

# Tzu Chi

Buddhism  
in Action

Winter 2016

慈濟

Campaign  
Against Drugs





A free leaf like this one might drift to a river, then to an ocean, and eventually into a much bigger world in the end.

# Slander

Text and photo by Liu King-pong

Ken was a hard-working and capable young man, but he was tormented by slanderous comments that people were making about him. He was so upset that he could neither sleep well at night nor work effectively during the day. With nowhere else to turn, he went to see Venerable Master Chi Xin, who was famous for enlightening persons suffering from depression by using witty metaphors to cheer them up.

After listening carefully to Ken's problem, the Master smiled and instructed a novice to fetch a bucket and a ladle. He then asked Ken to go with him to a creek flowing behind the temple.

On the way to the creek, the Master plucked a leaf from a bodhi tree in the garden and dropped it into the bucket. He then turned to Ken and said, "You are just as pure and fresh as this leaf, which has done no harm to anyone in the world. In the same way that the leaf now lies at the bottom of the bucket, you have sunk miserably to the bottom of this mundane world." Ken sighed heavily and nodded his head. He had to admit, he was like that leaf—stuck at the bottom of life's bucket.

When they arrived at the creek, the old monk put the bucket at the edge of the water and bent down to scoop up some water with the ladle. He said, "This water represents nasty slander aimed at crushing you. Watch what happens when it hits the leaf." He then poured the water right onto the leaf. The leaf was violently tossed to and fro inside the bucket, but eventually came to rest, floating calmly on the surface of the water.

The monk stooped and ladled up some more water, pouring it again onto the leaf. "Here is another verbal attack, intended to knock you down completely." The water sloshed fiercely inside the bucket again, but the leaf, which remained intact and pristine, just floated closer to the top of the bucket.

Smiling, the Master said, "It would be even better if we could have more criticism and slander...." Confused, Ken watched the Master repeatedly pour ladle after ladle of water over the leaf. Eventually the water overflowed, carrying the leaf out of the bucket and into the creek. In front of their eyes, the leaf swiftly drifted downstream.

The old monk looked at Ken and remarked that what made the leaf untouchable was its pure, fresh nature. All the nasty lies—the water that the Master had used to try to destroy the leaf—didn't damage it at all. On the contrary, they helped release the leaf from the bondage of the bucket and set it free to drift into the creek.

"You never know," the Master stressed, "that leaf might drift to a river, then to an ocean, and finally to a much bigger world."

Having been awakened by the Master's words, Ken blinked back his tears and said happily, "I understand! A pure, fresh leaf can't be confined to the bottom of a bucket forever. Likewise, slander only helps to cleanse all the impurities in our hearts and motivates us to grow stronger."

I read this inspiring story a long time ago. I recently had the chance to share it with Blanca, my colleague at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. She seemed a little distressed, so I asked if something was bothering her.

She replied, "Professor Zhang was all upset and I tried to calm him down, but he wrote a letter to our supervisor and accused me of dereliction of duty. What a lie!"

It turned out that this Professor Zhang's daughter went to study in France last year, and she was unfortunately hit by a car in Paris. Although she got good treatment there and returned to Taiwan safely, Zhang urged Taiwanese diplomats based in Paris to claim compensation from the French driver. Blanca was assigned by our supervisor to meet with Zhang and explain that taking care of such personal matters went far beyond the scope of our diplomats' duties.

Blanca did exactly what our supervisor had asked her to do, and then, to help Zhang look on the situation positively, she reminded him that his daughter's safe return home was far more significant than claiming indemnification.

"He twisted my goodwill completely around!" Blanca complained. "He even accused me of being worthless and knowing only how to shirk my duty. Now I have to write a report and explain in detail what I said to him."

I shared Ken's story with her, and it brought a smile back to her face! How nice! ☸



# Tzu Chi Quarterly

Vol. 23 No. 4 Winter 2016



4



14



28

## 1 SLANDER

Amazingly, the lies that other people say about you may set you free from your mental bondage.

## 4 IDEALS SEALED THE DEALS

Opened in 1986, Tzu Chi Hospital in Hualien, Taiwan, is now celebrating its 30th anniversary. It was the foundation's first institution built to provide quality medical care to the public, especially to the needy.

## 14 TZU CHI UROLOGY

The efforts of Dr. Hann-Chrong Kuo and his team over the past 28 years have made the Department of Urology at Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital a major research and treatment center.

## 28 JUST ONE OUNCE

In Taiwan, drug use is on the rise and the average age of users is going down. Tzu Chi volunteers are doing what they can to fight the drug epidemic.

## 30 FROM PRISON TO THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE

Once a drug addict and a prison inmate, Gao Zhao-liang is now an anti-drug crusader.

## 40 WHEN ONE USES DRUGS, THE WHOLE FAMILY SUFFERS

When a loved one suffers with drug addiction, their parents and siblings all feel like they are in hell.

## 44 MIRED IN QUICKSAND

Tzu Chi volunteers conduct anti-drug workshops and spread correct messages about illicit drugs to help prevent young people from getting mired in the quicksand of drug abuse.

## 48 DEEP IN THE JORDANIAN DESERT

Tzu Chi volunteers in Jordan travel hundreds of miles to help Bedouins living deep in the desert.



48



58

## 58 BETTER HOMES FOR THE DESITUTE

Tzu Chi volunteers and staffers help the poor repair their dilapidated homes.

## 58 PROS AT YOUR SERVICE

A group of Tzu Chi volunteers in Pingtung, southern Taiwan, recalled how they had helped the needy.

## 83 REMEDY FOR THE WORLD

Every time a disaster strikes, our volunteers practice the bodhisattva spirit and quickly mobilize to help the victims.



87

## 87 AN ORDINARY YET EXTRAORDINARY LIFE

Huang Mian, 95, could not stick to her recycling work if she did not have a dedicated, determined heart.

## 90 THE ILLUSTRATED JING SI APHORISMS

All living beings can cultivate compassion and wisdom.

## 91 TZU CHI EVENTS AROUND THE WORLD

Tzu Chi briefs from all over.



Campaign  
Against Drugs

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.

Address: No. 2, Lide Road, Taipei 11259, Taiwan.  
Telephone: 886-2-2898-9000 ext 8046  
Fax: 886-2-2898-9977  
E-mail: [chris\\_wu@tzuchi.org.tw](mailto:chris_wu@tzuchi.org.tw)

## Tzu Chi Quarterly

President and Publisher

Shih Cheng Yen

Managing Editor

Wu Hsiao-ting

Staff

Teresa Chang

Lin Sen-shou

Liu King-pong

Douglas Shaw

Tang Yau-yang

Steven Turner

*Tzu Chi Quarterly* is owned and published quarterly by the Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation, No. 1, Lane 88, Jingshe St., Kanglo Village, Shinchon Hsiang, Hualien County 97150, Taiwan.  
Shih Cheng Yen, Chairman.  
Copyright © 2016 Tzu Chi Foundation. All rights reserved. Printed in Taiwan.  
For a free copy of the *Tzu Chi Quarterly*, please contact your nearest Tzu Chi branch office (see inside back cover).

中華郵政台北誌字第910號執照登記為雜誌交寄



# IDEALS SEALED *the* DEALS

*Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital opened in 1986 to serve people on the relatively undeveloped eastern coast of Taiwan. The area was known for its insufficient medical care—far from major population centers, vulnerable to frequent earthquakes and typhoons, backward in academic research, and far behind in medical expertise. It is no wonder the new hospital had a tough time recruiting physicians, even as its impending grand opening loomed large.*

*It was the first such institution that Tzu Chi established to provide quality medical care to the public, especially to the poor who could not afford treatment. A nursing school, a medical school, and five more hospitals have since been created by the foundation in pursuit of that goal.*

*The Hualien hospital that spawned this medical-care network turns 30 this year. This article looks back at the early days of that hospital's history, when challenges and uncertainty abounded.*

Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital celebrates its 30th anniversary this year. It has come a long way, from a severely understaffed hospital to the only government-designated medical center in eastern Taiwan.

YAN LIN-ZHAO

**By the Tzu Chi Monthly History  
Compilation Project Team**

Translated by Tang Yau-yang

Photos courtesy of Tzu Chi Hualien headquarters



The construction of Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital was completed in January 1986. The original plan was that it would take three years to complete, but through the combined efforts of many people, construction on the hospital was finished nine months ahead of schedule.

The rapid pace of construction was not the result of overtime pay or other monetary costs. On the contrary, the project came in substantially under budget. The hospital was built for NT\$570 million (US\$19 million), well under the total projected budget of NT\$800 million. The savings were possible for two reasons. One was the hard work of the construction committee who kept a watchful eye on every expenditure. The second was the goodwill and discounted prices provided by contractors and vendors.

Master Cheng Yen, the founder of Tzu Chi, thanked everyone for contributing to the successful building of the hospital. All parties involved were aware that the construction money had been donated by many loving people, so they were mindful that every bit of it should be spent carefully.

The early completion, however, added to the pressure of recruiting personnel. Recruiters faced a daunting challenge in getting medical professionals to come to Hualien to work and live. After all, Hualien was far from major population centers, vulnerable to frequent earthquakes, backward in academic research and medical expertise, and had living standards far below those in western Taiwan. In addition, the Tzu Chi hospital was new—no one knew what the future held in store. As a result, many young physicians passed on the opportunity to join the staff.

In light of the difficulty in recruiting, many members of the steering committee for the opening of the new hospital suggested to Master Cheng Yen that the grand opening be postponed until the hospital was more fully staffed. But after careful contemplation, the Master decided otherwise. "With support from the public, we beat our own deadline for building the hospital. The earlier we open, the sooner we'll be able to benefit people in eastern Taiwan. If we put off

**More than 20,000 attended the Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital opening ceremony on August 17, 1986.**



the opening, people might miss out on a cure or even a chance to live. We can't let our supporters down in that way."

Therefore, despite the monumental obstacles in hiring, the Master decided to open the hospital without delay.

### Critical initial support

The hospital ran newspaper ads for resident physicians in early 1985, more than a year before the opening, but the three-day ads yielded just two applicants, both dentists.

Steering committee members Yang Sze-Piao (楊思標), Tu Shih-mien (杜詩綿), and Tseng Wen-ping (曾文賓) believed that adequate staffing could only be assured by linking the new hospital with an established one. They felt that such a partnership would help entice skilled physicians to serve at the new hospital, and would also assure that it could maintain high medical standards. They unanimously recommended that the Hualien hospital partner with National Taiwan University Hospital (NTU Hospital).

"As the oldest and largest hospital in Taiwan, NTU Hospital has dual missions: patient care and teaching," said Yang, who was then the superintendent there. "It has an obligation to train medical care professionals for hospitals in Taiwan, big or small."

He explained another benefit of the inter-hospital collaboration: Physicians at NTU Hospital did not necessarily get to treat all types of patients. Through joint efforts with the Tzu Chi hospital, they would have opportunities to treat diseases that were more prevalent in eastern Taiwan. This experience would be tremendously beneficial to the cultivation of these doctors.

In August 1985, Tu was the deputy superintendent of NTU Hospital. He invited department heads and Lin Kuo-sin (林國信), the new superintendent of NTU Hospital, to visit Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital. Tu wanted to acquaint the visitors with the founding ideals of the Hualien hospital. He believed that with increased understanding, they would be more willing to recommend good doctors to work there. Tu also asked the administration of NTU Hospital to help recruit residents for the Hualien hospital.

Tu retired from NTU Hospital in May 1986, after 44 years of service. He and his wife, Chang Yao-chen (張瑤珍), left Taipei and moved into their dormitory apartment in Hualien on July 19, 1986. Four weeks later, Tu took up his new

post as the first superintendent of Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital.

Though retired from NTU Hospital, Tu continued to hold an appointment there as a clinical professor, and he saw nasopharynx cancer patients there every Monday. After he had finished his morning clinic, he would visit various hospital departments in the afternoon. Many of the department heads had been Tu's students. He talked to them about Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital's collaboration plan with NTU Hospital and how they might be able to lend a hand.

On the strength of Tu's tireless work and with approval from the Ministry of Education, Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital signed a three-year collaboration agreement with NTU Hospital in July 1986, just in time for the opening of the new hospital.

### The early going

In a show of support, many heavy-weight professor-physicians at NTU Hospital opened special clinics or conducted monthly teaching sessions at the new hospital when it first opened. Among these were Lien Wen-pin (連文彬), Wang Teh-hong (王德宏), Chen Kai-mo (陳楷模), Liu Chen-hui (劉禎輝), and Lee Tzu-yao (李鎡堯). They did not charge the hospital anything for their services, not even traveling costs. What is more, they brought costly instruments to Hualien so they could operate on patients.

Professor Chen Kai-mo, head of surgery at NTU Hospital at the time, had three decades of rich experience as a surgeon. He was on the team that had separated conjoined twins Zhong-ren (忠仁) and Zhong-yi (忠義), joined at the ischial bones, in September 1979. The operation had received a lot of attention.

Chen was a strict teacher. He was nicknamed "Thunder God" for his loud voice, and he didn't mince words. However, he was very kind at heart. His mother was a pious Buddhist. She repeatedly asked him to help the Tzu Chi hospital as much as he could, so as an obedient and respectful son he did as he was told. When he visited Tzu Chi, he saw how Master Cheng Yen selflessly devoted herself to aiding the needy and building the hospital to help save lives. Moved, he decided to help the new hospital establish its surgery department.

In accordance with a medical collaboration agreement between Taiwan and Saudi Arabia, NTU Hospital started sending physicians in cardiology and surgery to Saudi Arabia in 1979. According to the agreement, if hospital physicians



volunteered to work in that country for two years after their residency, they would be promoted to attending physicians upon their return to Taiwan. That arrangement attracted many young physicians to travel to Saudi Arabia. To likewise attract physicians to serve in Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital, Chen replicated the Saudi Arabia incentive: After serving two years at the Hualien hospital, an NTU Hospital physician could return to his or her old post in Taipei and be immediately promoted to attending physician.

"On the one hand, working in eastern Taiwan expands the horizons of resident physicians from NTU Hospital. On the other hand, having the service of high-caliber physicians ensures that Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital can provide quality medical service to its patients," Chen said of the incentive program. "Unconditionally allowing these physicians to return to NTU Hospital is the best guarantee that I can give them."

Chen had always advocated the ideal that doctoring is a union of the art of medicine and the spirit of compassion. He believed that by serving in Hualien, NTU Hospital physicians could learn more about compassion. "The religious spirit of Master Cheng Yen is the best education."

### The first full-time doctor

Born in Tainan, southern Taiwan, Chen Ing-ho (陳英和) was an outstanding student at the NTU medical school. He made his teacher, orthopedic surgeon Professor Liu Tang-Kue (劉堂桂), very proud. Since childhood, Chen had loved to take things apart and put them back together. While a resident at NTU Hospital, he innovated and improved many surgical techniques. In his fourth year of residency, he devised an instrument for femoral neck fracture surgery that shortened the surgery time, reduced a patient's pain, and decreased the amount of time medical workers were exposed to X-rays.

In 1986, when Chen was the chief surgical resident at NTU Hospital, surgery chief Chen Kai-mo informed him of Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital's urgent need for specialists. The hospital's grand opening was fast approaching.

Chen Ing-ho had visited Hualien for the first time just two years before. During the visit, he rafted down the Xiuguluan River. The natural beauty and serenity of that rural region, which reminded him of his own hometown, was a fond memory to him. Therefore, the idea of serving in Hualien did not immediately turn him off as it had done to many of his fellow physicians.

Yet, though deeply attracted to the natural simplicity that was abundant in Hualien, Chen was not immediately convinced that he should move there. Living in an out-of-the-way place was just a small inconvenience for him, but what really weighed on his mind was that he might lose touch with mainstream research, so vibrant and readily accessible to him in Taipei.

Both his former teacher Liu Tang-Kue and surgery chief Chen Kai-mo were strong supporters of the collaboration plan between the Tzu Chi hospital and NTU Hospital. Among the three surgeons who were asked to consider serving at the new hospital, Chen Ing-ho was the only one who was unmarried. Since relocating an entire family entailed more work, he became the best candidate for working in that distant outpost.

Chen felt the urgency and pressure on him to make the move. He pondered. As a Christian, he knew that the new Tzu Chi hospital, operated by a Buddhist organization, would be run not for profit but to provide the best medical care for patients. As a doctor, he had a duty to use his expertise to serve patients. Now the new hospital had an urgent need. He was more inclined to help out than not. Besides, the professors had promised him that he could go back to NTU Hospital after just two years. He was on the verge of saying yes.

One day in early 1986, Chen met Master Cheng Yen in a hallway in NTU Hospital, their first meeting. The Master had come to the hospital for a meeting on the collaboration between the two hospitals. Looking at the Master—frail yet determined and working hard to advance medical care in eastern Taiwan—Chen felt a sense of mission bubbling up inside. He took a few quick steps to catch up with her. "Master, I'll go work for Tzu Chi," he said.

Less than two months later, in March 1986, he reported to work at the Tzu Chi hospital, where finishing touches were being added to the new buildings. Chen became the first full-time, in-house physician at the hospital.

### Whatever your religion

When Chen reported for work at the hospital, he asked the Master, "I'm a Christian. Am I fit to serve in a Buddhist hospital?"

"That you're Christian doesn't concern me in the least," the Master replied without any hesitation. "But I'd be concerned if your Christian faith was not deeply rooted in your heart. A true reli-



**Tu Shih-mien, the first superintendent of Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital, speaks at the grand opening ceremony.**

a hardware store will do the job just as well, but at a tenth of the cost. They're more durable too."

The Master was impressed by Chen's thoughtfulness and mindfulness.

His mindfulness did not stop there. A kind of surgical tweezers used in microsurgery had very fine tips, so they broke easily. They were costly as well. Chen went to some stores that specialized in preci-

sion never deviates from love, and no work is more important to a medical worker than giving love to patients. You'll give your patients unconditional love if you have a deep religious faith."

Those words removed any doubts Chen might possibly have had for serving at the hospital. Now he was all set to dedicate his undivided attention to his work at his new post.

There seemed to be a thousand things to do to properly set up a new orthopedic practice at a new hospital. Chen carefully attended to all those tasks. He was even personally involved in planning the layout of the clinics and the selection and purchase of equipment and instruments. He knew that the funds for the establishment of the hospital had come from many donors, so he made each purchase decision very carefully.

One day just before the hospital opened, the Master was checking things out in the hospital when she heard the rapid breaths of someone running up the stairs. It was Chen, carrying a large pair of shears.

"Dr. Chen, I know you're very busy every day. How can you have the time to trim plants?" the Master asked.

Chen explained that he was not doing yard work. Instead, he had just bought the shears at a hardware store to be used to cut materials for treating orthopedic conditions. These materials were generally very hard. "The shears typically used to cut these hard things crack easily, so they often have a very short life span," he explained. "What's more, they're expensive—more than 30,000 NT dollars [US\$1,000] a pair at a medical supply store. These shears I found at

sion tools, and he found tweezers used in repairing watches and clocks. They were even more serviceable than the surgical tweezers and were again a lot cheaper.

It was with such care and mindfulness that Chen went about setting up the orthopedics department. Three months later the job was completed. When the hospital opened on August 17, 1986, the services of the orthopedics department went online with it.

### Grand opening

The brand-new Tzu Chi hospital stood tall and proud amidst the green landscape of Hualien, a miracle in any sense of the word given the abundant difficulties and obstacles that had been surmounted to bring it into being. The opening of the hospital was a great encouragement to its supporters, as it meant that people in that area would be able to receive better medical care. However, the opening of the hospital also meant lots of worries and sleepless nights for those who were responsible for keeping hospital services open and available to patients—something that would be very hard to deliver if there was not enough medical staff.

"We were very short on physicians," Tseng Wen-ping, then deputy superintendent of the Hualien hospital, recalled of those early days. "We only had about ten physicians in all. They included Chen Ing-ho, a handful of residents, and the four department heads of internal medicine, surgery, Ob/Gyn, and pediatrics."

Tseng and Superintendent Tu sent all their resident doctors to train at NTU Hospital, and





NTU Hospital sent 14 residents and 7 interns to support Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital. With such a limited number of physicians, the new hospital began its service.

The staff was short-handed and resources were few, but lots of work still had to be done.

From setting up an orthopedics department to treating patients day in and day out, Chen Ing-ho was gradually transformed from a newcomer in an exploration-and-adaptation mode to a physician happily devoted to his work. Being Christian did not make him a square peg in a round hole in this Buddhist hospital. Quite to the contrary, the not-for-profit nature of the hospital made working there straightforward for him: He needed to concern himself only with patient care and nothing else. At the same time, he saw how Tzu Chi volunteers helped deliver an additional layer of care to patients and their families at the hospital. It was a good environment in which to work.

With no baggage from the past to contend with, the Tzu Chi hospital supported all reasonable requests that its staff made. Chen had thus been able to carry out his ideals and do the work he wanted to do. He felt a great sense of fulfillment. So after his two-year commitment to serve at the hospital ended, he decided to stay instead of going back to Taipei.

In August of that year, the Ministry of Health and Welfare granted the hospital the status of a quasi-regional hospital. That same month, doctors Hann-Chrong Kuo (郭漢崇, urology), Chien Sou-hsin (簡守信, plastic surgery), Huang Lu-chin (黃呂津, internal medicine), Wang Ying-wei (王英偉, family medicine), Tsai Bo-wen (蔡伯文, cardiac surgery), Chao Shen-feng (趙盛豐, cardiac surgery), Chang Tso-wen (張佐文, neurology), Tang Tze-wan (鄧子雲, radiology), Lin Mei-hwey (林美慧, pediatrics), Hsieh Yan-huai (謝沿淮, orthopedics), and Lee Jen-jyh (李仁智, pulmonary medicine) joined Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital.

All of them came from NTU Hospital, except for Lee Jen-jyh, who came from a tuberculosis treatment center. These doctors were already attending physicians or would soon have been promoted to that rank if they had stayed at NTU Hospital. Yang Gee-gwo (楊治國, chest medicine), then studying in the United States,

**The Buddha carefully cleans and changes the dressing for an ill person in this mosaic in the lobby of the Hualien hospital. It is a declaration of the hospital's mission—humane care for patients.**

returned and joined them in Hualien the following year.

The infusion of about a dozen young physicians made waves in eastern Taiwan. The unprecedented influx of talent immediately catapulted the ranks of full-time physicians at the hospital from 12 to over 20.

### Why Hualien?

Lee Jen-jyh had been working at the hospital part-time, offering a clinic one day a week, ever since the hospital opened. He was therefore keenly aware that there was a dearth of internal medicine specialists, which made it difficult for the hospital to provide optimal patient care. Lee wanted to help alleviate that situation. "To me, this job is not a stepping stone to some other better job elsewhere. I'm here to put down roots and work hard with everyone else for the hospital."

Dr. Hann-Chrong Kuo had led the treatment of urinary dysfunctions at NTU Hospital for five years when he and his cohort of transplants from Taipei joined Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital. His rich clinical experience had made him one of a few leading experts in Taiwan in treating patients with voiding dysfunctions. He had not only held a special clinic at NTU Hospital but had also lectured and conducted research projects at the NTU medical school.

He had also previously worked part-time at the Hualien hospital before he formally joined. Three months after the hospital opened, Dr. Yao-Jen Chang (張耀仁) invited him to operate at the new hospital on a patient with bladder stones. At the time, Kuo was just thinking about making some extra money by moonlighting at the remote hospital, where he gradually worked more and more frequently.

One day Chang took Kuo to see Master Cheng Yen, who shared with Kuo her ideals that had brought the Hualien hospital into being. Now, despite all the hurdles, the hospital had been built and was open, but it was having a hard time attracting physicians to work there full-time. Without enough doctors, the illnesses and sufferings of area residents could not be adequately relieved. Therefore, the ultimate goal of the hospital remained elusive. Speaking of this, the Master choked up with emotion and tears welled up in her eyes.

Seeing the Master like that, Kuo silently told himself: "Though feeble and frail, she has enough perseverance and courage to bring a big hospital



into being, and all she thinks about is how to relieve the suffering of the needy. Compared to her, we young physicians—also full of altruistic ideals and ambitions—seem to be doing nothing more than empty talk. Shouldn't we give her a hand? Shouldn't we work with her and create a miracle together?"

He had no answers to his own questions.

An attending physician and lecturer, Kuo was then single-mindedly focused on his goal of becoming a full professor at the NTU medical school. Uprooting himself from the capital city and relocating to serve in remote locales seemed a worthwhile and altruistic pursuit for the future, when he had passed middle age. But to do so now, at his age? He had a dream of his own to chase yet.

So Kuo continued doing what he had been doing at the Hualien hospital: performing surgery there when such help was needed. After doing so for some time, he noticed a troubling sign: Some of his Hualien patients could have

been healed without surgery if they had been treated sooner, and some should have had surgery long before he operated on them. However, that window of opportunity for early diagnosis and intervention had often been lost because there was a lack of local specialists.

As a physician, he felt he had a duty to improve that situation, so he decided to open a urology clinic for patients in eastern Taiwan. He began working one day a week at the Hualien hospital, commuting back and forth between Taipei and Hualien.

### Not alone

One day, some NTU Hospital doctors who had previously served in Saudi Arabia had a gathering. Tsai Bo-wen, who had decided to work at Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital full-time, asked, "Anyone want to go with me?"

That question could not have found a more receptive audience. These doctors had all treated patients at the Hualien hospital on a part-time basis, and in the course of doing that, they, like Kuo, had also noticed that by the time they saw their Hualien patients, they were often very sick. People there procrastinated in seeking medical attention not because they wanted to but because they had no access to specialists locally and

**Drs. Chen Ing-ho (left), Hann-Chorng Kuo (second from left), Chien Sou-hsin (center), and Huang Lu-chin (second from right) attended the opening ceremony of the Tzu Chi Junior College of Nursing on September 17, 1989.**



HONG SI-WEN



YAN LIN-ZHAO

**Chen Ing-ho (center), who set up the orthopedics department at Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital from scratch, at a celebration in honor of the 30th anniversary of the hospital**

could not afford to travel to western Taiwan to be treated by specialists. These doctors all had seen how desperately eastern Taiwan needed people—physicians just like themselves—to elevate the quality of local medical care. The need for their service was unmistakably there. Also clear was their desire to serve that need and to discharge their duty as physicians. Therefore, they decided to leave NTU Hospital and join Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital together.

Kuo was preparing to study in the United States around that time, but he decided to give that up and relocate to Hualien to serve patients in eastern Taiwan. His decision surprised even himself. "It wasn't that the Master had any magical power to sway my decision," Kuo said, reflecting on the decision that he and his colleagues had taken. "Rather, it was the Master's sincerity and the love of Tzu Chi volunteers that moved me."

So, in one fell swoop a dozen or so specialists set foot in Hualien. They took their families there too. "Rather than vying for wealth and sta-

tus in Taipei, we chose to cultivate the medical field in Hualien on a long-term basis," Kuo remarked. "Taipei could do without a physician like me, but in Hualien I could do a lot."

In August 1988, at a gathering in the lobby of their new hospital to commemorate its second anniversary, these doctors took turns sharing their thoughts about their group relocation and their decision to join the hospital. When Kuo took the stage, he said that when he had made up his mind to come to Hualien, his chief at NTU Hospital, who knew him well, said to him, "No way will you stay there for long—you'll be back." Many others asked him how long he would work in Hualien, three years or five. "I always answered that I'd serve at the hospital till 2018."

Thirty-five years old when he joined, he would reach retirement age 30 years later in 2018. "I'll sign a long-term contract with Tzu Chi Hospital. I don't want the Master to ever be worried again about not being able to find doctors to work at Tzu Chi."

Another doctor who had joined, Chien Sou-hsin, also spoke up: "Tzu Chi will be my home. I'll be here until my last days."



# Dr. Hann-Chorng Kuo

## Urology at Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital

By Yang Shun-bin

Translated by Tang Yau-yang

Photos by Yan Lin-zhao

**"T**he compassion emanating from a feeble Buddhist nun made it difficult for us young physicians to turn down her invitation to join her to serve. Because we shared the same ideals, we felt we had found the right place to put our compassion to good use. That's how we embarked on our journey in Tzu Chi."

Those words were delivered by Dr. Hann-Chorng Kuo (郭漢崇) in 1988, at a ceremony marking the second anniversary of Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital. Kuo and about a dozen other young physicians had just left their careers at the venerable and prominent National Taiwan University Hospital (NTU Hospital) in the heart of Taipei to join the fledgling Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital, located in the remote city of Hualien on the relatively undeveloped eastern coast of Taiwan.

Like the others in his cohort, Kuo had stepped upon the stage to explain to the gathered audience why he had chosen an uncertain future in Hualien over a tried and true career path in Taipei. His decision was a choice that few doctors had been willing to make. Not surprisingly, Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital had experienced a severe shortage of medical professionals in nearly all of its medical departments. All of them, including the Department of Urology, relied on the services of attending and resident physicians from NTU Hospital.

Kuo pledged that he would sign a 30-year employment contract with the Tzu Chi hospital and help relieve the personnel shortage in the Department of Urology so it could serve its patients without delay.

That was 28 years ago, and a lot has changed. Over that time, it has grown from a chronically understaffed department to one of the preeminent urological research and treatment centers in Asia. Physicians from far and wide, even

from other countries, flock to the hospital to receive training.

### Entering the field of urology

In the old days in Taiwan, urology was not a popular specialty choice among young physicians, who favored internal medicine, surgery, OB/Gyn, and pediatrics. Doctors who ended up in other disciplines were usually there because their medical school grades were not high enough, as was the case with Kuo. Knowing that at best he would only be put on the waiting list for those hot specialties, he opted for a career in urology instead.

Having made his choice, he went at it wholeheartedly. He bought a complete three-volume set of thick urology textbooks, read them over and over again, and made careful notes.

After his residency at NTU Hospital had ended, he and a few other doctors volunteered to be stationed at Hofuf Hospital in rural Saudi Arabia. Doctors who volunteered to serve there for two years would be promoted directly to attending physicians when they returned to Taiwan.

Physicians from many countries worked at Hofuf, so it seemed like a mini United Nations. However, a spirit of mutual support was lacking. When physicians there saw others mess up, they would just look on instead of offering a helping hand—perhaps because they wanted to make themselves look good. Working in such an unfriendly environment, Kuo learned to perform each and every operation with the utmost care and caution, as if he were walking on thin ice.

After his stint at Hofuf, he returned to NTU Hospital, received the promised promotion, and became an attending physician.

One day two years later, Dr. Yao-Jen Chang (張耀仁), Kuo's college roommate for six years,



COURTESY HANN-CHORNG KUO

invited him to consider moonlighting at the newly opened Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital to support its urology medicine. No hospital in the greater Hualien area at the time had a urology department, so patients had little access to urologists. Patients needing such specialists either put off seeing the doctor until they could not stand the illness any more, or they sought help from other physicians like internists or surgeons. If they could afford it they went to Taipei, where such services were abundant.

Chang's suggestion led Kuo to start practicing urology part-time in the Hualien hospital. That was in October 1986. Kuo's first operation there was on a patient with bladder stones. Kuo continued for two years to hold an outpatient clinic in Hualien one day a week. During that time, he formed deep bonds with his Hualien patients.

Kuo figured that in Taipei he would be just one of many urologists, and hardly anyone would be inconvenienced if his services were unavailable. But it was an entirely different story in Hualien, a place sorely in need of medical

**This photo of Dr. Hann-Chorng Kuo (left) and Master Cheng Yen hangs on a wall in his office to remind Kuo not to deviate from his initial commitment to serve patients. The efforts of Kuo and his team over the past 28 years have made the Department of Urology at Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital a major research and treatment center and a magnet for young physicians to receive training.**

resources. He contemplated moving to Hualien to work full time. His colleagues urged him on and his family supported him, so he chose not to pursue further study in the United States and instead joined the Tzu Chi Hospital. That was nearly 30 years ago, in 1988.

### The Department of Urology

Now that there was a full-time urologist on its staff, the hospital quickly purchased video-urodynamic study equipment to more precisely diagnose and treat patients with urinary tract dysfunctions.



The hospital also bought high-caliber urological ultrasonography equipment worthy of the best medical centers. Using this equipment, the urological team at the hospital completed the first continent urinary diversion surgery in eastern Taiwan. The team also used it to monitor physiological metrics in women with urinary incontinence, and on the strength of the collected data they published several papers.

Kuo and his team plugged along. By the fifth anniversary of the hospital, three years after Kuo's arrival, they had logged more than a thousand urological operations, some of which were sufficiently difficult that only a few select medical centers in Taiwan could have accomplished them. What is particularly worth mentioning was the ileal neobladder surgery the team offered. This procedure brought untold blessings to patients who otherwise would have needed to live with urine drainage bags attached to them.

"I was probably the second or third surgeon in Taiwan to perform this surgery," Kuo commented, "which even today few surgeons perform. Many young surgeons dare not attempt it because their teachers don't teach it."

Kuo pointed out that doctors used to take a more conservative approach in treating bladder cancer and neurogenic bladder dysfunction. A typical surgeon might have removed the bladder, resected a segment of the small intestine, anastomosed the ureters to one end of the intestinal segment, then pulled the other end of the intestinal segment to form a stoma in the lower abdomen. An advantage of this conventional approach is a low risk of complications, but the big disadvantage is that the patient must forever live with a urine bag. This greatly degrades the patient's quality of life. A person may shun social contact or become overly conscious of being in a closed space because he or she might worry about a leak or any noticeable odors.

Kuo had often pondered this problem while he was still an attending physician at NTU Hospital. Later in Hualien, he took the conventional surgical approach as detailed in literature and modified it with an eye to improving a patient's quality of life. As in the conventional method, his modified version also utilizes a resected segment of the small intestine; but unlike the conventional approach, he executes a double-folding suture, making that small intestinal segment into a sac which he then sutures to the urethra.

Kuo's modified surgery is difficult to perform and more time-consuming. It also requires

extensive post-operative care. However, with all this extra effort, a patient can urinate normally without relying on a urine bag.

As can be expected, that benefit has turned out to be a huge draw for patients far and wide. Many patients have even traveled from Taipei—the most medically advanced city in Taiwan—to Hualien in order to obtain Kuo's care and receive the benefit of his surgery.

### Pushing the envelope

Urological patients often suffer from discomfort or embarrassment that is beyond the understanding of people who have not experienced the same problems. Kuo gave an example to illustrate this. A successful businessman had had an operation for his prostate cancer. Though the surgery had successfully removed the cancer, he began to leak urine. The problem persisted for a year. Kuo thought hard about how to fix the problem, and he eventually decided to try urethral suspension surgery, a very advanced procedure at the time, which modified the bladder neck suspension surgery for females to suit the needs of male patients. It worked. The leak stopped for the patient the very next day after the surgery.

The patient was ecstatic. In tears, he thanked Kuo repeatedly for relieving him of the misery that had dogged him for a whole year. He had deeply despaired because of his urine leakage problem—it was even worse than having cancer. He had had to wear an adult diaper because of his condition, and that had led him to routinely turn down invitations from friends to go golfing or take walks. No amount of business success meant anything to him when he was unable to control his urination. But now all this wretchedness was a thing of the past. He felt that his world was once again filled with color.

Kuo is deeply convinced that "a physician must concern himself with not just curing an illness, but also improving the patient's quality of life."

In 2012, Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital established a Voiding Dysfunction Therapeutic Center, the first such center in Taiwan. The center combines under one roof treatment of and research on urodynamics, overactive bladder, bladder outlet obstruction, voiding dysfunction, urinary retention, etc.

The efforts of Kuo's team have not gone unnoticed. Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital has been ranked among the top 30 in the world in urological research and the third in the quantity of



COURTESY HANN-CHORNG KUO

diagnosis, treatment, and research on overactive bladder.

### Constant search for a better way

Kuo's team has attracted patients from other countries as well.

An Australian man, John, about 40, had long suffered from a condition in which he felt the urge to urinate but could not actually do so. No doctor seemed to be able to help. Using his symptoms and the drug names that his doctors had prescribed for him as keywords, he searched medical journals and found some relevant papers. One researcher's name popped up in almost all these papers: Hann-Chorng Kuo.

John traveled to Hualien and sought help from Kuo. Tests indicated that John's bladder sphincters could not relax to allow urine to flow out. After ascertaining that the nerves and muscles that control urination were functioning normally in John, Kuo treated him with botulinum toxin (Botox). It did the trick, and John's condition was cured.

Kuo explained that Botox had first been used to treat crossed eyes by relaxing eye muscles. He figured that if Botox could relax muscles, it could perhaps be effective in treating overactive blad-

**In this photo from two decades ago, Kuo conducts an ultrasound examination of a patient's kidneys.**

der as well. Though he was pretty confident it would be a sound therapy, he nonetheless repeatedly checked out the side effects and potential risks. He also obtained permission from the government before using Botox on patients for whom traditional medical approaches had not worked.

The Department of Urology at Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital has had 58 research papers on Botox to its credit in the past 15 years, some of which have been cited by the American Urological Association as epitomes of therapies that have changed conventional ways of treating patients. Today, using Botox to treat urological conditions has become quite commonplace. The national health insurance system in Taiwan has even approved of such therapies as covered services. Many patients have benefited.

Reflecting on this experience, Kuo emphasized that research must originate out of a concern for patients. Only when it centers on their welfare will it become a meaningful project. Conducting research just for the sake of bumping up one's paper count invariably results in empty



talk that does patients no good. To Kuo, that amounts to a failure to do one's duty as a physician. He always emphasizes this point to his students when he teaches.

#### Personal values

A student once asked Kuo how he managed to conduct so many research projects while also fully occupied with his clinical responsibilities. "Here in Hualien, it takes me seven minutes to commute to my office and eight minutes to go home after work," Kuo replied. "That's 20 fewer days a year that I spend on commuting than you guys in Taipei."

Apparently, Kuo puts those saved hours to productive use. He uses his time wisely and efficiently. He always arrives at his office before seven in the morning to take care of mail and office paperwork. He starts his rounds at 7:30 sharp with residents in tow. He chats warmly with patients—he has a knack for making people comfortable in his presence. To patients and their families, Kuo is personable and never stuck-up.

Jiang Yuan-hong (江元宏), director of the Department of Urological Reconstructive Surgery and Endourology at Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital, has studied under Kuo for eight years now, since Jiang's days as a resident. To this day, he feels that he has much to learn yet from Kuo's ability to quickly earn the trust of his patients.

"He treats his patients like friends, which is why they trust him," Jiang said. "Every day we see how he interacts with patients, and that teaches us a lot."

Jiang pointed out that Kuo, though a world-renowned physician and professor, still rolls up his sleeves to examine patients' wounds and drainage tubes when making rounds. He personally changes wound dressings for patients who are not recovering from surgery as well as he would like. And no matter how busy he is, he always does two daily rounds to monitor the efficacy of the medications that he has prescribed for his patients and to make any necessary adjustments.

Kuo stressed the importance of a mentor in cultivating a good physician, noting that everything that the mentor says or does absolutely exerts influence on the mentee-physician. He elaborated on this point with examples: "Suppose a professor always talks about how much money he has made from the stock mar-

**Kuo arrives at his office every morning before seven to take care of mail and paperwork.**

ket, or how much money he has pulled in from this or that type of surgery. Over time, his mentees invariably take on values such as those. Conversely, if a mentor always treats patients with their best interests at heart and empathizes with their pain, his students will most likely become loving physicians as well."

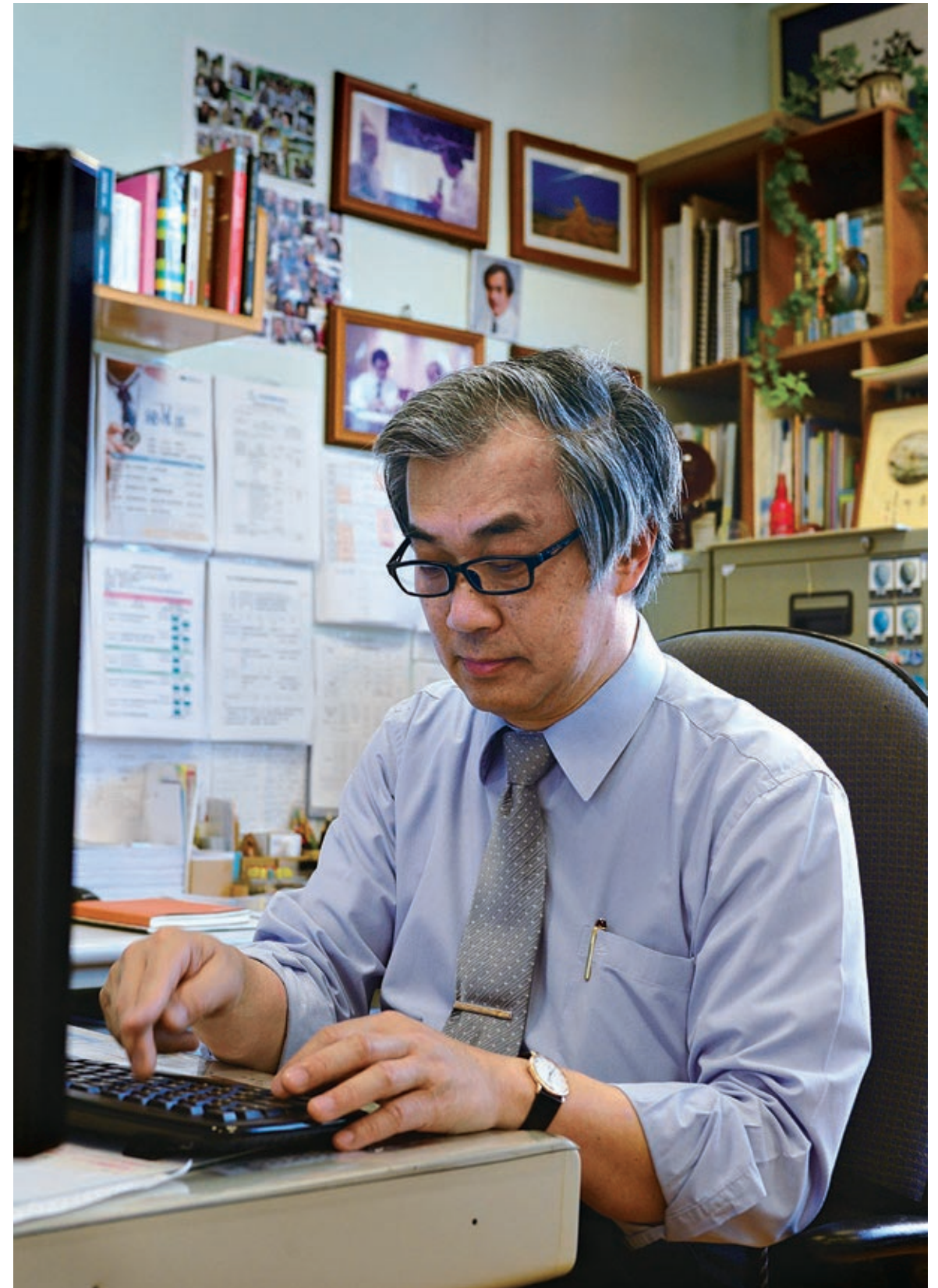
An American physician, Dr. Edward Trudeau (1848-1915), said: "To cure sometimes, to relieve often, to comfort always." This means that even though only a limited number of illnesses can be cured, physicians must do what they can to relieve their patients' pain and always bring them comfort. Senior physicians often share this quote with young physicians. Dr. Jiang has discovered in Kuo the physician that Trudeau advocated, and he intends to follow in Kuo's footsteps.

#### Refuse to say no

"The thing Dr. Kuo says most often to his patients is, 'We'll figure out a way for you.'" Jiang pointed out another characteristic of Kuo: He never easily says "no" to his patients. He believes that physicians should give them confidence and support, not discouragement and despair. A physician that says "no" and stops trying to help people who are already suffering and badly in need of support is like adding insult to injury. Although there are limits to what medicine can do, Kuo believes that it is the responsibility of a physician to try to break through, to not give up, and to not abandon people to face their difficulties alone.

Kuo attributes his tenacity and insistence to an encounter with a woman from Kaohsiung, the second largest city of Taiwan. She had been treated elsewhere for cervical cancer, which had impacted the nerves for bladder control and had left her unable to urinate. After many failed attempts to treat her condition, her doctor suggested she go to Kuo for treatment. Kuo was one of only a few doctors at the time who were willing to perform endoscopic bladder neck incisions on patients.

After the first operation, the patient was able to empty half of her bladder. However, the woman sought more improvement than that. Four more operations followed, which reduced her residual urine after voiding to within a hundred milliliters (3.4 fluid ounces). Still wanting more improvement—seeking zero residual—she asked Kuo for another surgery.







**Kuo patiently answers a patient's questions while on rounds with his colleagues.**

However, all those operations caused fistulas to emerge in her vagina and urethra, which in turn brought about hard-to-treat side effects. The patient returned to the hospital once every six months for her follow-up checkups, but she often left disappointed. Kuo himself had been very disappointed too. One day he said to her, "I've tried my best. Would you prefer to see another doctor?"

"How can you talk like that, doctor?" the patient shot back. She said that it had been a lot of work every time for her to travel all the way from her home in Kaohsiung to Hualien, but she had never thought of giving up. How then could Kuo give up? "Are you fit to be a professor?" she asked pointedly.

About eight resident physicians were standing right there around Kuo, catching every word the patient said. It was quite an embarrassing moment for the senior physician.

"She taught me a lesson," Kuo recalled. "She helped me understand that I should be doctoring from the patient's point of view." He has as a result often shared with his students that it is inevitable that physicians encounter medical conditions that just seem impossible to treat. In those situations, it is normal to feel frustrated and be tempted to send the patient away. However, a physician should embrace a sense of mission. No matter how tired they are, they must keep trying to figure out a way to help their patients get relief. "You might be their last hope," Kuo says.

Kuo says that occasions that cause frustration abound in urology. A case in point is the treatment of interstitial cystitis (IC), also called painful bladder syndrome. This is a condition that urologists the world over cannot seem to completely cure. It often causes recurring discomfort or pain in the bladder and the surrounding pelvic region. "Patients may feel a burning sensation, as if a piece of burning charcoal is stuck in their bladder," Kuo explained.

Because IC patients manifest no outward signs of affliction, they are often thought of, wrongly, as just imagining their pains. Even physicians outside of urology may not fully appreciate their suffering.

Since the disease is hard to treat, many doctors refuse to care for IC patients. They simply refer them to other doctors. Eventually, almost all of these patients end up in Kuo's clinic.



Kuo can no more promise them a cure than the other doctors can, but he says to them: "I'll care for you the best I can. If I can't cure your illness, I can at least help you learn how to live with it."

Though fully aware that a cure is most probably elusive, IC patients, knowing that Kuo and his team understand their suffering, have gradually learned to live with their symptoms and to smile again.

"This is the best reward we physicians can hope for," Kuo added.

#### New tools, new expertise

On August 14, 2014, Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital started using the da Vinci robotic minimally invasive surgery system. Two dozen or so hospitals in Taiwan already had such a system at the time, but the one at Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital was the very first in eastern Taiwan.

Kuo was one of those who had pushed for the purchase of the system. He readily acknowledged that it would be a sure money loser because the small population in eastern Taiwan would leave the system under-utilized. He advocated the purchase in spite of this because, without it, the hospital would not be able to train its surgical residents in how to use this potent tool. The purchase was a good investment in education.

Kuo's department got the honor of being the first to use the system. With the assistance of this precision robotic device, a team removed a man's prostate. This patient had previously had a hernia repaired, which made the resection of the prostate much more complicated to perform. Without the stability and precision of the da Vinci equipment, it would have been all but impossible.

That inaugural surgery was a success. The man was able to thank the doctor with a sonorous voice just days after the operation.

In the two years since the da Vinci device was inaugurated at the hospital, its surgeons have used it on about 140 patients. Jiang was the surgeon for about a hundred of them. The urological team at the hospital have used the da Vinci system to excise tumors, reconstruct urethras, and treat difficulties in urination. They have been able to remove a prostate, located deep inside the pelvis, within two hours and without damaging nerves and sphincter muscles.

The team has achieved a respectable level of excellence. The da Vinci robotic surgery system has greatly improved the safety of laparoscopic

procedures at Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital and extended the level of care that Kuo and his team can offer patients.

#### New papers

As Jiang builds up his clinical experience and expertise, he also continues to expand his research activities and publications—just as his mentor has amply done. Jiang pointed out that Kuo at times suggests potential research topics for his students to try. If he sees promising initial results, he provides more clinical cases for them to delve into.

Jiang recalled how his own first research paper had come about. When he was still a resident doctor, he performed an operation on a patient to treat urinary incontinence which involved placing a sling around his urethra. Kuo reviewed the ensuing ultrasound report and wrote "good position" regarding the placement of the sling. Jiang knew that textbooks at the time had not stipulated a standard location for such a sling. Curious, he asked his mentor how he had made the judgment about this sling placement.

Kuo admitted that he did not know for sure either—he just felt that it was the best place for the sling from the standpoint of structural mechanics. Since that was just a conjecture, he suggested that Jiang look into this topic further.

Jiang collected data on actual cases, compiled statistics, studied the literature, and spent two months writing a paper, which was subsequently published in an international medical journal. He even went to England to talk about his paper. This experience helped bolster his confidence and pique his interest in urological research.

Jiang said of Kuo, "He never pretends that he knows everything just because he's a professor. He's always humble in the face of the vast ocean of medical knowledge." When students ask Kuo a question to which he does not know the answer, he does not get mad; instead he sees such questions as topics for further research to which he encourages his students to devote their energy.

#### Spinal injuries

Besides his care for typical urological patients, Kuo is also noted for his treatment of spinal injury patients with urological conditions. When he chaired the academic committee at the Taiwanese Continence Society, he held many seminars on the care of spinal injury patients to give young physicians a chance to understand and appreciate



**A physician uses the da Vinci robotic minimally invasive surgery system at Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital.**

the difficulties these people face. He urged physicians to join him and do more for them.

Kuo has worked with spinal injury patients since 1989. As part of its third anniversary celebration, Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital held a free clinic for such patients. Hospital social worker Deng Shu-qing (鄧淑卿) invited Kuo to help out there. At the clinic, Chen Ing-ho (陳英和), then head of orthopedics at the hospital, cared for spinal injuries, while Kuo dealt with urination problems.

Kuo pointed out that urologists back then were rarely exposed to spinal injuries. What lit-

tle knowledge they might have possessed about this kind of care most likely came not from clinical experience but from textbooks, which offered one-size-fits-all treatment protocols like, in Kuo's words, "Open a hole in the abdomen [for the urine catheter] and ask the patient to return regularly to change the catheter." With the help of the social service office at Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital, a group of spinal injury patients had set up the Spinal Cord Injured Patients Care Society. Kuo noticed that many core members of the society, despite being mobility-impaired themselves, were working hard to help others. They impressed him so much that he decided to pursue this field of medical care.

Kuo participated in free clinics for spinal injury patients every year after that and helped



**Kuo demonstrates surgical techniques at a simulated surgery on a donated cadaver at Tzu Chi University.**

relieve their discomfort coming from such conditions as urinary tract infections, urine leaks, and renal edema. However, he also knew that there were many people whom the free clinics had not reached because their condition was too severe for them to make the trip to the clinics. Therefore, he decided to reach out to them.

The Spinal Cord Injured Patients Care Society provided Kuo with a list of people for him to visit. Carrying a briefcase containing a hand-held ultrasound machine, empty vials, and home care pamphlets, he traveled around Taiwan, visiting the patients in turn. At their homes, he checked their bladders and kidneys and collected their urine, which he took back to the hospital lab for analysis and record keeping. He examined more than 900 patients at their homes in 2003 and 2004.

"Many patients didn't look good in the early days," Kuo said. He cited the case of a Mr. Zhu, who had damaged nerves as a result of an automobile accident. After surgery and rehabilitation at a hospital, he was discharged and went home with a urinary catheter. He would press on his bladder to urinate, and he thought that was normal. But Kuo noticed that the man was pale, lacked any appetite, and was extremely fatigued. The doctor figured that something must have gone wrong.

Tests proved Kuo right: The man had renal edema. If he had remained untreated for just a bit longer, he would have had to begin dialysis. Kuo arranged to have him operated on right away. The patient returned to health, and now he has a steady job and a happy family.

During his home visits, Kuo checked on patients and taught them how to care for themselves. He remarked that many of the people that he had visited ended up going to the hospital to receive his treatment. Since both urologists and neurologists have become more involved with the care of spinal injury patients, such patients have better access to proper medical care. Kuo has been very happy to see this.

On weekends, he serves spinal injury patients in northern Taiwan, and he holds a regular clinic at Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital. The Spinal Cord Injured Patients Care Society has developed into the Spinal Cord Injured Patients Potential and Development Center in Taoyuan, northern Taiwan. Kuo and members of the Tzu







Kuo believes that young physicians—standing on the shoulders of countless teachers—will surpass him in their ability to care for patients.



Jiang Yuan-hong, one of Kuo’s students, tends to a surgical wound as he explains to a patient and her family how to apply artificial skin so that they can safely do it at home to lower the risk of infections.

Jiang was one of only three young urologists in Taiwan chosen for an inaugural exchange program between the European Association of Urology and the Taiwan Urological Association. This was the certificate awarded to Jiang after his participation in the program.



Chi International Medical Association also go there to hold free clinics and pass on healthcare information when there are new members at this center.

Kuo is also active in the Spinal Cord Injured Patients Voiding Management Care Network. He recruits physicians throughout Taiwan to join the network, and so far about 20 doctors from 16 hospitals have joined. He sincerely hopes that the nearly 50,000 spinal injury patients in Taiwan can one day easily find local doctors who can care for their voiding needs.

Now Kuo’s 30-year contract with the hospital is about to run out. When asked if he would renew it for another 30 years, he laughed and said that would be impossible. He added that it would be more important for him to instill in younger physicians the spirit of patient service and to transmit his experience to them so that the torch can be passed on. He wants to help make his students more effective than he has been.

He prays that all physicians in Taiwan, not just his own students, will cultivate a patient-centric mindset. Only then will medical care in Taiwan continue to improve and advance.



# Just One Ounce

## I Swear

*It takes years for a person to grow and build a life, but mere ounces of an illicit drug can shatter that life. When a drug user falls, his or her family falls too. Drugs, as inconspicuous as they are, seem to inflict more destruction than even the largest tanks.*

*In Taiwan, drug use is on the rise and the average age of users is going down. More people are incarcerated for drug offenses than for any other single offense. Tzu Chi volunteers are doing what they can to fight the drug epidemic.*

**By Li Wei-huang**

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

A Tzu Chi volunteer enters the heavily guarded Changhua Prison for an anti-drug workshop for inmates.







## From Prison to the Presidential Palace

*Seven years have passed since his release from prison, but Gao Zhao-liang is still occasionally jolted awake from nightmares in which he is being taken away in a police car for drug use, the offense that got him locked up in the first place.*

*An addict must spend the rest of his or her life fending off the risk of falling into the habit again. Gao keeps reminding himself that he must always walk on thin ice when it comes to drugs.*

*To help people who have been in his shoes and to warn people away from drugs, he frequently gives anti-drug talks. Every talk is a reminder to himself to never go down that path again.*

Tzu Chi volunteers followed guards at Changhua Prison through a series of securely locked metal doors to a big classroom in factory number seven. More than a hundred inmates were already in the room waiting for the volunteers. All doors to the room were securely locked.

Over 2,500 inmates are serving their time at Changhua Prison, in central Taiwan. Half of them are here on drug-related charges.

Volunteer Gao Zhao-liang (高肇良) took the rostrum and related to the inmates his own encounters with drugs and jailhouses, the miseries he had caused himself and his family, and his regrets for having used drugs. The audience was quiet and attentive, probably because they felt that Gao knew and understood them better than most. After all, he had once been one of them.

In the summer of 2009, Gao was released from this very prison. He was 34 years old then. He has been back often since—not as a recidivated criminal but as “Teacher Gao,” as he has become known to the inmates and prison administrators. Accompanied by other volunteers, he talks to inmates in the 12 factories at the prison.

### Hurry home

Gao counts himself fortunate in having kicked his drug habit, which had been like a runaway horse that threatened to carry him off the edge of a cliff. He hopes his experience can

**Gao Zhao-liang, once a drug addict and an inmate, is now an anti-drug crusader.**

help other people, so he gives talks to warn people of the danger of drugs. In addition to Changhua Prison, he has also been back to the other correctional institutions in which he had previously been incarcerated: Yunlin Prison, Taichung Prison, and Nantou Detention Center. He has even talked to students at the junior high school where he first got hooked. “I want them to see me so they can believe that they can overcome the power of drugs too,” said Gao.

He works with Tzu Chi volunteers in making such visits. His audience usually includes inmates and students. Gao and other volunteers do everything within their power to accommodate every request for their presentation. Since he started, Gao has made more than 300 such presentations. He gave over a hundred talks in the first nine months of 2016 alone; Tzu Chi volunteers worked 3,000 shifts in conjunction with his talks.

Gao and the volunteers went into overdrive in May, when he talked for 25 days. The volunteers wanted to reach as many students as possible before they started their summer vacation in July. Long summer days can be a particularly tempting time for students to use drugs. However, talking so much for so many days in a row was quite challenging to Gao. One day while he was stoned, he had a traffic accident and severely damaged his trachea. Initially, doctors thought that he would have to use nasogastric tubes for the rest of his life. Only his perseverance helped him overcome that prognosis and get rid of those tubes. But the accident still has its effects: He becomes hoarse after too much talking.



Even so, he cherishes every opportunity to talk to others about drugs. He knows the damage they can do, and he hopes to help as many people as he can to reduce any possible damage.

Traveling so much and giving so many talks may give the impression that Gao is free of financial worries, but that is not so. He needs to earn a living as much as the next guy. He and his wife, Xie Shu-ya (謝舒亞), run a store in Yongjing, Changhua, selling luggage and backpacks. They also have a side business selling lemon *aiyu* jelly drinks and vegetarian snacks at a stall in front of their store. Each night before a talk, besides getting his presentation ready, Gao has to prepare the ingredients for his jelly drinks too. After the talk is over, he hurries home to open his businesses.

He is keenly aware that drug users face monumental hurdles in their search for employment after their release from prison, so he puts a portion of his income into a fund to help former convicts transition back to society.

#### Personal touch

Gao tries to shake the hands of every inmate after each prison talk. He hopes that the warmth of his handshake can help convey to them his care, his best wishes, and his message that he will never give up on them. He believes that a little warmth can go a long way towards helping inmates make a change for the better in their lives.

Gao tells inmates that they can change right then and there. They do not need to wait till after their release to amend their life. He himself

did not wait for his release to make changes.

The example of Cai Tian-sheng (蔡天勝), a Tzu Chi volunteer and former drug user and convict, helped Gao decide while he was still in prison to turn over a new leaf. Cai often gave talks to share his story after he had reformed and cleaned up his act, and so Gao began replicating his approach of spreading the message.

Gao not only talks to inmates—he also answers letters from them, giving them encouragement and hope to help set them free from the fetters of drugs. Over the years, he has received nearly 800 letters from inmates. He receives an average of 20 to 30 letters a month. He carefully hand-writes a reply to almost every letter. “Behind each letter is a person longing for change,” Gao explained. That’s why he treats every letter very seriously.

He himself was in and out of prison for 15 years, so he knows how inmates feel when they receive letters from outside. “You feel that someone still cares about you,” he says.

Sometimes inmates write to Gao to tell him how sorry they are and how terribly they miss their parents who are getting on in years and who live alone at home without any help. Messages such as these prompt Gao and other volunteers to take action. They usually contact the parents. If they are willing to meet with volunteers, Gao and others pay a visit to their home. If the family needs financial or medical help, they are referred to social workers at the Tzu Chi Foundation.



Many inmates write to Gao, and he patiently answers every letter to give them encouragement. He keeps up regular correspondence with about 50 inmates.



Gao shares his life story with inmates. The slide in this photo says, “From prison to the Presidential Palace: the road I have traveled.”

Gao has seen these unfortunate scenarios unfold too many times: A drug user drains his or her family’s finances and leads it into poverty; or an addict who has to help support his or her family becomes ill from taking drugs or is put behind bars, likewise leading the family into financial straits. Some of the letters that Gao has received and acted on have been spurred by such unfortunate circumstances. He knows that it is important that volunteers reach out and help these inmates’ families. As soon as a family has been helped, Gao writes to the inmate to bring him up to date on what volun-

teers have done for his family. Gao also urges the inmate to behave in prison, to never relapse once he is released, and to instead fulfill his duty as a child and take good care of his parents. “Once you get out, never, ever go back again,” he pleads.

#### Been there, done that

A-shun was an inmate at the Kaohsiung Drug Abuser Treatment Center when he learned that his father had terminal cancer. The family was poor, so he was very worried that his dad would not be able to receive good care. After learning about A-shun’s situation, Gao and other volunteers visited his father at home. When the father passed away, they even helped with funeral arrangements.



A-shun's circumstances brought a painful memory back to Gao's mind. He recalled that he was locked up at Yunlin Prison when the news of his own father's death reached him. He was allowed to return home for the funeral. When he arrived home, shackles on his arms and legs, he got down on his knees and crawled towards his father's picture to pay his last respects. He was wracked by regrets.

The memory still wrenches his heart, and there is no way he can undo the wrongs he has done. The best he can do now is use the body his father gave him to do good. To that end, he is fully committed to anti-drug work.

Sometimes inmates enclose postage stamps in their letters to Gao and ask him to donate the stamps to charity on their behalf. Gao keeps the stamps and donates the equivalent cash to charity in the inmate's name. He then mails the receipt to the inmate.

As a result of his correspondence with inmates, some of them have gone to see him at his store after their release from prison. "Only those who truly want to change come to see me," Gao said.

Some drug users' families have also sought out Gao for help. He remembers a couple who visited him at his store to talk about their drug-addicted son. The mother cried the entire time, while the father sat quietly to one side. They told Gao that their son began using drugs after he went to work in Taipei. They had never seen drugs themselves and were at a complete loss about how to help their son.

That is probably a typical scenario that has played out in many families. A child goes astray. The parents try to set him straight with love, but to no avail. He keeps stealing or begging for money to buy more drugs, becoming more and more deeply addicted.

As cruel as it may appear, Gao sometimes suggests that a child be handed over to law enforcers, especially if he is a long-time addict. Imprisonment at least disrupts the consumption of drugs and leads to possible reform of a drug user. Otherwise the pain caused will never see an end.

#### **I know you**

Unfortunately, even prisons provide no guarantee of reform.

Once Gao went to a prison to give a talk. One of the inmates in the audience, Pan, was an acquaintance of Gao. They had bought drugs together. Now years later, Gao had become a lecturer, a rehabilitator, while Pan remained on the wrong side of the law.

Pan was happy for Gao, seeing that he was leading a steady and meaningful life. However, when Gao encouraged Pan to pursue volunteer work after his release, Pan choked. He said that he was over 60 years old and serving a 16-year sentence. When he got out, if it ever came to that, he would be a doddering old man.

**Gao gives a juvenile drug offender a hug and says to him, "Be good. Once you get out of here, don't come back."**





In the course of talking to inmates over the years, Gao has come across at least ten people in his audience whom he knew: schoolmates at elementary school or junior high school, or other inmates he had met while incarcerated.

This shows how widespread drug use has become, how easy it is for drug offenders to be released only to recidivate and be put back in prison again, and how difficult it is for drug addicts to kick the habit and shatter the shackles of drugs.

Sometimes a drug user is put behind bars for stealing, robbing, or other offenses. They may start by borrowing or begging for money to buy drugs, and when they cannot get any, they steal or rob. They may even use violence against their

own family to get what they want. The impact of drug abuse can be huge and far-reaching. There have even been instances of drug addicts or their parents killing themselves because they cannot take it any more.

Drugs, any way you look at them, are a huge problem for society.

#### Addict rehab

Gao has been around drug addicts who have been paroled. He has helped them to reintegrate into society and to stay away from drugs. As can be imagined, it is no easy job.

He has likened his work to planting on barren soil: The harvest is never assured. It takes a lot of patience and perseverance to see results.

He mentioned an inmate with whom he had kept in touch for several years before he was released. When that person was out, Gao helped him move to new living quarters and look for work, and he took care of other things to make his transition back to society easier. But his efforts went down the drain when the man took up drugs again not long after. It broke Gao's heart, but he quickly got himself together. He knew he must not be easily defeated. "If I was so easily broken up, how could I help the next person?"

It has been three years now since Changhua Prison started regularly sending soon-to-be-paroled inmates to Tzu Chi recycling stations to volunteer. As a result of this, some participants,

after their parole release, have continued to volunteer at the recycling stations. Tzu Chi volunteers are also working with the Changhua County education department to fight drugs. Volunteers plan to visit all 215 junior high schools and elementary schools in the county to spread the anti-drug message.

The county has engaged Gao to serve as a speaker in its anti-drug campaign. Gao also goes with county social workers to visit people who are quitting drugs. The Changhua branch of the Taiwan After-Care Association, which is under the supervision of the Ministry of Justice, has also provided interest-free loans for discharged drug offenders to start their own lemon aiyu jelly drink businesses, with Gao as their mentor.



Gao and his wife, Xie Shu-ya, rush home after a presentation to open their businesses: a luggage store and an aiyu jelly drink stall in front. A student gets a complimentary drink if he or she comes to the stall and says, "I'm a little fighter against drugs."

Gao and Xie drive to Changhua Prison to give a talk. Gao joined Tzu Chi and became a dedicated volunteer after he was released from prison. Seeing his transformation, Xie decided to marry him and start a family with him.



### Don't ever touch it

It is important not to touch drugs. Among other things, if you get caught and are convicted,

**Gao, back row center, and other Tzu Chi volunteers in front of Changhua Prison. Gao himself was released from this prison in 2009. He now regularly visits it to share his story.**

it leaves you with a record. Gao knows the stigma that comes with a criminal record, so he is very worried on behalf of young students.

He pointed out that when he was in junior high school, amphetamines used to be a category three drug in Taiwan. That designation would not have resulted in a criminal record on its users. However, the drug has since been

reclassified as a category two. Now people convicted of amphetamine use will receive, and carry with them for the rest of their lives, a criminal record.

Nowadays ketamine is popular among students. It is a category three drug, as amphetamines once were. Gao is concerned that ketamine, if it ever follows amphetamines onto category two, will get many young people convicted and slap them with an indelible criminal record. That is yet another impetus for Gao to quicken his pace of outreach in hopes of debunking the drug mystique that often piques the curiosity of drug-naïve students and adults. He hopes to guide them away from drugs before it is too late.

### Speaking to himself

Seasoned drug users know that deciding to take drugs takes but an instant, but regaining independence from drugs can take a lifetime. Laying out one's drug past plainly in front of other people takes great courage. Gao is doing this to help others and also to help himself. Whenever he talks to others about his own drug past, he is at the same time reminding himself to never ever go down that path again.

Gao's fear of a relapse is shared by a Christian pastor who, once a drug user like Gao, to this day still remains on high alert. He remembers the ecstasy that he got by taking drugs. Every time he preaches against drug use, he has to remind himself of his God-given responsibility to never slip or relapse again.

Another former drug user, now a drug counselor, says that when he counsels drug users and detects on

them that familiar scent, he asks to be excused for a moment, goes outside to pray, and returns to resume the session only when he has regained composure and control.

Once exposed to drugs, a person must spend the remainder of his or her lifetime fending off the cravings.

Pastor Liu Min-he (劉民和) of Operation Dawn, Taiwan, has worked for many years preaching an anti-drug message and helping people affected by drugs. He pointed out that drug use damages the totality of the user, and that it takes love, time, and patience to have any chance of winning the battle. It is no cakewalk.

Pastor Liu Hao (劉昊), founder of the Flying Life Association of Christ, an organization that has helped many drug users and former prisoners, believes that if you have used drugs for 10 or 20 years, you have to remain drug-free for the same amount of time to be considered having successfully kicked the habit. Even so, it does not guarantee that that person will keep drugs out of his life forever; it does not guarantee that he will never be snared by them again. "If you want to talk about real success, then you'll have to wait until the lid on a former drug user's coffin has been nailed," Liu said.

A free person now, Gao still occasionally has nightmares in which he is being hauled away in a police car for drug offenses.

He remembers the time when his mother had a solid iron door built to lock him in his room to force him off drugs. While he was locked up, he became totally incontinent—a symptom of his drug withdrawal—and his mother cleaned up after him throughout the duration.

He is thankful to his parents for never giving up on him; their support was why he could have another shot at life. Last year, in 2015, he even received a presidential award for his efforts to help keep people away from illicit drugs.

He remains ever so vigilant, ever so careful. He knows that he, like every person who has tried drugs, is not immune, award or not, from the hazards of a relapse. "If I ever relapsed, I'd hurt everyone who has trusted me and loved me. I'd also cause a lot of people to lose confidence in themselves." With this in mind, he chooses to remain on thin ice as he continues his campaign against drugs.





# When One Uses Drugs, the Whole Family Suffers

*"Drug users suffer, but their families suffer even more," said Zeng Ming Di. Her two younger brothers, enslaved by drugs a good part of their lives, suffered tragically. Their parents, worried and living in fear for their sons' sake, felt like they had been dragged into hell.*

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting



*I*t has been my wish since I was young to get married, have two kids, and establish a happy, warm, harmonious family. I told myself I'd arrange my days so that they were pleasant, fulfilling, and wonderful. But that dream evaporated when I succumbed to the vile habit of using drugs. I felt like I'd fallen into an abyss and was powerless to stop my descent.

*I vow that this will be my last time in prison. If I do drugs again after I'm out, it will be my death penalty. I'll take my own life if I so much as lay my hands on drugs. I'll put an end to my pitiful life and not drag my family down with me again.*

A-liang wrote those thoughts in a journal he kept while in prison. Having been in and out of prison for five years, he vowed he'd never touch drugs again. He sketched out his hope for a better future in the words of that diary. Yet tragically, things did not pan out as he had hoped.

The next year, early in the summer of 1991, A-liang's older brother A-chang was put behind bars on charges of drug use. Later that same year, their father, physically and mentally exhausted from dealing with his sons' drug problems, died of illness. A-liang was out of prison by that time, but he had not successfully given up drugs as he had vowed. He felt ashamed that he had not cleaned up his act in time to allow his father to see him turn over a new leaf. Now it was forever too late. Deeply remorseful, he committed suicide one year later. He was only 31 when he died. When his sister Zeng Ming Di (曾明諦) rushed home that night after receiving a call from their mother, A-liang's body had already gone stiff. Devastated, the whole family cried in agony.

A-liang's suicide note read, "Drugs are too difficult to quit. I'm sorry I dragged you all in, so I decided to take my life to end all this misery." For A-liang, sniffing glue gave way to taking pentazocine, then amphetamines, and finally heroin. He went on a downward spiral until eventually he was drowned in a sea of drug

abuse. Along the way, he caused his family endless pain.

## Fatal attraction

All this happened more than 20 years ago. Zeng's family has chosen to bury this painful memory deep in their hearts and rarely mention it. Even A-liang's room was converted into a storage room long ago. Zeng has never had the courage to ask her mother how, on that tragic night, she managed to lower A-liang's heavy body from the rope onto the floor.

A-liang left behind his journal, allowing his family to discover his inner pain. Zeng dissolved in tears as she read through it. The journal revealed that her brother had long ago made the decision to take his own life should he touch drugs again. Learning about his struggle, Zeng was sad and moved at the same time. "He still had a good heart."

One of A-liang's journal entries read: "A mother's love for her children binds her to them forever. It's like being sentenced to life in prison without any possibility of parole. I'm so indebted to my mom that I'll never be able to fully pay her back. After I rejoin society this time, I'll do my best to fulfill my duty as a son." When A-liang was still in prison, their mom sent him three to five thousand NT dollars (US\$100 to 165) every month for him to use. A-liang felt bad that he not only caused his mom to suffer but also had to take money from her.

Zeng said that both her parents loved A-liang and A-chang deeply, despite their drug habit. Before her dad passed away, he told Zeng again and again to never give up on her two younger brothers and to do what she could to help them kick their habit. His love for his sons, in spite of the pain they had brought him, was heartrending and touching.

He had had quite a good career. He and his wife had two daughters and three sons, all of whom they loved dearly and were very protective of. Zeng remembers that their dad was so



**A-liang recorded his feelings, thoughts, and regrets in his journal in prison. His entries show how badly he wanted to reform and atone for his past wrongs, and how much he missed his family. The red underlines were made by Zeng Ming Di, A-liang's older sister.**

protective of them he would not let them engage in any sport that might pose the least bit of danger. When A-chang was in junior high, he began rebelling against the protectiveness of his parents, which he deemed restrictive. He fell in with bad company and started going astray. Their dad, to cut off his son's ties to those bad influences, moved the family twice. However, even such measures could not stop A-chang from continuing to go down the wrong path.

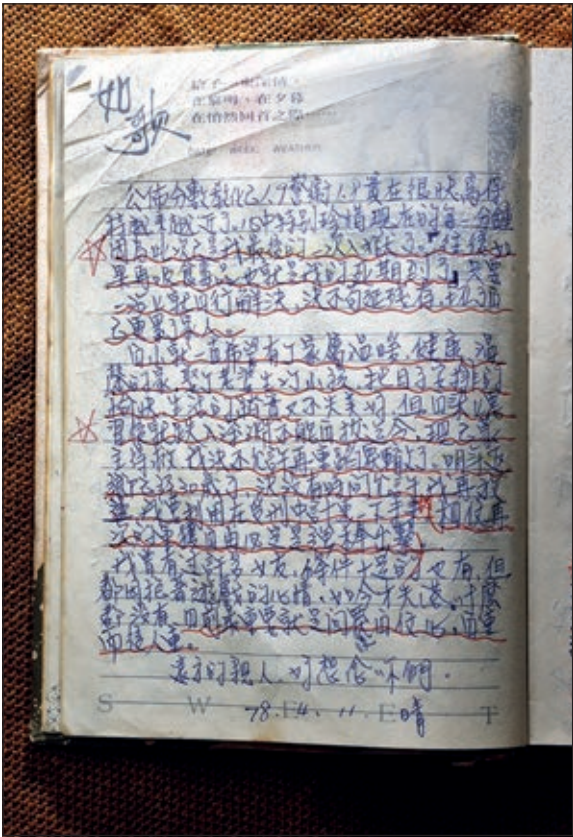
In 1975, Zeng graduated from a teachers college. A-chang was in a juvenile detention house by then. Zeng kept trying to talk sense into her brother and persuade him to return to the right path, but to no avail. Even worse, their younger brother A-liang began using drugs too.

A-chang did not come to his senses until their dad had passed away and A-liang had committed suicide. He broke his addiction, landed a steady job, got married, and started a family. Sadly, he was later diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Weakened by his long-time drug habit, he found it hard to bear the pain brought on by the illness. To dull the pain, he began taking drugs again. Within a short month, he spent hundreds of thousands of NT dollars on heroin.

When the drugs caused hallucinations, he asked Zeng to accompany him to a hospital to help him break his addiction. Unfortunately, he eventually lost his fight with cancer. Before he died, he held his mom's hand and repented of his wrongs in tears. He said he hadn't gotten a chance to fulfill his filial duty to his dad, and now he couldn't even continue to take care of his mom, let alone see his own daughter grow up. He was sad that in his 46 years of life, he had wasted 18 years in slavery to drugs. He asked to be buried with his dad so that he could ask for his forgiveness.

**A life-long tug of war with drugs**

At A-chang's funeral, his mom was given a cane to hit his coffin three times. This is a Taiwanese tradition observed when a child dies before his or her parents. It symbolizes a reprimand to the child for breaking his or her parents'



hearts by dying before them. But his mother could not bring herself to hit the coffin. She cried and said, "He tried to clean up his act. He wasn't a bad son. He was my beloved darling." Then she dropped the cane and cried inconsolably.

Zeng said that though their parents loved them, they never doted on them. To help her two brothers break their addiction, they even asked the police to place them into juvenile detention houses. When that failed to reform them, they later checked them into private rehab centers and other similar facilities.

When her brothers came home, their mom kept a close eye on them almost 24 hours a day. But when a craving hit, her brothers' eyes would glaze over, they would talk incoherently, and all they wanted to do was rush out of their home to get a fix. Drug dealers that would satisfy their cravings were never far away. "It was impossible to stop them from going out," Zeng recalled. "I'd often think to myself in frustration: 'We're doing our very best to help them. How can they keep on like this?'"

Her brothers would steal gold jewelry or cash from home to buy drugs. When they could not get their hands on any money, they would

raise such a racket that even their neighbors could hear it. They even lied to swindle money from their family, saying they were starting businesses with friends and needed some capital. Their father knew that if he gave them the money, they would just use it to buy drugs, but he still gave it to them because he didn't want them to steal from other people to pay for drugs. He was helpless and deeply disappointed in his sons.

Zeng and her family were most afraid of receiving phone calls telling them that A-chang or A-liang had been sent to a hospital or police station again. Sometimes they were arrested because their friends had given them firearms for safekeeping, or they had been found in possession of stolen goods. Sometimes they were sent to hospital because they had been found lying on the side of a road injured or unconscious from taking drugs. "At times like those, we had to drop whatever we were doing and rush to where they were to take care of things for them," said Zeng. "We were constantly on pins and needles; there was no peace for us."

When A-chang or A-liang were incarcerated, their family would visit them regularly no matter how far away they were. Ironically, it was only when they were serving their sentences that their family could get a breather. But going to prison never did the two brothers any good. In prison, they got to know more drug dealers or made more wrong friends, and when they got out they just fell back into their old ways.

One night, Zeng, having married and moved out of her parents' home, visited her parents. In the living room, her mom and dad sat silently across from each other. They sighed and cried, saying to her, "We're so miserable. Our two sons can't quit drugs. We feel like we're living in hell."

**Save at least one**

People often look at drug addicts with leery eyes, but Zeng knew that her two brothers were

not bad people. They were kind at heart, but it was just that they were "sick." They needed help from society.

She says that whether people can successfully kick their drug habits depends a great deal on their willpower, but that it would have really helped her brothers if there had been some sort of halfway house to help them transition back into society after they were released from prison. "Many former prisoners revert to their old ways because they find it challenging to readjust to society." Some have trouble holding down regular jobs because they cannot stand how people look at them because of their past.

Zeng admitted that back when she was still a teacher, she avoided talking about her two younger brothers to outsiders because she felt they were a shame to their family. Her parents felt the same way. They blamed themselves but could not figure out what they had done wrong as parents. "We've never done any evil. How did our sons end up like this?"

Zeng's experience as a member of a family with drug addicts has allowed her to know the pain drug use can cause. To help prevent people from falling victim to drugs, she has bravely stepped forward and joined Tzu Chi's anti-drug campaign. She shares her story in public, even though every time she does so she relives the agonizing pain she once felt.

"Anti-drug education is really important," Zeng reiterated. "It brings to people's attention the terrible consequences of doing drugs. It's like giving inoculation shots. Even if we can save just one, at least that's one. We must keep kids from touching drugs." She knows how difficult it is to wean someone off drugs. Once you get on the road of drug abuse, it is hard to return. She does not want anyone to be enslaved by drugs again or go through the pain she and her family went through. "Drug addiction is so difficult to kick, it's like you're possessed. Never try it out of curiosity. You must love yourself and your family."





## Mired in Quicksand

*A Tzu Chi volunteer shows schoolchildren cystoscopic images of a normal bladder and the inflamed bladder of a ketamine user. During an anti-drug workshop, volunteers use pictures, props, and story-telling to make their presentation more interesting and engaging to young students.*

*In the last seven years, Tzu Chi's anti-drug campaign has sponsored 7,000 workshops, many of which have been for young students. Early exposure to correct messages about illicit drugs may help young people fend off the temptation of using drugs.*

The Tzu Chi anti-drug campaign is in its seventh year of operation. In conjunction with the Ministries of Justice, Education, and Health and Welfare, Tzu Chi volunteers and former drug addicts have gone to military bases, schools, communities, organizations, prisons, and drug rehabilitation centers to spread their drug awareness message. They have given more than 7,000 workshops so far.

In early September 2016, just after the school year had started, volunteers from the Tzu Chi Teachers Association chapter in Taipei began running anti-drug workshops at 45 elementary schools in Yunlin County in rural southern Taiwan. The allure and destructiveness of drugs are entirely non-discriminatory. They can inflict great harm to any person no matter whether he or she lives in a rural village or a big city. In fact, "The less sophisticated the students, the more critical it is to give them 'immunity shots' early," said Wu Cheng-hua (吳承樺), director of academic affairs at Huanan Elementary School, one of the 45 schools. He believes that children in a rural area are simpler and more innocent and are therefore especially susceptible to drug traps viciously placed to snare them unawares. It is important to inoculate the children as early as possible against the use of drugs.

The damage of drugs can reach the most rural area. Volunteers once conducted a workshop in a countryside community in Yizhu, Chiayi County, where they talked to a group of villagers. A tearful female participant sought the volunteers out after the workshop and told them that her son had been locked up for 20 years for selling drugs and that he would soon be discharged from Chiayi Prison. She was very worried about his release.

"It's bad enough if he just takes drugs himself," the mother said. "What I'm more worried about is that he'll continue to sell drugs to other people and ruin their lives. I wish that he wouldn't be released."

Apparently, the son had harmed the mother to the point that she no longer believed in him.

Most people have enough sense to stay away from illicit drugs, but they do not know how to prevent their loved ones or friends from using. They also do not know how to help their drug-addicted loved ones or friends to quit. Society at large seems to believe that drug users have nobody but themselves to blame for their addictions, so many people refuse to spend their time and money to help drug addicts quit.

Tzu Chi believes otherwise. Its anti-drug campaign spreads the word against drugs to help people see and understand the harm that drugs can do to users and collaterally to their family, friends, and society. After all, a drug-free society means a more peaceful society.

### Quicksand

The Narcotics Hazard Prevention Act in Taiwan places controlled substances into four categories. Category one includes such drugs as heroin, morphine, opium, and cocaine. Category two are drugs like coca, cannabis, amphetamines, and Ecstasy. Ketamine and flunitrazepam (often referred to as the "date rape" drug) belong to category three. Category four includes alprazolam (Xanax), diazepam (Valium), etc. Government data has shown that the number of young people using category three drugs has skyrocketed 15-fold over the last decade.

A survey published in October 2016 by the Child Welfare League Foundation showed that 16 percent of Taiwanese teenagers and children were aware of channels through which they could obtain category three and four drugs. The same survey revealed that more than one in four respondents believed that they would be able to control their consumption if they chose to use category three or four drugs. Is such perceived self-control a good thing? Quicksand does not usually appear threatening to someone until he carelessly walks into it and becomes helplessly mired.

The survey also reported the primary reasons why respondents decided to try category three and four drugs. In order of importance, the reasons were: 1) frustration, 2) feeling no warmth in their families, 3) stress relief, and 4) curiosity. The list seems to indicate that youngsters' demand for drugs stems not from physiological but from psychological impetuses.

Young people, especially those around 13 to 18, are generally curious, impulsive, and prone to peer pressure. They tend to conform to the prevailing norms in their circle of friends. If they lack good influences in their lives or if no responsible adults are around to provide them with trusted counsel and support, they might fall to the temptation of using drugs.

Some of those who have fallen into the drug trap were probably unaware of the dreadful medical consequences that can await drug users.

Ketamine is currently the most popular controlled substance in Taiwan. Long-term con-





**Drug dealers have disguised drugs as candy or powdered coffee. First, that throws the police off the scent. Second, they can use the drug-laced candy to trick unsuspecting schoolchildren. Volunteers teach children through role play what to do when people they don't know offer them candy.**

sumption can lead to permanent damage to the brain, resulting in diminished memory and capacity to learn, and also psychological problems including high levels of anxiety and depression. Even worse, it can cause sudden death from cardiovascular diseases.

Another serious consequence is severe fibrosis of the bladder wall. A fibrotic bladder can become so dysfunctional that it can hold no more than 50 ml (1.7 fluid oz) of urine. To put that in perspective, the typical human bladder capacity is between 300 and 500 ml (10 and 17 fl oz). The extremely small capacity of a fibrotic bladder brings its owner unceasing frustration. Just imagine needing to relieve yourself every ten minutes or so. In the worst cases, a fibrotic bladder may have to be surgically removed. Some ketamine users need adult diapers long before they are old.

### Family and environment

According to Taiwan's Ministry of Justice, the average age among youth for first-time drug use is 12.5 years. Many people find this fact incredible. Another fact might also be surprising: A survey indicates that more than half of the drug users in Taiwan receive their drugs not from dealers but from schoolmates, colleagues, or friends.

A person's family also plays a big part in his involvement with drugs. Xu Yu-ji (許玉姬), a Tzu Chi volunteer from Taoyuan, northern Taiwan, has long worked with inmates at Taoyuan Women's Prison and juveniles at Taoyuan Reform School. It has been her obser-

vation that families and the environment in which a child grows up significantly influence whether that child will turn out to be a drug user or not.

She pointed out that some of those she had worked with had parents who were drug addicts or dealers, and who ordered their underage children to sell drugs for them. Some parents, though not drug users, could not spend much time with their children because they were too busy working. To compensate, these busy parents gave spending money—way too much money—to their children. These children, flush with cash and without parental supervision, might have fallen into bad company, joined gangs, and ended up using drugs. Often it wasn't until they were busted that their parents found out that their children had gone astray.

Xu also pointed out that drug dealers can rake in carloads of money very easily, making it hard for young people to resist selling drugs.

### Bring them down to earth

In a workshop, a Tzu Chi volunteer asked two students to come up to the front. She gave them each a piece of aluminum foil and asked them to crumple it up in their palm. She then asked them to undo what they had just done and return the foil back to its original smoothness.

The students, despite their best efforts, could not make the foil as smooth or shiny as before. Nobody could have done it, and nobody can ever do it.

The volunteer told the students to imagine that the foil was their body and that the act of crumpling it up was the damage illicit drugs can do to a user's body. She pointed out to the students the importance of never trying drugs, not even once. Just as crumpling leaves irreversible marks on aluminum foil, drug use leaves the user with permanent, irreparable damage for the rest of his or her life.

A mother once told volunteers about a conversation that she had had with her young son. He said that he had been attracted when his friends had given him sensational descriptions of the unbelievable bliss and ecstasy attained by taking drugs. But after he attended a Tzu Chi anti-drug workshop, he learned about the terrors that follow drug use and realized the importance of staying away from drugs. He even shared an aphorism by Master Cheng Yen with his mom: "Doing what should be done is wisdom; doing what shouldn't be done is foolishness."

The mother said to the volunteers, "Thank you for saving our entire family."

Feedback like this helps sustain and propel volunteers to continue offering the workshops. They believe that the anti-drug seed that they plant in schoolchildren may one day sprout and help them say no to drugs. Their efforts are well worth it if they can help just one child per workshop stay drug free. His family and society as a whole will benefit as a result.

### Keep going

According to statistics published by the United Nations in 2015, more than 200 million people around the world consume drugs illegally and an average of at least 180,000 people each year die because of drugs. Sadly, the top three products in the world that changed hands in international trade are petroleum, arms, and illicit drugs.

### WHAT CAN YOU DO WHEN A FRIEND INVITES YOU TO TRY DRUGS?

**Just say no.**

**Say your mother said no.**

**Say you're feeling under the weather.**

**"So just call me a scaredy-cat."**

**Change the subject.**

**"Sorry, I have to go somewhere."**



**An elementary school student tries to undo a piece of aluminum foil that he has crumpled. Once crumpled, the foil can never be restored to its original shiny smoothness. Likewise, a person's body, once compromised by drugs, can never completely go back to what it used to be.**

Drugs are a big business. Many people are involved in manufacturing, transportation, distribution, and consumption. Drugs have harmed many people, young and old, and have destabilized families and societies. New derivatives of existing drugs or newly compounded forms of drugs have been added to the arsenal of drug dealers to entice users. Some drugs have even been viciously added to and sold as consumer products like chocolate, candy, powdered milk tea or coffee, and cigarettes, making it doubly difficult for people to fight off drugs.

The drug trade is flourishing. The war against drugs rages on.

Tzu Chi volunteers will continue to conduct drug awareness workshops, and they are compiling relevant information into printed publications for the public. They will also continue to recruit and train speakers to expand their anti-drug efforts.



# Deep in the Jordanian Desert

By Zheng Ya-ru

Translated by Tang Yau-yang

Photos by Hsiao Yiu-hwa

More than 1.6 million Syrian refugees have poured into Jordan during the years since the eruption of the Syrian civil war in 2011. The Syrian refugees are understandably having a difficult time living in a strange land. Tzu Chi volunteers in Jordan have done what they can to help these guests. At the same time, they have continued to care for the lives of some Jordanians living deep in the desert whose livelihoods are quite primitive and every bit as hard as those of the Syrian refugees. They are the Bedouins, an Arab semi-nomadic ethnic group.

For 13 years now, the volunteers have regularly visited and provided everyday necessities for four Bedouin tribes. Each such trip covers 200 miles one way and can be an adventure rife with challenges—due to desert weather conditions, religious differences, budgetary constraints, and a shortage of volunteers. Volunteers are undaunted in spite of these difficulties because they know that deep in the desert, their Bedouin friends are counting on them to show up.



It was mid-May. Volunteers left Amman one morning and drove southward. They wanted to visit their Bedouin friends before the start of Ramadan in June. Traveling on dusty desert roads for hour after hour, the volunteers saw an increasingly monotonous landscape—a ceaseless sandy and barren expanse, occasionally dotted with green spots of trees and homes of Bedouins. There were no power lines in sight.

The Bedouins, whose name means "desert dwellers" in Arabic, are accustomed to the unforgiving climate of the desert. The dust, sun, and heat are all par for the course for them. However, those conditions are a different matter to the volunteers, all city dwellers unused to the harsh desert weather and liable to heatstrokes. To make a living, the Bedouins raise goats or camels, hunt, or live on income from tourism. But regardless of how they earn a living, most of them have large families to feed and live in poverty.





In two days, volunteers (below) visited the four Bedouin tribes in Thugra, Abasiya, Wadi Fenan, and Wadi Rum that they have helped for 13 years. During this trip, they delivered to 240 families necessities including rice, sugar, cooking oil, chickpeas, black tea, dates, date butter, and sesame butter.

Local Bedouin women (opposite), adhering to their cultural tradition, wear niqabs, veils covering the head and face with a small opening for the eyes. Wadi Rum is a tourist attraction known for its scenery, and many Bedouins there work in the tourism industry.







While other adults are busy distributing or receiving supplies, volunteer Lily Jacob Armoush Ramin (opposite), a former teacher, gathers up children to share with them about Tzu Chi and its work to help the disadvantaged.

The foundation has provided scholarships over the years to worthy Bedouin youths to study out of town. Some of them are now working in Amman or Aqaba, but some have returned home to teach.

Waffa (above), a Syrian refugee in Jordan, hands out candy to Bedouin children in Thugra. This was the first time that she had volunteered for a distribution at Bedouin sites. Their austere living conditions have made her better appreciate what she has.



Volunteers (opposite) visit the Bedouins about once every three months. During each visit, they make a point of chatting with the locals.

After the distribution at Abasiya, the volunteers went to the home of the tribe leader (below). Tribal men and volunteers sat on rugs, drank tea, and engaged in a nice chat. The volunteers have gotten to know more about the lives of their friends through occasions like this. ☘





# BETTER HOMES FOR THE DESTITUTE

*Tzu Chi volunteers and staffers help the poor repair their dilapidated homes. With the renovation of their aged houses, these people no longer have to worry about rain leaking into their places. They now look forward to going home and their children are no longer shy about inviting friends over.*

**By Li Wei-huang**

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

Volunteers remove a rotten ceiling in the home of a needy family in Keelung, northern Taiwan.





This old man from Baozhong, Yunlin, used to live in a rundown, tiny shed cobbled together with wooden boards and corrugated metal sheets. When Tzu Chi learned of his plight, they repaired an old house nearby for him to live in.



**E**arly one morning, Chen Wen-liang (陳文亮), a civil engineer working for Tzu Chi, drove southward from his home in Taichung to the nearby city of Changhua. The foundation was helping repair the home of Mr. and Mrs. Wu, and Chen had arranged for several volunteers to pour the foundation on this day.

Wu is over 60 years old. He farms and takes care of his epileptic wife, whose illness entitles her to a monthly disability payment of NT\$3,500 (US\$110) from the government. Wu also works odd jobs when he can to supplement his income.

The 40-year-old house in which the couple lived was almost uninhabitable. Its roof had rotted, allowing rain to leak through. Exposed electrical wiring ran every which way. There was no indoor plumbing. Wu usually pumped up groundwater to wash himself, but when it got too cold for that, he would heat water outside the house and take it inside to use.

The cement truck was too big to get close to the house, which was located in a narrow alleyway. Chen and the volunteers used wheelbarrows to ferry the concrete mix from the truck to Wu's home. They made trip after trip through the alleyway, which was no small inconvenience to the residents in the neighborhood. Fortunately, the neighbors were patient with the workers; they knew all about Tzu Chi and its philanthropic work.

Wu had left the house before dawn to work an odd job, but he came home early so he could join the volunteers and help them out. The work planned for that day was successfully accomplished.

The next day, Chen moved on to another project. Like the day before, he got up bright and early. He packed a new water heater and gas range into the back of his car and headed for Huwei, Yuanlin—even further south than where he had traveled the day before.

Dozens of volunteers were already waiting when he arrived at Mrs. Qiu's house, ready to fix the woman's ramshackle old place. Her home used to be a woodshed in a 60-year-old traditional courtyard farmhouse. The roof of the shed leaked, its beams and pillars were warped, and the con-

**Chen Wen-liang checks on the condition of a house in Changhua that he had previously helped repair.**





In preparation for a roof repair in Huwei, Yunlin, volunteers remove roof tiles and form a line to pass them out.







LIAO LI-NENG

Chen Qi-shi's house before and after repair.



crete floors were cracked. Volunteers had decided to fix up the place, put in a bathroom and kitchen, and repartition the interior space so that there would be a room where Mrs. Qiu's children could sleep when they returned home to visit.

House renovations like this are no big deal for people who can afford to pay others to do the work. But for those who rely on aid for a living, such renovations are often beyond their means. As a result, they end up living in their dilapidated homes, putting up with conditions that most people cannot imagine.

Working with social workers and construction professionals, Tzu Chi staffers and volunteers provide free home restoration services to the needy and, when they can, do the actual work themselves to minimize the cost of labor.

### Home restoration

Chen Wen-liang is a full-time staffer in Tzu Chi's construction department. He has worked on more than a hundred homes in the last four years to improve their safety or functionality.

"We installed several dozen septic tanks just last year alone," Chen said. He is shocked by how many families he has met in the course of his work who have lived without such a basic sanitation amenity as a flush toilet. The wide gap between the rich and the poor in Taiwan really surprised him.

Before he joined Tzu Chi, he worked on several public mega-projects. The budgets for those projects ran into billions or even tens of billions of Taiwanese dollars. By contrast, his current projects usually cost no more than 300,000 Taiwanese dollars each. Despite the huge budget differences, he treats his home repair projects with as much care as he did his former mega-projects. "We save when we can, but we also rip out old things and replace them with new things when that makes sense." Chen pointed out that in planning for a repair job, aside from cost and functionality, the Tzu Chi team also takes into account the durability of the building materials and house-specific considerations, such as the architectural style and construction techniques of the original building.

Usually, before a Tzu Chi team thinks about repairing a house, it performs a thorough inspection, which includes checking the soundness of the electrical wiring and whether a gas water heater is located in a safe place. They ask questions such as: How many people are there in the family? How many male and female members?

Are there old people or children? Are there disabled people? Do they usually cook at home? After all, the residents are the end users of a house. Their needs must be taken into consideration when arrangements are being made for a renovation project.

Building a brand new structure is often just a matter of following the blueprint, which is rather straightforward. In Chen's opinion, building something new is usually easier than making improvements to a run-down house. "Repairing an old home is a bit like a doctor trying to find out what's wrong with a patient." It often requires a great deal of expertise and experience. For example, diagnosing the source of moisture for a moldy wall and eradicating the problem calls for someone who truly knows his work.

Expertise and experience are required, but there is even more to it than that. The people who actually do the repairs must also be willing to work in uncomfortable places. Sometimes the surroundings are downright offensive to the senses.

One time Chen walked into a house slated to be repaired in Zhushan, Nantou, central Taiwan. His first thought upon entering the home was that he had stepped into a tunnel. The house was so cluttered by garbage that there was only a small passageway left that allowed people to go through. He saw two people sleeping in that narrow passage, an old man and his grandson.

As he went further into the house, he saw a toilet that had overflowed. He also saw a kitchen filled with old junk, and odds and ends hanging from a horizontal bamboo pole covered with dust. "I thought I had walked into a deserted house," Chen said. "But there were actually people living inside."

Volunteers removed several truckloads of garbage from the site. "We even removed a nest of mice," Chen recalled. "Two dozen baby mice apparently had just been born because their eyes were all still shut."

The team had planned to install a flush toilet and septic tank system and a shower stall that day, but some volunteers were on the verge of throwing up before the new toilet set was even unloaded from the truck.

You couldn't pay some people enough to get them to work in this kind of environment. It definitely takes love and a sense of mission for a person to volunteer in such an unpleasant setting. "It's not a problem if you work on the project as if you were repairing your own house," Chen said.



### Every home custom-made

Chen Qi-shi (陳乞食), 78, lives alone in a century-old house up on Bagua Mountain, Nantou. His house had become derelict over the years. The roof leaked every time it rained, several windows and doors in the house were broken, light fixtures were damaged, electrical wiring was exposed, and the water heater was too old to be useful. Two typhoons in 2015 further damaged the roof over a bedroom, forcing Chen to sleep on a cot in the living room. His house offered little quality of life, and his physical safety was at risk too.

His only income had been an annuity payment for farmers from the government, but that was only about 230 U.S. dollars a month. That was scarcely enough to cover his medical bills and provide him with a basic living, so it was out of the question for him to contemplate a repair project for his house.

He asked around for charitable organizations that might help. His village head and a local charity referred him to Tzu Chi. Chen Wen-liang and some volunteers visited his home, assessed the situation, and decided to rehabilitate his old house.

The old man was expecting just a little help—enough to fix his roof. When he learned that Tzu Chi would repair his entire house free of charge, he was truly and pleasantly surprised.

The house had historical value, given its age. So instead of repairing it just for function, the Tzu Chi team approached the project with a mindset to restore it for its heritage value. For instance, the rear wall of the house had been built with mud bricks, so the new wall was not painted but stuccoed to give it an appearance closer to that of the original. The wooden window frames were kept, and the roof tiles were replaced with silver-gray steel tiles that give off an air of antiquity.

This process was much more involved than simply tearing down the old and putting in the new, but the Tzu Chi team did not mind the extra work. After restoration, Chen's house appeared much as it did before in terms of architectural style, but the inside of the house had been fortified with steel beams and posts and other improvements that were not visible on the outside.

The old man used to heat water on his gas range and carry it to the bathroom to wash himself. The renovation team installed electrical wiring and an electric water heater in the bathroom,



so Chen can now just turn on the faucet and get hot water for showers.

All the remodeling and structural fortification work was completed in less than a month, at a cost of about NT\$140,000 (US\$4,500). The team quickly and inexpensively created a better home for the old man that has greatly improved his quality of life.

Engineer Chen took comfort in being part of the team that helped the old man. Helping the

**Aside from repairing houses for needy families, volunteers regularly visit them to provide care and help.**

less fortunate improve their living conditions gives him a great sense of achievement. Most of his college classmates are likely helping to build luxurious buildings or large-scale structures, but Chen feels at peace with what he has chosen to do. "In our repair projects, we're clear about

who'll benefit from our work and who'll make use of what we produce. A project typically doesn't take much time, but we can quickly see improvement in the lives of those we help." Using his expertise to serve people truly makes him happy.

### Mother and daughters

A-rong is a factory worker from Vietnam. She has lived in Douliu, central Taiwan, since she



married a man there. Her husband died of a heart attack two years ago, and she and their two daughters lived in a mud-brick house that was at least half a century old. The roof of the house was damaged and leaked badly. When it rained, the family had to use large containers to catch the rainwater that dripped from the ceiling. The mother and daughters carried out their daily activities and slept in a room that did not have a leak.

A bigger problem than the leaky roof was that they did not have a toilet in the house. The three of them had to walk 55 yards from the house to use an outdoor latrine. That was both inconvenient and unsafe for them at night, so sometimes the girls preferred to wait in discomfort until they went to school to use the toilet.

Volunteers made many improvements to the house. They put on a steel-tiled roof, put in a septic tank and toilet, and installed porcelain wall tiles in the bathroom to help deal with an old mold problem. They also converted a storage space into a bedroom so the teenage daughters could have their own room. The work took more than 30 days, and volunteers had put in 130 shifts by the time it was done. The repaired house now has two bedrooms, a living room, a kitchen, and a full bath that fully satisfies the basic needs of the three-person family.

Zhang Rui-zhu (張瑞珠) has long been the Tzu Chi volunteer in charge of caring for A-rong and her two daughters. After the house was finished, A-rong told Zhang that when she and her daughters used to share a room, the lack of space

was physically too close for comfort. As a result, they often bickered over small matters. Now that the girls have their own bedroom, the situation has greatly improved, and the girls have even made great strides in their schoolwork and grades. With an improved house and an improved life, A-rong no longer thinks about going back to Vietnam. Instead she has decided to stay put and work hard to bring up her daughters.

### Not just to save money

Volunteers themselves do the work that is involved in a repair project whenever possible. That brings down costs. For example, Mr. Wu once tried to find people himself to fix his home and got an estimate of NT\$700,000 (US\$23,300). Then volunteers took on the repair project, provided the labor where they could, and hired outside help when necessary. They finished all the work at a cost of just half of that estimate. Mr. Wu's son-in-law and Tzu Chi shared the NT\$350,000 expenditures that had greatly improved Mr. Wu's house.

When volunteers plan for a home repair project, they try to find materials and items that have better quality and are more durable rather than just go for the cheapest route. For example, a cheaper item may become unserviceable in

**The Liao family poses with school teachers, classmates, and Tzu Chi volunteers who have gathered to celebrate the completion of repairs to their home.**



five years, but an alternate, slightly more expensive item may last 20 years. Volunteers do that so that a disadvantaged family will not need to face another repair issue too quickly.

The care and attention to detail that volunteers dedicate to their projects have not gone unnoticed. Tzu Chi once helped renovate the home of a 90-year-old man. The man was impressed when he saw that the new gas range and toilet in his repaired home were brand-name items—the volunteers had not given him just any range or toilet. “These things are better than what we used to have,” he exclaimed.

Huang Wei-xuan (黃維軒), a Tzu Chi social worker, commented that about nine out of ten recipient families were very satisfied with what repair projects had done for their homes.

### How it started

Tzu Chi now has paid staff stationed in regional offices to provide systematic house repair services to the needy, but in the old days these services were provided in a less organized manner. Back then volunteers, out of the goodness of their hearts, did what they could to help repair the homes of the needy as soon as they discovered the need. It was perhaps less well planned, but their efforts were carried out with just as much goodwill.

Senior volunteer Hong Xiu-e (洪琇娥) recalled helping an old man in Changhua, central Taiwan, some 20 years ago. The man's house had nine broken windowpanes, which he had merely taped up with paperboard. That hardly kept out the chill on a cold day. Volunteers hurriedly measured the sizes of the panes and went to a glass shop to have them cut out nine pieces of glass. Then they returned to the old man's house with the new windowpanes and installed them. “We did what we could to help,” Hong said.

Another time, volunteers in Yunlin, central Taiwan, came across an aid recipient whose house needed a lot of repair. The volunteers recruited more volunteers, and they enlisted the help of a house painter, an electrician, and a carpenter. The large group of workers arrived at the house in five vehicles. They cleaned and worked the whole day through and finally returned a better house to the 80-year-old woman who lived there.

Tzu Chi social worker Li Yu-hua (李玉華) of the Taipei Tzu Chi branch pointed out the importance of a sound and safe home. Imagine living in a dilapidated house with a leaky roof, and the sense of insecurity and fear that would incur.

One may even be ashamed or feel a strong sense of inferiority for living in a house like that and for being powerless to improve the situation. But after a home is improved, people can sleep soundly through rainy nights; children can feel at ease inviting their friends or classmates over to their homes, something that they couldn't do when their homes were in bad repair; and family members can spend the night at their parents' home if they return for a visit. The relationships between family members may even improve with a better home. The good a home repair can do can never be underestimated.

### Continued care

Chen Wen-liang serves central western Taiwan, an area from Miaoli in the north to Chiayi in the south. When he drives to his work-sites and passes families that Tzu Chi has helped, he detours to check on their houses. “I want to know if they've stood the test of heavy rains or strong typhoons,” Chen said. He takes comfort in seeing houses that have held up well, and he learns from the problems in houses that have failed the test of time and the elements. “I want to know what went wrong so I'll do better next time,” he said.

It was June, a time of year when it is very hot in the morning but very rainy in the afternoon. Such weather conditions often disrupt the schedule of a repair project. With more than 20 home repair cases going on concurrently, Chen and his team were a bit on edge.

Luckily, the house for Mr. Wu and his wife was finally ready for occupancy in late June. Over 20 volunteers gathered at the house early one morning to help the family celebrate. “The old house was a dump before, but it looks like new today,” veteran volunteer Lin Bing-qian (林秉謙) commented.

The repair team has preserved the house's façade and a wall in one room. They were constructed with bamboo skeletons and clay, a traditional Taiwanese architectural style. However, the roof now rests on the firm support of eight steel beams, and several steel posts help support the house. Inside the house, a modern bathroom and kitchen provide useful services to the family. The couple's daughter, who works and lives out of town, now has a comfortable bedroom to sleep in when she returns home to visit.

The foundation started helping the Wu family long before it repaired their home, and the care for the family will continue.



# MODERNIZING OLD HOMES

A mother and son in their restored bamboo skeleton home in Xizhou, Changhua



The special appearance of this restored home in Erlin, Changhua, has made it quite a unique sight in the community.



In Yunlin and Changhua, central Taiwan, there are many traditional old homes whose walls were built of bamboo skeletons and clay. These houses are from an era when Taiwan was still a relatively poor society, when lives were hard and resources scarce. Abundant and inexpensive, bamboo and clay were used to build homes like these back in the old days.

When Tzu Chi staff and volunteers repair this type of home for needy people who can't afford it, they strive to maintain the quaint appearance and old-time charm of the original structure—even though doing so invariably entails more work.

While the original look is preserved as much as possible, the interior of the house is strengthened and fortified with steel beams and posts. The finished product is a combination of tradition and modernity.





## RESTORING ROOFS

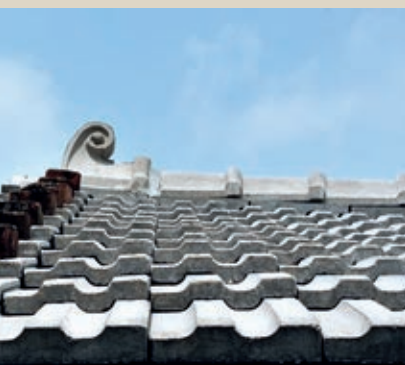


When an old roof leaks, the easiest way to solve the problem is by removing the tiles and installing a new roof. However, Tzu Chi volunteers in central Taiwan often choose to preserve the original roof tiles when they repair traditional old homes. In their quest to keep as much traditional architectural beauty as they can, they try not to do a wholesale removal of the old materials. They are like physicians who strive to retain as much of the original body as possible, excising only what absolutely cannot be saved.

Volunteers find craftsmen to repair the old roof tiles while they work to fortify the roof against rain. As a result, old houses that they have repaired have been able to emerge with much of their architectural style intact, even while they have provided the homeowners with a much improved shelter against the elements.



**Before volunteers stepped in and repaired it, an old house in Yunlin was so rundown that the owner had to use several buckets to catch the rain.**







## LIVEABLE INTERIORS

Despite the material abundance in modern Taiwan, homes can still be seen in outlying areas that lack even the most basic essentials, such as indoor bathrooms and kitchens. Occupants of some of these homes cook outdoors, which is very inconvenient when the weather is bad. When volunteers fix this kind of home, they try to make it so that the inhabitants can cook or take hot showers in comfort.

Some families have many children, and in others three generations may live together. In those cases, volunteers repartition the space so that family members may have separate bedrooms and more privacy.

When needed, volunteers also provide furniture and install kitchen equipment, such as gas ranges.



Now Mr. Zeng, of Sihui, Yunlin, can easily use the bathroom and the toilet in his home. Due to a congenital condition, his legs are severely atrophied and deformed. Though unschooled and illiterate, he is optimistic and sunny in disposition. He gets around on an electric scooter and sells joss paper at temples to support himself. When volunteers repaired his home, they lowered the toilet to suit his height and made the bathroom more accessible.





## A HANDLE TO HOLD

Mr. Guan, 86, lives alone in a rented room, one of 22 such units, ranging from 36 to 180 square feet in size, in an old building. The tenants are old, disabled, or otherwise disadvantaged.

The bathrooms in this rental facility are communal. Tzu Chi volunteers installed handrails and grab bars in the bathrooms and hallways to help the residents steady themselves.

Statistics show that an exceedingly large portion of injuries among senior citizens in Taiwan can be attributed to falls that occur in unsafe homes where floors are slippery, rooms are dark, or thresholds are so high as to trip residents.

To pay for home safety improvement projects, disadvantaged senior citizens can apply for subsidies from government agencies or private organizations, such as the Hondao Senior Citizen's Welfare Foundation or the Eden Social Welfare Foundation. Tzu Chi also works to improve safety in homes of needy seniors by installing handrails, grab bars, lighting, anti-slip floors, or access ramps for the handicapped.



# PROS AT YOUR SERVICE

By Zhang Yu-mei

Translated by Tang Yau-yang

*One thing often quickly runs up the tab on home improvement projects: the cost of hiring skilled workers. This often pushes home repair projects out of the financial reach of the poor. Kind-hearted expert volunteer workers chip in to help.*

A team of skilled workers in Pingtung, the southernmost county of Taiwan, volunteers to help the destitute repair their dilapidated homes. Su Ti-cheng (蘇體誠), 77, the founding member of the team, recalled how they got their start.

When the Tzu Chi Foundation established a branch office in Pingtung in 1991, Su started repairing the homes of people who were receiving aid from the foundation. He was joined later by Jian Yin-wang (簡銀旺), now 65. The team expanded again when Lin Zhuang-jie (林樺杰) joined in 1999. The three of them would drive a van around from one repair site to another, carrying the tools they needed.

Then a severe earthquake—the 921 Earthquake—struck Taiwan on September 21, 1999. Demand for repair services shot up dramatically, so the trio recruited more volunteers. The expanded team visited disaster areas twice a week to help quake victims rebuild their homes.

The members that later came on board, though younger, were no less capable in their

knowledge or skills than the three original members. The infusion of the new blood caused the team to grow stronger and able to serve more people.

## Inspired to give

Lin Chun-sheng (林春生), 55, now runs the team. “After the 921 quake, I went to Nantou [the worst-hit area] to check on a friend. There I saw Tzu Chi volunteers doing what many Taiwanese considered taboo: working in close proximity to the dead as they chanted the Buddha’s name to bless the deceased. I also saw them cooking meals and building prefabricated houses for the survivors.”

Lin was touched by how the volunteers selflessly and unconditionally helped the victims. Witnessing the devastation in the disaster zone also taught him how fragile and ephemeral life and worldly possessions could be. He was running a prosperous business in construction cranes at the time, and he could have continued to enjoy a life of ease. But he decided that he could not

Volunteers work in a home in the town of Sandimen.



CHU RU-LIAN



Volunteers repair and clean up a home in Pingtung City.

ZHANG YU-MEI

continue to indulge himself in such a comfortable lifestyle. He volunteered for Tzu Chi.

Well connected in the construction business, he not only joined the repair team but also recruited many other like-minded building pros to join in the effort. So far he has helped repair 80 homes for the disadvantaged.

Lin remembers helping a man who was paralyzed in his lower body. The man lived alone in a crude, leaky shed made of metal sheets. His limited mobility prevented him from keeping his home clean; cockroaches and mice ran amok. There were even snakes in the house. Tzu Chi

volunteers felt for him and urged him to rent a decent place, but he insisted on staying put. In response, the repair team rebuilt his shed for him so that he could at least have a sturdier place in which to live.

Another time, Lin and the repair team helped a father and son in Pingtung City. The son, over 50, had originally worked as a backhoe operator and earned a steady income. But he had to quit his job to look after his father when the latter developed a chronic kidney illness. When the roof of their house developed a bad leak, they had no money to repair it.



The team fixed the house for the father and son. They replaced the roof and repaired a leaning wall. They also installed new doors and windows. The renovation work was finished in eight days, on December 31, 2014—just in time for the two men to usher in the new year in their new home.

#### A cohort of pros

Jian Yin-wang, one of the three original members, speaks highly of Lin for his dedication and contributions. Lin has helped a lot with repair work, and in other areas as well. In the aftermath of Typhoon Morakot in 2009, Lin put aside his crane business and drove a backhoe into the town of Linbian. He worked all day every day in this heavily flooded place. He helped clear paths so the rest of the volunteers could get in to help with the clean-up.

Lin did not stop after the Morakot clean-up either. He continued to be heavily involved in the construction of homes for survivors of the typhoon. He also helped out when prefabricated classrooms were built for five middle and high schools in the county.

Team member Jian Teng-yi (簡騰邑), 55, specializes in metalworking. Though he has worked on the repair of numerous homes over the last dozen years, one family in the town of Yanpu stands out in his mind. The Vietnamese woman in that family had come to Yanpu to marry a Taiwanese man. Unfortunately, her husband died some time after they were married. The woman single-handedly raised her two children and cared for her father-in-law.

The family lived in an old, rundown house. The repair team initially planned to simply fortify it, but because the house was so old, Jian opined that even if they repaired it, it might not be a very safe place to live. He suggested that the team rebuild the house. The team took his suggestion. However, the family could not show proof of ownership to the plot of land on which their house stood. A whole year elapsed before the issue was resolved and the rebuilding could commence. Despite the obstacles, Jian was bent on giving the family a safe, sturdy home. Meticulous and careful, he believes that giving families well-built homes is what the home repair team is all about.

Lin Qi-ming (林啟明), 55, also makes a living out of metalworking. He often pays for repair work out of his own pocket. A decade ago he volunteered on a repair project for a

family in the town of Majia. The head of that household was an alcoholic who could not hold down a regular job and who neglected his duty to support his family—not exactly the kind of person that could elicit sympathy. Even so, Lin could not stand to see his many children live in a ramshackle house. In the end, he paid for the building materials and workers out of his own pocket to have the house repaired. He did not mind spending his own money at all, because he knew that to give is more of a blessing than to receive.

Lin Wen-liang (林文亮), 49, is a technician in the military. Having been on the team for seven years now, he volunteers on his days off work. He remembers particularly well a man living in a leaky freight container near the seashore in Checheng. To keep the rain out, the repair team built a metal canopy over the container. Volunteers also ran water and electricity lines into the container, making it quite safe and comfortable to live in.

Wang Zhen-lian (王振連), 60, has helped repair over ten homes. He particularly remembers one house in the town of Wandan, where the family peddled cakes for a living. The house did not have a toilet, and Wang wondered how they could possibly live like that. Though he later had to drop out of the repair team in order to take care of his father, he said that his experience on the team taught him how blessed he was.

Zhou Kao-li (周考立) remembers repairing the home of the Guo family. It was low, stuffy, and hot, and the ceilings had caved in. The repair team raised the height of the house, rebuilt the roof, installed new ceilings, and painted them. It looked like a new house afterwards. Zhou remembers feeling exhilarated at how nicely their handiwork turned out. The participating volunteers could not stop smiling when they gathered with the family to celebrate the completion of the new home.

Zeng Zhen-zhong (曾振鐘), a retired policeman, remarked that the team had once worked in several villages in the predominantly Christian area of Sandimen. At the ceremony to mark the completion of the rebuilding project, a Christian pastor led a prayer thanking the Tzu Chi volunteers for their help. It was a heart-warming and touching gathering.

These volunteers and their teammates have helped make homes safer and more comfortable for many needy people in Pingtung County. The world is a little better as a result. ❀

# Remedy for the World

By Dharma Master Cheng Yen

Translated by Teresa Chang

Hurricane Matthew, the most powerful storm to hit the Atlantic in nearly a decade, barreled across the Caribbean Sea and the southeastern United States in October this year. Five U.S. states were seriously affected. The storm also wreaked havoc in Haiti, located in the Caribbean, killing over a thousand people and impacting more than a million. With an ongoing cholera epidemic already plaguing the country, I was really worried about how the Haitian people were going to cope with this new devastation.

Haiti is an extremely poor country, often hit by natural disasters. After Hurricane Georges devastated the nation in 1998, Tzu Chi donated four containers of clothes to help the victims. That marked the beginning of our relief work in Haiti. Our foundation once again extended a helping hand to the country after four hurricanes ravaged the country in 2008. In 2010, our volunteers reached out yet again to Haiti after it was rocked by a strong earthquake which killed close to 300,000 people. After that earthquake, Tzu Chi provided emergency relief and later helped with school reconstruction. To this day, Tzu Chi volunteers and their care and love have never left Haiti.

Just two weeks before Hurricane Matthew hit at the beginning of October 2016, our volunteers finished distributing 600 tons of rice in Haiti. The process was riddled with difficulties and challenges. Six hundred tons of rice was simply not enough for a country with so many poor people. Our volunteers could only focus on the poorest among the poor and tried to encourage others to be compassionate to people who

were even more in need. Thankfully, the distribution went off well in the end.

Authorities in Haiti urged residents in high-risk areas to evacuate before Hurricane Matthew made landfall, but many people refused to leave. That contributed to the high death toll. International aid organizations airdropped relief goods to Haiti after the calamity, but survivors fought among themselves to claim what they could. People who were old, ill, or physically disabled were at a disadvantage to get any aid, and their only option was to wait for roads to be repaired so that more supplies could be sent in. Tzu Chi volunteers from the United States visited

Haiti to assess the damage in the aftermath of the storm. The reports they sent back were heart-wrenching. Many houses that were ramshackle to begin with were completely destroyed by the strong winds and heavy rainfall. To make matters even worse, debris and garbage were strewn all over the disaster areas, raising the possibility of an epidemic outbreak.

To help the victims, U.S. Tzu Chi volunteers are preparing blankets, water purifiers, instant rice, and other supplies to be delivered to the disaster zones. They are also evaluating

the possibility of a cash-for-work program, in which participants will get paid for cleaning up their ravaged neighborhoods. This will hopefully prevent the poor sanitation conditions from deteriorating further.

Currently, tens of thousands of people in Haiti have no home to return to. They need people in the international community to pool together their love and give them a hand. When each and every one of us can act out of compassion and wisdom, we will be able to help Haitians rebuild and return to normal lives as soon as possible.



This article is excerpted from a series of speeches delivered by Master Cheng Yen from October 1 to 17, 2016.





**After Hurricane Matthew devastated Haiti, Tzu Chi volunteers from the United States along with Haitian volunteers carried out relief work, which included the distribution of hot meals.**

PHOTOS COURTESY OF TZU CHI USA



### Good seeds bear good fruits

We are witnessing frequent natural disasters around the world caused by extreme weather—this is a sign that our Mother Earth is sick. To mitigate and ward off disasters that are plaguing the entire world, we need the combined efforts of the majority of the global population, not just a few people. Only when lots of people create blessings together will the collective benevolent force be great enough to make a change. Let us all heighten our awareness, live balanced lives, reduce our desires, nurture good thoughts, and do good deeds so that we can bring about a world that is safe, peaceful, and healthy.

Our volunteers in Africa are doing their best to help bring about such a world. There are at present Tzu Chi volunteers in eight countries on the African continent: South Africa, Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Swaziland, Botswana, Namibia, and Sierra Leone. These countries are largely poor and faced with law and order problems. Despite that, many people there are still willing to reach out and help those worse off than themselves. This is truly praiseworthy and admirable.

Our volunteers from Durban, South Africa, have traveled to Namibia three times to inspire more people to become volunteers and serve their own communities. It is a long, arduous, 2,900-mile round trip. During the journey, there might not even be a chance for the volunteers to wash their faces. Even so, they have willingly endured all kinds of inconveniences to spread seeds of love. When they arrived at their destination, they shared their volunteer experiences

and the Tzu Chi spirit with the locals even though they were in a totally strange environment and not everyone was friendly to them. For them, every place can be a spiritual cultivation ground. They talked to people who had gathered under a tree, for example. Their efforts have successfully aroused people's curiosity about Tzu Chi.

In September, three Namibians who had joined Tzu Chi visited South Africa to learn more about the foundation. They arrived early one morning. Right after breakfast, they went out with local volunteers to call on the needy, serve food to orphans, and visit vegetable gardens cultivated by volunteers to feed the needy. The visitors wanted to learn how the South African volunteers cared for disadvantaged people on their own strength. The Namibian volunteers also listened to my talks during their visit.

Teofilus, one of the three Namibians, asked Taiwanese volunteer Michael Pan (潘明水): "I have love in my heart, but I don't have anything to give to others. What can I do?"

"Give them your shoulder to lean on," Pan answered. He told Teofilus that most native South African volunteers don't have much either, but they still manage to overcome all difficulties and give to the needy in their country. Not only have they done this, they've even crossed into Swaziland, and in just four and a half years they've inspired more than 3,000 people there to pitch in and care for their own countrymen.

On Sunday during his visit to South Africa, Teofilus, a devoted Christian, wanted to go to church. He asked our South African volunteers if there was a church nearby he could attend. Gladys Ngema, who is also a devout Christian, told him that a church exists in each of our hearts. As long as we embrace love, a church can be wherever we are and any time is a good time to pray.

Teofilus immediately grasped her point. He took out the Bible he carried around with him and shared a teaching from it with everyone: "A good tree can't produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can't produce good fruit." He explained that he had seen how Tzu Chi volunteers were working hard to spread love in Africa, and they had even visited his own country, Namibia, to sow seeds of Great Love, hoping that the seeds would one day grow into big trees and yield good fruit. He promised that after he returned to Namibia, he would also mindfully carry out Tzu Chi work and help spread Great Love.

Our South African volunteers have come to realize that walking the Bodhisattva Path and doing good will yield good fruit, so even though they are poor themselves they are dedicated to helping those in need. When they visit communities to distribute aid, they carry heavy sacks of rice on their shoulders. When they slip and fall on the muddy road, they quickly get up and continue forward. No matter how rugged their path may be, they are determined to reach their destinations. They keep a church in their hearts at all times and sincerely encourage others to tap into their inner wells of love. If they, who live such challenging lives, can do it, why can't we? Those of us who are fortunate enough to live in a comfortable environment should all the more make great altruistic vows and work for the good of the world.

### Six Paramitas

There are all kinds of sufferings in our world. They may come from the life cycle of birth, aging, illness, and death, or they may be caused by natural or man-made disasters. But apart from these, there is another form of suffering that torments us even more: the worries and afflictions that plague our minds. When we walk on the Bodhisattva Path, we must not only give material relief to people who are living harsh

lives—we must also strive to alleviate people's inner suffering.

In order to better help others, we must do our best to cultivate ourselves. The world we live in, with all the suffering there is, is a good place to carry out spiritual practice. The Buddha gave us the Six Paramitas (Perfections) to practice on our path of cultivation: giving, moral discipline, patient endurance, diligence, contemplation, and wisdom.

We practice giving and moral discipline when we give without expecting anything in return. We practice patient endurance and diligence when we endure all kinds of hardships and press forward so that we can bring relief to the suffering. No matter what difficult people and harsh criticism we may come across in the process of accomplishing our missions, as long as we practice contemplation and wisdom, we will be able to overcome all challenges and continue forward.

Every time a disaster strikes, our volunteers quickly mobilize to help the victims. They do not sit by and look on, thinking, "My family and I are fine. The suffering of other people has nothing to do with me." They demonstrate the spirit of a bodhisattva by embracing the mindset of "giving without expecting anything in return."

Real-life bodhisattvas must diligently give to others without falling prey to the pride of being a giver. Our mission is to fill the world with warmth. But in the process of helping others, we inevitably encounter difficulties and hardships. When that happens, will we be able to stay true to our commitments and never deviate from the Bodhisattva Way? Will our faith be firm and strong enough?

Many unenlightened, self-centered people only focus on their own petty concerns. They get



JENNIFER CHEN

**Volunteers from South Africa and Lesotho visit Namibia to spread seeds of Great Love.**





**Tzu Chi volunteers distribute aid to victims of Typhoon Haiyan in Leyte Province, the Philippines. Every time a disaster hits, Tzu Chi volunteers quickly mobilize to help survivors.**

caught up in worries and negative emotions when they run into interpersonal conflicts or challenging circumstances. As they give way to hatred and anger, they drive people away from them. When people's minds are thus entangled in negativity, they contribute to the spiritual turbidity in the world.

Our minds are stubborn and hard to tame. That's why we suffer and cause suffering. In this world, we see people displaced by climate change and natural disasters, and we see people displaced by war and turmoil, but in fact there are even more people "displaced" by their own mental afflictions—they can't get past the obstacles set up by their own worries and negative thoughts.

As we embark on the Bodhisattva Path, we must truly practice the bodhisattva spirit. We must care for not just the needy, but all people around us. When we can thus form good affinities with everyone and help relieve their suffering—mental or physical—we will create a lot of good karma and truly benefit the world.

#### Tzu Chi principles

In Tzu Chi, we believe that religion helps us realize the purpose of our lives and guides us to use all occasions in our daily lives to educate and improve ourselves. Following that belief, our volunteers must abide by the guiding principles of sincerity, integrity, good faith, and honesty when they deal with others, and they must practice loving-kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity in their daily lives.

We must never veer away from sincerity, integrity, good faith, and honesty in our everyday dealings with other people. As spiritual cultivators, it is important that we observe

moral discipline and never stray from uprightness in whatever we do. We must believe in these life principles and carry out our work in good faith.

I have abided by these principles ever since I took refuge with Master Yin Shun 53 years ago. He instructed me to work for Buddhism and all living beings. He hoped that I could nurture and inspire people's faith in Buddhism and use Buddhism to benefit the world. I promised him that I would do so, and I have kept my promise. For the past half century, I have done the best I can to relieve people of suffering and give them joy. I have carried out all my work with sincerity, integrity, good faith, and honesty. My whole being has been devoted to Tzu Chi.

I'm grateful to all our volunteers for helping me advance the Tzu Chi missions for the past 50 years. They have paved our path with love. Our volunteers in Taiwan, the birthplace of Tzu Chi, work hard to carry out philanthropic work, and volunteers abroad also make the best of their time by helping suffering people. All our missions aim to save lives, nurture wisdom, and transform people's minds, and our volunteers have striven to do just that.

When you have discovered the right path and committed yourself to it, you must hold firm to your aspirations. If you can do that, you will be able to accomplish a lot. Time waits for no one; it marches by relentlessly and never returns. We must use every second to do what is right and nurture kindness in ourselves and others instead of wasting our time on useless worries and negative, limiting thoughts.

The Buddha's teachings are a good remedy for the ills of the world. The Enlightened One teaches us to do all good and avoid all evil. When the force of goodness increases in the world, the force of evil will diminish. Let us do all good and avoid all evil and encourage others to do so as well. Doing so will set into motion ever-widening ripples of goodness.

I expect all our volunteers to abide by sincerity, integrity, good faith, and honesty, and practice loving-kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity. Such are the principles and values we uphold in Tzu Chi; such is the spirit of our foundation. Please be ever more mindful. ❀

# An Ordinary Yet Extraordinary Life

**By Xu Qian-hui**

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Photos by Huang Xiao-zhe

Walking into an alley off Nanchang Road, a shop-lined commercial street in Taipei, I soon saw the Jiliu Recycling Station. Inside, a group of older women were busy sorting bottles, cans, and paper of different colors. Ninety-five-year-old Huang Mian (黃勉), all smiles, was singing. Several women in their 70s or 80s, amused by the vivacious nonagenarian, laughed heartily.

Before long, Huang was telling me how she had become a recycling volunteer for Tzu Chi and what she had learned along the way, never for a moment stopping in her work. She was quick and neat. While we were talking, she prepared several old books for recycling. When she was done, she stood up and said, "I have to rush home." A recycling truck was visiting her home and some nearby locations in half an hour to collect recyclable garbage, so she had to leave in a hurry.

I followed Huang as she traversed streets and alleys. I saw her entering shops and coming out with plastic bottles or paper, or stepping into tall buildings and asking if there were any recyclables for her. Later I learned that she had been doing this work for over two decades. She collects recyclables within a 30-minute walk of her home.

I asked her if people were ever rude to her or refused to give her their recyclables. She answered with a smile, "Very rarely." She explained that she always wears a hat with the Tzu Chi logo on it while out collecting recyclables.



**Though she is still healthy and agile, Huang Mian, 95, could not have stuck to her recycling work day in and day out for over two decades if she did not have a dedicated, determined heart.**

bles. People are generally willing to let her have their recyclables when they see that logo. If she encounters people unfamiliar with Tzu Chi, she explains to them she isn't salvaging the reusable materials to sell and make money for herself; instead, the proceeds are being used to advance the missions of a charitable organization. "I tell them they'll gain spiritual merits from donating their recyclables to a good cause. 'Let's do good together,' I say. After hearing my words, most people are happy to work with me."

She cheerfully added that it is a really happy thing to be able to do good and help others.

#### Rain or shine

Huang was born in Nangang, Taipei, in 1921. As often happened with children of poor families at that time, she was given up for adoption by another family when she was still very young. She started working at nine and never went to school. Later, she became a cleaning lady and washerwoman. At her busiest, she washed clothes for 73 families and had to leave for work at two or three in the morning. Life was hard, but it did not deter her from helping the needy. She began donating to Tzu Chi back in the 1970s.



After toiling away for her family for the majority of her life, Huang found herself out of work at the age of 72. Her employers had all bought washing machines; even if they hadn't, they would have been reluctant to continue hiring her because of her age. Even though she was unemployed, she did not feel bad. Her children had all grown up and become independent. She had done her duty for her family, so she was free to do what she wanted to do.

She began pushing her grocery cart around to collect recyclables, which she delivered regularly to a local Tzu Chi recycling point. She told other recycling volunteers that she had retired and could focus on doing good.

Now Huang has a very tight schedule every day. She has a set time for gathering recyclables in the alleys, a set time for picking up plastic bottles at a high school, a set time for collecting paper at companies, etc. When she is not making her rounds reclaiming reusable resources, she volunteers at the Jiliu Recycling Station.

Volunteer Hong Jin-hong (洪金鴻) expressed his admiration for the nonagenarian's perseverance. She has been at it now for over 20 years. Rain or shine, hot or cold, she never rests. She takes the elements in stride, saying that a little

**Volunteers gather at a recycling point in front of a bank every Tuesday to sort recyclables. Everyone there, no matter how old they are, calls Huang "Grandma."**



sun and rain is nothing to her and that she endured far harder days when she was younger.

Besides doing her work, she cares for other volunteers like a mother. Volunteer Li Xie-sheng (李謝陞), 70, is often so busy driving a truck around to collect recyclables that he often skips lunch or postpones it until very late. Huang admonishes him when that happens and makes a gesture to spank his bottom. "If you don't listen to me and take good care of yourself, I'll stop giving you the recyclables I collect," she says, threatening a man old enough to be a grandfather but still young enough to be her son.

"I always tell my own grandchildren that I won't have much money to leave them, but I'll leave them a lot of spiritual wealth." Huang said that she is lucky to have very sensible children and grandchildren. They have never been opposed to her doing recycling work because of her age; instead, they just tell her thoughtfully to watch her step when she goes out for her collection trips and to be sure to look both ways when she crosses a road. With their strong support, she says, "I feel at ease every day. I'm so grateful."

### Nothing is difficult

Huang lives on the fourth floor of an old apartment building. There is no elevator. If she cannot find a place to store the daily recyclables she collects, she has to haul them up three floors to her home and then move them back down with the



**After finishing her work at the bank, Huang moves on to her next collection point.**

help of other volunteers when a Tzu Chi recycling truck comes by to take them away.

Huang's home is near Jianguo High School. She visits the school every day to collect beverage bottles. Other people visit the school for the same purpose, but students there tell those people they are saving their bottles for "Grandma Bottles." She joked that her age puts her at an advantage against her competitors.

Plastic bottles, being light and easy to carry, are a treasure in Huang's eyes. After class is dismissed for the day, some students stay at the school to play ball. They put their unfinished drinks on the sidelines. In order not to miss those bottles, Huang sometimes waits patiently on the sidelines to gather them.

Her collection area covers two streets where there are many publishing houses and bookstores. She gets a lot of blank white paper there. She likes that because the white paper needs no sorting and can go directly to a recycler.

Paper in bulk is heavy. I asked her how she moves it. She told me that after she ties up paper in her home, she throws the bundles down to the first floor for a recycling truck to come and collect. That way, she doesn't need to haul those heavy stacks of paper down all those stairs. Huang truly embodies Master Cheng Yen's teaching: "Nothing is difficult if you set your mind to it."

### Helping each other

There are about a dozen regular volunteers at the Jiliu Recycling Station. Most of them are elderly. Li Chun-hui (李春慧), a volunteer who has known Huang for over ten years, told me that Huang loves Tzu Chi and Master Cheng Yen very much. When Huang attended a Tzu Chi year-end blessing ceremony last year, she held the Master's hands tightly and wouldn't let go.

Having worked hard all her life, Huang has a pure and determined heart. "I'm happy that people still let me work despite my age."

Volunteer Li Xie-sheng said that before the Jiliu Recycling Station came into being, a truck passed through Huang's district only once a week to collect recyclables. Huang gathered a lot of recyclables, and every Tuesday when the truck dropped by she had to push cart after cart of recyclables to the collection point for the truck to take away. Li felt for her. To save her all those trips, he began driving his recycling truck to every point where Huang temporarily stores her recyclables. He has a lot of collection points to visit, so his schedule is packed. Nonetheless he insists on doing that for Huang.

"All I give is a little energy and time, and yet I can save her a lot of work," said Li. "This is something I must do." These two volunteers, one 70 and the other 95, care for and help each other. Aided by good-hearted people like Li, Huang continues to stride confidently forward on her path as a guardian of the Earth. ❀



# The Illustrated JING SI APHORISMS

## The Buddha says:

My teachings are as innumerable as the grains of sand in my hand. Everyone can practice and witness to my teachings and thus gain freedom from suffering.



THE BUDDHA CAME TO THIS WORLD TO TEACH ALL LIVING BEINGS THAT THEY HAVE THE SAME WISDOM AND NATURE THAT HE HAD, AND THAT EVERYONE CAN CULTIVATE THEIR COMPASSION AND WISDOM.



**If our parents' demands are in conflict with our own ideals, should we obey our parents or choose to follow our own ideals?**

We should try to communicate with our parents, clearly understand their points of view, and calmly listen to their suggestions. Do not disagree with them just for the sake of disagreeing. Many youngsters now think that they can do anything they like. With this attitude, they will blindly do things that hurt both themselves and others.

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



A volunteer mixes with students at a scholarship award ceremony held at James Hill Elementary School in Langley, Canada.

### Canada

On September 27, 2016, Tzu Chi volunteers from Surrey, British Columbia, joined representatives from Langley School District No. 35 at a scholarship award ceremony at James Hill Elementary School in Langley. The foundation donated a total of 15,000 Canadian dollars, which would benefit 82 students. This was the fourth year that volunteers had donated to help students in the area.

Twenty-five volunteers arrived early to set up the venue. They reviewed the list of the recipients' names one last time and arranged the school bags to be given out at the ceremony.

Susan Byrom, president of the Langley School District Foundation (LSDF), thanked the volunteers on behalf of her foundation. She said that Tzu Chi's support over the years had helped their children learn and grow.

Gord Stewart, acting superintendent of the Langley School District, said that his district, with over 4,000 students, can fund only regular educa-

tion with no money left to support extracurricular activities. Without the scholarships provided by Tzu Chi over recent years, many of these students could not have participated in summer activities.

Chad Bedard, a teacher, thanked Tzu Chi for its help, saying that the scholarships have allowed his students to attend summer camps where they have tried and experienced different things. They have learned to respect, care for, and get along with other people. Many children have grown a great deal and have become more confident as a result of those experiences.

A student from HD Stafford Middle School said that she had had a wonderful summer when she attended the first summer camp in her life. There she learned to focus on what was in front of her, and to respect and be friendly to other people.

A teacher from Walnut Grove Secondary School said that through one summer program called Gator Shades, students who have graduated from elementary school can get to know





ZHENG RUJING

**Tzu Chi held a free dental clinic on October 30 at a Salvation Army center in Las Vegas, giving free dental treatments, haircuts, and secondhand clothes to the homeless.**

other students who will also be going to eighth grade with them. This might help them be better prepared and more confident for their lives in secondary school.

Susan Cairns, executive director of LSDF, said that she was thankful to have the occasion to work with the Tzu Chi Foundation. Children in the area and their families have all benefited from the scholarships.

#### United States

Finding jobs is a sure way for homeless people to improve their lives, but with their long, unkempt hair, yellow teeth, and tattered clothes, it is virtually impossible for them to get interviews, let alone land jobs.

To enhance their prospects of finding work, it is essential that they look cleaner and neater. Tzu Chi volunteers helped some homeless people with all three aspects—hair, teeth, and clothing—at a free dental clinic in Las Vegas, Nevada, on October 30. During the clinic, volunteers fixed the homeless people's dental

problems, cut their hair, and gave them clean secondhand clothes.

The treatment offered at this clinic, held at a Salvation Army center, included tooth extractions, tooth scaling, and cavity fillings. People requiring further treatment were referred to local dentists. Eight dentists, three dental hygienists, and eight dental assistants served 101 street people on this day. This was the second time Tzu Chi held a dental clinic at the same venue.

Patient Robert Carpenter was scared when a dentist raised his hand to give him a shot of anesthesia, but much to his surprise he did not feel any pain at all when the shot was administered. The dentist then pulled out a tooth for him. The whole procedure was also painless. Carpenter praised the dentist for having a pair of magical hands.

Another patient, Roger, lived alone in Las Vegas on disability checks. Tzu Chi volunteers gave him two pieces of extra-large clothing. When a volunteer pushed his wheelchair over to a dentist, he became scared. His fear was somewhat amplified by his inability to see clearly. However, he was pleasantly surprised that the treatment was completely painless. He was grateful for the services of the day.

Megan Arron, another patient, was happy to come to the free dental clinic because her teeth ached and her Medicare insurance did not cover dental care.

Arron originally received disability benefit checks when she was working part-time. However, one day she lost her job and the benefits stopped coming too. She also lost her home and her car. These setbacks were so hurtful that she could not stop weeping when she told her story. However, she still felt thankful that she had seen a flyer about this dental clinic in time to take advantage of it.

Even though she was still struggling, someone had found a place for her to live, and someone else had agreed to babysit her child. This encouraged her to face life bravely.

She had a food handler permit from the Southern Nevada Health District, so she could work in a restaurant. Tzu Chi volunteers looked up the phone number of an employment agency for temporary workers and encouraged Megan to try her luck there. The volunteers also gave her the address and phone number of a local Tzu Chi office and told her that she would be welcome there any time. The care and love demonstrated by the volunteers brought her to tears. She signed up to be a Tzu Chi volunteer right on the spot.

Tim Miller was busy at the free clinic that day. He had a bad tooth removed, had his teeth scaled, got a haircut, and received some clothes. He said the dental treatment was painless, and he was grateful for a suitcase from Tzu Chi to store his clothes.

George Tomich appreciated the service that he had received from the free clinic. He was retired, but he could not live on his pension alone. He had been living at the Salvation Army center for over a month as he waited for his housing subsidy from the government. He had his teeth checked at the clinic, but could not receive further treatment at the site because of his hypertension. As a result, the dentist referred him to a private dental clinic for follow-up.

**Tzu Chi volunteers held a free clinic from October 28 to 30 on Batam Island, Indonesia, benefiting 492 patients.**

Though the homeless people had fallen on hard times, they were still willing to give. Before the day was over, 19 people picked up Tzu Chi coin banks so they could save money to do good deeds.

#### Indonesia

From October 28 to 30, 2016, the Tzu Chi Indonesia branch held a free medical clinic at Budi Kemuliaan Hospital on Batam Island. This was the 114th large-scale clinic the branch had offered to provide the needy with medical treatment.

In addition to residents of Batam Island, the clinic also served needy people from areas including Bareleng, Tanjung Balai Karimun, Tanjung Batu, and Uban. Tzu Chi paid for their transportation and room and board so they could come to the free clinic without worrying about spending any money out of their own pockets.

To help the clinic go more smoothly, Tzu Chi held a screening on October 22 and 23 to determine whether people were suitable for surgery.

One of those who received surgery after being screened was 47-year-old Abdul Manun, a driver who had suffered for two years from cataracts. He could not see the road very well because of his condition and had to be very careful while driving so as not to cause an accident. Driving at night was out of the question. His vision was restored to normal the day after the surgery at the free clinic.

Chandra Rizal, the head of the Batam Health Agency, commended the medical service Tzu Chi offered. He pointed out that a main medical problem in Indonesia was the unequal distribu-



CHEN LI-YUAN





JAMICA DIGO

**Having received emergency cash from Tzu Chi, a typhoon victim figures out what materials he will need to repair his home.**

tion of medical facilities, so he warmly welcomed Tzu Chi's free clinics on the island.

This was the seventh time Budi Kemuliaan Hospital had provided its facility and staff to help Tzu Chi provide free treatment. Sri Soedarsono, the hospital founder, said that she felt grateful to be able to work with Tzu Chi in helping people regardless of religion or race and that she appreciated the confidence that the foundation had placed in the hospital. She also expressed her hope that the cooperation would continue into the future.

The three-day clinic served 492 patients, including 232 who had cataracts removed, 59 treated for pterygium, 66 for hernia, and 19 for cleft lips. Tzu Chi volunteers hope that offering free clinics will bring hope and happiness to underprivileged people afflicted with illness.

### Philippines

Typhoon Haima, known in the Philippines as Typhoon Lawin, plowed into that country on October 19, 2016. The storm killed 14 people and caused widespread damage to the northern part of the archipelago. Tzu Chi volun-

teers visited disaster areas to evaluate the situation before they decided to help 93 families in Balzain East, Tuguegarao, Cagayan Province. The foundation provided each family with 10,000 pesos (US\$200) to buy construction materials to repair their houses. Many homes in the area, built with light materials, suffered heavy damage from the storm.

Before eight in the morning of October 27, people were already waiting at a school for the distribution to open. One of them was Vicente Guitering, who had received surgery at a Tzu Chi free clinic 18 years earlier to remove a cyst on his knee. He raised his knee to show a volunteer where he had been operated on, and he praised the surgical skills of the doctor. He also extended his gratitude to the foundation for its financial assistance this time. "This is a big help because nobody else has given us this much money so we can rebuild our home," he remarked.

After handing over emergency cash to the recipients, volunteers gave each of them a hug, a gesture to convey their care and to warm the typhoon victims' hearts.

Virginia Caulian said that her house had been completely destroyed in the storm. Although both she and her husband worked, they did not earn enough money to start rebuilding their home. "We are so very thankful that God sent Tzu Chi here to help us," she remarked.

Apart from helping residents rebuild their homes, the financial aid provided by the foundation gave typhoon victims a chance to resume their livelihoods. Myrna Parallag was a 53-year-old popcorn vendor. She said that the storm dampened the corn she had bought, so she ended up having nothing to sell. "If not for your aid, I wouldn't have been able to start selling again."

Some aid recipients immediately figured out what materials they would need to repair their houses as soon as they returned home from the distribution. But when they went to hardware stores to ask about the prices of the goods they needed, they found that the storm had driven up the cost of many building materials.

Many victims, like Parallag, were street vendors, peddling vegetables, popcorn, fried food, and such. They planned to make money at cemeteries on the upcoming Undas, the holiday honoring the dead, when big crowds would visit their family tombs to pay their respects. The vendors hoped to make extra money to help pay for their house repairs.

The recipients appreciated the aid from Tzu Chi. Compared to relief goods, the cash assistance offered them flexibility to make the best use of the money to recover from the disaster.

### **This Haitian cheerfully displays the money he received for his work in Tzu Chi's cash-for-work program.**



COURTESY TZU CHI USA

### Haiti

After Hurricane Matthew devastated Haiti in early October 2016, Tzu Chi volunteers from the United States traveled to that nation and joined hands with local volunteers to help victims. They served hot meals in the hard-hit cities of Jeremie and Les Cayes and initiated a cash-for-work program in Jeremie.

On October 27, volunteers worked with the city government of Jeremie to distribute hot meals to 500 people at a local school. The meals were prepared with Tzu Chi's instant rice with adzuki beans. Because many people could afford only one meal a day, they were very excited about the rice. However, they lined up in an orderly fashion and patiently waited to be served.

One woman said that her family was poor and that this was the first time she had eaten rice in 29 days. Between mouthfuls of rice, another resident praised its delicious flavor.

The instant rice had been flown from Taiwan to Haiti and then trucked for over nine hours to Jeremie. It was a long trip, but it was well worth it. The rice warmed the hearts of those who ate it.

The Jeremie city government enlisted the help of some cooks to prepare the meals for this distribution. They first used coal to boil the beans in large pots. Then they poured in the rice and kept stirring. To appeal to local tastes, they added butter and soybean oil instead of the seasoning packets that had come with the instant rice.

On October 26, Tzu Chi also started a cash-for-work program in Jeremie, which paid residents to clean up hurricane debris in the city.

There were not enough cleaning tools available on the first day of the program. Tzu Chi volunteers purchased more tools from a local hardware store. As they were making the purchase, they saw store employees busily moving construction materials that people had ordered. The hurricane had left Haiti with many damaged houses and created an increased demand for these supplies.

Those who took part in Tzu Chi's cash-for-work program received cash for their labor. They could then buy materials to rebuild or repair their homes. Juste, 21, said she would use her wages to buy galvanized metal sheets and plastic panels for her parents to rebuild the roof of their house. "Our roof was blown apart [by the hurricane], and now the house leaks whenever it rains."

In the aftermath of Hurricane Matthew, Tzu Chi distributed 28,044 hot meals in Haiti, and its cash-for-work program logged 290 shifts.





To express their appreciation for Taiwan's rice aid, Tzu Chi volunteers from five African countries presented officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with shopping bags made from used rice sacks.

Volunteers will continue to assess needs to determine how Tzu Chi can further help out.

### Taiwan

At the end of 2002, Taiwan's Council of Agriculture initiated a program in which rice is set aside every year for government agencies and private aid organizations to distribute to needy people in other countries. The program helps relieve hunger in the world, gives a boost to Taiwan's image on the international stage, and puts more money in the pockets of Taiwanese rice farmers, a win-win-win situation.

Tzu Chi has received rice through this program since 2003. The foundation has delivered the rice, 118,620 metric tons to be exact, to needy people in 17 countries around the world, including the Philippines, Haiti, Jordan, Honduras, South Africa, Lesotho, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique.

On November 17, 2016, a Tzu Chi delegation composed of volunteers from those five African countries visited Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and Council of Agriculture (COA) to express their gratitude for Taiwan's long-term rice aid. These volunteers had attended a Tzu Chi volunteer training workshop and

received their volunteer certification from Master Cheng Yen in Taiwan and were about to return to their countries.

During their visits to these government agencies, delegation members gave officials handmade shopping bags that had been fashioned by African Tzu Chi volunteers using sacks that had contained rice from Taiwan. The words, "Love from Taiwan," printed on the original rice sacks, could be seen front and center on the shopping bags. Volunteers observed that fashioning used rice sacks into reusable shopping bags is a way the love from Taiwan can continue to work, in a different form, in their countries. Gladys Ngema, a volunteer from South Africa, said that the handmade bags symbolize gratitude and the recycling of materials and love.

Volunteers told Shen Wen-chiang (沈文強), deputy director-general of MOFA's Department of NGO International Affairs, and Liao An-ding (廖安定), COA secretary-general, that Tzu Chi passed on the spirit of Great Love to impoverished people and inspired them in turn to help other people. Distributing rice in their countries has in this way created cycles of love and goodness. Delegation members also sang and danced to show their appreciation.

YAN FU-JIANG

# Directory of Tzu Chi Offices Worldwide

### TAIWAN

**Hualien: Headquarters**  
Tel: 886-3-8266779  
Fax: 886-3-8267776

**Taipei: Tzu Chi Humanitarian Center**  
Tel: 886-2-28989000  
Fax: 886-2-28989920

### ARGENTINA

Tel: 54-11-48625770  
Fax: 54-11-43140252

### AUSTRALIA

**Brisbane**  
Tel: 61-7-32727938  
Fax: 61-7-32727283

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

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

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

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

### BRAZIL

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

### BRUNEI

Tel/Fax: 673-3336779

### CANADA

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

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

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

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

### DOMINICAN REP.

Tel: 1-809-5300972

### EL SALVADOR

Tel/Fax: 1-503-7293905

### FRANCE

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

### GERMANY

Tel: 49-40-336806  
Fax: 49-40-72919975

### GREAT BRITAIN

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

### GUATEMALA

Tel: 502-22327648  
Fax: 502-23675872

### HONG KONG

Tel: 852-28937166  
Fax: 852-28937478

### INDONESIA

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

### JAPAN

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

### JORDAN

Tel/Fax: 962-6-5817305

### LESOTHO

Tel: 266-28312566  
Fax: 266-22313897

### MALAYSIA

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

**Kedah**  
Tel: 60-4-7311013  
Fax: 60-4-7321013

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

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

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

### MEXICO

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

### MYANMAR

Tel: 95-1-541494/541496

### NETHERLANDS

Tel: 31-629-577511

### NEW ZEALAND

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

### PARAGUAY

Tel: 595-21-333818  
Fax: 595-21-310588

### PHILIPPINES

Tel/Fax: 63-2-7320001

### SINGAPORE

Tel: 65-65829958  
Fax: 65-65829952

### SOUTH AFRICA

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

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

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

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

### SWEDEN

Tel/Fax: 46-31-227883

### THAILAND

Tel: 66-2-3281161-3  
Fax: 66-2-3281160

### TURKEY

Tel: 90-212-4225802  
Fax: 90-212-4225803

### UNITED STATES

**San Dimas**  
Tel: 1-909-4477799  
Fax: 1-909-4477948

**Atlanta**  
Tel: 1-770-4581000

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Indianapolis**  
Tel: 1-317-5800979

**Kansas**  
Tel: 1-913-3976517

**Long Island**  
Tel: 1-516-8736888  
Fax: 1-516-7460626

**Madison**  
Tel: 1-608-2687692

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

**New Jersey**  
Tel: 1-973-8578666  
Fax: 1-973-8579555

**New York**  
Tel: 1-718-8880866  
Fax: 1-718-4602068

**Los Angeles Northwest**  
Tel: 1-818-7277689  
Fax: 1-818-7279272

**Los Angeles West**  
Tel: 1-310-4735188  
Fax: 1-310-4779518

**Oakland**  
Tel: 1-510-8790971

**Orlando**  
Tel/Fax: 1-407-2921146

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

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

**San Diego**  
Tel: 1-858-5460578  
Fax: 1-858-5460573

**San Francisco**  
Tel: 1-415-6820566  
Fax: 1-415-6820567

**San Jose**  
Tel: 1-408-4576969  
Fax: 1-408-9438420

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

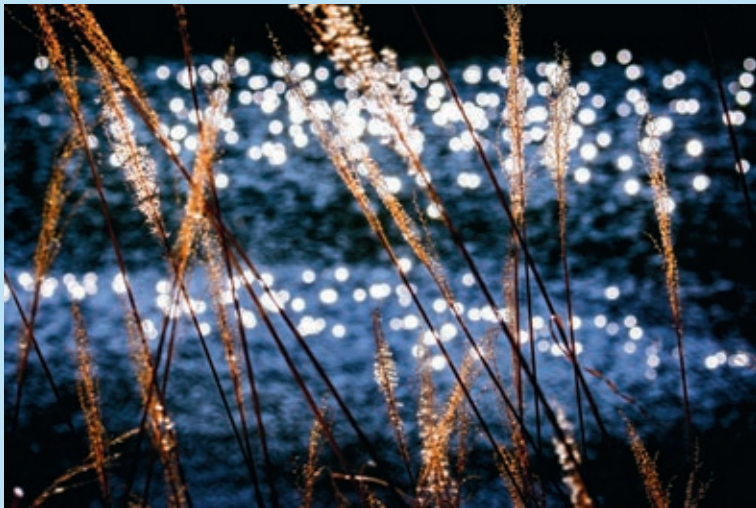
**St. Louis**  
Tel/Fax: 1-314-9941999

**Washington DC**  
Tel: 1-703-7078606  
Fax: 1-703-7078607

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

To read our magazine online, please visit our website: [web.tzuchiculture.org.tw](http://web.tzuchiculture.org.tw)





*Our mind is like a garden: If no good seeds are sown,  
nothing good will grow from it.*  
—Master Cheng Yen

PHOTO BY LI BAI-SHI