but his hope was dashed. Her respiratory tract had suffered burns from the hot gases she had inhaled, so the doctors had to keep her in the ICU. The father had endured such emotional rollercoaster rides almost every day since his daughter had been hospitalized.

His heart was aching not just for his daughter’s condition, but for that of other patients as well. One patient had to have his small intestines excised, while another lost the tips of some fingers to gangrene. One had improved and left the ICU only to be sent back a short while later. Yet another had his intubation withdrawn, only to have it put back again later.

“Whenever I hear bad news about any other patient, I worry about my daughter,” the father said. He had as a result been constantly high-

strung and on edge. He had no idea how to face the future.

Even when his daughter got better and went home with him, that would signal yet another stage of her care, and with it more worry and pressure.

A woman said that she actually began to worry when the doctor told her that her husband would be discharged soon because that meant that she would soon be without the help of hospital personnel. “Once we go home, what am I going to do with the bandages on his legs? How am I going to bathe and shampoo him?” she asked. Thoughts like those kept her up at nights.

What it’s like to be burned

On July 18, over four thousand Tzu Chi volunteers gathered in 25 branch offices to take a lesson on burns via video conferencing. Du Xiu-xiu (杜秀秀), a manager at the Sunshine Social Welfare Foundation, talked to the volunteers about serving burn patients and the psychological journey of such patients. According to their website, the Sunshine Foundation provides “professional services for burn survivors and people with facial disfigurement in the hope of helping them live their lives with confidence.”

“Burn victims fear not just fire, but also water. If water gets into a burn wound, the pain is beyond what ordinary people can possibly imagine.

“When burn victims stand up, blood rushes to their lower extremities, making them feel like tens of thousands of ants are nibbling on their legs. Therefore they’ll keep fidgeting or running in place in small steps. Passersby may find such behavior weird.

“Burn patients are less energetic, so they may need to sit in priority seats on public transportation, raising eyebrows. As a result, they often get hurt psychologically after their physical injuries.”

Scar contractures, pressure garments, and physical rehabilitation splints were among the unfamiliar terms I noted down during Du’s talk. While copying down those terms, I pondered the daunting challenges facing a burn patient. If

A Tzu Chi volunteer helps a family member put on an isolation gown at Far Eastern Memorial Hospital in New Taipei City.

Medical workers at Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital race against the clock to save lives. The hospital admitted 13 burn victims from the disaster at the Formosa Fun Coast water park.

I hadn't come to the talk, I wouldn't have been able to imagine the difficulties that lie ahead of burn victims on their long and arduous road back into society.

Come to think of it, burn survivors have always lived among us, but we seem to rarely see them. Is it because we mentally block them out, or because they avoid public appearances? Do our prejudices or sincere but inappropriate expressions of care stand in the way of their recovery and reintegration?

Mental reconstruction

Families of 13 victims, including five victims themselves, visited the Guandu Tzu Chi Complex on September 9. They met with Master Cheng Yen to share with her what they had been through since the explosion more than two months earlier.

Some of the victims from those 13 families had already been discharged from their hospitals; others had been moved out of the ICUs into regular wards. Some were still in the ICUs, fighting for their lives.

One of the families had two children burned in the explosion. Their daughter had died and her younger brother was still in the ICU. He kept asking about how his older sister was doing, but his mother could not tell him the truth. Their father was overly sad. He earns a livelihood by making and selling tea seed oil. To assuage his sadness, volunteers ordered tea seed oil from him to encourage him to return to his work so that he could have something else on which to focus.

A young man had to have his legs amputated below the knees to save his life. His right hand was also amputated later to fend off infection. His father had accompanied him at the hospital every day. He said in tears, "We're just ordinary parents. We never thought something like this would happen to us, and we really don't know how to handle it."

He had never expected his son to be rich, he said. He had just hoped that he would be safe and well. Now that this tragedy had struck, he didn't know how his son, only 22, should face his future. "My mind is in a turmoil, but I know I have to pull myself together and face the chal-



lenge ahead," he said. "In fact, my son has been cheering me up. He's told me not to pull a long face. I pray that he may keep his only hand. Even just a few fingers would be good."

His wife said to the victims and family members there, "Cherish what you've got and seriously follow the rehabilitation regimen. If it hurts when you do the rehab, just think of my son." Though her son was in a dire situation, he had kept up his desire to live. When his intubation tube was removed a month after the acci-

dent and he took his first sip of water, he exclaimed, "This is divine!" She admired his optimism and his strong thirst to live.

A victim who had been discharged from hospital said, "On the day of the explosion, I experienced fun, terror, unconsciousness, and shock. But today, I feel loved." At one point he worried that he would not make it, but he urged himself to hang in there because he knew how much his mother was afraid of losing him. "I didn't have the right to be weak."

Every step in his treatment—wound cleaning, skin grafting, hydrotherapy, dressing changing, and physical rehabilitation—caused him excruciating pain, but he never groaned or cried. He did not want to inflict any more pain on those who cared about him. Not only that, he always said bravely to his therapists, "No problem. Please proceed."

He told himself to get well no matter what. "I want to be a good son, and I want to live for my friends who died in the explosion."

An interdisciplinary team at Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital discusses and makes treatment plans for each burn patient.

After hearing the stories of the 13 families, the Master said, “Our children are injured, but all of us feel the pain. I hope that our volunteers can continue to accompany them. I also hope that no mental scars will be left in the minds of these young people.”

Amazing outcomes

According to the National Health Insurance Administration in the Ministry of Health and Welfare, the 499 explosion victims, on average, suffered burns over 44 percent of their total body surface area (TBSA). According to the medical literature, a patient whose burns cover more than 40 percent of his or her TBSA has a mortality rate of 50 percent. However, by late September, 70 percent of the explosion victims had been discharged from hospital. The medical care providers at the hospitals have done a good job, and they deserve credit. Dr. Lin Chin-lon (林俊龍), CEO of the Tzu Chi medical mission, indicated that many medical professionals in other countries described those results as miraculous. He praised the caregivers for their professionalism and dedication. “They may have set a world record in burn care,” he said.

The medical professionals have done a good job, but the courage of many patients also merits recognition.

My heart was heavy when I first interviewed some burn patients. I worried about their future. But as I spent more time with them, their hard work in rehab touched me deeply. Their tenacity radiated a life force that was deeply moving and full of hope.

As Du Xiu-xiu of the Sunshine Foundation pointed out, returning home marks the beginning of new travails and challenges for the burn patients. They have to come to terms with the new conditions of their bodies; they have to accept the fact that they may not have as much control over their bodies as before; and they need to learn to deal with people’s furtive glances.

As they learn to live in their new reality, our society at large should also learn not to slap labels on them. Even with all the support they can get, it is hard enough for them to live their new lives. Trying to empathize with them and accept them as they are is one of the best gifts we can give these burn patients.



You're So Brave



Learning to Walk and Rock Again

By Huang Xiu-hua

Translated by Tang Yau-yang

Photos by Yan Lin-zhao

The explosion burned 76 percent of his total body surface area and left him hospitalized for 45 days. Although his mobility has been severely curtailed, he does not concede defeat. He is moving courageously forward on his arduous road to recovery.

Huang Zi-xian (黃子羨), 26, staggered into the rehabilitation department at Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital, southern Taiwan. His youth made him stand out among a group of mostly older patients, but he did not mind when people threw extra glances at him. He has been visiting the department three times a week for rehabilitation therapy since the middle of August 2015.

In the occupational therapy room, he strapped a one-kilogram (2.2-lb) weight onto each wrist, raised his right arm skyward, then moved it left over his head. He also picked up a small object, raised his arm high, and placed the object on top of a large mirror frame. He repeat-

ed the prescribed exercises over and over again so that his arm muscles would stretch out and he could avoid contractures and tightness.

In the physical therapy room, Zi-xian stepped on a balance board, grabbed hold of a rail, and squatted down. His legs were very sore and the tightness in his knees made the posture painful, but the pain and soreness were bearable. Then he rose and walked a straight line. A therapist reminded him to take longer strides. Next, he walked backwards, his steps a bit wobbly. All this training was to strengthen the muscles around his knees, ankles, and heels.

His legs had suffered the worst burns of his entire body in the explosion. He had to start

Under the direction of a physical therapist, Zi-xian works hard at Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital.

early on his rehab, because if he waited for his wounds to fully heal, it would be doubly hard to stretch them out.

His session ended after two hours. Tired and sweaty, he walked towards the entrance of the hospital to wait for his father to pick him up. On the way, he had to stop to rest and rub his knees before he continued.

Needing to rest during such a short walk was unimaginable for an exercise nut like Zi-xian. He used to run and jump all he wanted without feeling tired. Now the burns have

changed things. He cannot do many of the things that he could easily do before; his mobility is so restricted it seems as if he were bound by invisible shackles.

He knows that this physical impairment will only be temporary if he works hard to overcome it. This down time has also given him a chance to see his home and family in a new light.

He used to come home more like a visitor than a son. Often his visits were short. This brush with the explosion and fires has offered him the opportunity to stay home and spend more time with his family. He has noticed that his father is getting old. He knows that, given his age, it is high time that he grew up and matured.

The explosion

Zi-xian grew up in Beigang, Yunlin, central Taiwan. He is cheerful and easy-going. In college, he formed a pop music club and was the lead singer in a band. He preferred heavy metal. After graduating from college, he worked in northern Taiwan at various jobs, such as a real estate agent and security guard.

On the fateful day of the explosion, his friends invited him along to a "Color Play Asia" party at the Formosa Fun Coast recreational water park in Bali, New Taipei City. They had purchased four tickets and had an extra one for him. He went with them. Little did he know that heaven was about to throw a big challenge his way.

Zi-xian was standing near the front of the throng of young people at the party. In line with the party theme, colored corn starch powder was sprayed into the air. Suddenly, fires broke out in front of the music stage. The flames quickly expanded into a sea of fire. Zi-xian took a deep breath and ran for his life. He ran very fast, feeling no pain, only heat. It was only when he had gotten to a safe place that he noticed that the skin on the bottom of his feet had almost peeled off. His legs were covered in blood.

Groans and screams surrounded him. His companions were nowhere to be seen. He saw a big barrel for canned beverages. Exhausted, he crawled toward the barrel to soak in the water. Not long after, he was lifted out of it and deposited into a lazy river where he soaked with many other injured people.

"I was very sleepy, but people just wouldn't let me sleep," Zi-xian recalled. They were afraid that he would go into shock, so they kept him awake. A female Tzu Chi volunteer comforted him by saying, "Don't be afraid." He waited almost three hours before finally being picked up by an ambulance.

It was after eleven o'clock that night when he arrived at Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital. He did not have his cell phone with him, and he could not remember his parents' numbers. He only remembered the number at his childhood home. When social worker Lin Jia-de (林家德) called that number, Zi-xian's 93-year-old grandmother answered the phone. So incredible was Lin's account that his grandma thought the call was a prank and ignored it.

Zi-xian was rolled out of the ICU to a regular ward at Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital in late July. His father, left, welcomed him out of the ICU with joy.

Lin resorted to using Facebook to broadcast Zi-xian's situation, hoping that it would lead to contact with his family. Eventually, a friend of Zi-xian's was able to pass on the information to Zi-xian's father, Mr. Huang, who was at a Buddhist retreat when word came to him of his son's accident. He arrived at the hospital the following morning.

Mr. Huang and a friend of Zi-xian's went to the ICU to see his son. The friend couldn't help but break into tears when he saw Zi-xian with burns over 76 percent of his body.

Zi-xian was indeed seriously injured—his doctor had declared him in critical condition. But Zi-xian himself seemed to be in better shape than the doctors believed. He saw his friend cry for him, but he thought to himself, "I don't have chest pains or heart palpitations. I'm clear-headed and breathing normally. I should be all right."

The treatment

Zi-xian had covered his nose and mouth when the explosion hit, so he was able to lessen the extent and severity of inhalation injuries. He was

as a result spared the discomfort of intubation.

Even so, his extensive burns made changing his dressings an excruciating ordeal. He readily admitted that the mere sight of approaching nurses made him sweat blood because, he said, "It simply hurt too badly." Just as bad were the wound-cleaning procedures, which left him cold and weak. When he was pushed back to the ICU after such a procedure, even three layers of covers and a heat lamp could barely keep him warm.

He often suffered extreme pain that called for analgesics. When the pain relented, he



COURTESY OF TAIPEI TZU CHI HOSPITAL



would look at what the nursing staff was doing. He noticed that they were busy non-stop. Patients received very good care. When they wanted water or to have a bowel movement, all they needed to do was press a button and a helper would show up. "I was almost like a disabled person, relying on others for every last thing I needed."

Zi-xian stayed in the ICU for nearly a month. He often had nothing to do, staring at the ceiling, feeling the long days inching by ever so slowly. Visiting hours—twice a day—were his favorite times during those long days.

To stave off the risk of infection, visitors—his family and friends—were not actually allowed into his room. Instead, they saw and talked to him via video conferencing. Zi-xian's father would read him the warm wishes that he had copied down from Zi-xian's Facebook page. Those brought him great comfort.

Zi-xian said that throughout it all he had great confidence in his recovery and he always tried to think positively. "It never occurred to me that I might die from this. I always believed that I'd recover." When his psychologist asked him if he had ever had a nightmare about the incident or experienced a panic attack, he always said no. It was no surprise that his caregivers gave him the nickname "Mr. Calm."

Zi-xian's positive attitude was reflected in his physical well-being, and he recovered remarkably well after two skin-graft surgeries. When he was about to be transferred from the ICU into a regular ward, he would ask the nurses who cared for him where they lived and when they got off work. It was a way to show his care for them. Though he did not say it, he really appreciated what they had done for him.

The recovery

Zi-xian described his transfer out of the ICU: "It was like stepping out of darkness into light." The move brought his old, energetic self back to life. Everybody was amazed at his transformation. Many people brought food to eat with him, and a wall in his room was soon covered with photographs and encouraging messages and best wishes from his friends.

He tried to get out of bed and stand, but he found that he was very wobbly, undoubtedly

Bending over to put on a shoe, like many other mundane things, became difficult for Zi-xian to do after he was injured.

due to the long time that he had been lying in bed. In a few days, most of the needles and tubes that had been attached to him had been removed, and he began to learn to stand and walk with the assistance of a walker and the guidance of a rehabilitation therapist. With time and practice, his steps grew firmer and surer.

A father's love

When Zi-xian was in the ICU, his father chanted sutras every day to pray for blessings, and he dedicated the merits he accumulated to his son and all the other victims. When Zi-xian was moved from the ICU to a regular ward, he depended a lot on his father's care. His recovery would have been much more difficult had Mr. Huang not taken such good care of him.

For example, his father helped feed him each day when he was first transferred out of the ICU. Zi-xian had to rely on a feeding tube, a very time-consuming process. Each bottle of protein-rich drink would take Mr. Huang a long time to administer. After each feeding, he would wash the feeding tube, sterilize it with boiling water, and then put it in a refrigerator. All this would be repeated just an hour later. It would usually be one o'clock in the morning by the time he finished six bottles.

A good night's sleep, though, would not follow. If Zi-xian needed to go to the bathroom, Mr. Huang would have to walk him there or get the bedpan for him. Since Zi-xian's diet was primarily liquid, his stool was often watery. If his father changed his diaper and discovered a leak, he would immediately change the bedsheets.

The grown son needed to be cared for like an infant again. Mr. Huang did so without complaining, despite his fatigue. The demand of caring for a severely injured patient only made him appreciate more the hard work that the staff at the ICU put in for his son, day after day.

"Caring for me has really exhausted Dad," Zi-xian said. His father, a devoted Buddhist, had always given him considerable latitude to do as he wanted; his only request of him was to be a good and kind person. Though largely hands off in his approach to child rearing, he was always available to help when his son needed him—and he still is. Zi-xian, on the other hand, rarely expressed his love for his father, but he always kept him posted on what he was up to. The two have maintained a relationship that is inwardly connected if less outwardly intimate.



Zi-xian is sweaty and tired after a two-hour rehab session, but he takes it all in stride. He is thankful for his father's good care, which helps him walk with surer steps on the road to recovery.

Zi-xian has made a lot of friends over the years, and many of them visited him at the hospital. That made his father proud.

Mr. Huang has remained relatively calm facing the disaster and his son's injuries. He stresses that emotions will not help matters, that anger and distress cannot undo the harm. "Feeling bad won't change what's happened. Accepting it bravely is the way to go," he said. "Your suffering will help you better empathize with the pain of other people. I hope that Zi-xian understands this deeper meaning of life from his brush with this disaster."

"He's always taught me by example rather than by words," Zi-xian said of his father, who had retired early from his teaching post at a college in order to care for his own sick father. Later, in order to care for his mother, he rarely traveled far from home. This time, he stayed in Taipei for more than 40 days to minister to Zi-xian, a record for him to be away from home for so long.

"I'm the one that dragged him into this," Zi-xian said, "but few people could have cared for me as well as he did. He did a good job learning from the nurses. Among other things, he became quite an expert at changing bedsheets."

His father's meticulous care for him has continued since he was discharged from the hospital. At home now in Beigang, his dad prepares meals and snacks for him, changes his dressings, and drives him to Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital every other day for rehab.

To better care for his son, Mr. Huang learned from members of the Sunshine Social Welfare Foundation how to handle the scaly skin on a wound: First cover the wound with gauze, then douse the gauze with saline solution. Let it soak for three to five minutes. Then remove the gauze, and gently run your hand over the skin. Flakes will fall off easily, leaving the skin soft and shiny. After that, Mr. Huang applies baby oil or lotion to reduce itching.

One can see in such good care a father's deep love for his son. The terrible event has no doubt been agony for Zi-xian and his family, but it has nonetheless offered a unique opportunity for him to bond with his father. In the last six years, Zi-xian, away from home for school and work, rarely spent time with his father. This incident has

brought them closer together and made Zi-xian further realize the importance of family.

Adjusting

Seeing how his dad ministers to him, Zi-xian has nothing but gratitude in his heart. At the same time, he makes a point of urging friends who visit him to love life, stay out of harm's way, and avoid dragging their families into such a mess.

He says those words from the bottom of his heart. He stresses that if his injury could serve as a reminder for people to watch their safety, then his suffering would be worth it. The burns are sure to leave behind scars, but those do not bother him much. "What are a few scars to a man?" he asked. "The most important thing is to maintain bodily functions."

People sometimes give him curious looks in the halls of Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital or even ask him if he was burned in that water park explosion. Instead of shying away, he readily acknowledges his injuries. The strangers often cheer him on.

One's attitude decides everything. Zi-xian does not want to live in the shadow of the accident. He wants to be out in the sunshine and out among people. He works hard at rehab, and he hopes to return to society in one or two years.

His wounds now cover less than ten percent of his body, but it still hurts a lot when he extends his legs, and he has to first bend over so he can stand steadily when he gets out of bed. He claims that he has a very high threshold for pain and his pains nowadays are nothing compared with what he went through before. "If changing a dressing is a nine on a pain scale of one to ten, rehab is just one."

His legs suffered more serious burns—third degree—than any other part of his body. The burns on his chest, back, and upper limbs were rated second degree. He is glad that his fingers are not injured, which allows him to do many things, including scratching his own back.

Though his legs are still largely bandaged, he faces his future with courage. He is not afraid of what lies ahead, and he intends to overcome one obstacle after another. He is convinced that though the scars on the outside will remain forever, the scars inside will gradually heal completely.

His father advises him, "I hope that in the future you will see in other people's suffering your responsibility to help them." What wise words! "I'll remember that," Zi-xian says. "I'll help others, and fill my life with meaning and purpose."

Beauty Is in the Mind's Eye

By Li Wei-huang

Translated by Tang Yau-yang

Photos by Hsiao Yiu-hwa

When she was a child, a fire left her heavily scarred. "I've lived with the scars for nine years," she said with a wry smile. "I've grown used to them, but they make people uneasy."

What is beautiful and what is not? How much do the views of others about you affect your own? For her, others' views hold little sway. She sums up her strong attitude with a simple affirmation: "I myself decide how I want to look at myself."

This was a hot summer day. Yan Man-ru (顏曼如), 20, was wearing a T-shirt that freely exposed the scars on her arms and hands. Those scars were a result of a fire caused by an electrical fault on the night of the Mid-Autumn Festival in 2006. The raging fire killed her brother and left her severely injured. She was 11 years old and a sixth grader at the time.

Deep burns covered more than 60 percent of her body. She was in the ICU for three months, and her legs were amputated below the knees to save her life.

So young and yet so badly disfigured, could she handle the many obstacles that would face her as she grew up and traveled through life?

Apparently she could. In 8th grade, she won a presidential award for being an excellent student and for her optimism and courage in the face of adversity. She won a scholarship twice from the Sunshine Social Welfare Foundation, and she entered Taipei First Girls High School, reputedly

the best in Taiwan for girls. Now in college, she is upbeat and sunny. She is no different from other college kids: She does things that they do, and wears what they wear—except shorts.

She has recovered very well over the years, taking sure steps—scars and prostheses notwithstanding—on her path through life.

They don't bother me

The scars on her face are hardly noticeable if you don't look too closely. They have healed remarkably well. In fact, you may even say that she looks prettier than many other girls, with their faces intact and unharmed.

Still, the scars on her arms and hands are obvious, and many people feel awkward when they lock eyes with her. They are concerned that a curious glance from them might hurt her feelings.

"I've lived with the scars for nine years," she said with a wry smile. "I've grown used to them, but they make people uneasy."



You're So Brave

She might not have noticed one thing though: By accepting herself as she is, she is actually making it easier for strangers, including me, to look beyond her scars.

Man-ru figures that she has been through at least three wound-cleaning procedures, five skin-graft surgeries, an amputation, two scar reduction surgeries, and three bronchial laser surgeries. But she will admit, she isn't even sure herself exactly how many operations she has been through. However, she does know for cer-

Man-ru, far right, and some of her relatives in traditional costumes of the Taiwanese aboriginal Ami tribe. She was visiting her mother's hometown in Changbin, Taidong, eastern Taiwan, soon after she had been admitted into college.



COURTESY OF YAN MAN-RU

tain that her back, abdomen, thighs, and the crown of her head have all contributed healthy skin to cover her wounds, including those on her left cheek. A large area of her left cheek was badly burned. Her doctor shaved the scars there to make them smoother, harvested skin from her neck, and grafted it on the cheek.

Man-ru readily admits that she dislikes summer a great deal, but it isn't because her short-sleeved clothes expose her scars to public view. The real reason is perspiration. Her cheeks, due to the burn injuries, cannot sweat. Therefore, she sweats elsewhere, like from her forehead. "That often wets my bangs and collapses my hair. I really hate it when that happens," Man-ru said, running her fingers through her bangs.

Man-ru accepted an educational award from President Ma Ying-jeou in 2009 when she was in eighth grade for her positive attitude in facing her life's challenges and her excellent academic performance.



COURTESY OF YAN MAN-RU

The burns have messed up more than her hair; they have affected other areas of her life as well. The loss of her legs, for example, understandably limits her mobility. Prostheses can easily bruise her flesh, further curtailing her desire to move about. She used to sing pretty well, but injuries from inhaling smoke and hot air took such a toll on her lungs that she can no longer sing like before. She even has to have surgery because of that every two or three years. She used to swim frequently, but now because of her prosthetic legs, she no longer goes into a swimming pool.

One day during a summer break she went with her classmates to a stream. They all waded in and played, but Man-ru could only watch them having a good time as she sat on a boulder on the bank. Her prostheses do not lend themselves well to immersion in water.

"What does it feel like to have your feet in the water?" Man-ru asked a classmate. "It feels just like putting your hands in it," a thoughtful classmate replied in a way to which she could relate.

Actually, Man-ru has it all planned out: When she is mentally ready, she is going to enter a swimming pool again. She has thought it all through in detail: She'll take off her prostheses, get to the poolside, slip into the water, and enjoy the fun of the long desired experience. She has run through these steps in her mind many times, and she is serious about making it a reality one day soon.

A label named "beauty"

Burns leave indelible marks on their victims. Scars on the face, neck, and hands are the most difficult to hide. Exposed scars invariably attract unwanted attention. Indeed, Man-ru has received countless curious glances over the years—seemingly discreet but hardly undetect-

able glances—and she will see countless more in her life ahead.

This year *People* magazine named the American actress Sandra Bullock the "2015 World's Most Beautiful Woman." Bullock, 50, is the oldest person ever to scoop the title. But she openly called the whole thing ridiculous. The Oscar-winning star asserted that she thinks beauty comes from within. She said, "The people I find most beautiful are the ones who aren't trying." She observed that there was more to beauty than youth and physical appearance. She said that she accepted the *People* honor because "I said if I can talk about the amazing women who I find beautiful, which are these women who rise above and take care of business and do wonderful things, and take care of each other, then I'm more than honored to be on the cover of this."

Man-ru shares Bullock's view on beauty. Like the actress, she does not like society to dictate to her what is beautiful and what is not. "Beauty should manifest itself in more than one way, shouldn't it?" she asked.

Man-ru saw the title of an Internet article not long ago that read, "Even with bulky legs and small breasts, you can still dress to kill." She took issue with that. The title may seem positive at first glance, but it actually degrades people with bulky legs and small breasts. "Who set the standards for beautiful legs and breasts?" Man-ru asked. "Who are they or we to judge?"

She understands that most people may not give a lot of thought when they pass judgment on what is attractive or ugly—more often than not, they simply accept what the media tells them and unconsciously pass on those same views. But degrading remarks, if repeated often enough, might shape an entirely misguided and damaging stereotype. Take that article title again as an example; unsuspecting readers may consequently begin to believe that fat legs and small chests are not beautiful. Another example is the idea that being slim is a requirement for being beautiful. Man-ru refuses to be enslaved by such views. She believes that it is quite all right for women to slim down for the sake of health, but not for the perceived beauty of being slim.

Because of her experience, she tends to be more sensitive to the popular, superficial view of what counts as beauty. She is aware of the impact

She shows both her scars and her confidence, and that is beauty.

of this superficiality on her personally. She knows that, like it or not, her appearance may shape another person's first impression of her. This may have dire consequences in a job interview, which Man-ru will have to face one day. Stereotypes may lead prospective hiring managers to sacrifice functions and skills for looks.

It is indeed true that the job market can be unfair when it comes to dealing with people with unusual looks. For example, someone with impeccable carriage and manners, skills, and work ethic may qualify just as well as the next person for a job as a flight attendant or a model, but scars on his or her face—whether from fire, surgery, or whatever—would all but guarantee that he or she will not be considered further for the position.

"Face equality" is an issue the Sunshine Social Welfare Foundation has long been advocating. The foundation hopes by advocating this issue to change public attitudes towards persons with unusual appearances, and to promote fair

treatment and equal opportunities for everyone, regardless of how they look.

Disfigurement can result from diverse causes, such as burns, tumors, or birthmarks. Whatever the cause, disfigurement more often than not subjects the person to prejudice, which hurts even when it is entirely unintended. The hurt may last a lifetime if the owner does not learn to live with or even accept the prejudice.

The recent explosion at the water park has shone light on the issue of face equality once more, but it is still too early to tell how much discussion will be generated, how long public attention will last, or whether any material changes will ensue to benefit the disfigured.

A positive attitude

A disfigured person can face special treatment at every turn. One day, while waiting for the elevator, a boy stared at Man-ru, turned, and said to his mother, "What happened to her? She looks scary." His mother quickly covered his mouth and said, "Remember I told you not to play with fire? Be a good boy and do as I say, okay?" At least Man-ru might have served a useful purpose in that instant.

The fire on that fateful night in 2006 was a watershed in Man-ru's life. When telling people about herself, she invariably contrasts the two worlds that she has known—the one before the accident, and the one after.

At 11 years of age, when she was first hospitalized after the accident, she could not appreciate the full impact of her injuries—she did not even think about how the loss of her legs would affect her. She did not become more concerned until she was about to be discharged from the hospital. Only then did she realize that she would need help for her every need, be it a drink of water or to use the bathroom. It began to dawn on her that many challenges awaited her.

Her family was very protective of her the first few years after her injury. They would not let her go to the park near their home, and even though they lived near a bus stop, she never took a bus. Her father always drove her to and from school or let her take a taxi. Because of that, she never knew where the buses went until she started high school.

But that was in the past. Now she is quite at ease with taking the bus or the mass rapid transit system. She is independent, and she has been quite active at school, even being an officer of a school club.

Looking back, it was not an easy path, but luckily support and help accompanied her along the way.

The 2006 fire erupted late at night. Tzu Chi volunteers showed up at the hospital early the following morning to offer care to Man-ru and her family. They took hot food and herbal tea to her parents every day. When Man-ru was transferred to another hospital, volunteers who lived closer took over the care. Forty volunteers helped the family clean up after the fire.

From the burned home, they removed charred wood pieces, burned furniture, soaked mattresses, twisted window frames, shattered glass, cracked tiles, and other debris—enough stuff to fill two large trucks. It must have been a nightmare for Man-ru to be in the middle of the flames that destroyed all those things.

Her classmates in junior high school helped her a lot too. They fetched her lunch and took it to her desk, and they moved and pushed her wheelchair. Their care for and attention to her made her a unique celebrity on campus. Many people came to know her as a result. Along the way she made good friends of her own who have accompanied her ever since.

The Man-ru of today is optimistic and looks at the bright side of things despite her disability and disfigurement. Her sound mindset might have been nurtured by the many kind people that have assisted her along her path.

As Man-ru's physical injuries healed with time, her mind evolved and matured.

When her neighbors saw her after she first returned home from the hospital, many comforted her by saying: "Those burns were all right. You still look pretty."

At first, the young Man-ru thought that, though well-meaning, the neighbors did not really mean what they said, and she felt they were phony. But she has changed her view now. "I've begun to think that maybe they really meant it. Even if they didn't, I can choose to believe their words."

She has matured enough to know that she does not need other people to tell her whether she is pretty or not. She herself gets to decide how she wants to think of herself.

Such an attitude in fact may benefit not just her, but anyone. Each person is unique and totally free to define their own beauty. After all, it is your life to live. Way to go, Man-ru!



The Messenger

By Li Wei-huang

Translated by Tang Yau-yang

Photos by Hsiao Yiu-hwa

They went together to the party, but were taken away separately, to different hospitals. Once admitted, they could not easily communicate with each other. A woman came forward and bridged the gap.



COURTESY OF LU MEI-YING

Da-fei (大飛), 33, was one of the victims of the explosion at the Color Play Asia event. Fortunately for him, he was wearing a surgical mask and a kerchief on his head at the time of the fire. He emerged from the disaster with only 23 percent of his body burned—relatively mild compared with many other victims.

After the accident, he and dozens of other victims were rushed to National Taiwan University Hospital in Taipei. Tzu Chi volunteers visited the hospital regularly to offer care to the burn victims. The volunteers were divided into nine teams, each team accompanying and providing support to about five victims and their families.

The volunteers brought with them an element that is sometimes missing in a hospital: a family-like attention to the needs of the patients and their families. They chatted with them about their wounds, their needs, their worries. They brought them food and daily necessities to make their stays more comfortable. These volunteers had more than enthusiasm and abundant love to aid them in their work—they also had rich experience in visiting and caring for the needy. They even took lessons on burns after the explosion so that they could better empathize and communicate with the patients and their families.

“Do the other hospitals [that took in victims of the disaster] have volunteers like you?” Da-fei asked volunteer Lu Mei-ying (呂梅英). Yes, they did, she replied. But why did he ask?

Delivering love

Lu found out that Da-fei needed to send a message to a friend, A-li (阿禮), who had been admitted after the accident to Linkou Chang Gung Memorial Hospital, in Taoyuan, northern Taiwan. Da-fei had gone to the party with A-li and three others. Sadly, one member of the small group of friends, a female, had perished. A-li was the one who had invited Da-fei to the party, and he felt deeply guilty after the tragedy. Da-fei wanted A-li to stop blaming himself for what had happened, but he did not know what to do.

After hearing Da-fei’s story, Lu decided to help. She found A-li’s mother through the help of Tzu Chi social workers and volunteers in Taoyuan. The next day, Lu went with A-li’s mother to visit him at Chang Gung Hospital.

Lu Mei-ying (second from right) and other Tzu Chi volunteers visit Da-fei at National Taiwan University Hospital.

He had burns on 25 percent of his body. Whenever he closed his eyes, he would see the scenes at the explosion again. His mind could not settle down, and he refused to face the outside world.

With the consent of his family, Lu went into the ICU to talk with A-li. “The wounds on your legs will get better with time,” Lu said to him, holding his hands, “but make sure that the wounds in your mind get better, too.” She told him that he should not blame himself for what had happened to his friends, in particular the passing of his female friend. She said that some of the badly injured explosion victims had gone through so many surgeries to harvest skin for grafting elsewhere on their bodies that they had almost run out of good skin to give themselves. The tough road ahead of them could only be imagined. “That friend of yours who has passed on, on the other hand, is free of pain now, and she’s no longer suffering.” She encouraged A-li to let go and help his friend rest in peace.

She continued: “Tzu Chi volunteers all over the world are praying for you all; you must wish yourself the best too.” She advised him not to be tied down by regrets. “You’re the only person who can relieve you of your own agony.”

Watery-eyed, A-li held Lu’s hand and thanked her. Lu’s words seemed to have relieved him somehow. That very night, A-li’s mother called Lu to thank her for visiting and cheering her son on.

A few days later, A-li gathered up his courage and opened his Facebook page for the first time after his injury. He burst into tears when he saw the multitude of messages left by his relatives and friends to cheer him on. He cried his heart out. This was the fourth time he cried in the ICU, and he hoped that it would be his last time as well. He told himself he had to be strong.

Another visit

A-li asked Lu to send his love and care to Da-fei too. Lu did, but her work didn’t end there—at A-li’s request, she visited another friend for him. That friend, Xiao-zeng (小曾), was the younger brother of the friend who had passed away. Again with the help of social workers and fellow volunteers, Lu got in touch with Xiao-zeng’s father, who was in his 70s, and got permission to visit Xiao-zeng at Taipei Veterans General Hospital.

Xiao-zeng was seriously injured, with 90 percent of his body burned. He remained unstable

even after skin grafting. A-li was very worried about him.

Xiao-zeng was so thoroughly burned that he was wrapped head to toe in bandages. Lu's heart ached for the kid when she saw him. "A-li is concerned about you," Lu said gently to him. The young man, attached to tubes, trembled in response though he could not move. Lu could see tears in his eyes. "Don't worry. We're all pulling for you. You must have confidence in yourself. A-li said that when they're out of the hospital, they'll come together to see you."

Lu was willing to visit different hospitals to deliver messages because she wanted the burn victims to know that they were not alone and that everyone was behind them to help them through this.

"Tzu Chi volunteers go all over the world to deliver disaster relief; it's really nothing for me to go to a few hospitals." Lu emphasized that

Lu Mei-ying (left) chats with Da-fei at his home.



she would always gladly give her time if the victims and their families needed her.

The messenger

Lu lives near National Taiwan University Hospital. Over the last dozen years, she has often visited the hospital with other volunteers in the area to provide care and help for underprivileged patients there. She is dedicated to her volunteer work not because she has too much time on her hands. In fact, she owns two companies which keep her plenty busy.

No-nonsense and capable, Lu used to give off an air of aloofness. People who did not know her might have thought her standoffish. But that has changed since she joined Tzu Chi. She has visited many needy people in their homes, and she has seen what it is like to be poor or sick. Her experience has made her more soft-hearted, and she has become gentler in demeanor and countenance as a result. Though as capable as ever, she is now a lot more approachable and personable.



Da-fei, his family, and visiting Tzu Chi volunteers pose for a group picture. Volunteers have continued to care for victims of the disaster even after they are discharged from hospital.

occasionally burns herself while cooking in the kitchen. Those burns are typically small and shallow, but even so they can be quite painful. "Given the large areas that were burned on many of these young people, you can only imagine the excruciating pain they must have felt," she said.

Some victims take their burns in stride, some in despair; some react well to words of encouragement, others dwell on their misery. Lu said that whatever their outlook or reaction, she attentively listens to them all and feels their pain all the same.

Her conversations are peppered with witty, humorous remarks that easily loosen people up and make them open up to her. World-wise and experienced, she could talk easily with Da-fei, A-li, Xiao-zeng, and others.

Lu has two daughters and a son. They are about the age of the fire victims. She cannot imagine how some of the injured youngsters are going to handle their challenges ahead, but she knows that she can love them as she does her own children.

She recalled that she and some other volunteers had a small gathering with an explosion victim on the day he was discharged from the hospital. For the first time, the young man, who was about to start college, shared with the volunteers what he had experienced at the disaster scene.

He thought it was really fun when colored powder was sprayed into the air, and when the fire broke out, he first thought it was part of the entertainment. But then he realized what had really happened and he started running for his life. When he looked back, he saw many people running, struggling, trying to get out of the fire. It all happened so suddenly, without any warning. This disaster really brought home to him how unpredictable and impermanent life is.

Lu feels for these kids, for what they have had to go through. Even without the emotional trauma, the physical suffering is bad enough. She

A new start

Da-fei was discharged from the hospital after a month and a half. Volunteers living closer to him have since taken over caring for him and his family.

On August 20, Lu and a few other volunteers visited Da-fei at his home in Zhongli, where he lives with his parents. His father owns a market stall and sells men's clothing, and his mother works at home as a seamstress. Though Lu and the others had known Da-fei for some time, it was the first time they had seen him on his feet. They were surprised to find how tall he was. At more than six feet tall, he now looked distinctly different from their image of him lying in bed during his days as a patient.

Da-fei was wearing pressure garments on his legs and right arm. He told the volunteers that he did not sleep well at night because of joint pains, but otherwise he felt fine and energetic. He even filled out an application on the spot to become a Tzu Chi volunteer, hoping to put his expertise in advertisement design and photography to good use for Tzu Chi.

He also announced to the visitors that he had officially changed his name because his old name included the word for fire. With his new name, he declared that he was starting his life anew.



HAITI

Five Years Later

In January 2010, a massive earthquake struck Haiti and killed hundreds of thousands of people. Though that was five years ago, the collapsed presidential palace has yet to be rebuilt. General Hospital, the best hospital in the national capital, Port-au-Prince, still seems to lack everything it needs. The public health system is in shambles. Even garbage collection is inadequate. People often have no choice but to burn their garbage on the streets, clouding the air and seemingly masking the nation's quandaries.

By Qiu Ru-lian
Translated by Tang Yau-yang
Photos by Hsiao Yiu-hwa

The Caribbean Sea below gleamed like a giant blue pearl as my airplane descended. However, the bright, relaxing sight soon yielded to rows upon rows of houses with rusting metal roofs. That brought me back to reality and reminded me that this was no vacation paradise, but a nation in need.

Haiti occupies the western third of Hispaniola, the second largest island in the Caribbean and the 22nd largest in the world. The Dominican Republic to the east occupies the rest of the island.

Though this church—the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption, located in Port-au-Prince—was downed by the January 2010 earthquake, devotees still come to sing and pray.



Haiti is one of the poorest countries in the world. No wonder people take whatever work they can get—sometimes too enthusiastically, like the man who almost snatches your luggage cart out of your hands at the airport so he can push it for you for a fee. After all, that is his job—a decent job at that.

Colonial days

Hispaniola was originally inhabited by the native Taíno people. Christopher Columbus, the famous European explorer, set foot upon the island during his first voyage to the New World in 1492. His arrival marked the beginning of Spanish colonial rule of Hispaniola. Tragically, within just a couple of decades, the indigenous people were all but wiped out due to enslavement and diseases such as smallpox.

Spain ceded the western third of Hispaniola to France in 1697. The new rulers brought in large numbers of African slaves to grow cotton, sugar cane, and coffee. Haiti became a significant producer of the latter two crops, supplying 40 percent of all the sugar and 60 percent of all the coffee consumed in Europe. Such large-scale, focused cultivation of cash crops for export came at the expense of local agriculture. To this day, Haiti relies on imports to meet its own domestic needs for food.

Haiti's slaves revolted in the late 18th century following the French Revolution in Europe. Bloody conflicts ensued in the colony. After a prolonged struggle, the Haitians declared independence on January 1, 1804. Jean-Jacques Dessalines, the first emperor of Haiti, ordered a massacre of the white Haitian minority, resulting in between 3,000 and 5,000 deaths in Haiti in 1804.

The weapons and the color of blood on Haiti's flag are vivid reminders of the country's violent and treacherous path to independence. Unfortunately, the nation did not enjoy much peace and progress after its independence. Political instability has plagued Haiti for most of its history.

A street-side scene in Port-au-Prince. Haiti has an unemployment rate of over 40 percent. Due to lack of a formal education, many adults have no marketable skills. They mostly make their living by selling goods on the street or by ferrying passengers with motor scooters. Some simply idle around, waiting for opportunities to land in their laps.



A weak health care system

Haiti's already weak economy was dealt a severe blow when a strong earthquake struck on January 12, 2010. The disaster robbed many people, already poor, of what little they had. Despite an outpouring of aid from the international community, reconstruction has not fared well. The collapsed presidential palace has not been rebuilt. Likewise, 85 percent of General Hospital, which is much closer to people's lives than the presidential palace, is still covered in rubble.

To accommodate large numbers of patients, makeshift wards were set up across the street from the hospital in a building that belongs to the Ministry of Health. The wards feature beds of various sizes, all flimsy and seemingly ready to collapse. There are no pillows or covers on the beds. Despite the poor facilities, patients throng outside the hospital, waiting to be seen.

At the nursing station are five young women in blue and white plaid shirts, suspender skirts, and nurse's caps. They seem to be putting patient charts in order, yet at the same time they seem to be at loose ends. Emilie, 18, told me that they are interns. They are not allowed to provide medical care to patients as nurses do. They help feed patients, assist nurses to change dressings for patients, or take care of other miscellaneous tasks. Most of the time, however, they wait around at the nursing station.

Haitians can see doctors for next to nothing, but they must pay large sums for medications. Therefore, it is not uncommon for patients to stay in a hospital but not receive any drugs for their illnesses. Many just lie in their beds, waiting for miracles to descend on them.

Their medications are not the only thing they can't afford—sometimes they can't even afford a meal.

Free meals

To help these patients out, Tzu Chi volunteers have been providing free meals at General Hospital since 2013. On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, volunteers make a combination of rice, red beans, vegetables, and a unique local sauce, and bring it to the hospital. When they arrive, families of patients immediately line up to receive their meals. The food, though simple, is a very good meal for many of them.

Jaff, 12, broke his leg in an automobile accident. He has eaten food served by Tzu Chi volunteers numerous times since he checked into the hospital three months ago. His mother has



Tzu Chi volunteers in Haiti provide three weekly meals at General Hospital.

just about used up all her savings on his treatment. He has been in the hospital for so long because she cannot afford the complete surgical procedure to repair his leg. He has had to receive piecemeal operations whenever she can afford it.

Two children, all skin and bones, share a bed in the pediatric ward. Their diapers hang loosely on them. They stare at the ceiling, their eyes blank. Their small bodies are conspicuously devoid of the boundless energy typical of children.

Tzu Chi volunteer Emeline Desert picks up one-year-old Gloria, who seems to be in better shape than the other children. The little girl has been hospitalized for some time, so she recognizes the volunteers. Emeline puts some rice on a plate to feed her, but Gloria cannot wait. She



A woman with a load balanced on her head walks by a building with colorfully painted advertisements.

grabs a handful of rice and stuffs it into her mouth...only to spit it right back out with a howl. It is too hot.

"She is very hungry," Emeline says. Gloria's family is too poor to afford meals. The three meals provided by Tzu Chi each week are just about all she and her family get to sustain themselves.

Just as everybody is trying to soothe Gloria, another commotion arises. Two men, grasping the four corners of a dirty bedsheet, call out for people to make way. The sheet sags under the weight of a boy who looks to be about 12 or 13 years old. His head hangs limply from the sheet—he has just passed away.

The men take the boy to a truck and, as if throwing out garbage, swing the boy onto the bed of the truck. The boy's family follow close behind, crying inconsolably.

A malnourished child in a ward at General Hospital



Orphans

If you look on the bright side, at least this boy had a family. Many children in Haiti do not. They are orphans. According to the United Nations, Haiti had 380,000 orphans before the earthquake; now that number has reached more than a million. Many orphanages are occupied beyond capacity.

The Institut du Bien-être Social et de Recherches is an orphanage in Port-au-Prince. Despite its small size, it is home to 82 children ranging from ten months to 18 years in age. The orphanage operates on a shoestring budget, so older children sometimes work outside to help with its finances. Unskilled, the children can only work menial jobs like washing cars on the street. Some children are too young to work, so they help out by looking after even younger children.

The lack of resources at the home manifests itself in more ways than one. To save money on water, they skimp on showers. Simple steamed rice counts as a meal. On this day, Tzu Chi volunteers took 70 10-kilogram (22-pound) bags of rice to the home, hoping that it would help relieve their financial strain a little.

Bath time for orphans at the Institut du Bien-être Social et de Recherches. Though living conditions at an orphanage may not be ideal, at least the children there get fed.

While these orphans struggle to live another day, some children their age reside in lavish homes on a hillside not far away. They swim in their own pools, without a care in the world.

The wealth in Haiti has always been in the hands of a few who live in luxury. Their lives have not been impacted by the earthquake in the least.

Our vehicle drove through a slum and ascended a winding road. Our driver, Paul, knew exactly where to go. Just as we approached what appeared to be a dead end, he turned into another alley, and we continued. Eventually, we arrived at a hotel in Pétionville, one of the most affluent areas in the nation and a tourist attraction. We saw mothers and children frolicking in a swimming pool and people eating delicious food by the pool.

We looked at a hill opposite the hotel, and our eyes met a shantytown composed of cinder block buildings painted in bright colors. It is said that the idea of painting the facades of the buildings in a rainbow of colors came from a deceased Haitian artist. The irony is that however colorfully painted these homes are, the well-being of the residents is just as remote and elusive as a rainbow far up in the sky.

Life goes on even though the nation's reconstruction is progressing at a glacial pace. Many people do whatever they can to make a living.

On this day, though it was only 7 o'clock in the morning, vendors of all sorts had their wares out at a market in La Saline. Some people, demonstrating a great sense of balance, carried goods in wicker baskets balanced on their heads as they wove through the streets.

Not far away, smoke was rising from burning piles of rubbish. "Garbage collection has been suspended due to the coming election," said a vendor with an air of resignation, "so we have to dispose of garbage ourselves." It is more like a matter of routine for them now.

Amidst the smoke, people moved about here and there. Smoke or not, they had work to do and livelihoods to be earned.



A New School, A New Beginning

Even ordinary Haitians do not usually go to this slum, but a new school just opened there, the only school in the area. It is the fourth that Tzu Chi built in Haiti. Though this marks the conclusion of Tzu Chi's rebuilding efforts in that nation in the aftermath of the earthquake of 2010, it is the beginning of an era in which local children will have a better environment for their education.



On July 29, 2015, a ceremony was held in Solino, Port-au-Prince, in which the Tzu Chi Foundation officially turned a newly rebuilt kindergarten facility, the Centre Educatif Carmen René Durocher, over to school administrators. "This is the most beautiful school we've ever seen!" schoolchildren exclaimed.

Dr. George Tseng (曾永福), 80, the architect who designed the school, flew in from Miami just for the occasion. He has designed many important engineering projects in the United States and Haiti. In the last several years, he unconditionally helped Tzu Chi build schools in Haiti. Often he would fly from Miami to Port-

au-Prince in the morning, inspect the construction, then fly back to Miami for work in the afternoon. "I cared deeply about the projects, so I did many things myself," he said.

Tseng, who is originally from Taiwan, continued with a choke in his voice: "In Taiwan going to school is taken for granted, but in Haiti it's quite hard to come by." He said that he really hoped that students here will receive a good education, find a good job when they grow up, and pay back to their communities.

Solino is one of the worst neighborhoods in the capital when it comes to public safety. Thieves often snatch things from people and

then disappear into the web of twisting narrow alleys. Not much can be done about that. As a result, few people venture into this neighborhood unless they live here. The Durocher school is the only one in this area.

The only school

The school actually has deep local roots. A factory used to operate in the district years ago. To make it easier for mothers to work at the factory, its owner built a nursery for them. He later transferred the ownership of the nursery and the land it occupied to the National Association of Guides in Haiti (ANGH). The association raised

funds to keep the nursery going, a task that was not easy.

A few years later, when the babies at the nursery had grown older, parents proposed to turn it into a kindergarten. The ANGH took their suggestion and named the kindergarten after the founder of the association, Carmen René Durocher. The first and only school in this area was thus established.

Opening the school was one thing, but keeping it afloat was quite another.

"Families here are very poor. Even a tuition of 250 gourdes [about five U.S. dollars] is beyond the reach of most families," commented



Kindergarteners line up and march to their new school from a nearby church, where they attended classes during the construction of the new school.

Marie-Ange Colinet, spokesperson for the ANGH. "Sometimes, parents who can't afford the tuition just drop their children at the school gate and then hurry away." She pointed out that although the ANGH has never refused a child, they have been greatly challenged by tight finances along the way.

As if the financial struggles were not enough, the kindergarten was reduced to rubble in the great earthquake that rocked Haiti on January 12, 2010. The ANGH could not afford to rebuild

it, so they simply used tarpaulins and wooden boards to cobble up temporary learning spaces for the students so classes could continue.

One day Father Columbano Arellano of Saint Alexandre parish asked Marie-Ange Colinet to assist the Tzu Chi Foundation in an aid distribution. She agreed.

"I saw Tzu Chi volunteers [at the distribution] respectfully hand over relief goods and sincerely wish the victims well," she said. She was moved. "It goes without saying that people

should help each other, but, because of their long-lasting poverty, Haitians tend to think only of themselves."

Identifying with and drawn to the group, Colinet began actively participating in Tzu Chi. Her affinity with the foundation sowed the seeds for rebuilding the Durocher school.

During a visit to the school, Tzu Chi volunteers saw what was left of it after the earthquake. They witnessed that despite the difficult conditions, the teachers were holding down the

fort and teaching the children at the only school in the community. Tzu Chi decided to help rebuild the school. Construction began on October 26, 2012.

Despite all the good intentions behind the project, things did not go smoothly at first. The original contractor lacked experience and could not handle the work, so construction ground to a halt. The Overseas Engineering and Construction Company (OECC) was then brought on board to take over the project.

David Chang (張士鎡), then the deputy general manager of OECC, had first encountered Tzu Chi in 2008. In August and September that year, four hurricanes in a row hit Haiti. Foundation volunteers held aid distributions for the needy, and Chang and other OECC employees helped package the goods for distribution. He was impressed by the work ethic and dedication of the Tzu Chi volunteers, who never complained in spite of the tiring work.

After the 2010 earthquake, Tzu Chi reconnected with Chang. OECC eventually helped the foundation rebuild four schools in Haiti: Christ the King Secretarial School and the Collège Marie-Anne primary and secondary schools, which the foundation turned over to the Congregation of the Sisters of Saint Anne on May 17, 2013. Last to be built was the Durocher school.

With its red roofs and yellow walls, the two-story building stands out in the midst of low gray houses. Most people cannot help taking a peek inside when they walk by. This bright new school has instilled hope and energy in the local community.

Meaningful construction

Chang, originally from Taiwan, worked in Haiti for 13 years. "I identified with Tzu Chi's aid approach, and I wanted to work with the foundation to make Haiti a better place," he said.

Not even getting mugged 12 times in 13 years could diminish his love for this land. "Anything can happen in Haiti," Chang observed. He was once kidnapped right in Solino, the district where the fourth school built by Tzu Chi was located. He lived there for so long that he grew used to even things like riots and coups d'état.



Kindergarteners dance during the school inauguration ceremony.

"After I'd had a gun pointed at my head a few times, I kind of got used to it," he said with a smile. Though he made the remark with a touch of lightheartedness, he was all business when it came to building schools in Haiti. He knew how important education was to this land. "Haiti is really very poor, to the point that people are driven to rob, swindle, and deceive," Chang said. "If we could provide them with an

environment where they could more easily get an education, they would at least have a chance to learn right from wrong." That's why he readily accepted the request from Tzu Chi to build schools there.

Public infrastructure was sorely inadequate. Water and power outages were routine. OECC had to rely on diesel power generators to supply electricity, and it bought well water and

trucked it to the company. "When a truck went out to get water, we could never be sure if it would come back safely," Chang remarked. Rioters might block the truck, interrogate the driver, and let the truck pass only when they felt so inclined.

Despite the hardships, OECC and its employees built many quality buildings in Haiti that earned the respect of local people.

Most of the building materials used in Haiti, even nuts and bolts, were imported. When cargo containers arrived in Port-au-Prince, however, all sorts of problems might arise. For example, the local freight company trucks hired to deliver the containers might be late, or the police might pull a truck over, or the cargos might simply vanish.

Chang recalled one unpleasant situation during the construction of the Durocher school. "We took the trouble to import child-sized toilets from Taiwan," he remembered. "After the goods cleared customs, we shipped them to the construction site. I felt uneasy about leaving them there, so I told our workers to be extra watchful. Still, we lost several of them."

Chang felt there was no such thing as sitting in the office, reading reports, and giving orders if one was in the construction business in Haiti. "I jumped in to fight fires with workers every day," he said, referring to the frequent bumps and hiccups that the company encountered.

In 2013, after a particularly busy spell, he suddenly began to get tired very easily and his weight dropped dramatically. He returned to Taiwan for a checkup and was diagnosed with liver cancer. By that time he had handled 56 construction projects in Haiti. He had wanted to leave Haiti after reaching a hundred projects, but now he could not wait. He went back to Taiwan for treatment.

He was thus able to spend more time with his family. For the first time ever, he was able to attend his daughter's graduation—from college—in June 2015.

Chang reflected that before going to Haiti, he had never thought that mere construction could ever bring hope to people, but when he left the nation, he felt otherwise. He felt that his life had been worthwhile. "I was able to earn a living for my family and do something meaningful for others. I'm quite proud of it."

He recalled that his family, like many others in Taiwan, had received aid from the United States when he was little. He knew well what a mere bag of wheat flour or powdered milk meant to people who didn't have much. In Haiti, he saw something similar. Once, his company built a bridge. At the inauguration ceremony, people ran from either end of the bridge toward each other and embraced. They were residents



Architect George Tseng (far left), volunteer James Chen (center), and David Chang turn over the new school to the ANGH. The school currently has more than 200 students.

of the villages the bridge connected. The sight touched Chang very much.

"In Haiti, you can see how much basic infrastructure impacts people's lives. That's what has kept me there for 13 years," Chang continued.

Though no longer working in Haiti, he still keeps an eye on the projects there. This time, he also attended the opening ceremony of the Durocher school.

"Haiti is making progress," Chang asserted. "Even though it's not as fast as we'd like to see, you do see things changing." He firmly believes that education is the key to transforming people's minds. A school in a destitute area like Solino is a step in that direction. Young minds, like seeds, may sprout and flourish there, leading them to a better future when they can bring about the change that the country needs.

Hope

While the school was being rebuilt, classes were held in a small community church in an alley across the street. In that small space, children shared long benches and teachers shared podiums and blackboards. Because the church was used for worship on weekends, the teachers and students would pack up everything and remove it from the premises before they left on Fridays. On Mondays, they would bring it all back.

That was indeed a makeshift school, but it was now a thing of the past. On the day the new school opened, the kindergarten students, looking very sharp in their uniforms, waved goodbye to the

church and marched to their new school, which had nine classrooms on two floors. The students would each have their own desk and chair, and the teachers would all have their own podiums. The building was engineered to withstand winds up to hurricane force and earthquakes up to magnitude 8.5, a huge improvement over the old

school. The school would also serve as a disaster shelter for the community in the future. Principal Melissia Daverne has worked at the kindergarten for 27 years. "I never dreamed of having such a nice school," she said cheerfully. "Many children around here can't afford school, so I hope to somehow accommodate them in the future." The school had also started taking in elementary school students, and vocational training classes were being planned.

Marie-Ange Colinet, the ANGH spokesperson, planned to introduce the Tzu Chi culture of love and respect into the school. She also intended to encourage the parents of the schoolchildren to save their spare change in coin banks and, when they became full, donate the money to support the school.

"This community was infamous for being unsafe," she said. "But I believe the school will bring about changes. To ensure the safety of the children here, community residents will need to protect this place."

Tzu Chi volunteer James Chen (陳健), who was also heavily involved in the construction of the school, said, "When children in Haiti have an opportunity to receive an education, they cherish it." He opined that a hundred years from now almost no one will remember the aid supplies distributed by Tzu Chi after the quake, but a school is different. If the roots of education reach deep enough, change will come to the land.

Amid joyous music and cheers from residents in the neighborhood, representatives of the ANGH and Tzu Chi unveiled the new building. A new era for the Durocher school and the local community has just dawned. ❀

With a floor space of 10,140 square feet, the new school provides better facilities for local children.



มูลนิธิพุทธจืไ้แห่งประเทศไทย
臺灣佛教慈濟基泰國分會
Buddhist Tzu Chi Foun in Thailand

Medical Care for Refugees in Thailand

By Qiu Ru-lian
Translated by Tang Yau-yang
Photos by Hsiao Yiu-hwa

A waiting patient at a Tzu Chi free clinic event reads information written in his own language. Languages from many countries are spoken in the free clinics that Tzu Chi offers every month to refugees in Bangkok, Thailand. The refugees there receive warm receptions from volunteers, have their ailments treated, and relax in conversation with fellow countrymen in their mother tongue.



A group of us from Tzu Chi climbed the narrow stairs up a four-story building in a Bangkok suburb. Suddenly, from behind us, someone called out, “Are you with Tzu Chi?” We looked back and saw Suhail Joseph waving to us from an open door. Going past his home without knowing it was an understandable mistake—the building contained many small studio apartments, each with a door of the same color.

Suhail led us into his apartment. Saima Khokhar, his younger sister, was setting the table. “Please join us for breakfast,” she said to us.

A small balcony, equipped with a personal-sized gas stove, served as their kitchen. Joseph squatted by the flame to make buttered toast and a pot of Pakistani milk tea. Volunteers stepped up to kiss his mother, Theresa Khokhar, 71, who was sitting on a bed. Theresa broke into a smile.

As the sizzling toast filled the room with a but-tery aroma, Saima began to tell us their story.

An interpreter works with a patient. The piece of paper on his back clearly indicates his languages of expertise. Signs like this help patients find suitable interpreters.

The family came from Pakistan. Suhail was a makeup artist, while Saima worked at the British Embassy in Pakistan. She had worked at the embassy for ten years when someone reported to the government that she and her family were Catholic. She was warned that her job hinged upon her conversion to Islam. When she refused to convert, she began to be ostracized at work. She was finally fired and even threatened with death.

Saima knew that her family had only one way out—to flee to another country. She knew that Thailand was a tourist magnet and that it was easy to obtain a tourist visa to the country, so they decided to go there.

When they arrived in Thailand in 2013, they first stayed at a cheap hotel. Their church later

helped them find a place to rent, for which they paid four thousand baht (US\$110) a month, utilities included. The church priest even gave them furniture and eating utensils.

Before they knew it, their two-month visa expired. With help from their church again, the family applied for asylum at the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Saima was fluent in English, so a lawyer from the church got her a job as a translator. She makes between 2,500 and 3,000 baht (US\$70-84) a month. That is not much money, but earning it requires a lot of courage. Every time she steps out of her home to go to work, Saima worries about being questioned or detained by the authorities. She is afraid of not being able to see her family again. But she has to push those fears aside to go out to work to help support her family.

Even with her income, they barely scrape by. Theresa has a heart condition and diabetes; she goes to a clinic once every two months to see the doctor and get medications, at a cost of about 2,500 to 3,000 baht. In other words, for every two baht that Saima makes, one goes towards her mother’s regular clinic visits.

Saima is grateful to the priest for often providing them with food and clothes. Still, she and her family have to live as simply as they can to cut spending.

Free clinics

In 2013 the number of refugees registered with the UNHCR in Thailand jumped from less than three thousand to over eight thousand. They are from 47 nations; some of them were smuggled in and some simply chose to overstay their visas. Though they came to the country through different means, they shared a common goal: a free and stable life.

However, that seemingly humble aspiration has proved elusive. Thailand was not a signatory of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. This means the nation does not grant asylum to refugees. As a result, refugees are illegal in Thailand. This is why Saima is so apprehensive about leaving her apartment for work. The lack of legitimacy has kept refugees largely in hiding, subsisting with the help of charitable organizations.

The Bangkok Refugee Center started offering basic medical care to help these people more than two decades ago. However, the center featured only rudimentary equipment, and physicians

were not always on duty. Nurses dished out over-the-counter medications to patients for minor conditions, but anything more serious required the services of private clinics elsewhere.

In 2014, with the surge of refugees in Thailand, the UNHCR sought to collaborate with charitable organizations to provide better services for refugees while they waited to be granted asylum. The Office of Refugee and Migration Affairs at the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok was aware of the good work that Tzu Chi volunteers had done for refugees in Malaysia through the provision of free medical services. Officials at the embassy got in touch with Tzu Chi volunteers in Thailand and expressed hope that Tzu Chi Thailand could also offer free clinics for local refugees. That led to the eventual signing of a memorandum of understanding to this effect between the U.S. State Department and Tzu Chi in August 2014.

To fulfill this mission, Tzu Chi would first need the help of many medical care providers. Yu Jian-zhong (余建中), director of the Thailand chapter of the Tzu Chi International Medical Association (TIMA), invited physicians from several large public hospitals to visit Taiwan, the home of Tzu Chi, to learn more about the foundation and its medical mission. The 21-person delegation made the trip in December 2014. When they returned, Yu invited many medical professionals to join Tzu Chi free clinics.

Another issue volunteers needed to tackle was finding a suitable venue for the clinics. They surveyed the city of Bangkok for suitable sites. After skipping those that were too small or too expensive to rent, they settled on a few possibilities. But when that list went to Master Cheng Yen, she said that a permanent site would be better: They would not have to worry whether refugees would be able to find a new place if they changed the venue. It was decided that the Thailand Tzu Chi branch office, still under construction at the time, would be used as the permanent site for the clinics. Once that decision had been made, the contractors were asked to expedite the construction so that the branch office could have a better environment as soon as possible in which to hold the clinics.

Next, to spread the news about the free medical services, volunteers printed flyers for dissemination by the UNHCR and charitable organizations that had long been involved with refugees. They also relied on word of mouth to spread the news.



Volunteers help an infirm patient get to the clinic.

Many refugees, concerned about being questioned or detained by authorities, rarely left their neighborhoods. To draw them out, the American embassy helped Tzu Chi negotiate with the Thailand Ministry of Foreign Affairs to ensure that refugees would not run into trouble with the authorities for coming to the clinic. Volunteers also visited the three police precincts closest to the clinic site and asked for their accommodation. Free shuttle buses were arranged to take refugees from a nearby rapid transit station to the clinic. All this was to help the refugees feel at ease about seeking medical treatment.

It turned out that getting the sick to the clinic was just half the battle; the other half was to be able to talk to them in their native languages. Since refugees in Thailand came from more than 40 countries, Tzu Chi volunteers sought assistance from the UNHCR and other charitable organizations to recruit interpreters. Tzu Chi then spent time to organize them and give them orientation sessions before putting them on the job.

The free clinic was launched on January 25, 2015, at the Thailand Tzu Chi branch office, even though it was still under construction. The clinic has since been a regular event on the fourth Sunday of each month.

Patients, not refugees, for the day

On May 23, 2015, the sun shining through the clouds illuminated the Thailand Tzu Chi office. The ground was still wet and muddy from the heavy downpours the night before. The brick walls of the building had yet to be mortared, and rectangular openings in the walls had yet to be fitted with windows. Though the office was still not complete, volunteers had set up the venue the best they could so it would be safe and comfortable for the free clinic patients. They had fashioned raised walkways with cinder blocks and plywood so people would not need to walk through the mud. There was a breast-feeding room and even a prayer room. Computers had been set up and network connections tested. Everything was ready for the event the next day. Volunteer Jin Rong-gang (晉榮鋼), who oversees the free clinics, stated, "To support the events, we mobilized just about all of our volunteers in order to provide the best possible service to the patients."

TIMA Director Yu arrived at the venue early the next morning to check the set-up of the consulting rooms one last time. He observed that the medical workers that supported the day's event, the fifth free clinic since the program had been launched, were led by Surapong Boonprasert, director of Banphaeo Hospital, and Thanya Subhadrabandhu, deputy dean for service at Ramathibodi Hospital. Staff from these two public hospitals have been enthusiastic supporters of the Tzu Chi free clinics. Banphaeo Hospital also provides all the needed medications.

"If Tzu Chi hadn't invited us, we wouldn't have known that there is this group of people who don't have medical insurance and who have difficulty getting medical attention," said Dr. Boonprasert. "The free clinics have helped us find people who really need help."

Off to one side, a group of Tzu Chi volunteers wearing kerchiefs, surgical masks, and aprons were getting snacks ready for event participants.

A patient from the Middle East registers at the free clinic.



The day before, they had bought potatoes, carrots, and cucumbers, and they had made potato salad. Now they were busy making sandwiches. "It's been our experience at the free clinic that potato salad sandwiches are popular among children and grownups alike," said volunteer Liu Hui-ying (劉惠英). At the check-in and the weight and height measurement areas, volunteers were busy testing the electronic medical records system.

Soon, the first shuttle bus from the rapid transit station pulled in with the first batch of patients.

Interpreters

Wearing a Tzu Chi volunteer vest, Saima Khokhar bustled around the venue, interpreting for fellow refugees who could not speak English. She had learned four months earlier that Tzu Chi was enlisting interpreters to serve at its free clinics, and she immediately signed up because she wanted to make some money.

Saima helped patients check in, get weighed, talk to the doctors, or collect medicine. She



A volunteer takes a photo of a patient for her registration card. This card helps a patient check in easily in the future, and it helps bring up information about the patient's prior visits.

noticed that many people smiled after they had received their medications. It was as if the mere act of being seen by a kind doctor was enough to cure a good part of their illness.

She wanted to get her mother, Theresa, treated at the free clinic too, but she worried that her mother's condition would not allow her to stand the stress of coming to the site on public transportation. Saima told Tzu Chi volunteers about her predicament, so they arranged for a taxi to take Theresa to the free clinic. Theresa walked into the venue supported by Saima's brother. When Theresa saw a doctor, Saima served as her interpreter. She sincerely hoped that her mother would get better soon.

Like Saima, Aneel Sohail, 33, was an interpreter from Pakistan. As soon as his interpreter duties had ended, he took off his volunteer vest and rushed to check in as a patient so he could see a doctor before the event came to a close.

In Pakistan he had been a marketing manager at a cell phone company, and his wife had been a nurse. When he steadfastly refused to convert to Islam, he lost his job and faced death threats. Eventually, he and his mother, wife, and daughter fled their home country.

His daughter, Azal, just nine months old when they first arrived in Bangkok, was now three years of age. Aneel recalled that Azal had needed a vaccination during their early days in the country. It cost 3,800 baht (US\$106) at a private hospital, but he couldn't afford it. "It was way beyond my ability to pay," Aneel said. "I had to borrow money from our church and friends." Remembering how helpless he had felt at the time, he continued: "So, I urge Tzu Chi to keep offering free clinics."

Though it was quite muggy in the makeshift venue, everyone was patient. "Tzu Chi volunteers are friendly, and they're all smiles. They even serve us snacks. With them around, I don't mind this waiting at all," said Aneel with gratitude.

Aneel and Ghafoor Shahzad were good friends. Ghafoor had started working as an interpreter at the first free clinic in January. One



Saima Khokhar, right, an interpreter at the free clinic, interprets for her own mother, Theresa Khokhar, seated, during Theresa's first visit to the clinic as a patient.

PENG QIU-YU

time, when volunteer Guo Mei-jun (郭政君) tried to contact him to tell him about a training session for interpreters, she could not reach him and was worried. Aneel told her that Ghafoor had been detained by the authorities after being questioned on his way home.

"I repeatedly asked Aneel to tell Ghafoor that we'd be waiting for his return," Guo said. Ghafoor was released on March 25, and he interpreted at the free clinic event just four days later.

When the April clinic was coming up, he announced the good news that his family had been granted asylum and would be going to the United States.

An energetic baby brings smiles to the faces of Banphaeo Hospital employees serving at a free clinic.

Volunteers went to the airport to see them off. They waited and waited, but they did not see him and his family. It turned out that the immigration authorities, for security reasons, had taken them directly to the gate to board the aircraft, bypassing the volunteers waiting in the concourse. They could only bid him farewell by telephone.

Although they did not see each other on that occasion, the connection between them was not lost. Volunteers in America touched base with Ghafoor and picked up where the Bangkok volunteers had left off.

By providing the free clinics, Tzu Chi volunteers hope to help provide some sense of security and comfort to refugees as they face their uncertain future. The events would not have been possible without all the participants who provided medical treatments and who translated for the refugees. When people fall on hard times, hope emerges if their fellow human beings reach out to help ease that suffering.



A Ferry to the Other Shore

By Tan Kim Hion
Translated by Tang Yau-yang

Aboriginal children in Paitan, a remote area in Sabah, make up for their poverty with an abundant desire to learn. With scholarships and other aid, Tzu Chi volunteers are helping to ferry them toward the shore of learning.



The volunteers had traveled the route numerous times, but they were still not accustomed to the physical demands that came with the remoteness of their destination. They were visiting Paitan, a far-flung rural town in Sabah, Malaysia's easternmost state.

At just past five o'clock one morning in September 2015, Chin Choi Mee (陳彩媚), Hsieh Hsiu Hua (謝秀華), and other volunteers left Sandakan, also in Sabah, for their destination. As their vehicles advanced, their way changed from smooth asphalt roads to gravel paths to winding, bumpy mountain roads. Four hours and 220 kilometers (137 miles) later, they finally reached a small dock by a river in Paitan.

But that was not yet the end of their journey; they still had more distance to cover. They put on hats—to keep the sun off—and life vests before stepping into a skiff which would take them down the river to three schools Tzu Chi had sponsored. The foundation provided students at the schools with monetary support for transportation, meals, and tutoring assistance.

Along the way local indigenous people, who predominate in the landscape, looked curiously at the volunteers. What drew their stares was the life vests. The locals themselves did not wear life preservers.

"I can't swim, so I was so scared the first time I took a skiff," said Chin Choi Mee. She added

that every time they ride in a boat and water gets in, she hastily scoops it out lest the boat sink.

A motorized skiff is considered to be the most utilitarian vehicle in this remote mountain area to ferry residents between one place and another. Students also rely on a skiff to go to school, but the fare is too expensive for many of them. When fares become a problem, some of the students are forced to skip school. Hsieh Hsiu Hua explained: "Children here live in villages in the mountains or by the river, some distance from their schools. There's no bus service, so if they can't afford the skiff fares, they have to walk to school."

Tzu Chi volunteers first went to Paitan in 2004 to provide free clinics for the indigenous people

Students get off a skiff, a primary means of transportation for many villages in Paitan.

there. They heard from local principals and teachers a few years later that forests in the area had been cleared for palm plantations, leading to soil erosion and muddy roads. The road conditions were so bad that it was taking students several hours to walk to school. On rainy days, the roads would become almost impassable, and by the time students reached their classes, school would be over for the day. It is no wonder the absenteeism rate among students was high.

In response, volunteers began to offer scholarships to students in various secondary and



COURTESY OF SANDAKAN TZU CHI OFFICE

Students in Paitan show off their new book bags. Gone are the plastic bags in which they used to carry their school things.

to school. Luckily for him, he can now.

“Now I can attend school every day, and my sister, too. We’re really lucky,” he said. “Before, my grades weren’t all that great, but this year, I’m in the top ten in my class.”

Even though he and his sister have to set out for the riverbank before daybreak every day to catch the boat, even though it is always so packed that he cannot stretch out his legs, and even though they get wet if it rains, Danue does not mind. These are minor inconveniences as long as he can go to school.

It gives Tzu Chi volunteers great comfort to see the bright smiles on the faces of the students. They are happy to be able to go to school, and that makes the volunteers feel that their efforts to help the students have been very worthwhile.

A book bag

Volunteers have seen a steady rise in the number of applications for Tzu Chi scholarships over the years. As they visit the home of every applicant to assess their qualifications for the scholarships, volunteers have come to know the needs of the students much better.

“They’re sorely in need of school supplies. In fact the principals always ask us not to hand out money. They ask us to give students supplies such as pens, rulers, notebooks, and uniforms instead,” Hsieh said.

Over the 11 years they have provided free clinic services and educational subsidies in Paitan, Tzu Chi volunteers have bonded with local residents, teachers and students.

primary schools in Paitan in 2010. About 3,500 students have benefited so far. In 2014, volunteers launched another program to provide subsidies to needy students to cover the costs of transportation, tutoring, or meals.

A skiff: hope for education

By the time the skiff took the volunteers to the dock near SK Simpangan, a primary school, the secondary school nearby had already let out. Some of the secondary school students gathered in the shade on the dock, waiting for elementary students to get out. They would ride a skiff home together.

Danue, a ninth grader, and his first-grade sister lived 20 minutes from school by boat. Their mother stayed home to care for their younger siblings, but their father did not earn enough money to pay for their daily boat rides. A round-trip boat ride costs 1.80 ringgits (40 American cents). Danue said that before the Tzu Chi subsidies for the boat rides became available to him and his sister, he had been able to afford the rides only two days a week. As a result, he had to skip school the other days of the week.

Danue liked to study. He wanted to be an engineer, an impossible dream if he could not go



COURTESY OF SANDAKAN TZU CHI OFFICE

She saw for herself how much the students needed such items, including book bags. She often saw students in Paitan using plastic bags to hold their books, which would scatter all over the place if the bags got torn.

In early 2015, she saw a lot of recycled denim pants at a Tzu Chi recycling station and had an idea: The pants could be made into schoolbags to give to scholarship recipients. She then enlisted the help of volunteers who had tailoring skills to turn her idea into a reality.

Later, when Hsieh went back to Taiwan to visit her family, a volunteer in Sandakan called and told her that there were not enough pants to be converted into book bags. Even if there were, they would not be able to make enough book bags before the distribution day—they would need more than 500 to give to the students.

Hsieh had to come up with a solution. It just so happened that right around that time she

Students put their books and notebooks neatly inside their book bags.



TAN KIM HION

noticed a dark blue bag for sale at a Jing Si Books and Cafe store that would serve very well for a book bag. She wanted to buy 500 of them, but there were not enough in stock, so she ordered 400 and shipped them back to Sandakan.

The hand-made bags and the 400 purchased bags should have been enough for the scholarship recipients, but then another school made a request for book bags at the last minute. “As we had no more to give, we could only promise them that we would provide them next year,” Hsieh observed.

At the distribution, those who received the hand-made bags, each different in size and shade, were happy, as were those who received the store-bought bags. Those who received other supplies but no book bags were quite disappointed.

The volunteers felt for the students when they saw their reaction. When they returned to Sandakan, they kicked off a “Sponsor a Book Bag” campaign, and they quickly got a thousand book bags. There would be no disappointed children during the next distribution.



HSIEH HSU HUA

Students wave good-bye to volunteers from the balcony of their dorm.

Students improving

The care that Tzu Chi volunteers have extended to local students over the years has impressed Principal Dasni Dooh, of SK Lubang Buaya. He first encountered volunteers in 2008 when he taught at another school. Each year they gave students at his school supplies such as notebooks and dictionaries. They later even provided students with bicycles to make it easier for them to commute to school. At his present school, volunteers have been helping students pay for meals and tutoring fees.

The subsidies for tutoring have really helped. “Our students have made tremendous progress in their grades. Ten students in sixth grade who have learning disabilities have amazed us with their performance, and two students even got five As on their report cards,” said the principal. “Nobody at this school has ever done so well.”

To the principal, the volunteers are the guardian angels of his students. They endure the long, tough journey so they may care for the children

and cheer them on. Touched by the volunteers’ help over the years, the principal has made monthly donations to Tzu Chi so that the foundation can help other needy people.

When Hsieh and other volunteers visited the school on this day, a student opened his book bag and showed her how neatly he had put his books and notebooks inside. “It holds many books. It’s a good bag,” he whispered to Hsieh.

When school let out, students zipped up their book bags, slung them on their shoulders, and filed out of their classrooms, smiling despite the weight of their bags.

Some of them went to the pier to wait for the skiff, and some went back to their dorm. The volunteers went with them to see the dorm. They found that the students’ living environment was stark, but the youngsters seemed to think nothing of that.

When the volunteers were about to leave, the students went out onto the balcony to see them off. As the students waved good-bye, the volunteers waved back and told them to keep up their studies. The students responded with broad smiles—smiles of promise and hope. ❁



ZHAN JIN-DE

Agony Up Close

By Wang Ming-meng

Translated by Tang Yau-yang

I traveled with a Tzu Chi delegation to Turkey in October 2015 to distribute aid to Syrian refugees in that country. I felt intensely their agony and helplessness as I saw up close and personal how they struggled to survive in a foreign land.

I had just returned to Taiwan before the trip from a relief mission to Nepal. A strong earthquake there in April 2015 had devastated the nation. Although there were similarities between Syrian refugees in Turkey and quake victims in Nepal, there were also significant differences.

Nepalese victims had their government looking after them, they spoke the language of the land, and they could turn to relatives and friends for assistance. What's more, the international community was providing all sorts of aid to the region.

In contrast, Syrian refugees enjoy none of that. After they risked their lives escaping their country, they ended up in a foreign land illegal-

ly. They have to toil every step of the way for everything that their families need every day, be it shelter, food, work, or school. They are in the country physically, but deep down they do not feel settled and grounded. They do not even speak the language.

I vividly remember one episode during our trip. A senior Turkish legislator was speaking at our distribution at a market in Sultangazi, Istanbul, when a Syrian woman openly challenged him. "Tzu Chi volunteers come all the way from Taiwan to help us here," shouted the woman. "What is the Turkish government doing?" She continued to vent, and everyone in the venue froze. Zhou Ru-yi (周如意), a Tzu Chi volunteer living in Istanbul, quickly walked to the woman and hugged her to calm her down.

Later, volunteer Faisal Hu (胡光中), Zhou's husband, went on stage to talk to the audience. He pointed out that the Turkish government had in fact been helping Syrian refugees and that it



LI MEI-RU

had supported everything that Tzu Chi had done for Syrian refugees in Turkey, including helping to obtain the use of distribution venues.

Syrian refugee Professor Cuma Suri also talked to the group. He had worked closely with Hu and Zhou on their initiatives to help his fellow compatriots in Turkey. He shared with the audience the origins of Tzu Chi, and then he invited the protesting woman to sit in the first row with the VIPs to observe the distribution ceremony.

When the woman saw how we bowed low to refugees—a respectful gesture of gratitude to them for giving us this chance to help them—as we handed them cash cards and aid goods, her discontent began to dissipate. Finally, she cracked a smile.

The moment that moved me the most was when I saw Zhou burst into tears as she looked at the woman. Zhou later explained that she cried because she felt the woman's pain but did not know how to relieve that pain for her.

Master Cheng Yen often encourages us to expand our love for ourselves and our families to include all living beings in the world. Zhou

had truly taken the Master's teachings to heart. Her concern and care for the refugees, who were complete strangers to her, touched a deep chord in me.

I once saw a documentary in which a male Syrian refugee said, "This is the first time that I've ever asked for help from someone other than Allah." I could not help crying when I heard his words. When a devout Muslim talked like this, I knew that he was really desperate for help but had absolutely nowhere else to turn.

Love is the most powerful antidote to the suffering in the world. As I witnessed Tzu Chi volunteers treating distribution recipients respectfully, I knew that the boundaries between religions and ethnicities can be dissolved and that the peoples of the world can be like one big family. Those thoughts brought me hope.

Being there personally among the Syrian refugees, I felt what it was like to be afflicted with adversity. I also knew that the goodwill created by our distribution would persist in their hearts and minds long after the financial aid had been spent or the goods distributed had been consumed. ❀

Stay True to the Bodhisattva Path

By Dharma Master Cheng Yen

Translated by Teresa Chang

On September 2, 2015, the body of a three-year-old boy was found washed up on a beach in Bodrum, southern Turkey. A boat carrying his family and other Syrian refugees had capsized in the Aegean Sea between Turkey and Greece. The boy was lying face down in the sand and surf when he was found. He had drowned. Later, it was reported that he had fled Syria with his father, mother, and brother, and that only his father had survived the tragic journey. We can only imagine how sad the father must have been. The news of the young boy's fate, and that of his family, spread around the world. Countries in Europe were called upon to extend a helping hand to the refugees in a humanitarian spirit. As a result, some countries have announced their willingness to take in a limited number of refugees.

More than four million Syrians have fled their homeland since a civil war broke out there over four years ago. Whether traveling by land or by sea, they have risked their lives seeking refuge. They have been exposed to the elements during their journeys, have had little food to sustain themselves, and have had no access to medical care should they become sick. Some have drowned when their boats capsized on the sea during rough weather. Some refugees even suffocated to death in an overcrowded, closed truck trying to reach safety. These refugees' paths to sanctuary have truly been covered in blood. Yet, even though

countless people have lost their lives before reaching their destinations, others are undeterred.

Similar tragedies have occurred not just to Syrians—the problem of refugees has long existed in the international community. Religious, racial, or political strife has led to wars in many countries, and legions of people have had no choice but to uproot their whole families and settle elsewhere.

Sadly, even if they reach their destinations in safety, life does not turn out to be rosy for them. Without any legal status in many countries, refugees cannot work legally and have difficulty making a living. Despite having escaped danger, they are still stuck in hardship. The world is vast, but where is their home?

The plight of the refugees is truly heartrending. To help relieve their suffering, our volunteers in Jordan and Turkey have been doing their best to take care of Syrian refugees. They provide the refugees with

daily necessities and other items, including space heaters to keep them warm in winter. Our volunteers have found that quite a few Syrian refugees come from well-to-do families and are very well-educated. Some of them even owned companies back in Syria. But to escape the ravages of war, they had no choice but to abandon everything in their home countries and flee to a foreign land. They settled in shabby dwellings, and they cannot work legally. Their children cannot receive a formal education. Many children have even been forced to work to help support their families.



SHAO YU-HWA

This article is excerpted from a series of speeches delivered by Master Cheng Yen from September 1 to 19, 2015.



During a home visit, volunteers burst into tears after hearing the sad story of a refugee. Tzu Chi volunteers in Turkey have been caring for Syrian refugees there.

In an effort to provide refugee children with an education, a group of kind-hearted people in Istanbul worked with Tzu Chi and set up a school this year in Sultangazi, Istanbul, offering both primary and middle school education. The local government provides space, Tzu Chi provides scholarships, and Syrian teachers conduct classes. Eight hundred Syrian youngsters go to school there.

In a foreign country, refugees have no control over their destinies and do not know what tomorrow holds for them. We empathize with their situations, and at the same time we realize what a blessing it is that we can live in peace in our native land.

Cessation of suffering

We can trace the refugee problem back to the wayward thoughts of a few people in power. It's truly horrendous how the unwholesome thoughts of a few people can cause such chaos and turmoil in society and lead to the suffering of so many people. The world we live in is indeed full of suffering, be it physical, psychological, or spiritual. What is the origin of all this suffering? How can we extinguish it?

All suffering originates in the mind. Swayed by external circumstances, our mind gives rise to all kinds of thoughts, all kinds of ignorance and delusion. No matter how insignificant a bad thought may seem, if it is not reined in, it can lead to tremendous, earth-shaking tragedy.

That's why we must constantly keep an eye on our mind and reflect on ourselves: Do we get angry or fly into a rage when things do not go our way, when we cannot get what we want, or when others talk to us or treat us harshly? Even worse, do we let our anger escalate into hate? If we do, we are allowing the mental poisons of greed, ignorance, and delusion to hold us captive. When these hold sway, we feel discontent and bitter, and we fume and complain. As a result, bad affinities form between us and others, tangling us in a web of enmity.

When we cannot tame our thoughts, when we instead allow them to be manipulated by external conditions and rampage like a wild horse, we cannot think clearly or judge correctly. Conflicts can easily flare up this way.

We must therefore work on broadening our hearts and minds. We mustn't be so self-centered that a little frustration and unhappiness make us

complain and give in to resentment. When our minds become unbalanced like this, we are bound to suffer.

Our life becomes shorter with each passing day. In addition, impermanence can strike at any time. We really do not know how much time we have. Faced with an ever-shortening, unpredictable life, we must really take care to think through the best path forward for us and do our best to give of ourselves while we are still healthy and able-bodied. Let us show care and concern for others, and share compassionately in the unhappiness of others. When we go among suffering people to give, when we learn and awaken to the truth of life through what we do, we will come to see the origin of suffering. Please don't stay idle and let your precious life slip away in vain.

When we have learned the Dharma—the Buddha's teachings—we must take them to heart and put them into practice. If we can try our best to rid the needy of their suffering and help them get back on their feet, we bring happiness not only to them but also to ourselves. Helping others transform their hard life into one of happiness and seeing them break into smiles is a joyful experience. The more we give, the more we gain.

On the other hand, if we work on broadening our knowledge of the Dharma but never practice it, we are likely to grow arrogant. Then it is very easy for our knowledge to become a stumbling block on our spiritual path. When that happens, our aspiration to walk this path will fluctuate as we encounter unfavorable circumstances, and we can easily fall victim to all kinds of afflictions again. Please be careful not to sow the seeds of this vicious cycle.

The suffering in our world needs the loving-kindness and compassion of the bodhisattvas. When we can uphold the Buddha's teachings and go among the less fortunate to ease their pain, when we can guide people to see things in perspective and smooth out their entangled emotions of love, hatred, and resentment, then we'll be able to lead them to the path of stability.

The suffering in this world is endless, but the Dharma can take us from this shore of suffering to the other shore of peace and happiness. So it is my wish that ever more people will receive the Dharma, refrain from doing bad, and do all the good they can. As more people do good and pool together their love to contribute to the well-being of the world, more people's hearts and minds will be purified and the day will come when all living beings can enjoy peace and safety.

Reach out

In June, an explosion at a recreational water park in Taiwan left nearly 500 young people injured. Young people are the hope of society. Their injuries were a big disaster for Taiwanese society. After the calamity, Tzu Chi volunteers provided care and support to the victims' families at dozens of hospitals so that medical teams could focus on caring for the patients. Knowing that the injured would need nutrition to help their wounds heal, our volunteers prepared nourishing food for them. When they saw victims' families rushing around to buy diapers and other disposable medical supplies for their children, they saved them the trips by purchasing the needed items and giving them to the staff at the nurses' stations for use. They took care of the burn patients and their families in every way they could think of. Even after the patients were discharged from the hospitals, our volunteers visited their homes and continued their care. From these home visits, volunteers found out that some families had financial difficulties, so they followed up with monetary assistance to those households.

The burn patients face a long path to recovery. Though they are the ones who are injured, their parents feel just as much pain. They need society

as a whole to give them support. Let us give it to them with loving-kindness and compassion. I believe that if we can reach out to them with sincerity, we'll be able to help them through this rough patch; with the support of our society, sunshine will return to the lives of the injured. Having received help from others like this, the victims may even be inspired to put their compassion and wisdom into action and help guide others out of the dark tunnels of their lives.

On August 8, Typhoon Soudelor hit Taiwan, causing mudslides in areas including Wulai, northern Taiwan. Tzu Chi volunteers and people from all sectors of society pitched in to help victims clean up their homes and neighborhoods. A participant who worked at the Industrial Technology Research Institute said the cleaning work was so hard he wanted to quit after shoveling mud for a while, but when he turned around he saw a senior volunteer who looked to be about 70 hard at work. That sight changed his mind. He bent back down and got back to work.

Wastewater mixed in with the mud created a bad stench in some areas in Wulai. The stench was especially overwhelming in some basements. The volunteers cleaning these basements

Tzu Chi volunteers purchase nourishing food for victims of the water park explosion.



After Typhoon Soudelor hit Taiwan on August 8, volunteers helped clean up the disaster areas.



had to get out every once in a while for fresh air before they could continue their work. Even so, no one quit. Everyone persevered because they wanted to help the victims' lives return to normal as soon as possible.

A line from a Chinese poem goes, "Born to this world, we are all brothers and sisters even if we are not related by blood." Acting in this spirit, our volunteers clean up disaster areas, care for the needy in their communities, and engage in other charitable work. Just as bodhisattvas always reach out to help whenever they see people suffering, Tzu Chi volunteers care for the less fortunate not just for one day, but every day throughout the year.

Tzu Chi has developed with firm, solid steps since its founding 50 years ago. In the very beginning, our members donated 50 New Taiwan cents [then 1.2 U.S. cents] a day to help the needy; today, most members donate 100 NT dollars [US\$3.30] a month. Though each of these amounts is small, they can make a big difference when they are pooled together. That's how our foundation has been able to render aid in 90 countries around the world. My monastic disciples at the Jing Si Abode, the spiritual home of all Tzu Chi volunteers, do not accept offerings. They work to support themselves and are self-sufficient. Not only that, they provide assistance for our volunteers around the globe. Looking back on the path we have traveled, we have stayed true to our initial aspiration to "be committed to Buddhism and to all living beings."

Every month, Tzu Chi commissioners visit donating members to collect their donations. They do so at their own expense and on their own time. Sometimes they spend more money on transportation than the amount they collect. But they still make the trip because they are not just collecting donations—they are also soliciting love from the donor and helping nurture his or her kindness. They use the opportunity to tell donors about the work Tzu Chi has been engaging in, hoping that the donors may also step forward to give of themselves and help our society become more harmonious.

With modern technology, people today are flooded with all kinds of information, and it is often hard to tell if a piece of information is true or fabricated. Sometimes a person says something the truth of which he has never checked, and it gets passed on by thousands of people. In this way, a piece of mistaken information is believed to be true. This can cause disturbances in society.

As we walk on the Bodhisattva Path, it is inevitable that we encounter challenges such as criticism, whether it be true or false. When people criticize us, we should take it as a test to our resolve to walk this path. We should ask ourselves: "Have I carried out my duties to the best of my ability? Do I really understand the spirit and philosophy of our foundation? Do I uphold our guiding principles of sincerity, integrity, good faith, and honesty?" If the answers are yes, we should be at peace and continue doing what we should do.

When you give of yourself to help others, do so without hesitation and stride confidently forward. When you face criticism, stay humble and reflect on yourself instead of lashing back with vicious words. This is the spirit I hope our volunteers work in. It is the spirit of the Six Paramitas (or Perfections) the Buddha gave us to practice: giving, moral discipline, patient endurance, diligence, contemplation, and wisdom. Please keep in mind that when we take a step back, our world opens up. On the other hand, if we get caught up in the mentality of "You're wrong and I'm right" and allow ourselves to get riled up, things will get tough for us. Every one of us possesses the same pure innate wisdom as the Buddha. We should use this great perfect wisdom to look at all people and events in the world. Don't get disheartened by unpleasant and trying circumstances and lose your determination to walk this path.

Our volunteers aspire to be living bodhisattvas. When others suffer, we must reach out to them. To give with loving-kindness and relieve suffering with compassion—this is the pledge every one of our volunteers makes. Please hold firm to your vow so that we can bring peace and happiness to everyone.

Taking care of the world

With advances in technology, our lives have seen a lot of progress. Using technology to bring convenience and comfort to people's lives is a good thing. But if sellers, in an attempt to make more profits, overly encourage people to consume, negative impacts are bound to ensue. Overconsumption leads to excessive exploitation of natural resources and damage to the ecosystem, which will ultimately affect human beings.

An erratic climate caused by global warming is one of the negative impacts. As denizens of this world, we should all do our part to protect the Earth and prevent the situation from



A Tzu Chi volunteer collects recyclable garbage from a shop owner. It is everyone's responsibility to protect the Earth. One good way is to reclaim reusable resources.

worsening. We should cherish what we have and curb our desires for what we do not need to help cut down on the use of resources. Only when the Earth is healthy can everyone live in safety and peace.

Recycling is one way to protect the Earth. Chen Hong-duan (陳紅緞) is a 90-year-old Tzu Chi recycling volunteer. She volunteers at a recycling station even on Chinese New Years' Eve. She said that she saw a lot of things piled high at the recycling station, things that people threw out as they cleaned their houses in preparation for the new year. She stayed at the station through the night to help sort it out. Before she realized it, the sky was turning bright and another new day was dawning. She did not mind sacrificing her sleep, and she even said she had earned an extra day.

Li Yue-juan (李月娟) is another recycling volunteer. Despite her advanced age of 102, and despite having to rely on a walking stick to get around, she still helps with our recycling work. In Tzu Chi, we have many elderly volunteers like Chen and Li who have dedicated themselves

to recycling. They have long retired from their jobs and completed their responsibilities for raising their children. Instead of sitting around feeling at loose ends, they step out of their homes and give of themselves. By doing so, they forget how old they are and stay young at heart. The meaningful work of recycling, which benefits the Earth and our future generations, gives them a strong sense of fulfillment and pushes them to give even more cheerfully. They are truly the treasures of the world.

While we do our best to protect the environment and keep it clean, we must also keep our inner world clean by cleansing away our inner impurities. Make sure your mind is free of mental garbage, free of unwholesome thoughts. Be content with what you have, treat others with sincerity and honesty, and play your part the best you can. When everyone helps and cherishes each other, it is the best blessing our world can have.

I hope both our inner world and the world around us can be well-balanced and enjoy peace and well-being. Let us be ever more mindful. ❀



Recycling Heals

Zhan Chun-yu

By Huang Xiao-zhe and Cai Yu-xuan Translated by Tang Yau-yang Photos by Huang Xiao-zhe

Photos possess the ability to freeze and preserve the best images of a person forever. One morning, we met Zhan Chun-yu (詹淳鈺), 46, for the first time at the Tzu Chi recycling station in Guandu, Taipei. She greeted us with a smile so broad and pure that I had to press the shutter to capture the precious moment.

Her ready smile made it hard for us to imagine that she had struggled with bipolar disorder for over 20 years.

Chun-yu worked for a bank when she was 19, but she could not handle her work. Her journal would often indicate that she should have had more money than what was actually at her desk, and she was responsible for making up the shortfall with her own money. She felt that she was not good enough for the job, and so she left. As a result she often suffered mood swings. Though she was still very young, her future seemed dark and bleak.

She underwent medical treatments, but no medications or hospital visits could bring her

relief. It pained her mother, Liao Shui-liu (廖水柳), to watch her daughter suffer. Finally, upon the recommendation of Tzu Chi volunteers, Shui-liu began taking her daughter to volunteer at the Guandu recycling station eight years ago.

There, volunteers treated Chun-yu with love and respect. With their encouragement, she gradually regained her confidence and began to smile more. Doing recycling work turned out to be great therapy for her disease.

A good helper

Chun-yu's older brother, Tian-shu (天樹), was also diagnosed with bipolar disorder when he was in high school. Their mother takes the two of them to the Guandu recycling station every day now. They hop on a bus near their home halfway up Mt. Yangming, transfer to the MRT to Guandu, and then walk to the recycling station.

Upon arrival, Chun-yu fills a thermos with hot water for her mother to drink, and she helps

her settle in for the day's work before starting work herself.

Most of the volunteers at the station are getting on in years. While they sort recyclable garbage in the station, Chun-yu, being younger, usually works on truck routes to pick up recyclables at collection points. Her work often keeps her out all day long. On busier days, she may not get home until nine o'clock.

If she does not go out with a truck, she stays in the station sorting out recyclables. She is deft and quick and can lift heavy things. She is a good helper.

One day she heard that Master Cheng Yen was coming to Guandu to certify recycling volunteers. She misunderstood the message to mean that only certified volunteers would be allowed to work at the station. Since she really

wanted to keep working there, she worked even harder and became certified. In the process, she learned to work better with other people.

She keeps a piece of paper with her, on which is written her motto: "When you face a challenge, adjust your mindset before attempting to work out the issues." She has certainly surmounted hurdles along her path, and now she examines and reflects on herself constantly to make sure she is on the right track. She is a good role model for us.

Repaying their mother's love

Today Chun-yu is a very different person from the one she used to be. Her transformation is in large part due to the love of her mother. Shui-liu raised five children alone on her income from cleaning range hoods for people.





When her children fell ill, she took them everywhere to seek medical help. The stigma associated with mental health sometimes invited ridicule or raised eyebrows, but she endured all that without complaint. She even disregarded the discomfort brought by a tumor in her own brain. It is hard to imagine the hardship she had to go through to care for her children, but the experience did not turn her bitter or cause her to lose hope. When asked what had sustained her in caring for her sick children for so long, she said with a smile, "It was hope that kept me going. I believed that my children would get better day by day."

The day before Mother's Day, Chun-yu made a vegetable and fruit salad for her mother. Though it was a simple dish, Shui-liu was moved because she felt that it was packed with Chun-

yu's love. "I used to worry about them," the mother said. "But now, looking back, I'm grateful to them because they led me to Tzu Chi." By working at the recycling station, the three of them are doing the earth a good turn, and they are cultivating blessings. This is the happiest time in Shui-liu's life.

"Filial piety is the most fundamental of all good deeds," Master Cheng Yen once said. "To be a good child, you must take good care of your health, go in the right direction in life, be independent, and cause your parents no worries."

Chun-yu is being a good daughter. She is helping herself, and helping others. It is her biggest hope to live every day in peace and safety so she can maintain her current course, be a person that serves others, and lead a meaningful life. ❀



A Hole in the Roof

By Qiu Yu-juan
Translated by Tang Yau-yang
Photo by Shi Jie-min

*They repaired a big hole in the roof of an old home
so it could again shelter its inhabitants from the elements.*

A decrepit old house stands amidst a group of modern new buildings in a corner of Beitou, Taipei. It is the rented home of 80-year-old Mrs. Cai and her 50-something wheelchair-bound son, who is afflicted with diabetes. They have lived there together since Mrs. Cai's eldest son and husband passed away within a short time of each other.

The house, though old and decrepit, provided good shelter for the mother and son—that is, until a few months ago. In August 2015, Typhoon Soudelor tore a big hole in their roof. Mrs. Cai was jolted awake that night as rain and roof debris poured through the hole.

Mrs. Cai's meager income came from a national annuity for the elderly and other financial aid, which she supplemented with a little extra money from selling recyclables she collected. To make matters worse, her son was in need of more frequent medical services right around that time. After the typhoon had blown over, she quickly sought assistance from the Taipei City Government's Department of Social Welfare and received a grant that was equivalent to about two hundred American dollars. But it was still not enough to repair the roof.

Since she had no way of coming up with the full amount of money needed for the repair, the hole remained.

As the old adage goes, "When it rains, it pours." That turned out to be true in this case as well: Typhoon Dujuan ravaged Taiwan on September 28, causing even more damage to her roof. Half of her roof collapsed this time.

Though never one to bother others for help, the old woman was left with no choice. She sought help from Tzu Chi volunteers who had cared for them for a long time.

"After Typhoon Soudelor, I asked Mrs. Cai if we could help, but she declined," said volunteer Lin Xiu-ying (林秀英), who has often checked on and looked after the old woman.

"Mrs. Cai always tries not to bother us, and she does everything herself whenever possible," added volunteer Wu Xue-ling (吳雪玲). "But she knew she couldn't possibly handle the hole in the roof herself, so she turned to us for help."

A small team of volunteers checked in on

Mrs. Cai at her home on the evening following the second typhoon. Early the next day, Zhang Zhen-ming (張振銘), Yang Lian-hu (楊連戶), and Zheng Hong-fang (鄭鴻芳) visited her home again to cover the hole with a tarp, a temporary measure to keep out the rain and buy them time until proper repairs could be made.

The repair team quickly held a meeting and brainstormed ideas for fixing the problem. They decided to use two teams of workers, one for roof repair and the other for ceiling reconstruction inside the house.

At about eight o'clock in the morning of October 7, nine volunteers, including masons, carpenters, and interior decorators, took time off from their regular jobs, gathered at Mrs. Cai's house, and began to repair the damage to the house.

"Those old roof tiles were very fragile and broke under the slightest pressure, so we had to be very careful when we went up on the roof," said Xie Ming-zan (謝明讚). They put concrete in small buckets, which were then relayed to Xie up on the roof. He gingerly poured it into wooden molds that the team had set up earlier. He also patched the cracks between roof tiles. He made sure that the roof would keep any rainwater from getting through to bother Mrs. Cai and her son.

Carpenters Zhang Zhen-ming and Wang Mu-cheng (王木成) took care of the ceiling reconstruction. Zheng Hong-fang, a drape maker, provided a flush-mounted light to be installed on the ceiling, which really lightened up the living room.

Mrs. Cai smiled as the repairs took shape. She offered to pay the volunteers for their labor of love, but they declined.

Though there are competing demands for what little money she has, she has saved her pocket change every day and donated it to help the needy, such as the victims of an explosion at a water park in Bali, New Taipei City, and survivors of the April 2015 Nepal earthquake. She said that she would continue to do so.

With the help of a small group of loving people, another chapter in the history of a helpless old woman came to a heart-warming end. ❀



Her Moment

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

The Victoria Home for Incurables in Colombo, Sri Lanka, is for people with physical disabilities or cerebral palsy. When I went there, a resident in a wheelchair—Ramane, 40—asked if I could take some photos of her.

Take some pictures? You bet, ma'am. I'm a professional photographer, and taking pictures is what I came here to do. I'm here to record a monthly visit of local Tzu Chi volunteers to this home.

I held up my camera, trained it on her, and got ready to hit the shutter.

Wait, she said. She didn't want to be photographed sitting down—she wanted to stand up. Home workers got her out of her wheelchair and helped her stand at the end of a bed. Grabbing hold of the top rail of the bed, she stood tall and turned to face the camera with a brilliant smile.

As I clicked away, it occurred to me that many things in life didn't come naturally. Even the most mundane of everyday acts like eating, walking, or standing could be very difficult for some people to attempt or achieve. Even the simple act of taking a picture or having a picture taken was a luxury for some people. In this age of photo overabundance, most people could on a whim take out a device from their pockets and snap photos of anything they desired, even of themselves. But in some corners of the world there were people, like this lady in front of me, who had never or only rarely been photographed. Having their pictures taken was a big deal that had to be handled with care and aplomb. Only the best possible poses should ever be captured.

After I had taken some pictures of her, I played them back for her to look at, and I promised that I would print out some images and give them to her if I were to return in the future. She said nothing, but her face took on an expression that tugged at my heartstrings.

Snapping a few frames to capture a moment or printing them out are nothing to me, but such photos might mean a lot to some people. I was glad to help this lady retain a few good memories.

Colombo, Sri Lanka, August 17, 2014



A Second Chance

Narrated by Cai Tian-sheng

Written by Chen Mei-yi

Translated by Jenny Wen-chuan Chu

About 80 percent of inmates return to jail after being released. I don't want to be one of those. Love and accommodation have strengthened my desire to be good. Having received so much from others, I hope to give a helping hand to those who have trodden the same path as I.



At an anti-drug exhibition, Cai talks about his experiences with drugs and the harm they can do.

I was sent to jail 16 years ago for drug trafficking. I spent my days in prison reading and practicing calligraphy. At first I tried to hand-copy the *Heart Sutra*, but I eventually gave up because I couldn't understand it. I turned to copying *Jing Si Aphorisms* by Master Cheng Yen. To my surprise, the more I copied it and pondered its meaning, the more inspired I felt.

My parents came to see me in prison. My mother was in a wheelchair because she had just had an operation on her spine. I saw her get up from her wheelchair and, with the help of a walker, start walking toward me. Suddenly she fell. My father used every ounce of his strength to help her up, but he couldn't. When I saw my beloved, elderly parents struggling on the floor, I collapsed.

My mother eventually got up with the assistance of a security guard, and she sat down on the other side of a glass window from me. I grabbed the intercom and said in tears, "You're not well, you shouldn't have come." My mother replied, "But I wanted to see my darling son." At that moment, I wanted to die so I could stop being a torment to my parents. It was also at that moment that I completely sobered up.

I WAS PRETTY SMART when I was a child, and I did well in school. I was once my class president in elementary school, and I graduated

with honors. But I took a turn for the worse after I entered junior high. I hung out with some bad characters, and I cut classes. I goofed around and took up smoking. In high school, I got into fistfights, stole stuff, and joined a gang. After my compulsory stint in the military, I worked as a bookmaker for an illegal lottery game and started doing drugs. I was eventually arrested for drug trafficking.

The district court sentenced me to life imprisonment. I felt I was doomed, that there was no hope for me in this life. I remained angry, hostile, and unrepentant. It wasn't until my parents paid me that visit that I came to see my stubborn foolishness and realize what a bad son I had been.

I had trouble falling asleep at night, so I'd read to pass the time. That was when I stumbled upon *Liao-fan's Four Lessons*. The author, Yuan Liao-fan (袁了凡, 1533-1606), reflected on himself and repented every day. By doing his best to do good deeds and refraining from doing wrong, he was able to change his destiny. I decided to follow his example in the hope of changing my destiny too.

I created a merit/demerit chart like he did and began recording my good deeds and unwholesome thoughts. I used a red pen for the good and a blue pen for the bad. I tried my best to help inmates who were elderly or disabled—I fetched



Cai presents a drug awareness session at an elementary school.

hot water for them and washed their underwear. Still, I recorded more blue than red at first—turning over a new leaf wasn't such an easy thing. Gradually, however, the red increased and the blue decreased. Within only two months, I knew that I would change my destiny.

I became a vegetarian to cultivate my compassion. Every day I chanted sutras, worshipped the Buddha, and repented of my past offenses. I read good books and copied the *Great Compassion Mantra* by hand. Other inmates saw what I was doing and pegged me as a "black sheep." They would tease me for what I was doing, but I didn't mind their teasing at all. I continued to do good things in prison and worked on enriching myself.

The first time I read *Tzu Chi Monthly* magazine, I was deeply touched. I read it again and again. I told myself if I ever got out of jail, I would join Tzu Chi and become a volunteer. I wrote a letter to Master Cheng Yen about my wish, and I asked my father to buy books by the Master and mail them to me.

When my case came before the Supreme Court, my fellow inmates advised me to deny the

charges. But I knew better. Instead of following their advice, I confessed to every crime I had committed, and I sincerely expressed my regret to the justice. He must have seen my sincerity, for he reduced my life sentence to eight years.

After that, I wrote once again to Master Cheng Yen, pledging to join Tzu Chi when I was out. I also told her of my decision to donate my body for medical research after I passed away. Nuns at the Jing Si Abode, the Buddhist convent founded by the Master in Hualien, often sent me books and audio tapes, which I used every day in prison. I looked forward with hope to a better future.

I WAS RELEASED on parole after serving six years in prison. I was already 45 years old at the time. I'd learned to bake in prison, and a month after my release I landed a job as a baker.

I didn't forget my pledge to join Tzu Chi. I rode my motor scooter to the Taichung Tzu Chi office, but I was so ashamed of my past I couldn't work up the nerve to enter the building. After circling around the area a couple of times, I finally mustered enough courage to go in. Yet, instead of telling the people inside I wanted to donate money and join Tzu Chi, I just bought a copy of *Jing Si Aphorisms* and hurried away.

I decided to try another tactic. I figured that a phone call would be easier, so I called the office and said, "I want to donate some money...." Yang Qiu-xia (楊秋霞), a Tzu Chi commissioner, visited me at my home shortly after. When I stammered that I was an ex-con, she laughed and told me that she had a past too: She had once owned an illegal bar. "The door of Tzu Chi is open to everyone. Your past is the least of our concerns. What we care about is what you do in the future." Under her guidance, I began volunteering for Tzu Chi.

Thanks to arrangements made by a few volunteers, four of us ex-cons met Master Cheng Yen in person. The Master looked me in the eye and said, "A prodigal son has come home." She continued: "People who can rein themselves in before it's too late are true heroes." I burst into tears right on the spot.

At the time, I was just one step inside the door to goodness—I was still far from what I hoped to be. The Master says, "It is easy to reflect on major mistakes, but hard to eliminate small bad habits." That's exactly what I was like back

then. I was too blunt, too rash, and too hotheaded. If it hadn't been for the love and patient guidance of other Tzu Chi volunteers, I wouldn't have been able to stay true to the right path. I thank them for instilling in me the Tzu Chi Four-Magic Soup: contentment, gratitude, understanding, and accommodation.

After undergoing training, I finally received my certification as a Tzu Chi volunteer. I did my best to carry out every volunteer assignment. As a former convict and drug user, I was often asked by my fellow volunteers to counsel alcoholics, drug addicts, or former inmates. In this way, I made the acquaintance of many who had similar histories as me.

A Tzu Chi sister who worked as a caregiver for hospital patients asked me to talk to a drug user who'd tried to kill himself by jumping off a building. He was only in his 30s, but he'd been addicted for 17 years. His mother had spent

Cai says goodbye to soldiers after an event at a military base to promote filial piety and warn against drug use.





LUO MING-DAO

Cai hugs an inmate during a visit at a prison.

nearly ten million New Taiwan dollars (US\$333,000) on him. He'd jumped off buildings twice before, but he'd been lucky enough to suffer only minor injuries. This time, the third time he tried to end his life, he broke both legs and injured his spine.

I mindfully gave him some advice, but he relapsed again. He just wasn't strong-willed enough to stay away from drugs. Even so, I wasn't disheartened. I visited him at his home every day, and I enlisted the help of other volunteers. After some struggle, the young man finally pledged to quit drugs, and he and his mother both joined Tzu Chi.

AFTER MY STORY BROKE in the media, a lot of drug addicts came to me for help. As one who had been through it I did what I could to help them, but after two or three years I came to realize that no one can kick an addiction purely on the strength of others. No matter how hard you work to pull people from that wrong path, if they don't have enough resolution and perseverance, if they haven't come to their senses, then your efforts will be in vain. Redemption is reserved for those who help themselves. On the other hand, if someone really wants to quit and you give him a helping hand, your help will go a long way toward helping him quit.

Nine years ago, some friends and I opened a vegetarian restaurant in Taichung, central Taiwan. We did that to promote vegetarianism and to provide employment opportunities for people who were once behind bars.

Among all the former convicts at the restaurant, Lin Chao-qing (林朝清) was the only one that I had met in prison. He was released earlier than me, but then he was jailed again. He came to see me after I joined Tzu Chi. By that time he had been in and out of prison three times. I told him what Master Cheng Yen had said to me when we met at the Jing Si Abode: "People who can rein themselves in before it's too late are true heroes." I encouraged him to show some real backbone and not be enslaved by drugs again.

Business was good at the restaurant. Everyone worked hard. In summer we dripped with sweat as we cooked in the sweltering heat in the kitchen; in winter we washed vegetables in icy cold water. On our days off, I took my fellow workers to volunteer at a recycling station.

During this period, I came across nearly a hundred drug addicts. Sometimes I'd feel stressed and frustrated in the process of guiding them to kick their addictions. However, when I thought of the pressure the Master must have been under—which must have been more than ten or even a hundred times the pressure I was under—I'd keep going. I'd tell myself to hang in there.

A-long really broke my heart. He had been in and out of prison so many times his family had all but given up on him. I took him to volunteer at a recycling station and urged him to clean up his act. Despite my efforts, however, he went back to his old ways and was caught doing drugs again. His arrest even made the headlines: "Tzu Chi volunteer fails at quitting drugs." I was speechless. I thought, "He's barely started to volunteer, so how could he be called a 'Tzu Chi volunteer'?"

I felt really bad. I felt I had let the Master and other Tzu Chi volunteers down. I debated with myself whether I should give up on A-long or keep working with him. I finally chose the latter path. The Master says that you should never sit by when you see people suffer. I said to A-long, "I'll give you one last chance. You can decide whether you want it or not."

This time, he finally came to his senses. He resolved to kick his addiction. He eventually underwent training and became a certified Tzu Chi volunteer.

The Master once said to me, "Not everyone can do what you're doing now." Indeed, counseling and guiding drug addicts often left me



DENG HENAN

Under Cai's guidance, Lin Chao-qing (right) cleaned up his act and turned over a new leaf.



PHOTOS BY LIN YAN HUANG



Cai has been a Tzu Chi volunteer for a decade. Here he volunteers at Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital and visits a nursing home for the elderly.

physically and mentally exhausted. But all my efforts paid off when anyone that I had counseled turned over a new leaf and was certified as a Tzu Chi volunteer. When that happened, I'd be so happy I'd weep with joy.

IN 2011 DA AI TV produced a five-episode TV drama based on my story. It was later edited into a 90-minute version. The Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Education each got 3,600 copies of the DVDs. After that I was often invited to prisons and schools to share my experience and spread my anti-drug message.

Tzu Chi brother Chen Nai-yu (陳乃裕) accompanied me on all those trips to prisons and schools spread all across Taiwan. Wherever we went, we were warmly received by Tzu Chi volunteers in that area. I felt so warmed by their hospitality.

However, being constantly on the go for anti-drug campaigns took a toll on my finances and health. Out of concern for me, some volunteers helped me start a second business, which we called The Biscuit Workshop.

My father worked in the confectionery business when I was a child. I still remember his insistence on quality and the aroma of his home-made goodies. A feeling of bliss always arose in me when I smelled the sweet fragrance of his candies and cookies. Now, following his example, I keep a close tab on the ingredients we use and shun all

unhealthy additives. We are bent on producing healthful biscuits and snacks that can bring a sense of delight to all those who eat them.

Meanwhile I continue to visit prisons and schools, and I've also visited military bases to spread my anti-drug message. When I'm at home, my younger brother and I take care of our ailing mother. I chant sutras every day, no matter where I am. I worship the Buddha, make good vows, and repent of my past wrongs. I abide by the Tzu Chi precepts and constantly remind myself to never do anything bad again.

On June 3, 2014, Chao-qing, my friend from prison, and I went to Taipei to receive awards which recognized people for their achievements in anti-drug efforts. When the vice-president of Taiwan, Wu Den-yih (吳敦義), handed the trophy to me, I was overwhelmed with emotion: I, a one-time drug addict and trafficker, was being recognized for anti-drug achievements. I felt at the same time repentant and grateful.

I was repentant for having indulged in drugs and broken my parents' hearts and caused harm to society, but I was grateful that despite my past Tzu Chi had taken me in with love. If not for that, I wouldn't have become what I am today. On a trip to the Jing Si Abode, I presented the trophy to the Master. She said to me with a warm, kind smile, "Congratulations."

It has been exactly a decade since I joined Tzu Chi. I'll continue to give warmth to others, just as others gave me warmth when I needed it the most. If you have done wrong, don't be afraid to confess it. As long as you repent sincerely and genuinely want to stop doing bad, Tzu Chi will welcome you with open arms. ❀

This Is Not the End

By Chen Mei-yi

Translated by Tang Yau-yang



LI BA-SHI

Lying on the operating table was a fine-featured, 17-year-old young man. He wore a red jacket, black pants, and nothing on his feet. His fists were lightly closed. Two fresh suture scars on his shaved head indicated that he had been operated on not long before, yet here he was about to go under the knife again. However, this young man wasn't facing surgery, but medical dissection.

At his age, he should have been studying in a classroom, biking in the countryside, or waiting in line to buy tickets to a hot movie. Instead, he was lying here on a cold slab, his mouth closed and eyes shut.

Medical students from Tzu Chi University filed into the room, and physicians from Hualien

Tzu Chi Hospital donned surgical gowns and gloves. When the moment came, the young man's jacket and pants were sheared and removed. His diaper was taken away and a towel was placed over his lower body. He now lay naked on the operating table. Though a cadaver, he struck me as a most solemn offering at a sacrificial altar.

Tzu Chi volunteers came in and started chanting the name of Amitabha Buddha. The physicians and students who would anatomize the body stood quietly around him. The air seemed to have frozen. When Dr. Hsu Yung-hsiang (許永祥), head of pathology at Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital, gave a signal, everyone bowed in silent prayer.

I suddenly felt my breathing stop as the anatomy process started. A doctor deftly slid a scalpel down the abdomen, leaving a line of blood, and then he made another incision near the throat. Before long, I saw white intermingling with red—ribs among flesh and blood.

The rhythmic sound of the Buddhist chants was abruptly overwhelmed by the jarring sound of an electric saw. The teenager's ribs were sawed off on either side of his body and lifted off, exposing his thoracic organs. The young man now surreally resembled a plastic teaching model at a hospital or school.

Physicians skillfully harvested his organs—intestines, liver, kidneys, heart...everything. As they did so, other participants were busy cleaning away blood, taking photos, collecting specimens, or writing notes. Everyone did what they needed to do, and nobody said a word.

Dr. Hsu moved to the young man's head, squatted down, and drew a half circle from one ear to the other with his scalpel, slitting the scalp open. Then he peeled the scalp back to expose the skull.

Though this was not the first time the medical students had participated in an anatomy session, they were all solemn and fully concentrated, demonstrating their respect toward this session of learning and toward the young man, whose body was helping them to learn.

The teenager was about their age, but he was no longer conscious or breathing. The medical students were still healthy, youthful, vibrant, and they had full and promising lives ahead of them.

As the young man's brain was being extracted, other participants sheared open his large intestine. The filth that flowed out made me think of something that the Buddha taught: Contemplate the body as impure. If you know that the body is impure, you won't develop an attachment to it. From non-attachment comes freedom. However handsome or beautiful a person is, he or she is like any other person on the inside.

When it comes to the end, we are all the same. When that day comes, you are either burned to ashes or buried in the ground where your body will gradually decay. No matter how wealthy you are, what good looks you have, or how high your social status is, all that dissipates like smoke. What's the point of getting hung up on appearances, status, and the tangible trappings of life?

Gradually, the body became quite hollow as the physicians removed the things they needed. After the internal organs were taken out, they began carefully removing the muscles and fat from the body.

After that was done, they stuffed cotton into the space where the brain once was, replaced the skullcap, pulled up the scalp, and sewed up the incisions. The same procedures were applied to the thoracic and abdominal cavities.

In the end, they wiped the body with warm water to remove the blood stains. The young man looked much like he had before the dissection, only with new suture scars. His face still looked at peace, mouth closed and eyes shut.

The whole session seemed like a sacred ceremony. There was no trace of any foul smell in the lab, only a hint of sandalwood incense. There was no noise, only the soothing sound of volunteers chanting the name of Amitabha Buddha.

It had lasted just under two hours. Afterwards, the body would be sent to a crematorium, just as it would have been without the anatomy dissection, but the dissection session greatly amplified the legacy of the young man.

Master Cheng Yen says, "We don't own our body, only the right to use it." The young man and other body donors like him have utilized their bodies to the fullest and thus made their lives more meaningful.

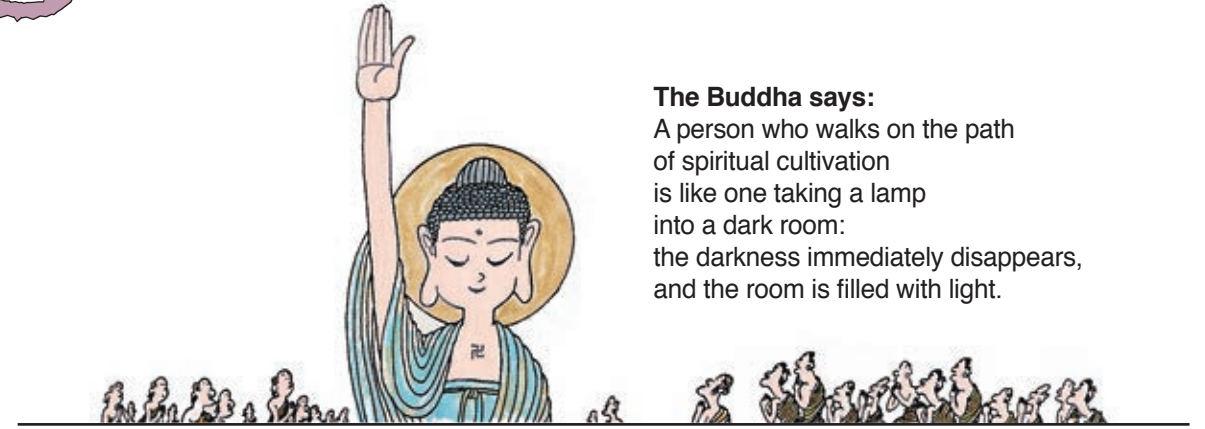
Specimens taken during sessions like this can assist clinicians to find the cause of a disease or help them diagnose a case. The specimens can also serve as valuable teaching aids for medical students.

If general anatomy is the study of the structure of the body, pathologic anatomy is for solving mysteries. This branch of anatomy has helped researchers demystify many horrifying diseases, like polio and meningococcal meningitis. Only with new understanding of such diseases will their diagnosis, management, treatment, or even prevention become possible.

A crucial key to such discovery processes is the availability of cadavers. When people donate their bodies for such purposes, their generous donations open doors for them into another realm in which their legacies live on, even though their physical lives have passed.

Though this young man may have lived only a short life, what he offered through his body would live forever. For him, passing on is staying on. Death is not an end, but a beginning. ❀

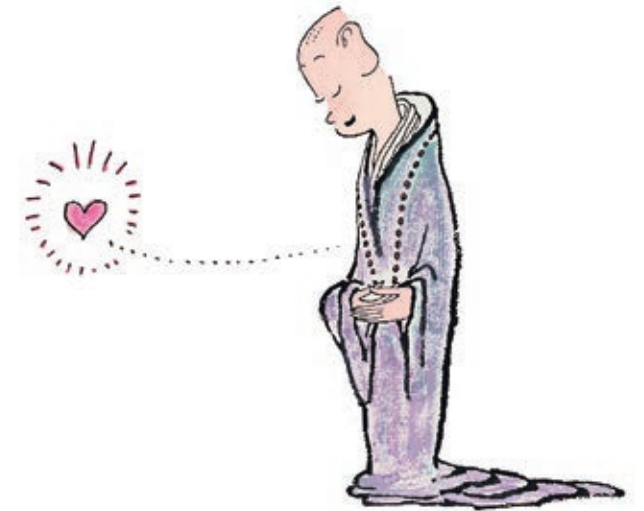
The Illustrated JING SI Aphorisms



The Buddha says:

A person who walks on the path of spiritual cultivation is like one taking a lamp into a dark room: the darkness immediately disappears, and the room is filled with light.

PEOPLE TURN ON LIGHTS TO SEE, BUT TRUE LIGHT COMES FROM THE HEART. YOU DO NOT NEED TO LIGHT LAMPS BEFORE THE BUDDHA'S STATUE. IT IS MORE IMPORTANT TO LIGHT THE LAMP OF YOUR HEART.



In this modern world, people think it is better to be a prostitute than to be poor. So I'm going to make as much money as I can.

Money does not bring happiness in life. Do all you can to help others while you are young. Don't just let your life slip by.

Translated by E E Ho and W.L. Rathje; drawings by Tsai Chih-chung; coloring by May E. Gu

Tzu Chi Events Around the World



Tzu Chi participated in a Care Harbor free health clinic that ran from October 15 to 18, 2015, at the Los Angeles Memorial Sports Arena.

USA

Care Harbor, a Los Angeles-based non-profit organization, has offered free clinics for uninsured and medically underserved local populations since 2011. Its fifth annual Los Angeles clinic was held from October 15 to 18, 2015, at the Los Angeles Memorial Sports Arena.

Tzu Chi has worked alongside Care Harbor in this large-scale annual event since its inception. Before that, the foundation worked with Remote Area Medical for two years. The collaboration over the years has benefited more than ten thousand people. Mark Ridley-Thomas, a member of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, presented a certificate of appreciation to Tzu Chi for its efforts in taking care of people's health.

To make this huge event possible this year, Care Harbor asked for help from 50 organizations; volunteers put in 3,100 person times. The L.A. Care Health Plan, the nation's largest publicly operated health plan, provided some of the

funding; Tzu Chi donated the most assistance. In addition to professional volunteers, the foundation provided three medical vans (one vision and two dental mobile units), equipment for the dental section, a dental pharmacy, and many other resources.

There was much work to be done before the empty stadium could be used as a free clinic site. Tzu Chi volunteers drove the three medical vans and two trucks full of medical equipment to the arena on October 13. Then a team of 16 volunteers spent hours inside without air-conditioning to set up equipment and examination rooms. They returned the following day to finish the job.

The check-in area was placed outside the arena; the inside was divided into six zones. Zone 1 was for dentistry. It was the biggest zone and staffed entirely by Tzu Chi volunteers. Patients received dental scaling, fillings, extractions, and other services. More serious dental conditions were treated in the two dental vans. An intraoral scanner at the venue was used to



In recognition of Tzu Chi's efforts in taking care of the health of people in the greater Los Angeles area, Mark Ridley-Thomas, a member of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, presents a certificate of appreciation to William Keh, CEO of the Buddhist Tzu Chi Medical Foundation.

scan teeth and produce dentures on site. Anyone needing dentures could get them immediately. Tzu Chi also provided oral cancer screenings, as it did in 2014.

Zone 2 was staffed mainly by medical professionals from the University of California at Los Angeles and Western University of Health Sciences, offering services for people needing various Western medical treatments.

Doctors from Tzu Chi, UCLA, the University of Southern California, and Southern California Eye Physicians & Associates provided vision care in Zone 3. Tzu Chi also helped people receive prescription eyeglasses in this zone.

Zone 4 was dedicated to Chinese medicine and was also staffed completely by Tzu Chi volunteers. Acupuncture was a big draw this year. Many people went for the service after they had heard good things about it from other people. One patient, Jose Hertcaul, said that his lower back pain had been greatly reduced following an acupuncture treatment. Another patient, Gerbil Loghoa, exclaimed after treatment how magical Chinese medicine was. He gave his doctor a big hug to express his gratitude.

Zone 5 was for preventive medicine, medical information, and health promotion. Zone 6 was a referral center for people who needed to be

treated elsewhere. Tzu Chi also provided free vaccinations for flu, tetanus, pneumonia, and shingles at the event.

Tzu Chi volunteers had asked businesses to join this good cause. This year, Frank Su, who runs the Norvatis company, came to volunteer with his brother Eric and their eight employees. Frank has participated in Tzu Chi events before and is very supportive of Tzu Chi and Master Cheng Yen. The brothers have often led their employees to volunteer at free clinics. This shows how a loving owner can inspire his employees to be loving too.

William Keh (葛濟捨), MD, CEO of the Buddhist Tzu Chi Medical Foundation, was impressed by the mindful dedication of every volunteer. He said that he planned to have Tzu Chi volunteers receive more professional training, such as in dental assistance and equipment sterilization, so they could do the volunteer work even better. He also expressed hope that Care Harbor could expand the free clinic event to more than once a year and to include northern California in the future.

Canada

The news of the upcoming winter distribution on November 1 prompted 28 Tzu Chi volunteers to gather at the Tzu Chi office in Surrey, British Columbia, on October 27 to pack relief goods, including jackets and personal care packages, for 150 street people. The packages contained woolen hats, scarves, gloves, socks, towels, toothbrushes, toothpaste, and combs.

Past experience told the volunteers to work in an assembly line fashion. They set up tables, put out the goods, and assigned people along

Members of the Tzu Chi Collegiate Association serve food to guests at the Front Room in Surrey, British Columbia, Canada.



the tables. At the end of the assembly line, volunteers checked to ensure that everything was in order, including the uniform placement of items in the plastic bags—every bag looked as good as every other bag. Many hands made light work. They finished the job in one hour instead of the two they had planned.

At 4 p.m. on November 1, 35 volunteers arrived at the Front Room, a drop-in shelter for street people in Surrey, British Columbia. The volunteers quickly mopped the floor and wiped clean 10 dining tables and 50 chairs. On each of the tables they placed a white tablecloth, maple leaves, and a small light. In 30 minutes, they turned this shelter into a comfortable dining hall filled with the aroma of food.

People were already waiting outside. The temperature had dropped to 5°C (41°F), so volunteers gave each person outside a cup of coffee to help keep them warm.

Because there were more people than there were seats, some people had to wait, each receiving a number. As soon as a seat opened up, the next number was called. Volunteers tried to keep the wait to a minimum. Volunteer Lin Hong-ming (林宏明) played violin throughout the meal.

When volunteers handed out the distribution goods, they asked each guest to pick out from a container a Jing Si aphorism and read it out loud or explain its meaning. While the food warmed the guests' stomachs, it was hoped that the maxims by Master Cheng Yen might provide some spiritual nourishment for the guests.

Dave Woods, a Surrey councilman, was delighted to come to the venue to volunteer for the first time. Sister Guan Hui-mei (管惠美) asked him to hand out chocolate at the door as the guests left and wish them luck in their efforts to return to society. Hoping that they wouldn't need to return for future distributions, the volunteers saw them off saying "Take care" instead of "See you next time."

Mr. Woods asked Sister Guan to explain the meaning of "Tzu Chi." She did, and he said with a smile, "I like your group. Thank you for your help."

Tzu Chi volunteers have held winter distributions at the Front Room for 14 years. They hope that by giving the homeless a little something, they may feel that there is still warmth in society and they may not lose heart. The volunteers hope to help them stand up again. On the other hand, the act of giving helps the volunteers realize how fortunate they themselves are.

Malaysia

Deepavali is an annual Hindu festival that lasts five days in October or November. It signifies the victory of light over darkness and good over evil. This year, the festival fell in mid-November. On October 11, Tzu Chi volunteers in Muar celebrated it early with care recipients at SJKT Ladang Lanadron primary school. At the same time, there was an aid distribution of food items, which included flour, curry powder, cooking oil, mixed nuts, dhal, and turmeric powder.

The volunteers invited 181 people from 78 families to the celebration, hoping to warm the hearts of the participants. The guests felt a strong festive atmosphere as soon as they stepped into the school auditorium. A *kolam*—a traditional colorful drawing often made with rice flour or

Tzu Chi volunteers, clad in saris, celebrate the Deepavali festival in Muar by entertaining care recipients and other guests with a performance.



rock powder to welcome guests—had been laid out on the floor in the front of the auditorium. The lamps set out on both sides of the kolam represented the triumph of light over darkness and goodness over evil.

S. Jeganathan, a teacher at the school and the MC of the ceremony, was in charge of decorations. He had asked for help from students and teachers to decorate the venue, and the kolam was made by three teachers. The teachers had dyed rice in different colors the day before the event, and after the rice was dry, they laid it out on the floor in a geometrical pattern.

Ten Tzu Chi volunteers, wearing saris, wove in and out of the crowds. C. Pandu Rengan, principal of SJKT Jalan Khalidi, said he was touched to see the Chinese volunteers dressed in traditional Hindu costumes for the occasion because the costumes were not easy to put on. He felt their sincerity in bridging the gap between different cultures. Volunteers in saris also staged a performance to entertain the guests.

The principal said that the aid distribution was a wonderful idea, as it would help ease the Hindu families' financial pressures as they got ready to welcome and celebrate the Deepavali festival. It would also make them feel very warm at heart. He praised the volunteers for giving unconditionally and treating people equally without regard to their race or religion.

All six people in Padma A/P Manian's family came to the celebration. She said her husband was the only breadwinner in the family. As their family grew in size, they started to have prob-

Tzu Chi donated a brand-new mid-sized bus to the Mennonite New Dawn Educare Center in Hualien so that its residents can travel to and from the home in safety.



lems making ends meet, including paying for their children's transportation to and from school. Her children often had to skip class as a result. Fortunately, Tzu Chi helped them with that, and now her children no longer had to skip school. She observed that Tzu Chi's assistance did more than reduce their financial burden—it also helped give them courage to face life's challenges. "I often encourage my children to study hard," she said. "Today we get help from others, so when we become capable in the future, we must pay back to society and help other people." Her children liked going to school, and their grades had improved much. This had brought her much comfort.

After enjoying the food served at the venue, care recipients went home with gifts of goods in their arms and big smiles on their faces. Volunteers also helped drive elderly people home.

Taiwan

On November 20, Tzu Chi donated a mid-sized bus to the Mennonite New Dawn Educare Center in Hualien. The center has been taking care of people with physical or mental disabilities since 1977. It has two types of residents: day-care and 24-hour. Most of the week, the nursing home has no problem picking up day-care residents from their homes in the morning and driving them home at the end of the day. But on Friday afternoons, employees must also drive the 24-hour residents back to their homes for the weekend, and then pick them up again on Monday morning to bring them back. At those times, the home does not have enough buses to go around.

One of the home's buses was over 22 years old. It used to travel an average of a hundred kilometers (62 miles) every day. It was so old and worn it was unreliable, and the cost of maintenance was very high. Once it even died on its way to pick up residents. For the safety of the residents, the nursing home really needed a new bus.

After assessing the situation, Tzu Chi decided to donate one. On November 20, 50 volunteers arrived at the center for the donation ceremony. Some of the volunteers performed a song during the ceremony, bringing with them blessings from Tzu Chi volunteers around the world. The volunteers also donated 131 thermal undershirts to the residents, just in time for the approaching winter.



CHEN SHUWEI

Tzu Chi volunteers chat with Hassan (right) on a visit to a refugee center in Grassau, Germany.

the center who can converse with the volunteers in fluent English. Mohammed was once an engineer, and Hassan had completed two years of medical school.

After fleeing their home country, the pair had traveled by car and by foot to Turkey. Then they undertook a perilous boat ride to Greece. For safety, they split up there and each

took a different route north. A month later, they reunited in Germany. The father and son had lived at the center for over three months when volunteers delivered clothing to the center.

Hassan hopes to get a resident permit from the German government as soon as possible so he can resume his medical studies. However, due to the recent flood of refugees into the country, that could take some time. The young man also expressed a wish to master the German language. He said that after he finished his medical studies, he would use his expertise to pay back the country that has taken him in. He and his father also hope to bring the rest of their family—Hassan's mother, younger sister and brother—from Syria to Germany so the whole family can be together again.

Noor Muhammad, from Afghanistan, is another resident at the center. He told the volunteers that he wished there was a teacher to teach them German so that they could find work instead of relying on social welfare.

Maximilan Landenberg is a local German volunteer. He was happy to join the Tzu Chi volunteers in caring for the refugees at the center. He didn't know much about the lives of the refugees when he began, but now he can see their suffering and helplessness. His volunteering experience has taught him to be grateful. He said that the act of giving helps one learn and grow.

Tzu Chi volunteers will continue to provide support for the refugees. They sincerely hope that their continuous care will help the refugees through this difficult time in their lives, and that one day, when they have the ability to do so, they may also help others in need. ☸

Mu-chuan Lin (林木泉), superintendent of the center, thanked Tzu Chi on behalf of the residents. He said that they will be much safer on the road with the new bus. The home has another old mid-sized bus and a bus that can take wheelchair users. He said they will use their vehicles efficiently to reduce carbon emissions.

Volunteer Cai Xiu-zhu (蔡秀珠) commended New Dawn for its decades of dedication to the care of disabled people. Working in the same spirit, Tzu Chi has also been helping the underprivileged for 50 years. The foundation is happy to provide support for a like-minded organization like New Dawn.

Germany

Many people, escaping war or turmoil, have recently flooded into Germany. A refugee center in Grassau, Germany, has taken in over 200 refugees from countries including Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Most of the refugees are waiting for a resident permit from the German government. Tzu Chi volunteers in Germany have been visiting the center to offer their care and support. Months of interaction have enabled the volunteers and refugees to bond despite the language barriers between the volunteers and most of the residents.

As the weather grew colder, the volunteers realized that many at the center, especially children, needed warmer clothes. In response they collected several boxes of second-hand clothes, and they also purchased winter coats and socks for the youngsters. They delivered those items to the center on September 13.

Hassan, 21, and his father, Mohammed, are from Syria. They are among the few refugees in

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*Atheism is better than superstition. Faith must be guided
by wisdom.*

—Master Cheng Yen

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