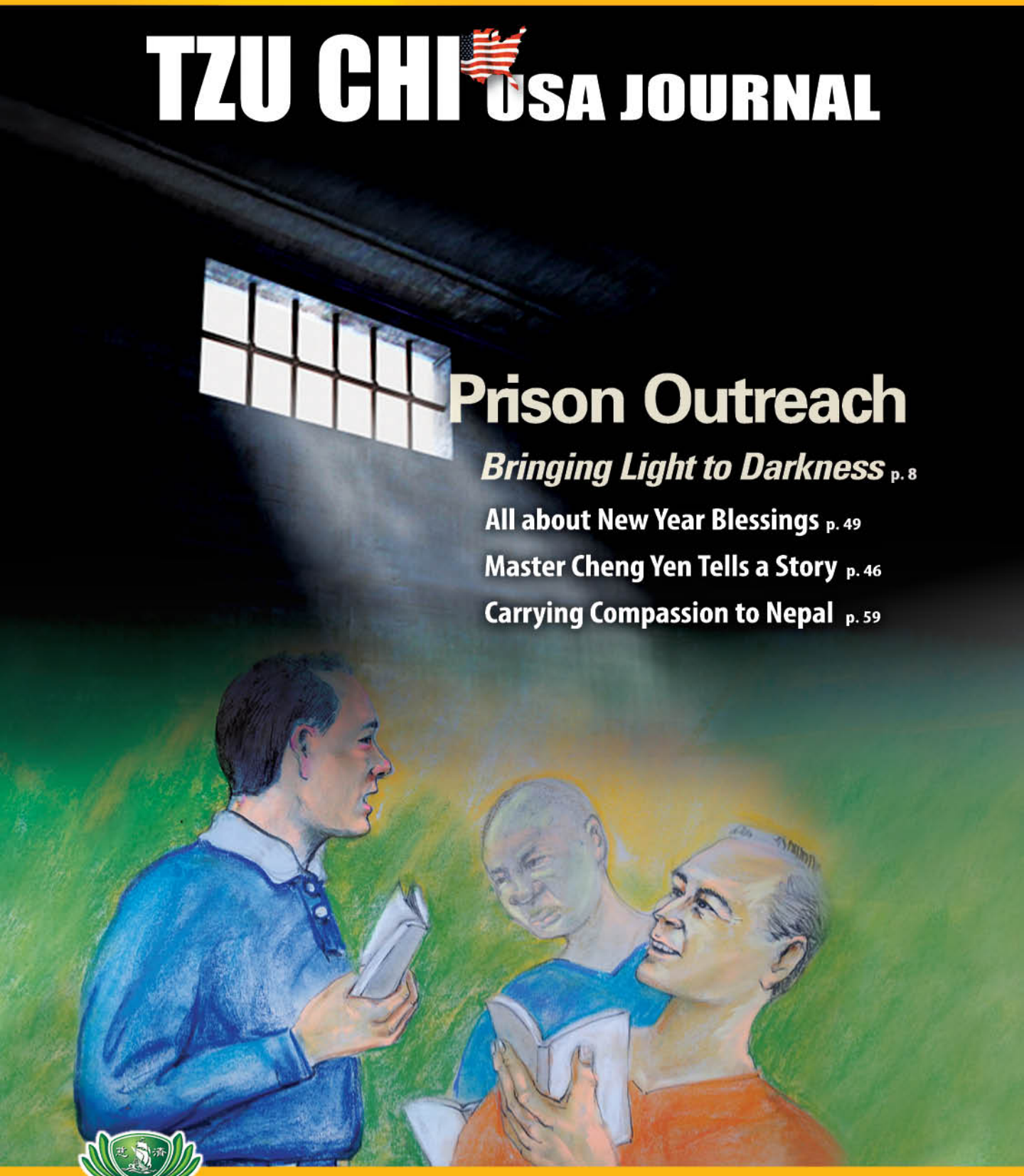
COMPASSION & RELIEF

TZU CHI USA JOURNAL



Prison Outreach

Bringing Light to Darkness p. 8

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Carrying Compassion to Nepal p. 59

ISSUE 46 | WINTER 2015

DHARMA MASTER CHENG YEN
FOUNDER OF
TZU CHI FOUNDATION

CONTEMPLATIVE WISDOM

thoughts for meditation, contemplation, and reflection from Master Cheng Yen

A Tireless Heart

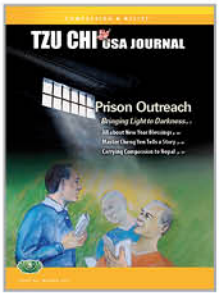
Let us be gentle, good-natured, and accommodating
as we interact with others;
with patience we can see the bigger picture.

Let us be self-disciplined and guard against wrongdoings
as we deal with matters;
with precepts we can attain a sense of freedom and ease.

Then we will not be shaken by wind or rain
nor afflicted by adversity.

When we feel for sentient beings,
we practice loving-kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity,
and widely share virtuous Dharma,
never becoming tired or weary.

Translated by the Dharma as Water Editorial Team



Cover Photo: By reaching out to inmates, volunteers bring light to dark corners.

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An Open Heart, Liberated from Suffering

On the path of Buddhist practice, our ultimate goal is to attain Buddhahood. Yet the Buddha tells us that to become a Buddha, we must first journey upon the Bodhisattva Path. If we do not walk the Bodhisattva Path, our hearts will always remain very different from that of a Buddha. It is therefore important to learn to serve as a bodhisattva.

As we set out to practice bodhisattva ways, our mind must first be turned toward the mission to relieve others of suffering. Such a mindset and internal orientation is of foremost importance.

Living beings experience many different kinds of suffering. There is the suffering due to external conditions, such as the suffering that comes with poverty, disaster, or illness. Yet, there is also psychological suffering, which arises as we react to what we see, hear, sense, or feel in our day to day life. All of these can cause us to suffer.

But while we try to help others out of suffering, do we not also experience the same suffering ourselves? If we have not yet learned the way to rise above our suffering, how then can we help others to do so?

In our lives, the conditions that cause suffering are often things that we can do little to change. How then can we liberate ourselves from our suffering? The key lies in the internal processes that enable us to rise above suffering. It takes a kind of transformation of perspective, mindset, or heart. This in fact is at the heart of spiritual cultivation, growth, and awakening.

For example, the conditions of our life often cannot be changed. The people around us may have habits and personalities that create problems for us or cause us pain and difficulty. The affairs we must deal with in daily life are not things we can escape from or alter. But most often, the reason these people and issues bother

Dharma Master Cheng Yen
Compiled into English by the Jing Si Abode English Editorial Team

us is due to our own personality and our ways of seeing or thinking. We all have the Buddha-nature within us, and this true nature is one of great compassion, love, and tenderness. But over the course of time, we have developed a personality or ego that is very willful and set in its ways. That is why we are so displeased by certain things or react in the way we do. In fact, with our hardened personality, we hurt others; at the same time, we also hurt ourselves. The practice is to tame this willful personality and to gradually touch our true nature, our Buddha nature. When we understand to practice in this way, we will begin to see everything and everyone around us as chances for us to practice and as opportunities for spiritual growth. Then, a sense of gratitude will fill our hearts and we will approach everything in a whole different way.

As we gradually overcome our willful personality and touch our Buddha-nature full of love, tenderness, and compassion, we become more effective and capable of helping others. Because we are more open, people will find us more pleasant and will be more willing to take the words we say to heart. That is why we must first tame our own willful selves if we are to help others to open their hearts and untie their inner knots and afflictions. It is in this spirit that the Buddha was also referred to as "The Tamer."

Helping others out of their suffering therefore requires that we first help ourselves out of our own suffering by taming the willful part of ourselves that in fact creates our suffering. This is an essential aspect of walking the Bodhisattva Path. When we understand this and practice so, we will embrace everything as an opportunity for our spiritual training.

WE NEED YOU!

We want to hear all the voices of the Tzu Chi family! Whether you're a volunteer, donor, community partner, friend, or newcomer to Tzu Chi, share your voice with a short answer (under 100 words) to a question below. Please email your answer to ***journal@tzuchi.us*** *and include your full name, city, and state.*

Issue 48 *(Due: January 31, 2016)*

What is the most memorable moment or moving encounter that you've experienced in Tzu Chi?

Issue 49 *(Due: April 30, 2016)*

What does "compassion in action" mean to you? Please share an example.

Issue 50 *(Due: July 31, 2016)*

If you had one more day with a deceased loved one, what would you do? What would you say?

call for submissions

Please email your answer, name, and city and state of residence to ***journal@tzuchi.us*** *by the listed due date. Answers may be edited or excluded for space, clarity, relevance, and content. By submitting your answer, you agree to have it included in all print and digital versions of* Tzu Chi USA Journal. *We welcome contributions from all readers; please feel free to submit or suggest story ideas or drafts.*

Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation
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CEO'S NOTE

Our Actions Become Our Character

Ever since the major earthquake struck near Kathmandu in late April, I have been very moved by the outpouring of support for the Nepalese people. I want to thank everyone across the U.S. who has shared their blessings and donated to support survivors. Even though most couldn't travel to Nepal to help directly, I want you to know that your love was delivered.

The two earthquakes and many aftershocks that the Nepalese people suffered should also lead us to consider why there seems to be no end of natural and man-made disasters in recent years. Here in California, for instance, we're still feeling the pressure of the ongoing drought. We're running out of water. It's a sign. Mother Nature is warning us that we need to do a better job of protecting her; we need to make caring for the environment a part of daily life.

Caring for the environment is not just about recycling. We also need to seriously consider how we use water every day. We should follow the call to water our lawns only twice a week. We should think about the level in the water tower as we brush our teeth. We should finish our shower quickly and not just keep standing there singing.

It's important to think about these kinds of things, especially in our daily routines. Thinking inspires actions. Actions become habits. Habits define our character. If we don't think, we fall into bad habits instead, and then those bad habits define our character.

Accumulated bad habits are one of the reasons why people end up in prison. It's truly worrisome to think about the prison problem in the United States today. Millions of people are locked away, and as much as sixty thousand dollars of taxpayer funds are spent incarcerating each inmate each year. It's an enormous amount of money and a terrible waste of potential.

I am very grateful to all of the Tzu Chi volunteers who reach out to many of these inmates, help them in their spirit and in their thinking, and give them something to lean on and think about. These volunteers show that Tzu Chi is not just about disaster relief, not just about environmental protection, but very active and involved throughout the community.

I'm grateful to our volunteers for providing inmates with the power to change by sharing moving examples found in real-life stories. I'm grateful that they demonstrate that the world is a good place when many people are helping one another. We can help people returning from prison and jail to be ready to contribute to society and to the circle of love. Thank you to all of our volunteers, all of our donors, and all of our inmate friends who are making an effort to help others in need.

Han Huang

Prison Outreach

Bringing Light to Darkness

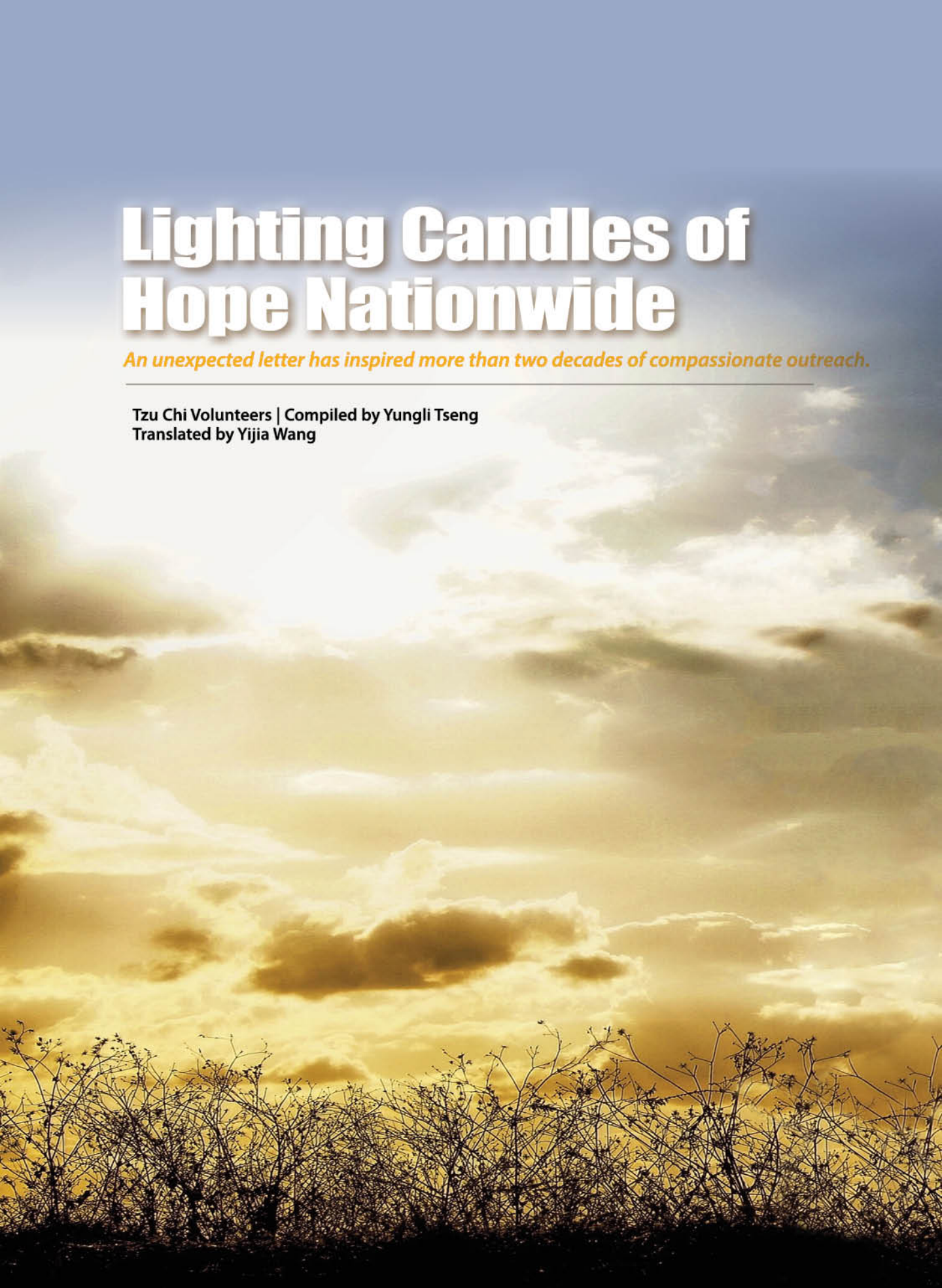
With more than two million Americans incarcerated in prisons and jails, and more than twice as many on probation and parole, far too many people are locked out of society and in need of love, care, companionship, and often guidance and inspiration.

Tzu Chi volunteers across the country have been reaching out to respond to these needs for more than two decades, and with renewed vigor since 2013. Through personal visits, meditation and cooking classes, discussion groups, letter writing, and book donations, volunteers give their time to show they care.

Lighting Candles of Hope Nationwide

An unexpected letter has inspired more than two decades of compassionate outreach.

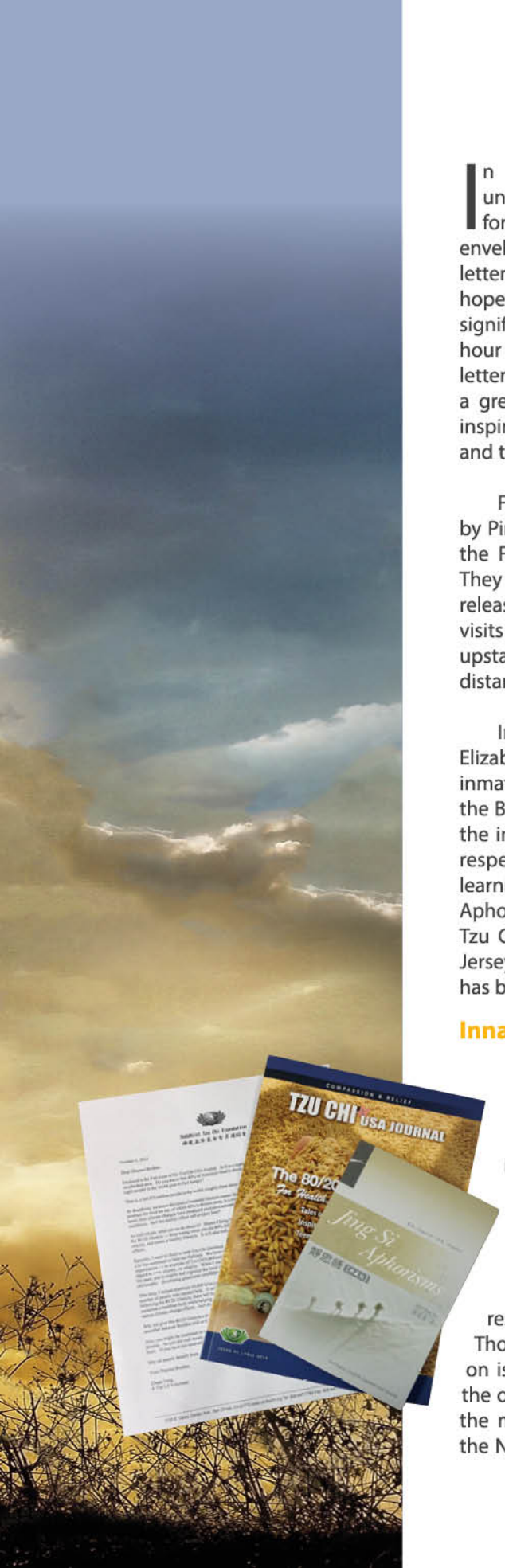
Tzu Chi Volunteers | Compiled by Yungli Tseng
Translated by Yijia Wang



In 1993, Tzu Chi volunteers in New York received an unexpected envelope containing a letter and a check for one hundred dollars. What was surprising was the envelope's origin—prison. The two inmates who wrote the letter expressed their desire that their donation bring more hope to the world. Though the amount was small, it was significant for them, as they earned only fifteen cents an hour working in prison. From the seed of this one simple letter, more than a decade of correspondence began, and a great national outreach to prison and jail inmates was inspired. Twenty years later, this outreach continues to grow and thrive throughout the country.

From 1995 to 1997, Tzu Chi volunteers in New York, led by Pinghua Wang, paid monthly visits to female inmates at the Federal Correctional Facility in Danbury, Connecticut. They provided loving care to ten inmates until all were released. Since 1998, volunteers have been making monthly visits to several inmates in a medium-security prison in upstate New York. They also occasionally visit six other more distant prisons and communicate as pen pals with inmates.

In New Jersey, volunteers started visiting inmates at Elizabeth Detention Facility once a month in 1999 to listen to inmates' stories and deliver requested books and images of the Buddha. On February 12, 2003, they also began leading the inmates in regular study sessions that included paying respect to the Buddha, practicing walking meditation, learning and practicing sign language, and reading Jing Si Aphorisms. One inmate, Mr. Sun, visited his new "home"—Tzu Chi Mid-Atlantic Regional Office in Cedar Grove, New Jersey—right after he was released from prison in 2007. He has been a diligent and dedicated volunteer ever since.



Innate Kindness Is Inspired

Many of the inmates visited by New York volunteers became Tzu Chi volunteers after their release. One enrolled her children in weekend Tzu Chi Academy classes and donated several thousand dollars immediately after a massive earthquake struck Taiwan in 1999. After returning home to Maryland, another contacted Tzu Chi's New York office to express her gratitude and donate to the charity fund.

Pinghua Wang in New York has been actively corresponding with one inmate for nearly two decades. Though this inmate's daily wage from working in the prison is just two dollars, whenever disaster strikes, he seizes the opportunity to help the affected through Tzu Chi. After the massive Sichuan earthquake in 2008, and again after the Nepal earthquake in 2015, he donated twenty-five dol-

lars—the equivalent of nearly two weeks' salary.

Mr. Ma, an inmate that Tzu Chi volunteers in the Greater Washington DC Region have been corresponding with for many years, has done many good deeds through his connection to Tzu Chi. After Typhoon Morakot devastated Taiwan in August 2009, he mailed a two dollar check to Tzu Chi from prison. What especially impressed the volunteers was that he did so despite only earning sixty cents per day by washing clothes.

In late June 2010, Tzu Chi USA Headquarters received a donation from a former detainee in Southern California's San Pedro Service Processing Center. From 2006 to 2007, Tzu Chi had regularly visited several detainees. In the three years since, the detainees had returned to their regular lives, but they had not forgotten to give back to show their thanks.

Education and Redemption

The United States has the largest incarcerated population in the world. Each prisoner costs taxpayers upwards of sixty thousand dollars a year, not including prison construction costs. In 2012, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation found that more than 65 percent of those released from prison returned within three years. It is absolutely essential to help rehabilitate and educate inmates, rather than simply punishing them, in order for them to successfully reenter society. As a result, charity and religious groups are often invited to provide such services.

In the nineties, Tzu Chi volunteer Aik Thye Wee from Northern California often drove past the state prison and juvenile hall in San Jose, until one day he decided to visit. Along with volunteers Poh Joo Tan and Kevin Luo, he received training to serve as a mathematics teacher; all three started teaching inmates in February 2000. Thus began Tzu Chi's long-term care activities for juvenile inmates in Northern California.

It is absolutely essential to help rehabilitate and educate inmates, rather than simply punishing them, in order for them to successfully reenter society.

Volunteer Karl Su teaches high school equivalency to inmates in Seattle, Washington. Thanks to his dedication, local volunteers started participating in quarterly inmate graduation ceremonies in 2009. Each time they provide delicious vegetarian food, share ***Jing Si Aphorisms***, and introduce Tzu Chi's humanistic culture through tea ceremony and flower arrangement tutorials. All of these actions bring a positive impact to the inmates. Since 2012, volunteers have also been offering art classes to cultivate inmates' patience, inner peace, and self-reflection.

Since August 2014, volunteers in Fresno, California, have been communicating regularly with more than twenty inmates from around the country. They also visit Chowchilla's Valley State Prison once a month to lead the prison sangha in discussions on ***Jing Si Aphorisms*** and Dharma Master Cheng Yen's teachings. Since the beginning of 2015, inmates have been inspired to create beautiful ***Jing Si Aphorism*** bookmarks for Tzu Chi to sell for charity funds.

Inner Peace from Jing Si Aphorisms

Books can inspire positive thinking. In 2006, Yuru Chou joined Pinghua Wang on her prison visits in New York and started thinking about giving books as gifts to the inmates. She sent letters to all of the prisons in New York, introducing Tzu Chi and providing examples of inmates influenced by the love and teachings of Master Cheng Yen. She eventually received several replies, including one from Orleans Correctional Facility. On September 26, Tzu Chi volunteers sent several publications, including ***Master Cheng Yen Tells Stories*** and ***Thirty-seven Principles of Enlightenment***, to the Orleans Correctional Facility library.

In recent years, Tzu Chi USA has sent another powerful gift to prison inmates—Master Cheng Yen's four-language edition of ***Jing Si Aphorisms*** in English, Chinese, Spanish, and Japanese. Volunteers in Las Vegas have been distributing copies of this book to both hotels and prisons since 2008, hoping to purify the minds of the weary and the incarcerated. In 2013, the effort extended nationwide.

In July 2013, volunteer Terri Lo was granted permission to give copies of ***Jing Si Aphorisms*** to prisons in Los Angeles, California. That December, volunteers gave one hundred more copies to Larry D. Smith Correctional Facility in Riverside.

In August 2013, volunteers in Washington DC invited police officers from a nearby station to a Tzu Chi event and presented them with copies of ***Jing Si Aphorisms*** as a gift. After reading the book, the officers were thoroughly impressed. Thanks to their referral, volunteers were able to donate one hundred copies to the local prison.

Buddha's Teachings in Prison

New York volunteer Yi Hsin Chen, who has been teaching with the prison correspondence course of the Buddhist Association of the United States for many years, truly believes that ***Jing Si Aphorisms*** is a good guide for inmates. Around Christmas 2013, Tzu Chi New York volunteers mailed copies of ***Jing Si Aphorisms*** and ***Tzu Chi USA Journal*** to over five hundred correspondence course students across the nation.

Since the beginning of 2014, Tzu Chi USA Headquarters has received many thank-you letters from recipients. Some have included donations for Tzu Chi's charitable projects, while others have mailed stamps to be resold for charity. Many have mentioned that ***Jing Si Aphorisms*** and ***Tzu Chi USA Journal*** have led them to rethink their lives and inspired them to apply aphorisms to their daily lives. They want to learn the spirit of Dharma Master Cheng Yen and Tzu Chi volunteers in order to give, even in prison. As of June 2015, more than five hundred letters had been received from prison and jail inmates. Volunteer Kelvin Chen leads a team that replies to each letter personally and sincerely.

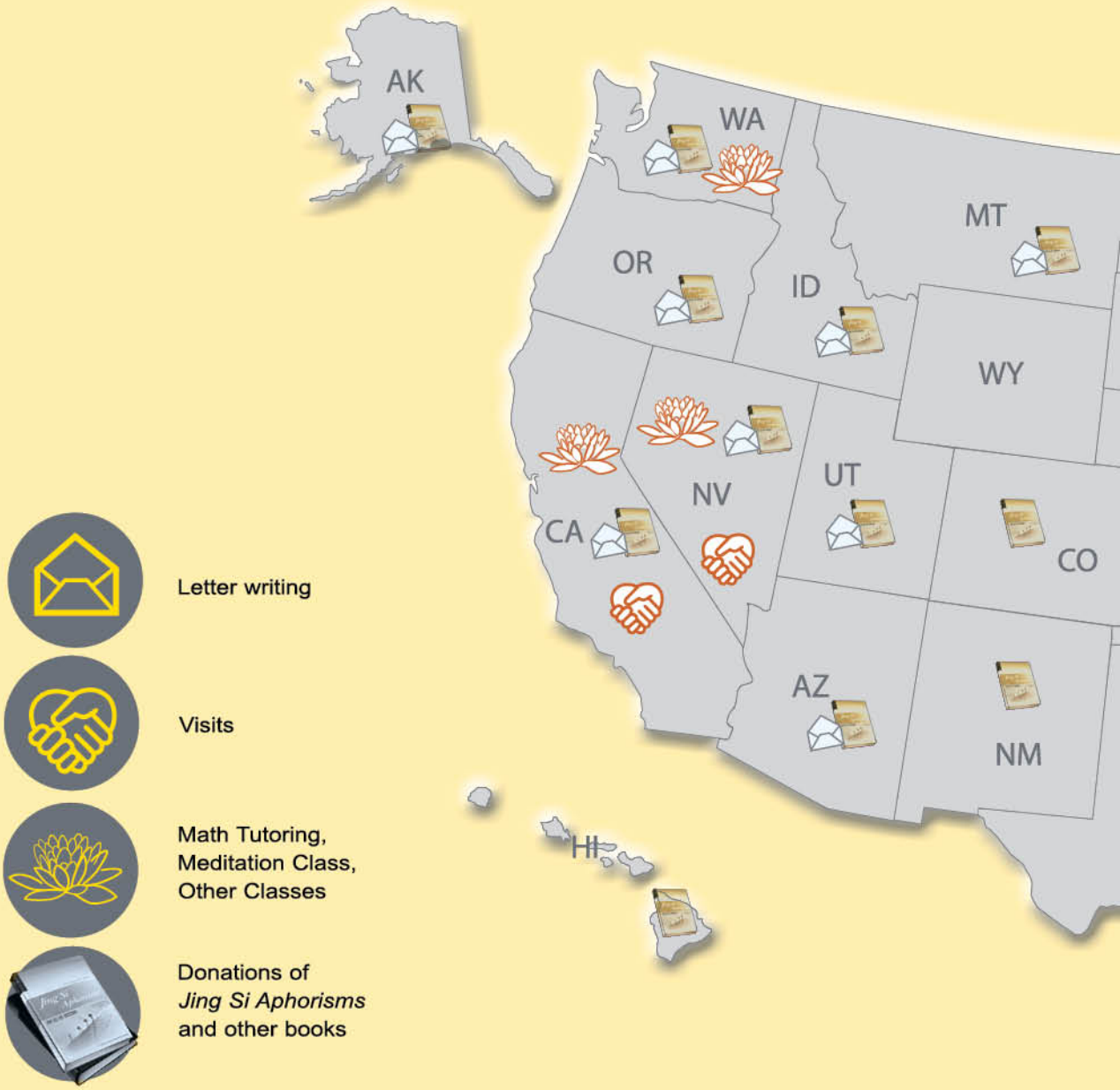
Just two days after a major earthquake devastated Nepal on April 25, 2015, a Texas death row inmate sent a brief letter together with a fifty dollar check. He expressed that he had read the stories in ***Tzu Chi USA Journal*** and knew that Tzu Chi volunteers would soon be providing relief to survivors of the earthquake. Despite his difficult circumstances, he wanted to share his love. His inspiring act recalls that very first letter received in New York two decades ago, in which two inmates shared that though their prison friends mocked them for donating, they knew they were making the right decision, perhaps for the very first time.

Master Cheng Yen's inspiring message of gratitude, respect, and love has lit a candle in the darkest corners and ignited a fire in the coldest spaces. Her words continually warm frozen hearts and point the way to a bright future.

New York volunteers have been caring for inmates at prisons such as this since 1993. Photo provided by Tzu Chi Northeast Region

Bringing Hope Nationwide

As volunteers have reached out to inmates across the country since 1993, the positive response has been overwhelming.



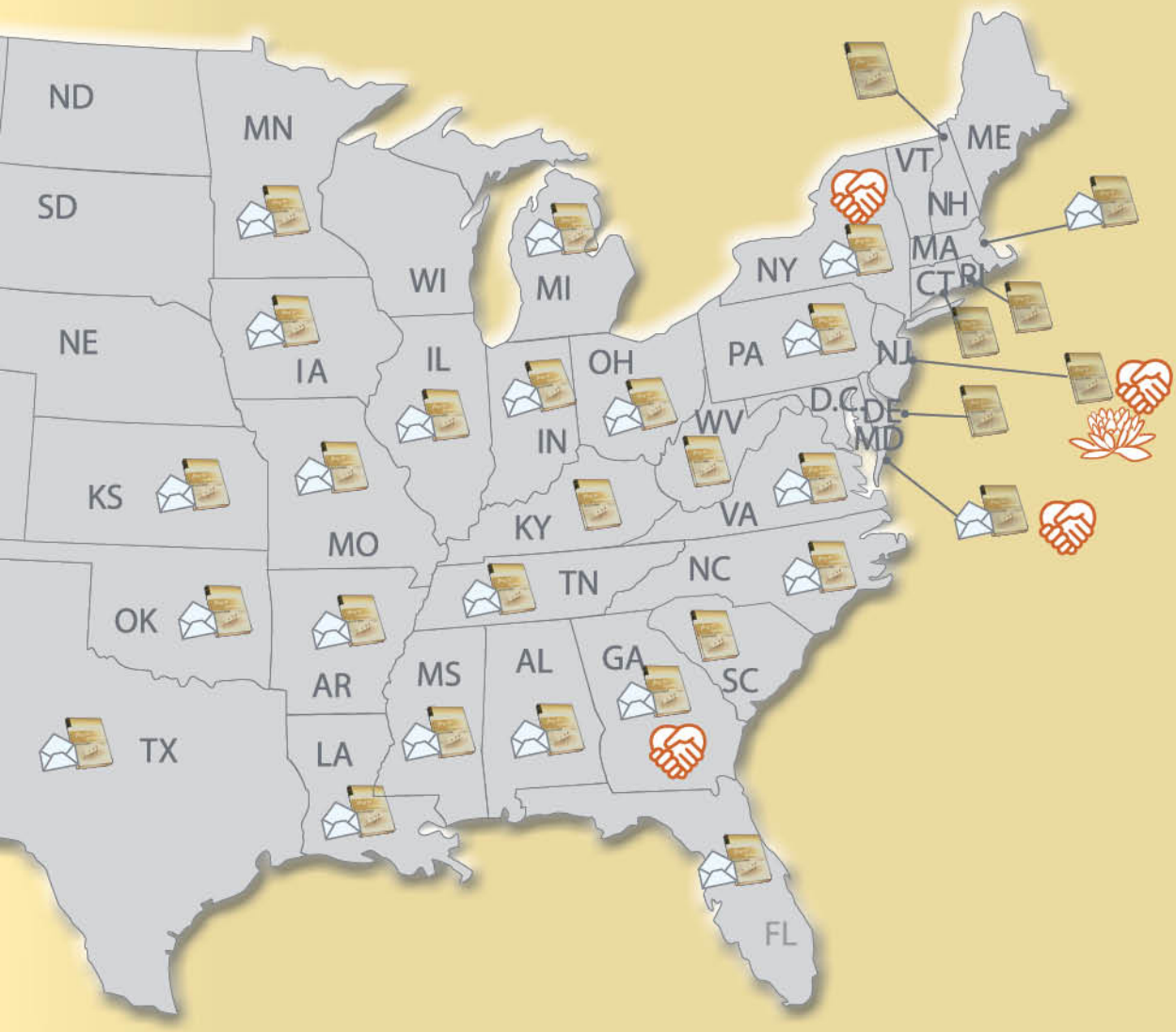
Letter writing

Visits

Math Tutoring, Meditation Class, Other Classes

Donations of *Jing Si Aphorisms* and other books

Prison Outreach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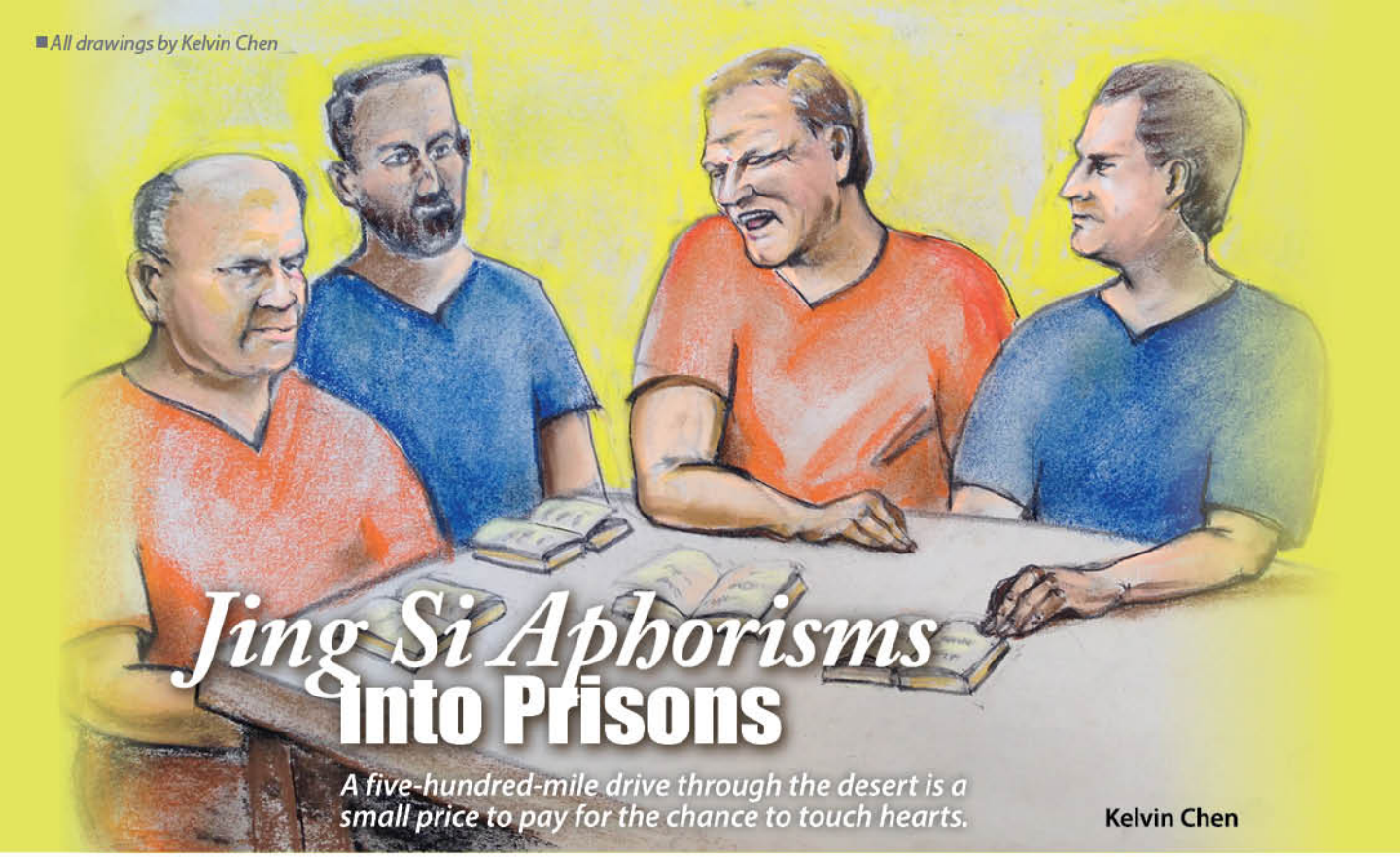
■ *All drawings by Kelvin Chen*



Jing Si Aphorisms Into Prisons

A five-hundred-mile drive through the desert is a small price to pay for the chance to touch hearts.

Kelvin Chen

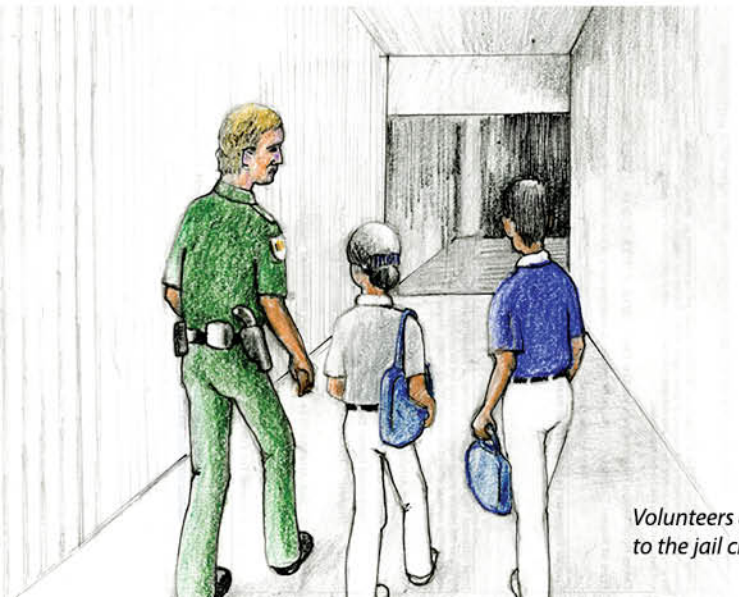
Like a mirage, the Las Vegas skyline slowly appears on the horizon. After four and a half hours of driving from Los Angeles through the barren desert, we have arrived at this oasis for pleasure seekers. Soon, Interstate 15 takes us alongside the famous Vegas Strip, where grandiose hotels, luxury shopping malls, gourmet foods, gambling tables, and extravagant night shows beckon visitors to indulge themselves.

Yet Nain and I drive on, oblivious to the dubious pleasures advertised on both sides of the highway. We are heading past Sin City to a large isolated building in the middle of a barren desert—Clark County Detention Center.

> His response pains me. How ignorant I am—he has paid with his freedom!

Since we took the Detention Center training class in May 2014, Nain and I have alternated with Johan Alwall to make this five-hundred-mile roundtrip nearly every month. Not once have we stopped at the Strip. The juxtaposition of the two places is extreme: the Strip is fun and pleasure, the jail anything but. The Strip is heaven on earth, the jail hell. Yet they are linked through karma—the Strip is the cause, the jail the result.

In the Four Noble Truths, the Buddha taught that all worldly pleasures eventually lead to suffering. But he also said that if we conduct ourselves appropriately according to the Noble Eightfold Path, we can leave all suffering behind and reach Nirvana. This is the good news we



Volunteers are guided to the jail classroom.

have come to deliver to the inmates through the words of Dharma Master Cheng Yen's ***Jing Si Aphorisms***.

At the jail entrance, we are warmly greeted by the smiling faces of two Las Vegas volunteers who will join us. Their support lifts our spirit and puts our minds at ease. "This is going to be another great, fulfilling trip," I say to myself, as if the sun has suddenly penetrated the gloomy sky. It takes some courage for volunteers to go through a full-body search, pass through locked door after locked door, and then finally enter a windowless classroom and be locked inside with a roomful of strangers—inmates. Without compassion and a genuine commitment to the spirit of Great Love expressed in the words, "There is no one in the world that I don't love / There is no one in the world that I don't trust / There is no one in the world that I cannot forgive," who would go out of their way to enter a jail?

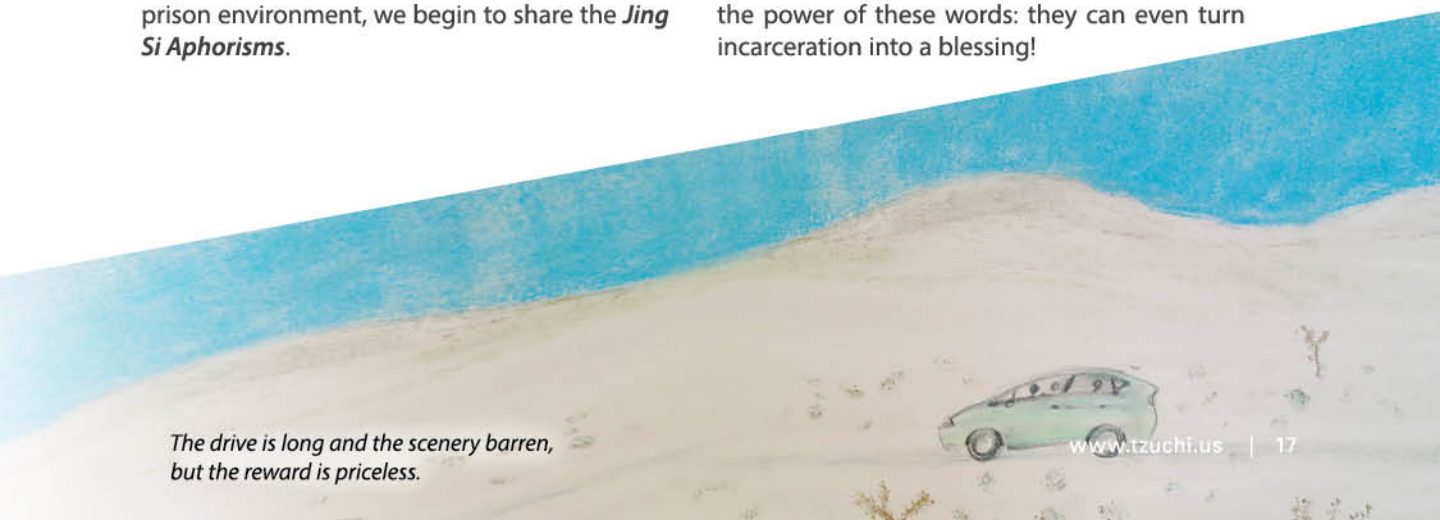
Nain Chen teaches inmates the Tzu Chi song "Love and Care."

The frigid faces of the inmates melt and turn into smiles as Nain teaches them to sing "Love and Care for All." It never ceases to amaze me how her smile and uplifting spirit quickly transmit through her angelic voice to the inmates, many of whom have not experienced any love and care for a very long time. Now that they are relaxed and have lost some of the suspicion and defensiveness common to the prison environment, we begin to share the ***Jing Si Aphorisms***.

Many inmates are eager to share during our visits. One large man shares that he used to worry too much about his upcoming trial and was unable to sleep. Since he began heeding the words on page 176—"affliction is like a poisonous snake that sleeps in the mind; the moment it is disturbed, it will bite you"—he now sleeps a lot better.

As their sharing continues, my heart begins to fill with joy. Master Cheng Yen's teachings are so simple, yet so effective in changing people's minds. In addition to the visits, I have been corresponding with prisoners across the U.S. since the beginning of 2014. In the first year and a half, I responded to over four hundred letters. Many wrote to tell me how ***Jing Si Aphorisms*** had changed their lives. One said that it was like a lighthouse that provided guidance to his life. Another said that the book gave him the moral compass that his parents never had. Many told me that they practice one page a day, contemplating that one teaching and trying to apply it to situations throughout the day. The inspiring stories go on and on.

I am jolted from my thoughts by a middle-aged inmate who shares that his incarceration has turned out to be a blessing. Otherwise, he would never have met Tzu Chi or known Buddhism. His candid revelation demonstrates the power of these words: they can even turn incarceration into a blessing!

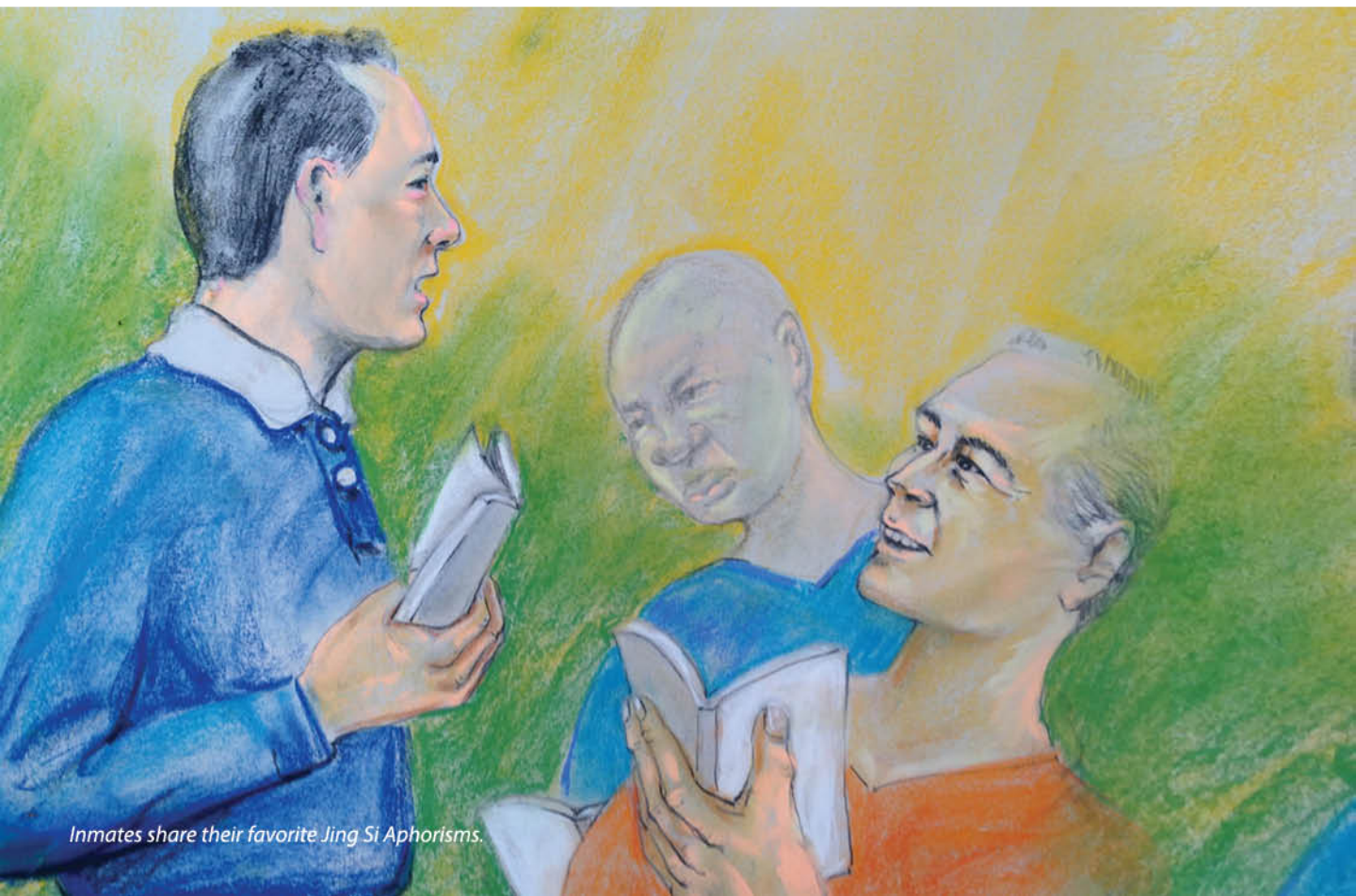


The drive is long and the scenery barren, but the reward is priceless.

Another person echoes his sentiment, commenting that the jail is a good place to practice such teachings. I jokingly tell them that I once paid fifty dollars a day for a retreat—several days away from phone, family, friends, and all outside distractions, with just basic food and lodging. Yet they have all these for free! But he replies resolutely, "No. I paid." His response pains me. How ignorant I am—he has paid with his freedom! While I can walk out of the retreat or the jail a free man at the end of class, he cannot.

Master Cheng Yen constantly reminds us that the Buddha's teachings need to be practiced in our daily life. Therefore, in our correspondence program, we also send the quarterly ***Tzu Chi USA Journal***. About seven hundred inmates across the U.S. now receive it regularly. The Journal shows them how Tzu Chi volunteers put Master's teachings into practice all around the world by helping others unconditionally. Such selfless acts touch the hearts of many prisoners, motivating them to do good deeds within their prison environment. Many even say that they want to become Tzu Chi volunteers when they are released.

After reading the report of how Tzu Chi volunteers helped the Hurricane Sandy victims, one prisoner, who grew up in the New York area, wrote that he was especially touched that Tzu Chi volunteers were helping his hometown while he was powerless to do anything. It motivated him to better himself and help others even while in prison. One gang member repented his past wrongs and expressed his desire to repay his community by corresponding with wayward youths, to advise them not to follow his path. Such touching stories go on and on.



Inmates share their favorite Jing Si Aphorisms.

A middle-aged inmate tells me, "I have been coming to the class for four months, and I shall continue to come for as long as I am here. When I am released, I want to be a Tzu Chi volunteer, too." Wow! With his statement, my entire day—getting up at five, driving four and a half hours straight, grabbing a quick bite, teaching three classes in three hours, grabbing another quick bite, then driving another four and a half hours back to Los Angeles—has been made worthwhile.

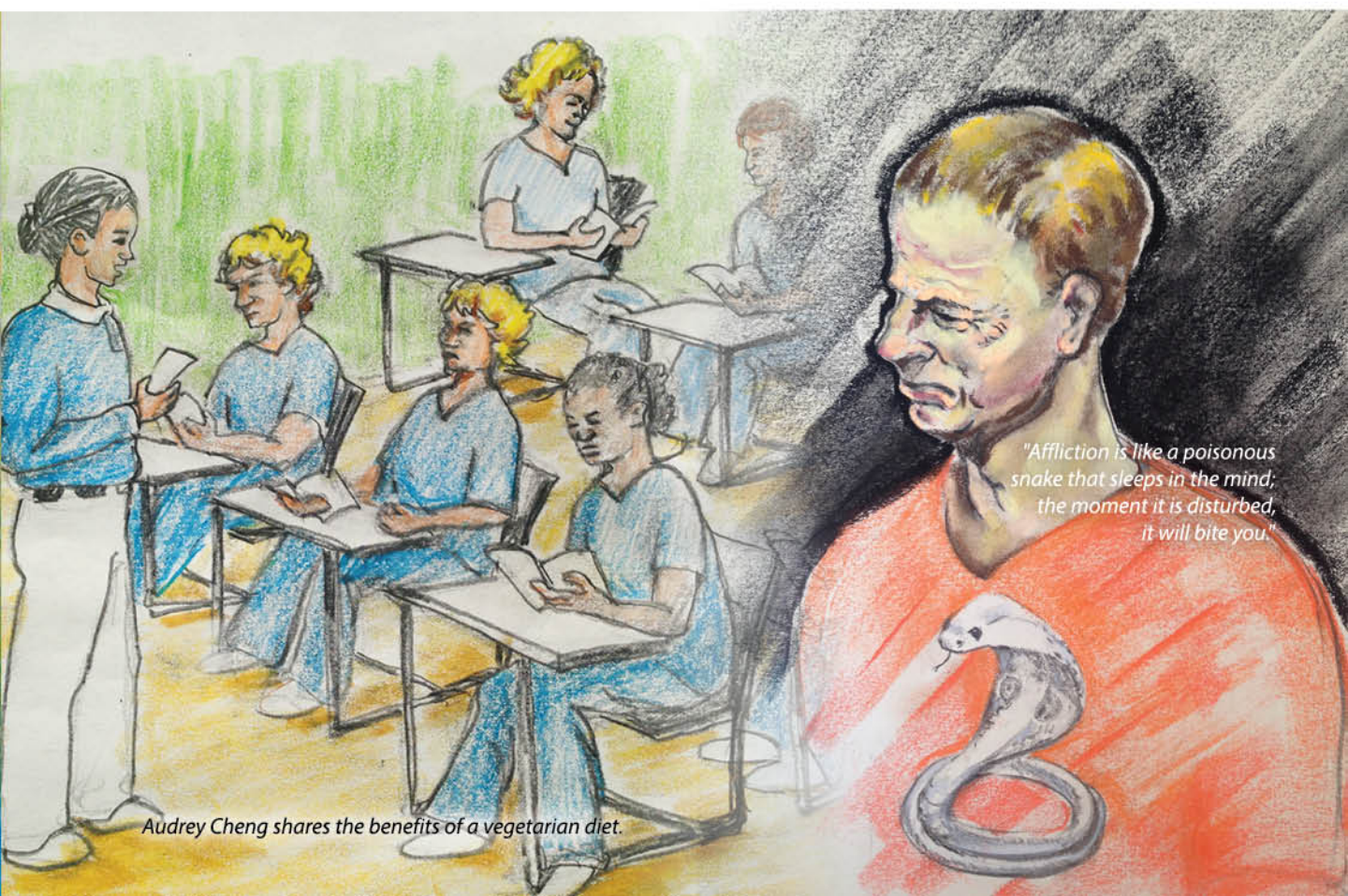
The candid sharing and heartfelt exchanges warm our hearts. We are like old friends sharing our life experiences and enjoying each other's company. We have all grown wiser by reflecting on Master's aphorisms together. Love, trust, and forgiveness fill the air.

Outside the classroom, the guards are getting impatient, waiting to lead the inmates back to their quarters, but no one seems to want to leave. As we bid farewell to each other, a bearded man shakes my hand and eagerly says, "I wish you could be here every week." He is visibly disappointed when I tell him that we came all the way from Los Angeles and can only make the trip once a month.

On this day, as with every visit, Nain and I arrive home around nine at night. Though tired physically, we are full of Dharma-joy and are already looking forward to our next trip. We are blessed to have the opportunity to help Master Cheng Yen deliver her teachings to some of the darkest corners of this world.

To benefit humankind is to enrich oneself.

Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen



Audrey Cheng shares the benefits of a vegetarian diet.

Enlightenment in the Borderlands

For the past two decades, IBS has been changing lives by venturing out to "hell on earth."

Daniel S. Tam | Translated by Estella Fung

Dharma Master Cheng Yen often teaches us, "In an instant, a wholesome thought and a decision to walk the right path could set the course of our life." International Bodhisattva Sangha (IBS) began spreading Buddhist teachings in prison based on such a moment's affinity, after receiving a call from Calipatria State Prison on a cold winter night in December 1994, requesting volunteers to help educate inmates (whom we call "Dharma friends") about Buddhism and meditation.

> *Studies have shown that inmates receiving any kind of education, including religious studies, are 43 percent less likely to violate parole than those who refuse education.*

Calipatria State Prison is a maximum security institution in Southern California that mainly houses serious male offenders serving long sentences. The facility has a capacity of four thousand. As news of prison brawls and other troubles are common, the media has dubbed the prison "hell on earth," and as Calipatria is a "no hostage" prison, visitors are required to sign a disclaimer recognizing that their safety isn't guaranteed. We hesitated slightly, as we had no experience of prison visits before, but I knew that I must practice what I've learnt in Buddhism to continue to learn along the Bodhisattva Path. Should anything happen, it would be due to my own karma, which cannot be avoided anyway. So I took on the assignment from IBS. I was forty-eight at the time, at the peak of my career. My time was split between office, temple, family, and now, prison. I never felt tired, even though I ran on such a packed schedule. I simply became ever more involved because I was doing all the things I'm supposed to do in life.

As Calipatria is located out in the desert near the Salton Sea, I had to leave at five o'clock in the morning to make the two-and-a-half-hour drive. The first visit was a memorable one, as I noticed our Dharma friends entering the room in neat blue uniforms. Even though they managed to squeeze out a smile, I could tell from their stares that deep down they were not at ease and had trust issues. They told us later that many inmates live in pain, guilt, worry, and anxiety. Many have committed suicide as they could no longer bear the torment. The suicide rate often peaks during holidays. Reacting to their needs, our emphasis has never been on explaining hard-to-grasp Buddhist concepts, but rather on caring and soothing their hearts, while introducing Buddhism through meditation and with compassion. Buddha's teachings help those who feel despair to spark new hope towards life.

During my first two years of visits, I engaged in studies to advance my Buddhist terminology in English, but I still felt I couldn't do the job right. I wish I had a better grasp of the language. Fortunately, I met Dr. Lewis Lancaster,

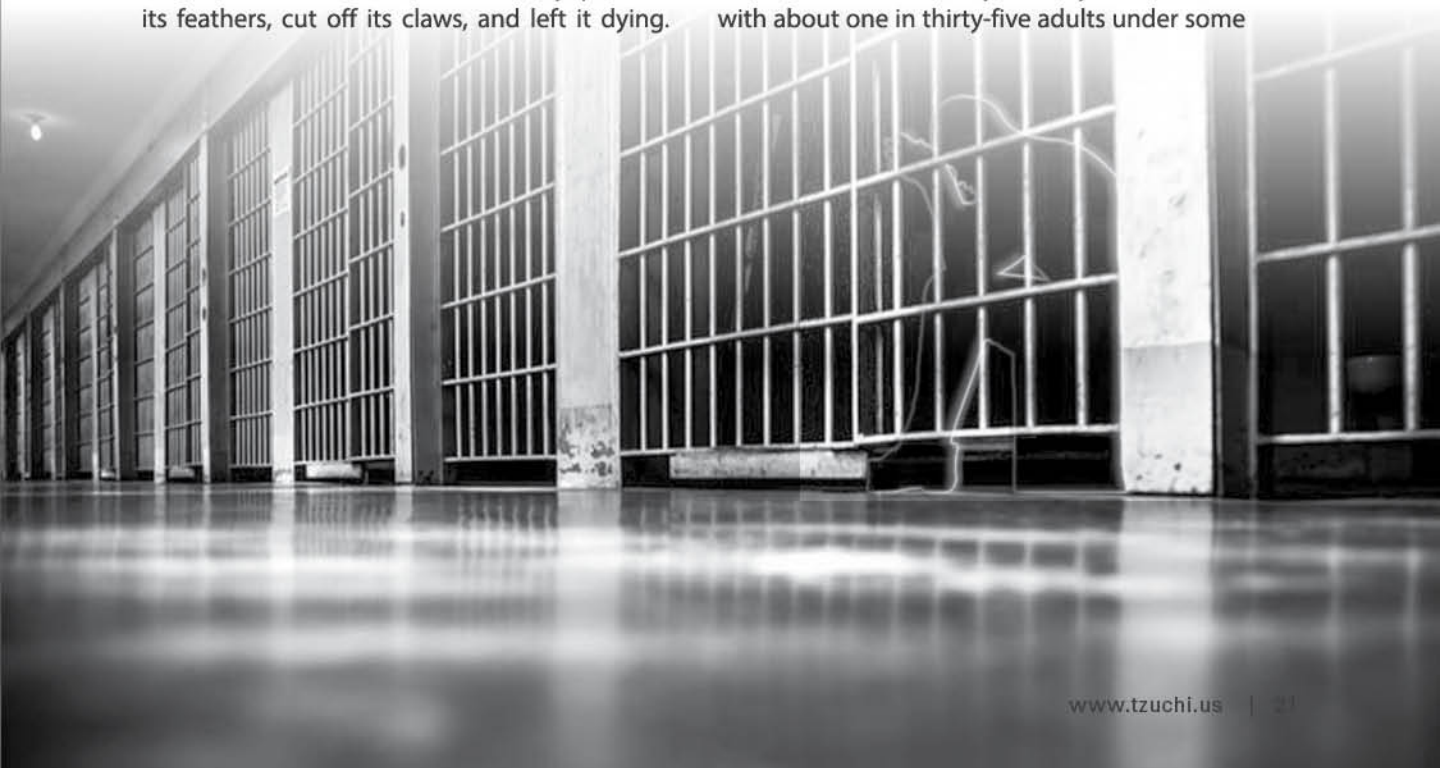
a well-known scholar in Buddhist circles, who visited San Diego to teach a Master's course in Buddhism at the Hsi Fang Temple. In 2002, he joined us to teach in the prisons. Our Dharma friends later requested that Dr. Lancaster offer a college course on Buddhism in the prison, and after a decade of hard work, we're now offering an accredited course on Buddhism in both Calipatria and Chuckawalla Valley state prisons. Our first students graduated in 2013.

Over two decades of prison visitation, we've encountered many touching incidents. One weekend morning, I received a call from prison as I was eating breakfast. It was about a Dharma friend in a dangerous standoff against correctional officers, and he might be hurt if I didn't come defuse the situation. The standoff had started because he refused to give up a small sparrow living in his cell. Since I was the only one he trusted, he said he was only willing to entrust the sparrow to my care, so I drove three hours to the prison to see what I could do.

When I arrived, I couldn't believe what I saw—our Dharma friend was feeding the little bird with his tongue. He told me that other inmates had tortured the bird; they plucked its feathers, cut off its claws, and left it dying. He saved the bird and nursed it back to health in his cell. It inspired his Buddha-nature, his compassion. But unfortunately the prison does not allow any animals in the cells, so he gave it to me. The small bird spent his final days in my backyard, and this Dharma friend had become an important pillar of sharing Buddhism in prison.

I received a letter from another Dharma friend's children once. They wrote about how unstable their father's emotions had been during the past decade. Their prison visits often ended in bitterness as their father blamed others for hurting him and complained about how unfairly life had treated him. They were impressed by how much he had changed after joining our Buddhist study group: he was now able to admit his wrongs and forgive others. As he found inner peace, prison visits became more pleasant. Because they appreciated how Buddhism had changed their father and brought them all happiness and warmth, they also began to learn about Buddhism.

The U.S. may be a powerhouse economically, politically, and militarily, but it has the highest incarceration rate of any country in the world, with about one in thirty-five adults under some



form of correctional supervision. California has the largest number of inmates of any state, with thirty-six state prisons of four to five thousand inmates each. Adding federal and regional correctional institutions, California's total prison population exceeds two hundred thousand.

Studies have shown that inmates receiving any kind of education, including religious studies, are 43 percent less likely to violate parole than those who refuse education; hence prisons welcome and value those who work as educational volunteers in prisons.

In the past two decades, IBS has set up sixty-one Buddhist libraries in prison, with over ten thousand books. Our collections include books penned by well-known Buddhist leaders around the globe, including Tzu Chi's Dharma Master Cheng Yen, Dharma Drum Mountain's Master Sheng Yen, Dharma Realm Buddhist Association's Venerable Master Hsuan Hua, Amitabha Buddhist Association's Venerable Master Chin Kung, and Venerable Master Hueiguang of IBS. Dr. Lancaster also supplies teaching materials from University of the West.

In her talks on the Sutra of Infinite Meanings, Dharma Master Cheng Yen said, "It's just the same in educating living beings: it needs to be taken one step at a time, from shallow to deep, from days to years of continuous learning and guidance. Then the seeds of Buddhism can be planted into the hearts and goodness can be rooted."

Master Cheng Yen's teaching is spot on. After twenty years of hard work, we've managed to transform a patch of desert borderland into a Pure Land oasis. We learn and experience the true Bodhisattva Path through the process of giving: giving wealth, giving fearlessness, and giving Dharma. When we're moved by something or someone, we gain strength to walk on the Bodhisattva Path. How could we inspire others if we're not moved ourselves? We too are the living beings we wish to help!

Dr. Lancaster, now in his eighties, shuttles between the different prisons despite the sweltering heat that can rise all the way up to 120 degrees Fahrenheit. It is a great physical toll, and yet he always beams with joy. He once told us that teaching in prisons is the most meaningful thing in his life. One day he even told us, "Today, we are all Ksitigarbha." Just like that great Bodhisattva, our vow is eternal: we will not rest until all hells are emptied.

For more on IBS, please visit **ibstemple.org**

The author prepares to visit prison with Ven. Yin Shun's The Way to Buddhahood.
Photo: Ven. Xian Zhong

Turning Despair *into* Hope

Both family members and strangers need compassion, especially behind bars.

Maria Barcenas

I am writing this essay at a Las Vegas detention facility, waiting for my volunteer training to get started. I couldn't find a more appropriate place to write: institutional, cold, thick walls with minimal furniture. Nowhere a picture of a flower. Nowhere an image of a bird. Nowhere a phrase of hope.

I have memorized many numbers in my life. Never has one been as painful as my cousin's inmate identification number at a San Diego detention facility. He lost his freedom one year ago; his trial is pending. I could have chosen to turn the other way and pretend it was not an issue I should be concerned about. But I am his cousin; I have known him for forty-five years. He saved my father's life fifteen years ago in Mexico. To go on with my life and forget about my cousin was not my choice. Instead, I chose to stand by him, along with his sister, to make him strong throughout this traumatic journey.

> I believe in this project because it makes a difference to inmates when someone cares enough to talk to them. It makes a difference when someone visits them. It makes a difference when someone writes to them.

I am honored to be involved in Tzu Chi's prison outreach project because I am convinced that the humanistic concepts I have learned within this organization can help our brothers and sisters who have lost their freedom and feel in despair. Dharma Master Cheng Yen's teachings have helped me live a fulfilling life by finding joy in simple yet profound concepts: kindness, selfless love, and compassion. I believe in this project because it makes a difference to inmates when someone cares enough to talk to them. It makes a difference when someone visits them. It makes a difference when someone writes to them.

Unfortunately, many inmates are alone in this world. Others are twice punished by their family's abandonment, most likely because of stigma or ignorance. Sharing that a family member is imprisoned is not glamourous. Choosing to get involved is costly—there are phone calls, toiletries, gift packs, postcards, visitations, court appearances, parking, legal consultations, and on and on.

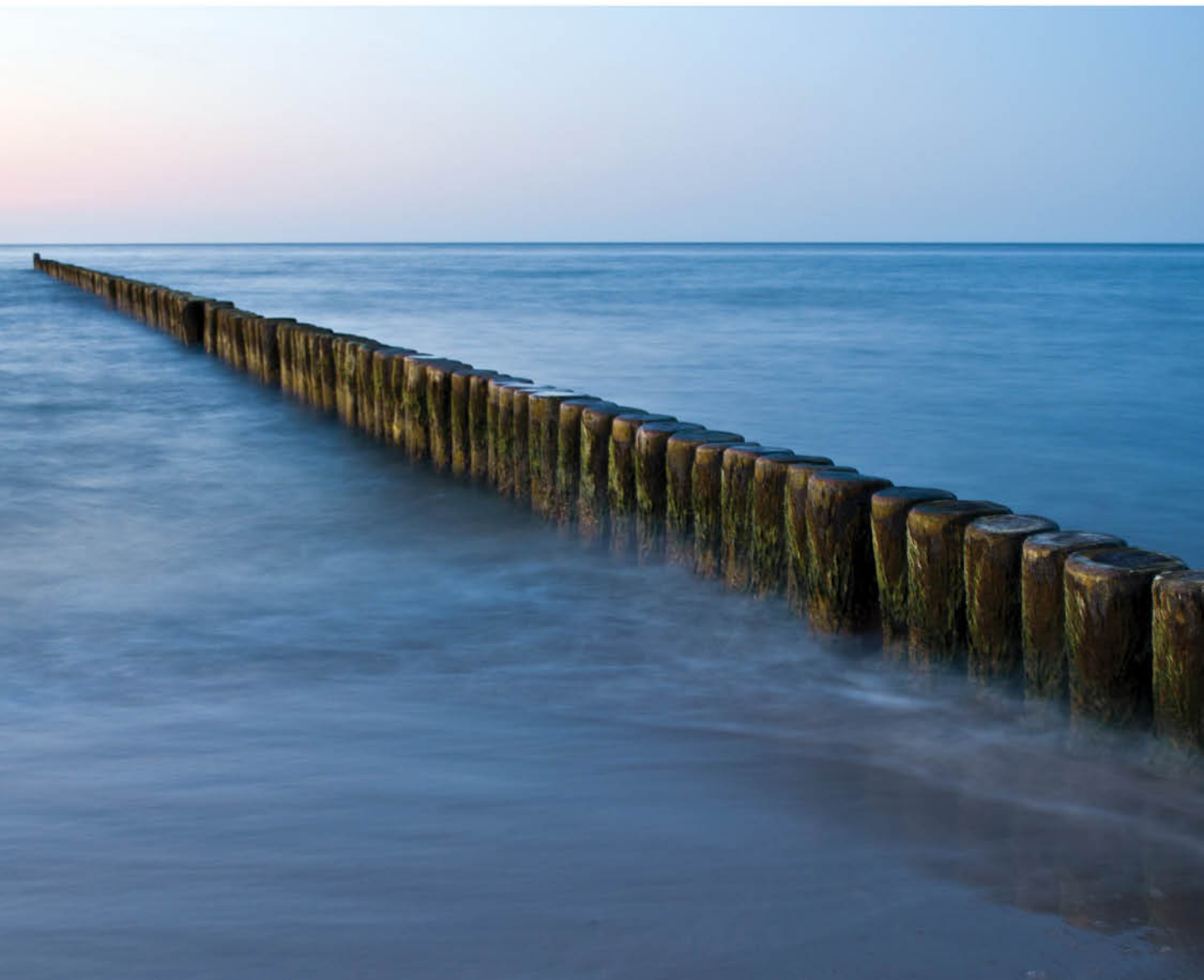
It is our role as Tzu Chi volunteers to change despair into hope with Great Love. We reach the afflicted hearts of the inmates and soothe their suffering. Through personal correspondence we inform them of what Tzu Chi Foundation stands for and we invite them to get involved in our "army of compassion." By providing a subscription to the quarterly ***Tzu Chi USA Journal***, we invite inmates to witness the actions of thousands of Tzu Chi volunteers engaged all around the world, wherever disaster strikes. By sending ***Jing Si Aphorisms***, we share the Dharma Master's wisdom and invite inmates to practice teachings on a daily basis to achieve an honorable and righteous life.

When I visit my cousin, I sing Tzu Chi songs to him along with sign language, and we discuss Buddhist concepts I have learned from Tzu Chi's literature. His reflections assure me that he understands the teachings. He and other inmates with whom he shares the aphorisms and the Journal appreciate and enjoy having these great resources to keep them company and give them great joy.

As Tzu Chi volunteers, our footprint is compassionate relief. We are called to action in prison outreach. We are called to be where others would rather not go. We believe that every heart has a great potential to improve. We don't think of anyone as a lost cause. What is important is practicing diligence, showing compassion to ourselves and others, and following the right path.

When conflict and adversity arise,
always keep a spacious and tolerant heart.

Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen



Bringing the Lost Lambs Back Home

Books and volunteering become positive alternatives to drugs and crime.

Compiled by Terry Lin | Translated by Mei-li Hamilton

Zhaoliang Gao became addicted to drugs when he was in junior high. For years he was in and out of jail, causing his parents much pain and sadness.

When his father passed away, Gao was taken to the funeral in handcuffs. The experience embarrassed him so much that he vowed to seek treatment for his addiction. He dedicated himself to reading positive books and even led a prison study group on Master Cheng Yen's ***Twenty Challenges to Enlightenment***. He promised the other inmates in the group that he would become a Tzu Chi volunteer once he was released from prison. They made fun of him, saying he would certainly forget this vow. But Gao insisted, "I'll be back! Not as a drug addict, but as a volunteer sharing with you how to overcome addiction."

While in prison, Gao heard about Tiansheng Cai, who conquered his addiction after joining Tzu Chi. Cai avoided his drug-using former associates and successfully stayed away from drugs. He even opened a vegetarian restaurant with a friend from prison. They use the restaurant as a way to help recently released prisoners, providing jobs so they can earn money and take care of their families. At the same time, Cai actively lectures about the dangers of drugs.

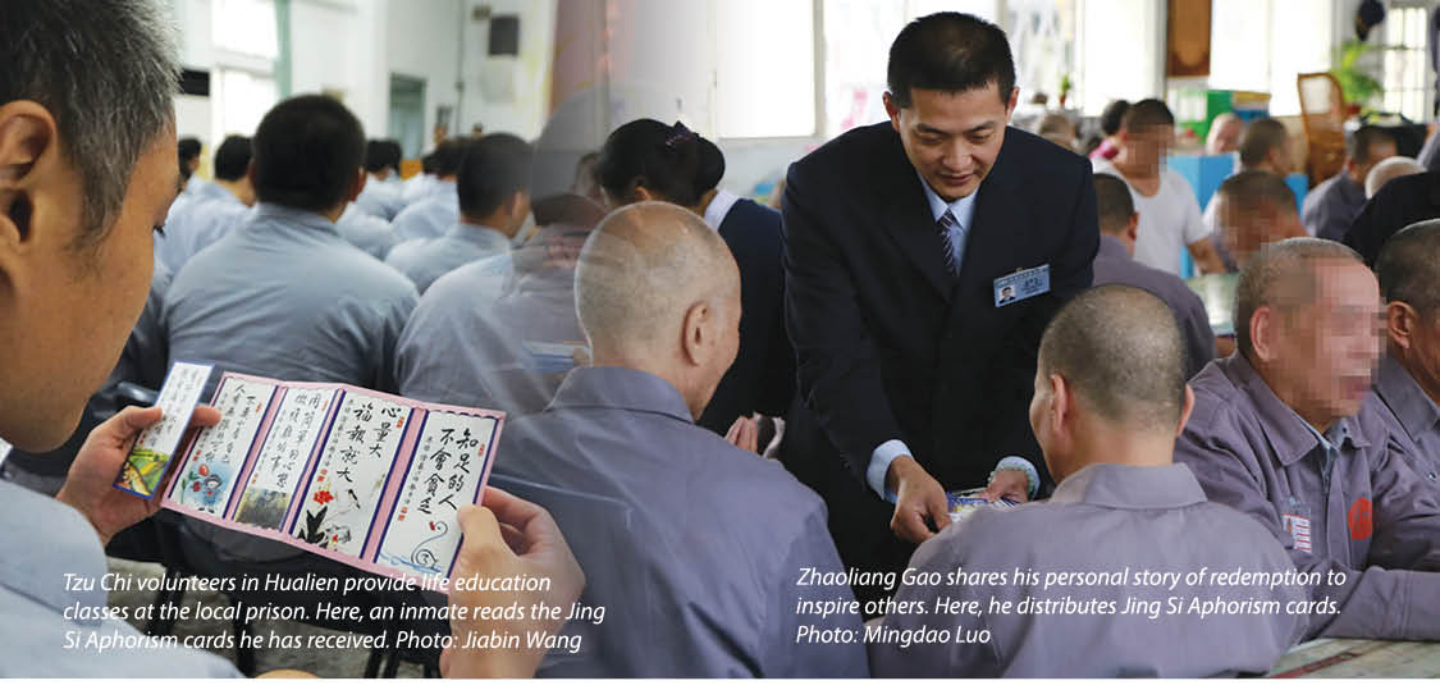
Just before he was released from prison in 2009, Gao wrote a letter to Cai. After Gao was released, Cai brought a group of Tzu Chi volunteers to Gao's home and invited him to attend Tzu Chi activities. Gao became a volunteer; he now visits prisons to share positive experiences from his life. He is now married and has a stable job.

A New, Drug-Free Life

Taiwan's Ministry of Justice has been working with Tzu Chi volunteers to combat drug addiction since 2010. Volunteers aim to eliminate drug use in communities through loving care, warm companionship, and creative approaches. Tiansheng Cai's story was even adapted into a 2011 Da Ai TV drama titled ***Breaking the Waves***, and it has become a popular teaching film in prisons.

In June 2011, Shunmao Lin, who coordinates volunteer visits at a Pingdong prison, invited Tzu Chi volunteer Wuzhong Chen to share Tzu Chi culture with inmates. Chen raised funds and purchased two thousand copies of ***Jing Si Aphorisms***, which he then distributed to prisons in Jiayi, Tainan, Gaoxiong, Pingdong, and Jinmen.

Tzu Chi volunteers in Pingdong visit the local prison regularly. They hold a weekly book club, which has read ***Jing Si Aphorisms*** and ***Dharma as Water***. After completing ***Dharma as Water***, the volunteers and inmates decided to put on a performance based on the book. Thirty inmates and volunteers rehearsed for four months. During that time, the inmates each ate one vegetarian meal each day to show their sincerity. On the day of the performance,



Tzu Chi volunteers in Hualien provide life education classes at the local prison. Here, an inmate reads the Jing Si Aphorism cards he has received. Photo: Jiabin Wang

Zhaoliang Gao shares his personal story of redemption to inspire others. Here, he distributes Jing Si Aphorism cards. Photo: Mingdao Luo

two inmates even repented for past mistakes in front of the audience.

One of the inmates in the book club, A Jun, became a Buddhist after his father and aunt both passed away in a three-year span. He said, "I was handcuffed when I went back home to bid farewell to my father. After reading ***Jing Si Aphorisms***, I have become less sad and more interested in sutra study. I have vowed to become a vegetarian to plant blessings for my dear aunt."

> Local volunteers all across Taiwan visit prisons regularly to deliver support and care to inmates.

A Jun attended a book club on ***Jing Si Aphorisms*** and shared his life story through correspondence with a volunteer. On the day he was released from prison, he took his letters and study notes and went to Tzu Chi's office in Pingdong to bow respectfully to the Buddha. The volunteers bought him books, daily necessities, and volunteer clothes. Then they accompanied him back to his hometown of Taichung, where local volunteers will continue to support him.

Taking Care of Body and Heart

Local volunteers all across Taiwan visit prisons regularly to deliver support and care to inmates. Since 2013, medical volunteers at Tzu Chi General Hospital in Hualien have also provided comprehensive medical services to local prison inmates.

Warden Shitian Liu says that Tzu Chi has brought many useful services to the prison. He especially appreciates the way volunteers introduce virtues like beauty and kindness to the inmates and use real-life stories to encourage them to be positive and follow a correct path in life as they care for sick inmates with skill and patience.

Inmates have strayed from the correct path temporarily; the job of prison is to educate and guide them back to the correct path through the power of kindness and positive thinking. The regular companionship provided by Tzu Chi volunteers not only takes care of inmates' health but also inspires them to give back to society with gratitude.

Bringing Light to the Darkest Places

Tzu Chi's prison outreach changes lives on both sides of the Pacific.

Johan Alwall

September 26, 2014. Hualien, Taiwan.

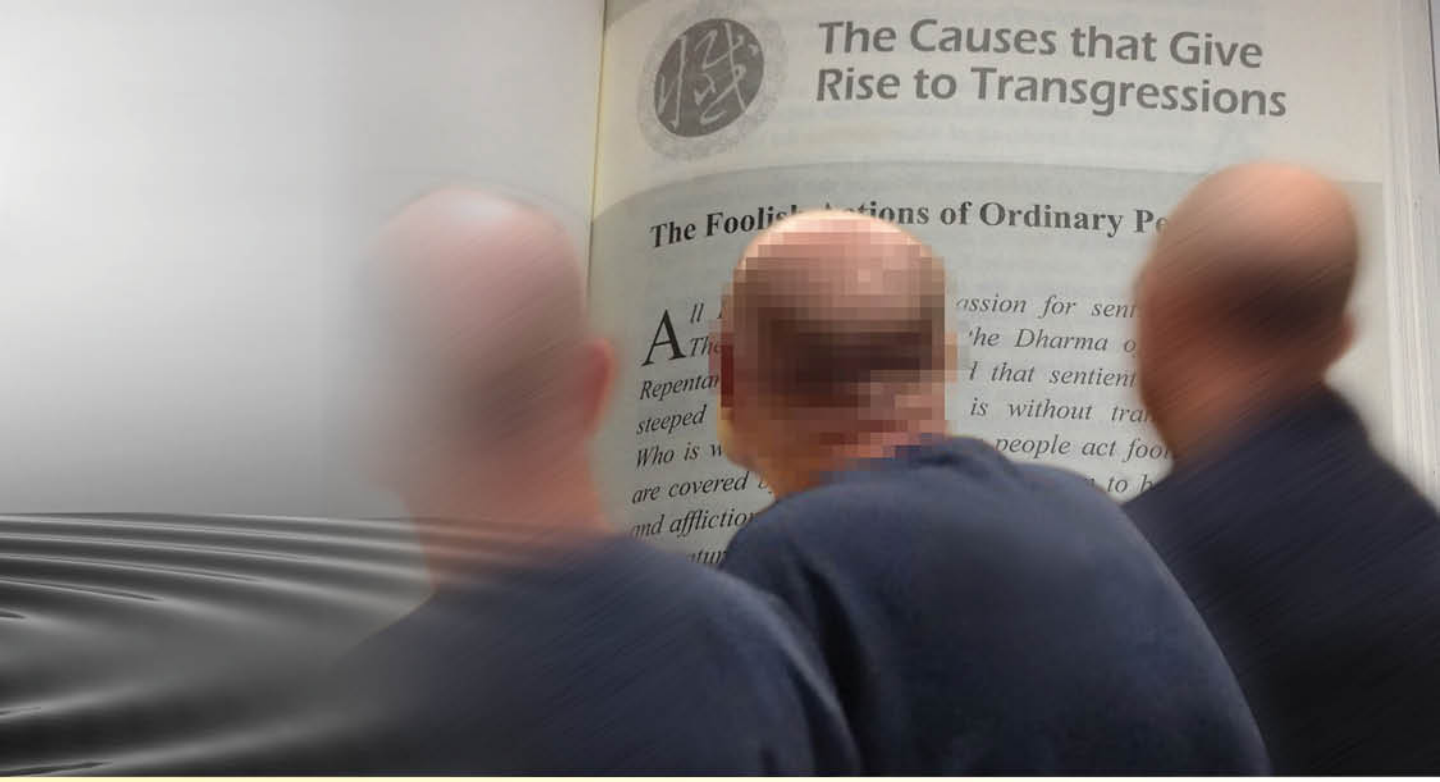
We were five Tzu Chi volunteers in the small entrance room. The guard told us to lock our cell phones in lockers, checked us with a metal detector, and unlocked the door. Another guard met us on the other side and led us through the corridors, deeper and deeper into the complex. With each steel gate and iron door that shut behind us, I had an almost physical sensation of my chest being squeezed tighter and tighter. It was my first time inside prison walls.

On the way, we passed a series of heavy doors with small, thick windows. Inside each door was a room no larger than thirty by fifteen feet. Outside each door were nametags, as many as fifteen per room. Each tag represented a prisoner living within. My fellow volunteers told me that inmates sleep side by side on the floor, so tightly packed that it is difficult to turn. The toilet and sink were to one side, without any divider.

We finally arrived in the "schoolyard"—home to the prison's classrooms—where we were greeted with enthusiasm, friendliness, and respect by inmates relaxing during a short break between classes. One of the students helped me connect my laptop to the classroom television and speakers to prepare for my talk on my disaster relief experience in Haiti. He seemed happy for the opportunity to practice his English, which he had been studying for several years inside the prison.

During this first visit to a prison, the contrast between the harsh living environment inside the walls and the openness and friendliness of the inmates was striking. I quickly forgot about my uneasiness and shared my experiences with the inmates as I would with any other audience. But what struck me even more was the respect, gratitude, and even love that the prisoners showed towards the local volunteers. For many years, these dedicated volunteers have been visiting the inmates every week to teach them how they can improve their lives through kindness. The attitudes I encountered there were the result of these many years of untiring love and commitment.

The author introduces his Haiti disaster relief experience in a Hualien prison. Photo provided by the author



February 15, 2015. Las Vegas, Nevada.

As the guard led us into the Clark County Detention Center, I had the familiar feeling of my chest tightening up as the heavy doors shut behind us. Although the facility was newer than the one in Hualien, with higher ceilings and presumably better living quarters, the visitation room we were brought to felt small and constricted. A few minutes after we entered, the inmates came in—big, muscular men, some with beards, others with tattoos covering most of their visible skin. For most, this was the first time they had ever heard of Tzu Chi. They had come because of a poster announcing a Buddhism class or perhaps just as an excuse to get out of their cells.

The initially tense and cautious atmosphere lightened up somewhat as I shared with the inmates about Tzu Chi's history, how I encountered the organization, and my experiences in Haiti after the earthquake. I gave everyone a couple of minutes to glance through the book of Master Cheng Yen's aphorisms that we use as class material and asked if any aphorism caught their eye. An inmate in the back raised his hand: "We cannot love when filled with suspicion. We cannot forgive when unwilling to believe. We cannot trust when filled with doubts." He continued, "That was exactly what happened between me and my wife. I was unable to trust her, and it broke our marriage apart. I wish I had read these words back then!"

One after the other, the men raised their hands, read a phrase that especially touched them, and shared a few words about the meaning those lines had for them. What touched me the most was their sincerity, how they dared to open up among their peers and in front of complete strangers. With every word and every story, I could feel how deeply they understand suffering and how strongly they wish to find a new direction in their lives.

We return to the Las Vegas jail one Sunday every month to hold the class. People keep asking if it is not tiresome to drive five hundred miles for just two or three hours of class, but we always feel energized by the journey. Seeing the effect these classes have on the inmates is a reward that far exceeds the small amount of time and effort we spend.

At my second visit, many participants were returning from the previous month. They shared with us that they read the aphorisms every

single day, and they talked about how they tried to implement the teachings in their everyday lives. "Every time I feel upset over something, I force myself to calm down, bring out the book, and read a few phrases. It never fails; I will always find the answer to my problem." One man added, "During the past month, I have read the book at least twenty times. Every single morning right after I wake up, I read this one: 'Making vows without taking any action is like plowing a field without planting any seeds. Both are letting opportunity pass in vain.' I read it to remind myself that I have to work on the change I want in myself every single day."

Through these stories of change inside the prison walls, I have learned more about human suffering, resilience, and potential than I thought was possible. Master Cheng Yen says in one of her aphorisms, "Do not underestimate yourself, for human beings have unlimited potential." This is true for every one of us; it is just that we might need some help to bring that potential out. This is the power of the aphorisms—they are like candles that bring light to the darkest places.

> Nothing is impossible with confidence, perseverance, and courage.
>
> Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen

Volunteers Johan, Kelvin, Nain, and Audrey prepare for a class in Clark County. Photo: Audrey Cheng

A Flood of Love & Understanding

An incredible affinity led volunteers in Fresno, California, to serve their local prison.

Colin Legerton

As the Buddha said, the workings of karma are inconceivable. Whatever you choose to call it—fate, destiny, divine intervention, luck—sometimes everything just comes together. When Grace Yang drove her small, but growing team of non-Chinese-speaking Tzu Chi volunteers five hours north to Santa Rosa for a weekend retreat to be held in English, she didn't know that prison outreach would be one of the topics on the agenda. She had no idea about the profound impact a simple suggestion would have on a new volunteer, nor could she anticipate the letter already on its way to Fresno.

> *The opportunity was right there in their own backyard. They were determined not to let it slip away.*

Grace had started Fresno's English study group back in 2012, trying to reach out beyond Fresno's small Chinese-speaking community to inspire new people and new communities with Dharma Master Cheng Yen's message of love, compassion, and service. The group steadily grew, as more people not only joined the book discussions, but also volunteered with medical clinics, charity cases, disaster relief, and street fundraising. Over time, several of the new volunteers became eager to dig deeper into Dharma Master Cheng Yen's teachings and become certified Tzu Chi volunteers, so they began traveling together to join occasional training courses in the Bay Area.

Jim and Linda visit the inmates in May 2015. Photo: Grace Yang (Because of prison restrictions on metal, visitors are unable to wear belts. For this reason, their uniform shirts are untucked.)

During this April 2014 retreat in Santa Rosa, the group listened enraptured as volunteer Jessica Su talked about reaching out to prison and jail inmates—an overlooked, often-forgotten population in special need of love. Among the Fresno team, Tom was especially moved, stepping outside to compose himself as tears streamed down his face. Tom had just encountered Tzu Chi two months earlier, after picking up a copy of ***Tzu Chi USA Journal*** at a volunteer's herbal medicine shop in February. He immediately

knew that he had found his home and quickly became an energetic and active volunteer, but he was still fairly new, and the other volunteers didn't know him all that well yet. They had no idea why this one suggestion touched him so deeply.

That night, he shared: "I went to prison in 1997." At first, he had been ashamed to tell his new Tzu Chi brothers and sisters about the eight years he had spent behind bars, but the thought of helping other inmates spurred him to action. He knew how much they would appreciate such care, and he was eager to get started. Grace was also in favor of the idea, but where should they begin with such a project? How could they start something so new and different?

When they returned to Fresno, the answer was waiting for them. In the office mailbox, they found a letter from an inmate at Valley State Prison in Chowchilla, just forty minutes' drive away. The letter's author explained that there was already a sangha, a Buddhist group, consisting of several dozen inmates there in the prison. They were visited each year by the International Bodhisattva Sangha (IBS); they had been reaching out to Buddhist organizations to come and help guide them more regularly. None had responded. This was exactly what the volunteers were seeking, precisely what the visit to Santa Rosa had inspired, and the opportunity was right there in their own backyard. They were determined not to let it slip away.

What followed was four months of persistence, patience, and paperwork as they strove to make the right contacts, struggle through the bureaucracy, and gain access to visit the inmates. Four volunteers—Grace, Tom, Linda, and Jim—applied for entry. Eventually, three were approved. Tom, who felt the calling so deeply, was not. Though heartbroken, he found a silver lining: even if he couldn't visit, he could continue his pen-pal correspondence with the inmates. He had already started by responding to that first letter in April, and soon other members of the sangha were writing to him as well. Some were longtime Buddhists, well-versed in the sutras and full of erudite questions. Others were

Inmates donate their time and talents by designing beautiful bookmarks and artwork to sell for charity.

Grace and Tom discuss inmates' letters. Photo: Colin Legerton

Tom and Linda sell the inmates' work for charity funds during Fresno's 2015 New Year Blessing Ceremony. Photo: Leon Liu

newcomers or adherents of various faiths, simply eager to learn more. Many simply wanted a connection; they were eager to interact with anyone willing to correspond with them, and Tom was happy to share his time and love.

After their approval came through at the end of four long months, Grace, Linda, and Jim visited the prison for the first time in August 2014. After all the months of uncertainty, new challenges arose. Holding classes in a prison was a new experience for all three. Jim considered his approach. He imagined that the inmates in a Buddhist study group would certainly be full of questions for their visitors from a Buddhist foundation. Should he present himself as some sort of Buddhism expert, even though he was anything but? Of course, his years of experience as a social worker made the answer clear: he could only be himself.

Linda, too, faced unexpected challenges—difficulties hiding in the details. Having recently passed through the first year of Tzu Chi's volunteer training, she proudly wore her new blue uniform to the first prison visit, only to learn that it too closely resembled one of the colors worn inside. She had to switch back to her old grey shirt. Another challenge came courtesy of the prison's complete prohibition on metal on the day she happened to wear an underwire bra. "I had to go back to the car and rip the wire out. It was a nice bra, too, but I wasn't going to miss the opportunity." Now she makes sure to carry a spare, wire-free bra, just in case.

Despite the challenges, Grace, Linda, and Jim share an afternoon of their time with thirty or forty members of the sangha every month. They start with meditation and proceed with lively discussions on aphorisms and excerpts from Master Cheng Yen's teachings. Before they depart, the inmates insist on singing and practicing sign language for the song "The Spirit of Great Love," which Grace taught them during the first visit—a song whose lyrics state that "there is no one in this world I cannot

love," trust, or forgive. The beautiful melody and penetrating lyrics end each visit with a powerful reminder of the way we all should approach each day.

Although he is still unable to join the visits, Tom continues his correspondence. As word spread through the sangha, he gained more and more pen pals. A year after he wrote his first return letter, he was already regularly corresponding with nearly two dozen inmates, including some from out of state. He sees it as an opportunity to share wisdom and experience while returning to inmates a sense of their own self-worth by reminding them of a Jing Si Aphorism: "Giving is not a privilege of the rich; it is a privilege of the sincere." He shares his Dharma-joy and his own life experience. He reminds his pen pals that the path to peace and growth is through compassion and repentance, not copping out and finding excuses.

After experiencing a "flood of love and understanding" upon receiving the first letter, Tom has dedicated his time to returning letters. But there are only so many hours in the day, and responding to each letter takes an emotional toll as Tom deeply feels the highs and lows expressed in each letter. He empathizes with the authors' struggles, and he thinks back to his own. Now, he has begun to share the letter-writing task with other volunteers, giving them the opportunity to serve and grow as well. "It's an honor to be able to relay the message of Tzu Chi," he adds, an honor he now shares with others.

While Fresno's prison outreach is still in its infancy, the response has been extremely positive so far. Jim reports, "I feel like a movie star," as inmates warmly welcome him and eagerly shake his hand on each visit. Through the monthly gatherings, kindhearted inmates have been given an opportunity to express their compassion, and they have seized it. Monetary donations are difficult, but several inmates have donated their time and talents by designing and creating beautifully intricate Jing Si Aphorism bookmarks and artwork, which are then sold for charity funds to support Tzu Chi projects. And the connection forged between the volunteers and inmates has proven to be strong and deep. "I'm going to be here eighty-nine months," an inmate told Grace at the end of one visit. "It's a shame I'll only get to see you eighty-nine more times."

For the volunteers engaged in visiting and writing letters to inmates, the program is an opportunity to gain valuable perspective. Whenever she visits prison and sees what life is like behind bars, Linda remembers how blessed she is. In comparison, "I have no problems," she reflects. After a couple of hours engaged with the prison sangha, Grace returns home "full of Dharma-joy."

As for Tom, he has the opportunity to connect with people who would otherwise feel alone and forgotten, just as he once did. Whatever mistakes they have made, whatever wrongs they have committed, they are still people deserving of—and able to give—compassion and respect. And as they live through the same experiences that Tom was once too ashamed to share with his Tzu Chi brothers and sisters, Tom shows them respect, compassion, and love. Having found his Tzu Chi family, having reached out to suffering people he recognizes all too well, Tom shares, "I'm at peace for the first time in my life with myself and the world around me."

You Are Making a Difference!

Whether you see it or not, your work in Tzu Chi is making a difference.

There is an epidemic behind bars. The United States has less than 5 percent of the world's population, but more than 20 percent of its prisoners. Millions of incarcerated individuals are locked away from society and severely lacking in care, comfort, companionship, and guidance.

Through visits, classes, letters, and more, Tzu Chi volunteers are reminding inmates that they are not alone and not forgotten. Volunteers provide encouragement, support, and a gentle nudge in a positive direction, hoping that these people will be inspired to return to society with a positive outlook, prepared to live in a way that benefits both themselves and society.

Volunteers in New York prepare letters and journals to be mailed. Photo: Rita Chang

Unfortunately, there is not nearly enough manpower to personally reach all of those in need. Thankfully, the inspiring philosophy of Dharma Master Cheng Yen can still be spread widely through the wise words of ***Jing Si Aphorisms*** and the powerful stories shared in ***Tzu Chi USA Journal***.

In the past two years, the positive response to these publications has been overwhelming. Many have taken the Bamboo Bank Spirit to heart by donating monthly to help others. An inmate on death row sent a donation just two days after the April 2015 Nepal earthquake because he had read the Journal and knew that Tzu Chi would help.

Most significantly, many have been inspired to change their lives for the better. One inmate read about the 80/20 Lifestyle in Issue 41 and decided to cut backon his consumption, especially of unhealthy snacks. Another was moved to give 20 percent of his food tray to another inmate who needed it more.

Elsewhere, an inmate wrote that by reading the stories of community partnership in Issue 39, he saw how boundaries of ethnicity, language, and religion fade away when people come together with compassion for a common purpose. Another inmate shared that he was deeply moved by Calvin Hsi's story in Issue 41, which reminded him to water the seeds of love and compassion, no matter what life brings.

The Issue 40 feature on Cash-for-Relief in the Philippines—and especially the story of the inmate who donated coffee to support Tzu Chi's relief effort—was cited by one inmate as an inspiration to find ways to help his fellow inmates. Yet another reflected that all the stories are reminders that Tzu Chi volunteers never let go of compassion and return to selfishness—an inspiration for others to do the same.

Master Cheng Yen's inspirational message is clearly making an impact, through her words in ***Jing Si Aphorisms*** and the shining examples of gratitude, respect, and love shared by volunteers, care recipients, friends, and partners of Tzu Chi in ***Tzu Chi USA Journal***. Your selfless dedication touches lives, whether you are donating books, mailing books and journals, writing letters, visiting inmates, or sharing your stories and reflections through this journal. Thank you for all that you do to bring light to the darkest corners.

After the April 2015 earthquake in Nepal, volunteers' letters to inmates encouraged them to keep disaster survivors in their thoughts and share words of blessing and encouragement if possible. One group of inmates in Florida went above and beyond, mailing 119 cards filled with their blessings. Truly there are kind hearts behind bars!

Buddhist TZU CHI Foundation

www.tzuchi.us

The 80/20 Lifestyle

Be healthy: Reduce your meal portions to 80%
Be generous: Use your 20% savings to help the poor

Improve your health by reducing meal portions to 80% of your normal consumption. With the 20% you save on food, you can help the needy.

Tzu Chi volunteers are active in fifty countries and regions worldwide, and have delivered relief in more than ninety countries across the globe. With Tzu Chi volunteers widely spread across every continent and time zone, there is always a volunteer somewhere serving with respect, gratitude, and love.

▲ *Tzu Chi Foundation and Tzu Chi International Medical Association (TIMA) volunteers in Manila, Philippines, held a free medical clinic on May 31, 2015, to serve the local Muslim community. Here, a Tzu Chi doctor performs minor surgery on a patient. Photo: Jiamei Li*

▲ *Tzu Chi volunteers from Gold Coast, Australia, held a distribution and Buddha Day Ceremony in Ipswich on May 31, 2015. Here, volunteers prepare a bag of supplies for a care recipient. Photo: Wanwen Hong*

On June 7, 2015, Tzu Chi volunteers held a winter distribution for elementary school students in the Mcal. López district outside Ciudad del Este, Paraguay. With new uniforms and other needed supplies, students are ready and excited for school. Photo: Yizi Chen

▲ *In Hamilton, New Zealand, Tzu Chi volunteers held a winter distribution for homeless and underprivileged local residents on July 6, 2015. Volunteers hope that their gifts of winter clothes and hot food will help recipients experience a warmer winter. Photo: Jianzhong Li*

▲ *On July 12, 2015, Tzu Chi volunteers from Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, traveled across the country to provide a free clinic in Kinh Môn, Hai Duong Province. Here, a volunteer helps a disabled patient reach the clinic to see a doctor. Photo: Lingdan Chen*

At the invitation of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Tzu Chi volunteers have been participating in the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) program in Richmond, British Columbia. During a June 8, 2015, graduation ceremony, volunteers provided a donation to continue supporting the local student training program. Photo: Yarong Huang

▲ *On May 23, 2015, Tzu Chi volunteers and medical professionals from Medan, Indonesia, traveled over a hundred miles to Langsa, where they held a free medical clinic for Rohingya refugees from Myanmar and Bangladesh. Photo: Junbin Chen*

▲ *Tzu Shao high school volunteers in Kluang, Malaysia, participated in a retreat on May 30 and 31, 2015. Through fun lessons and educational activities, they planted the seeds of love in their hearts. Here, participants clean the beach outside the village of Air Papan. In doing so, they learn that all people have the responsibility to care for the environment and not litter. Photo: Guohong Xu*

In Ladysmith, South Africa, Tzu Chi volunteers held a Buddha Day Ceremony and rice distribution for local residents on May 17, 2015. Together, volunteers and community members prayed for all sentient beings. Photo: Liying Lai

▲ *As Muslims around the world fasted during the month of Ramadan, Tzu Chi volunteers in Jordan traveled to the city of Mafraq on June 26, 2015, to distribute rice and daily necessities to impoverished locals and Syrian refugees. Photo: Chiou Hwa Chen*

▲ *Members of the Tzu Chi International Medical Association (TIMA) Singapore chapter traveled to Sri Lanka, where they provided compassionate dental care to residents of the Victoria Home for Incurables on May 27 and 28, 2015. Photo: Mingjun Wu*

In July 2015, Burma suffered its most severe flooding in decades. On August 8, Tzu Chi volunteers visited Ayeyarwady Region to assess damage, distribute relief materials, and comfort the affected. As the floodwaters had not yet begun to recede, volunteers had to row to affected areas. Photo: Menglan Wang

Medical Corner

What to Do with Allergies?

Tips on allergy prevention from a Licensed Acupuncturist in Austin, Texas

Kevin Luo, L.Ac.

Living in the Allergy Capital of the World?

"Achoo!"…"I can't breathe!"…"My nose just won't stop running!" … Are these complaints familiar to you at a certain time of the year? Or are you actually the one complaining?

I live in Austin, Texas. It is the capital of Texas and some of the locals also jokingly call it "the allergy capital of the world." While Austinites don't necessarily suffer the most from allergies, allergies do pose a significant threat to the residents of this great city. And allergies certainly affect people living in other U.S. cities as well.

According to the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, allergic rhinitis caused by pollens, also known as "seasonal allergic rhinitis," affects 7 percent of adults and 9 percent of children in this country. Pollens that can trigger allergic reactions generally come from trees, weeds, and grasses. Other common airborne allergens include molds, pet dander, and dust mites.

> It is important for allergy patients to avoid exposing the head, neck, and upper back to cold temperatures and wind.

Allergic rhinitis can greatly lower the quality of life in various ways. Typical symptoms include runny nose and mucus production, sneezing, stuffy nose, red and watery eyes, coughing, and itchy nose, eyes, ears, and mouth. These symptoms can bring down your energy level, blur your focus on study or work, and greatly affect your quality sleep.

Western Medicine: Diagnoses and Treatments

The American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology (aaaai.org) says, "If you have an allergy, your immune system mistakes an otherwise harmless substance (allergen) as an invader." In a way, Oriental Medicine also views allergies as a flaw in our immune (or defense) system, but it offers quite a different approach to resolve the condition, as we shall see later.

Western medicine diagnoses allergic rhinitis through skin prick tests, during which a healthcare professional pricks the skin on the arm or back and places a tiny amount of allergen extract right under the skin. The result is considered positive when the test results in itchiness, redness, and swelling. The diagnosis can also be made through blood tests that measure the levels of antigen-specific IgE antibodies.

Western medical treatments include antihistamines, nasal corticosteroids, decongestants, and immunotherapy. The aim is to lessen the symptoms and/or to suppress immune responses to the allergens.

Oriental Medicine: Diagnoses and Treatments

Oriental medicine diagnoses disease conditions through observation (of appearance, complexion, tongue, and so on), smelling, listening, interrogation, and pulse taking. Through these diagnostic tools, Oriental medical professionals can determine the nature of the patient's condition—exterior (surface) or interior, hot or cold. The vast majority of patients with allergic rhinitis present a picture of cold and exterior condition. The underlying cause is because the body's defense system is compromised and malfunctioning, and as a result, it responds erroneously to an external influence. Hence, the goal of treatments is to strengthen or correct the defense system to fend off any impact from the environment.

Oriental medical treatments are multifaceted and include acupuncture, massage, herbal medicine, and lifestyle and diet recommendations. Oriental medical practitioners can use acupuncture and herbal medicine not only to alleviate the manifesting symptoms of allergic rhinitis, but also to reinforce the body's defense system. Depending on the locations of the symptoms, massage followed by the application of a heating pad or hot compress in certain areas of the body can be very beneficial in relieving the severity of the condition. Consult a licensed practitioner for recommendations on herbal treatment, massage, and the use of heat.

It is important for allergy patients to avoid exposing the head, neck, and upper back to cold temperatures and wind. Teas or soups made with warm- or hot-natured ingredients, such as ginger, garlic, onion, and cinnamon, can offer a great deal of relief. When allergic symptoms are present, it is best to avoid cold drinks and cold food so that the body can dedicate its energy to strengthening its borders instead of warming the stomach for digestive purposes.

For patients with a tendency to produce mucus, it is recommended to avoid dairy products, such as milk and cheese, as well as oily or heavy foods. These foods can lead to mucus production and worsen the symptoms of allergic rhinitis.

Treatment Comparisons

Western medical treatments usually require patients to have long-term intake of medications or repeated allergy shots to control the symptoms. More often than not, these medications can bring about unwanted side effects that can be just as uncomfortable as the original symptoms of allergic rhinitis.

Oriental medical treatments, on the other hand, can provide preventative measures before allergy season and offer long-lasting protection against the recurrence of allergic rhinitis. These treatments give patients an effective natural alternative with fewer or no side effects.

But don't take my word for it. If you suffer from allergic rhinitis, like many of my fellow Austinites, give Oriental medicine a try. You might just be as pleasantly surprised as many of my patients are when their quality of life improves dramatically through just a few simple steps. It is my hope that everyone can sleep like a baby at night and enjoy the outdoors during the day without any fear of allergies.

Disclaimer: *The information above is neither intended nor implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider prior to starting any new treatment.*

Life's most valuable gift is a healthy body;
more valuable yet is following the right direction.

Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen

TZU CHI'S BAMBOO BANK SPIRIT

When Dharma Master Cheng Yen founded Tzu Chi in 1966, she fashioned coin banks from bamboo and asked her lay followers—thirty housewives—to save NT$0.50 (about US$0.02) from their grocery money every day to help the poor.

One follower asked, "Can't I just donate NT$15 each month?" But Master refused. She explained that though the amount was the same, it was important to give rise to a kind thought each and every day.

From these humble beginnings forty-nine years ago, Tzu Chi has grown into a global NGO with ten million volunteers and donors in over fifty countries, because it collects not only donations, but also kind hearts.

Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation
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Tzu Chi Summer Camp Reflections

Martina Lo

As I reluctantly watch the students file through the security checkpoint at the airport, many memorable scenes from the past month flash by like instant replay. Whether discussing Master Cheng Yen's morning teachings, listening to DreamWorks' twentieth anniversary concert, or watching Disneyland's fireworks show, these experiences have all become an unforgettable part of my summer journey.

Tzu Chi Summer Camp, hosted by the Education Foundation, is an annual month-long program designed to introduce American culture and university life to high school and college students from Taiwan. In 2014, three staff positions were opened to Tzu Ching collegiate volunteers for the first time, and I was fortunate to be selected to accompany fifty-nine participating students.

> *Group leadership improves when a leader can both lead and be led.*

The essence of Tzu Chi Summer Camp (TCSC) is nurturing students through hands-on explorations in various environments, and as a result, developing their skills of Trust, Communication, Strategic planning, and Cooperation (TCSC). Students developed Trust by sharing their feelings with one another during weekly reflection time—discovering their own strengths and shortcomings and ultimately developing a better understanding of each other. They found the Courage to communicate when they practiced explaining the Tzu Chi missions and bamboo banks to people at National Night Out, and when they used their knowledge of English and social skills to ask three policemen on motorcycles to take photos with them. Students planned Strategies to explore as much of downtown Los Angeles as possible in a given amount of time. When faced with curveballs along the way, they discovered that things do not always go as planned, and they learned to be flexible. They practiced Cooperation in order to save time at the beach. Instead of waiting for bathrooms to change in, they lifted bedsheets around each other. In working together, the students were able to witness the power of teamwork.

Due to our large group and limited staff, the two other Tzu Ching and I played various roles throughout the month and gained many valuable experiences along the way. First, I would like to thank Camp Director Lawrence Luo for teaching me how to efficiently lead a team. As a natural leader, he showed me how leadership can be delegated. I especially liked the Leader of the Day (LOD) system. Every day, a different LOD was appointed within each group, so that six LOD were assigned to assist the Tzu Ching staff daily. This not only lessened each person's burden, it also gave more opportunities for others to lead. Group leadership improves when a leader can both lead and be led, just as Confucius said: "In the company of three, one will certainly have something to teach me." Everyone has their own talents and can learn from others. However, if we are prideful, we do not learn and instead risk developing negative affinities everywhere.

Next to the role of the leader is that of a listener. Every day, I listened to students with different needs. Although sometimes I felt my patience was being tested, I was able to understand that every need was a chance for me to learn how to solve a problem. After all, this was the first time for many students to travel abroad. It goes without saying there would be times of need, and as long as I faced each situation with a positive attitude, I could always find a solution.

Sometimes, the role of a teacher came into play as well. As a teacher, I needed to promote not only the English language, but American culture as well. At first, the participants weren't aware of student dorm etiquette and would talk loudly with one another in the hallway, but after some pointers, they quickly learned to respect one another's quiet space. Every day, students paid careful attention to Master's teachings and carried out in-depth discussions. By the end of the camp, all fifty-nine students were able to tie Master's teachings into their weekly reflections.

Throughout the camp, I was most impressed by everyone's enthusiasm. Memorable scenes still run through my head: students mingling with the kids at Tzu Chi Great Love Preschool, lining up at In-N-Out to take pictures with cashiers, striking up a conversation with strangers on the bus, screaming when they saw themselves on the big screen at a baseball game, crying tears of joy after hearing that the Tzu Ching staff was just pretending to leave early, laughing upon seeing their teachers perform "A Whole New World," singing together on the bus ride back to the airport…

People often told me, "You've worked hard." But I didn't feel like it was hard work, because I felt blessed seeing the joy and gratitude on everyone's faces. It was at this moment that I finally understood why Tzu Chi volunteers always say they have "been blessed (*xingfu*)" instead of having "worked hard (*xinku*)." The greatest gift for me was learning to "give without asking for anything in return and to stay grateful at the same time," as Master Cheng Yen says. I am grateful for this opportunity to serve at the summer camp, because I know that I benefited the most. I learned to rely on others through Trust, move others through Communication, take action with Strategic planning, support through Cooperation, and most importantly, to be respectful of all things and give love endlessly.

Fifty-nine students attended camp to get a taste of American culture and gain valuable life lessons. Photo provided by the author (bottom left)

Gold Can Be a Poisonous Snake

Dharma Master Cheng Yen
Compiled into English by the Dharma as Water Editorial Team

It is because of the greed in our minds that the material things in our surroundings can entice us to take action. When we take those actions, they may cause harm to ourselves and others. In this way, gold, silver, money, and valuables can be like poison. The Treatise on Great Magnificence illustrates this in the following story.

One day, when the Buddha was in the kingdom of Sravasti, He went out to ask for alms with Ananda. As they walked alongside a field, the Buddha pointed to the ditch next to them and said to Ananda, "Ananda, that is a poisonous snake." He pointed and said, "You see, there is a poisonous snake in that ditch."

Ananda peered into the ditch, then turned back to the Buddha and replied, "Yes, World-Honored One, that is a poisonous snake."

Then the Buddha and Ananda kept walking. A father and his son happened to be working in that field. When they first saw the Buddha walk by, they felt a deep sense of reverence. And after they heard Him say to Ananda, "There is a poisonous snake in the ditch," the father became very curious.

"Is there really a poisonous snake in there?" he wondered. So, he walked up to the side of the ditch and peered in.

"That is no poisonous snake! It's gold! There is actually gold in this ditch. Why would the Buddha say He saw a poisonous snake?"

He then said to his son, "Let's pick up all this gold and take it home."

The father and son collected the gold and happily went back to their house.

They had been living very impoverished lives, but the gold they found now allowed them to live very comfortably. When their house began to deteriorate, they were able to repair it immediately. Before finding the gold, they had to harvest rice before they would have any food to eat. Now, they could buy plenty of food. Their clothing and their house became much more exquisite. Soon, the townspeople began to talk. "How did this household suddenly become so prosperous?"

Word spread all the way to the government, so local officials came to investigate. When the king heard their report, he felt that something was not right, so he sent people to seize the father. They asked him, "How did you come by this money?"

When the gold was brought out, the officials saw that it was clearly imprinted with the mark of the royal treasury.

"Did you steal this money? How did you come to have so much gold?"

The father said, "I didn't steal it; I found it!"

"How could anyone possibly believe that? That's impossible!"

By this time, there was not much money left, since the father had used a lot of it to fix the house and his family had been eating and dressing extravagantly. Because there was not much gold left for him to reclaim, the king decided that the father and son had to be punished.

The three poisons in the human mind are greed, anger and ignorance.
By giving, we overcome greed,
with compassion we pacify our anger, and
with wisdom we dispel ignorance.

– Dharma Master Cheng Yen

On the day their punishment was to be carried out, they were marched through the streets. While the father was being dragged along with his son, his son said to him, "Venerable Buddha, that was a poisonous snake."

The father replied by saying, "Ananda, it was a poisonous snake."

When the people heard them say this, they reported it to the king. The king was a devout disciple of the Buddha and a great supporter of the Dharma, so when he heard that the father and son had mentioned the Buddha, he had them brought back right away.

"Why did you say those things?" asked the king.

The father replied, "When I was working in the fields, sowing seeds, I saw the Buddha walk past a ditch. The Buddha looked in and then said to Ananda, 'Ananda, there is a poisonous snake,' and Ananda replied to the Buddha, 'Yes, World-honored One, that is a poisonous snake.'"

"Curious, I went to look. In that ditch, I clearly saw gold shining brightly. So, we picked it all up and brought it home."

After the father finished his story, the king went and asked the World-Honored One to verify it. The Buddha said, "Indeed, when I passed by that place, I saw gold, which is truly like a poisonous snake, because as soon as greed arises in our minds, we are in great danger."

Isn't this what happened to this father and son? Finding this gold was like being bitten by a poisonous snake; they nearly lost their lives. Later, an investigation revealed that another person had stolen the gold and had thrown it into the ditch as he was being chased by soldiers. When the Buddha passed by, He saw the gold there. But when the father and son saw it, they took it, resulting in this consequence. In the end, they finally realized the truth of what the Buddha had said. As the father said, "That gold was a poisonous snake, and we were bitten by it." Thus, because of their deep reverence for the Buddha, they remembered what He said. Then, as they were being led to their punishment, they realized the truth behind His conversation with Ananda. After recounting this dialogue out loud, they were brought before the king. Therefore, their reverence and their eventual realization saved their lives.

Thus, when we listen to the teachings, we must take them to heart and not forget them. We must constantly, with utmost reverence, remind ourselves to be vigilant. Then we will recognize that material things, like gold, silver, money, and valuables, can be poisonous if we succumb to our greed. Not only can these poisonous snakes harm our wisdom-life, they may pose a threat to our physical life as well. If we allow greed to arise in our minds and then act on it, the consequences that result will bring further misfortunes. When this happens, it is as if we are burned by a fire we have stirred up. This can happen at any time, so as we engage in spiritual practice, we must always be mindful.

BRAND NEW
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View current and past issues at **www.tzuchi.us/journal**. *Click "Subscribe" to be notified whenever a new issue is available.*

Ringing in a New Year of Blessings

Each year, Tzu Chi communities around the country celebrate the lunar Chinese New Year by reflecting on charitable acts carried out in the year past and looking forward to the year ahead.

With videos and skits, songs and sharing, volunteers, care recipients, and community members gather together to start the New Year out on the right foot by sharing the Tzu Chi spirit through songs, videos, skits, and more.

Celebrations are held at most Tzu Chi facilities throughout January and February. Please contact your local office (directory on pp. 72-74) for more information.

Inspired by Santa Rosa's New Year Blessing

Inspired and invigorated by a community celebration, the author is eager to give back.

Rebecca Siegfried

Santa Rosa's 2015 New Year Blessing Ceremony was a huge success! I drove three hours from Nevada City to attend and am grateful I did.

Generous hosts Greg Tylawsky and Sally Wei, along with their small army of dedicated volunteers, started out on the right foot (and left) by accepting multiple packages of new socks for the homeless from arriving guests. The ceremony included an informative and motivating video from Master Cheng Yen, showing an overview of just some of Tzu Chi's projects carried out worldwide throughout the year 2014. This was followed by a video and slideshow of Tzu Chi Santa Rosa's year of activity. Both made me proud to be a Tzu Chi volunteer and inspired me to do more this year.

> *I feel the nearer I get to understanding Master Cheng Yen's teachings, the nearer I come to Jesus and to the Buddha.*

Next were announcements and a performance delivered by teen and adult Tzu Chi volunteers. Awards to local Tzu Chi partners were presented, as well as recognition of volunteers who were certified as commissioners in the past year. Everyone present received beautiful, hand-crafted, three-dimensional Blessings and Wisdom red envelopes, and participants emptied their bamboo banks during a joyful ceremony. The ceremony ended with a sung prayer lit by lotus candles, as feelings of generosity and gratitude filled the air.

Guests were treated to a colorful dragon dance, while volunteers readied tables for a delicious veggie hot pot dinner. The rooms were abuzz with the delighted and appreciative chatter of the diners. I personally made four

new friends at my table!

I wasn't ready for the evening to end, so I didn't let it! I started helping the efficient, cheerful clean-up crew. While the entire evening was highly enjoyable and inspirational, I think my favorite part was drying dishes with Sally while watching Greg vacuum at nine o'clock. I truly admire their "never say die" dedication.

To be honest, I don't know a whole lot about Tzu Chi or Buddhism. I have a feeling it's a "rest of my lifetime" process, which is okay with me. What I have learned thus far has been from conversations with my good friend Jack and by participating in Saturday Night Dharma discussions on Skype, which is where I met several Northern California volunteers. I have also attended meetings and participated in activities with the Reno and Sacramento offices, and now the Santa Rosa office, too! I can see that what Master Cheng Yen has orchestrated over the years has affected millions of lives for the better and made a positive impact on the environment.

I have studied theology with a major emphasis on Christianity, observing Christian congregations for over fifty years. In Tzu Chi, I can see none of the underlying selfishness, greediness, or power struggles that plague many Christian organizations. Everyone in Tzu Chi works together with a focus on equanimity. Nor have I detected any socioeconomic discrimination, another common ill of many Christian communities. In seeking ways to follow the true ministry of Jesus, I feel I have found a home closer to Him by engaging with a Buddhist organization. I feel the nearer I get to understanding Master Cheng Yen's teachings, the nearer I come to Jesus and to the Buddha, which translates into living a life that has real meaning.

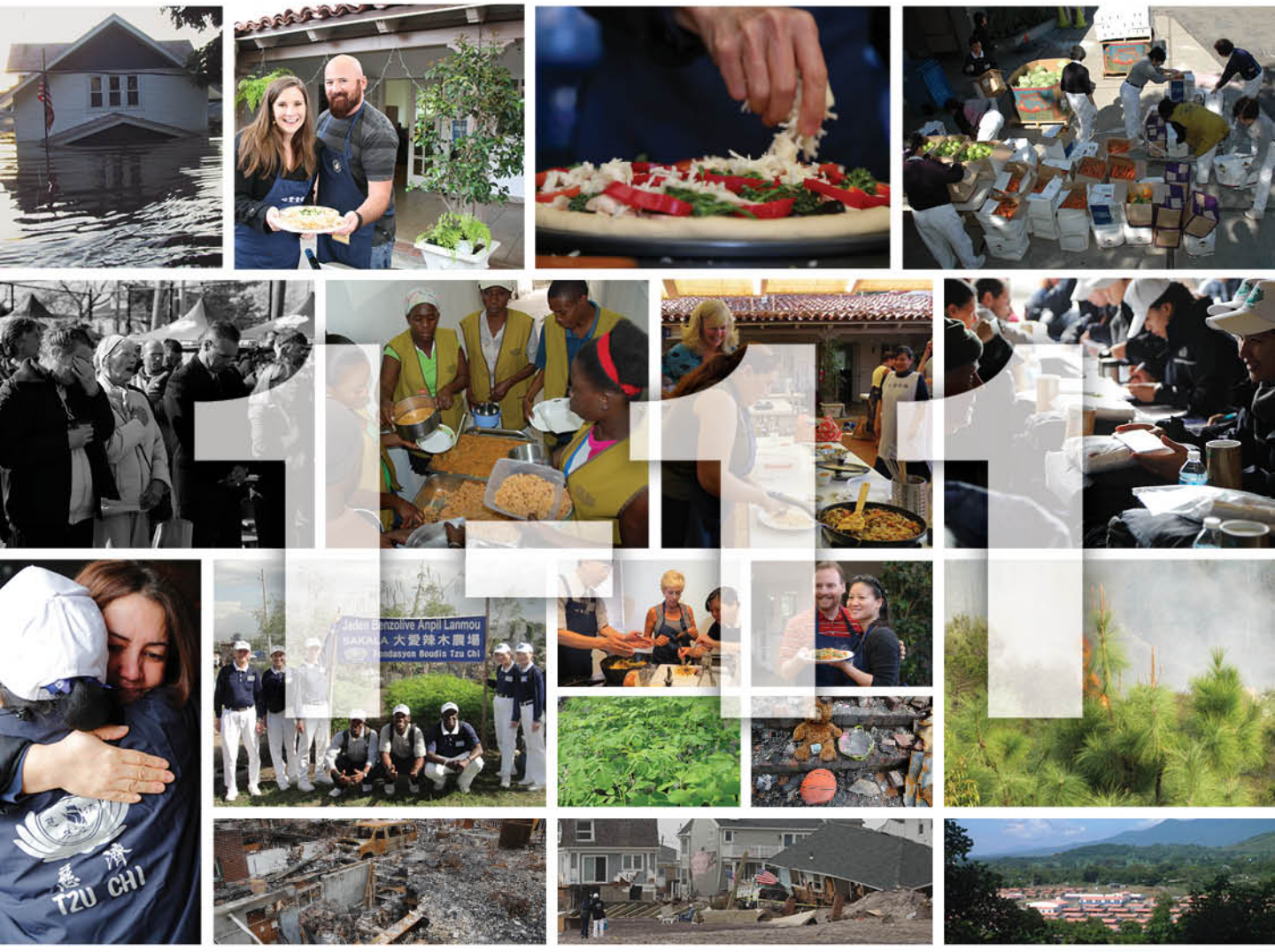
One way to look at this more deeply would be to take the New Testament of the Bible and dissect out the verses printed in red, which are reportedly direct quotes from Jesus's sermons. By categorizing those quotes into topics preached to his followers, Jesus said more about service to the poor and disenfranchised as being the cornerstone of Christianity than he did about any other subject. I've always felt this is not the most important goal of most Christians today, but Tzu Chi embodies this belief.

I began to realize this when I started helping Jack with his independent volunteer activities, including feeding the homeless and distributing copies of Jing Si Aphorisms to jail inmates and the homeless, as well as to local motels. These actions are right and pure—serving the poor and disenfranchised with generosity of spirit and without judgment.

Tzu Chi has inspired me to be a better person and to follow my own life's goals. It has afforded me good friends who are good people. I am grateful to have been invited to this year's ceremony at Santa Rosa Tzu Chi, and I look forward to a year full of volunteer activities.

People who share a common mission in life need to constantly encourage and inspire one another to maintain their kind thoughts.

Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen



Sustainability

STARTS WITH ONE

One World – One Heart – One Resolution

1-11

Ethical Eating Day

A vegetarian diet respects lives, protects the planet, and nurtures our own health. Building on the foundation of Meatless Monday and Fast for the Climate, we invite you to join Tzu Chi and people all over the world as we celebrate a full day of meatless meals and ethical eating on January 11.

For more information and to sign our pledge, please visit **www.tzuchi.us**

With offices, clinics, schools, academies, and bookstores spread across twenty-seven states, Tzu Chi volunteers serve their local communities each and every day. When their neighbors are in need—whether in the next town, state, or country over—they reach out with love and compassion to relieve their suffering.

▲ *Tzu Chi volunteers in Milpitas, California, held a community health day for residents of Santa Clara County on June 21, 2015, to serve low-income residents and those without healthcare. Here a volunteer presents a bamboo bank to a community member. Photo: Dongdong Wei*

◀ *Over more than five years since the devastating 2010 earthquake, Tzu Chi volunteers have never left the side of the Haitian people. On July 29, 2015, volunteers returned to Port-au-Prince to commemorate the kindergarten that Tzu Chi rebuilt for the National Association of Guides in Haiti (ANGH) in the Solino community. Here, volunteers and invited guests cut the ribbon at the school's grand re-opening. Photo: Yaohua Xiao*

Students and teachers of Tzu Chi's Chinese class in Millburn, New Jersey, visited the Tzu Chi Food Pantry in Cedar Grove to help provide food to low-income residents on May 29, 2015. Here, volunteers lead students in filling bags with the proper goods. Photo: Xinyi You

▲ On May 17, 2015, New York Tzu Chi volunteers and Tzu Shao high school volunteers visited Oyster Bay Manor assisted living facility on Long Island to spend a joyful time with residents. Here, Tzu Shao high school volunteers share a sign-language song. Photo: Huangquan Wang

▲ Greater Washington DC Region Tzu Chi volunteers held a community health day at Rosemary Hills Elementary School in Silver Spring, Maryland, on April 25, 2015, to provide local residents with free health screenings and medical consultations. Here, a volunteer provides an eye checkup for a young patient. Photo: Mark Tsai

After Texas was struck by multiple tornadoes in May 2015, Dallas volunteers traveled to Van Zandt County on May 16 to comfort survivors and distribute daily necessities and emergency cash cards. Here, a survivor shares a photo she took of tornado damage. Photo: Peng-Fei Wu

On May 10, 2015, Tzu Chi volunteers and Tzu Shao high school volunteers went out to clean the streets of New York, bringing a new sheen to the city by doing their part to help the environment. Photo: Peter Lin

After a massive earthquake rocked Nepal in April 2015, more than nine thousand individuals were killed and countless more affected. Tzu Chi immediately began providing relief, supported by the fundraising activities of volunteers all around the world. Here, volunteers in Columbus, Ohio, take to the streets to raise funds to help earthquake survivors. Photo: Aimi Qiu

▲ *Tzu Chi International Medical Association (TIMA) and Tzu Chi volunteers held a free medical clinic in San Bernardino, California, on June 14, 2015, to serve low-income, uninsured residents. Here, volunteers help patients fill out necessary paperwork. Photo: Huicen Liao*

▲ *During the final week of the 2015 San Diego County Fair—June 30 to July 5—local Tzu Chi volunteers hosted a booth introducing Tzu Chi's missions and environmental philosophy to visitors. Here, a visitor signs up to adopt a bamboo bank to fill at home. Photo: Margaret Yeh*

▲ *As part of the ongoing Happy Campus Program, Atlanta Tzu Chi volunteers traveled to Cary Reynolds Elementary School in Doraville, Georgia, where they distributed backpacks and daily necessities for students from low-income families on August 18, 2015. Photo: Xiuyue Lin*

For more than a decade, Miami Tzu Chi volunteers have been paying monthly visits to old friends at Hillcrest Nursing Home in Hollywood, Florida. These visits are also an opportunity to teach the values of filial piety and respect for elders to the younger generation. Here, volunteers visit with a friend on August 2, 2015. Photo: Judy Connors

Lemon Capellini with Tomato

Recipe provided by Vegetarian Cooking Team / Tzu Chi University Continuing Education Center
Instructor: Alice Chan

Ingredients

1 lb. angel hair pasta
2 tomatoes
2 tbsp. capers
1 bunch basil
pinch of grated parmesan cheese

Seasoning

2 tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
1 tsp. salt
pinch of black pepper
1/2 lemon (squeezed)

Directions

Bring a pot of water to a boil. Add noodles and gently stir.

When noodles are fully cooked, pour into a colander and rinse with cold water.*

Cut the tomatoes, remove the seeds, and cut into strips.

Remove stem from the basil and cut the leaves into thin strips.

Pour noodles into a pot or large bowl. Add tomato, basil, capers, and seasoning. Mix thoroughly.

Add parmesan cheese and serve!

** Keep a large pot or bowl underneath the colander to catch the excess water as you pour the noodles and then rinse them. After this water cools, you can use it for watering plants, mopping the floor, flushing the toilet, or other household tasks.*

Vegetarianism cultivates perseverance, compassion, and wisdom.
Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen

Photo: Steven Chiu

Psychotherapy with Jing Si Aphorisms

The positive words of Jing Si Aphorisms provide daily guidance.

Lina Lee, LMFT, Licensed Psychotherapist (Buddhist Tzu Chi Medical Foundation)

As Tzu Chi Medical Foundation's licensed psychotherapist, I see mental health treatment as a collaborative effort based on the relationship with my patient. I provide a supportive, nonjudgmental, safe space for my patients to talk openly. We work together to make positive changes, so that my patients can heal, strengthen, and improve.

Hopefully, by the end of treatment, we have not only solved the problem that brought us together, but have also learned new skills to better cope with whatever challenges arise in the future.

I integrate Dharma Master Cheng Yen's Jing Si Aphorisms into my clinical practice, and these sayings have inspired many of my patients to examine and reflect upon themselves as they face their challenges. Using Jing Si Aphorisms in psychotherapy helps my patients feel more positive and more accepting of their strong and weak points. If my patients are able to identify their feelings and reframe their ways of thinking, they become better at coping with their difficult situations.

Most patients come into the clinic feeling burdened with multiple problems in their lives. These could be marital conflicts, relational problems between parents and children, health issues, or problems at work. I often encourage my patients with the aphorism, "So-called 'hard times' do not refer to the length of time that passes, rather that time passes slowly because the heart is saddled with burden." I give patients this Jing Si Aphorism in the form of a bookmark, so that they can take it home with them.

For my patients who have anger control problems, I often share with them this phrase: "Don't get angry when we meet something unpleasant, because anger can only waste our effort and energy. It is better to solve the problem and reflect upon ourselves." I also educate them to reframe their problems using the aphorism, "When we experience friction with others, we should thank them for tempering our spirit and allowing it to shine." I have a patient who shared that he posted this Jing Si Aphorism on his front door so that he could be reminded every day.

I am grateful to be able to offer emotional support and guidance for my patients through their trying times. Using Dharma Master Cheng Yen's Jing Si Aphorisms, I help my patients gain a slightly different perspective, a different way of looking at their own feelings or problems. In that way, I am able to create so many wonderful heart-to-heart dialogues with my patients.

Two decades after first providing support to Nepal, Tzu Chi returned to aid earthquake survivors.

Carrying Compassion to Nepal

As told by George Chang to Susan Chou & Fang Yuan Chou | Translated by Colin Legerton

Nepal: the roof of the world. I'd heard about people visiting for pilgrimage and to climb the world's highest peaks, but I never imagined I would travel there myself. Yet this April something finally drew me to Nepal—earthquake relief.

As a member of one of Tzu Chi's first relief teams sent into Nepal after the devastating earthquake of April 25, I entered Nepal on April 30 and remained until May 16. We first traveled to Bhaktapur, just outside of the capital Kathmandu, to assess damage. Bhaktapur is an important cultural site and a former capital, but many of its key historic relics were destroyed in the quake and aftershocks. Everywhere we looked, we saw nothing but devastation and locals picking through debris to try to recover possessions and memories. I felt profoundly helpless seeing the cycle of formation, existence, destruction, and emptiness firsthand.

We could clearly see the impact of the Dharma as their relationships reflected the warmth and friendliness of days gone by.

Because of positive affinities established after severe floods in 1993, many local people recognized our Tzu Chi uniforms and were very willing to help us when we arrived in Nepal. What was different with this relief effort was that medical professionals from Tzu Chi hospitals immediately went in to help ease survivors' pain, with charity services following behind instead of leading the way.

In each day's video conference, Master Cheng Yen reminded us to interact with survivors with sincerity and affection. We traveled to Nepal with hearts of compassion; though we encountered many difficulties, we were able to achieve wonderful results.

As frequent aftershocks followed the quake, many residents did not dare return inside the brick buildings, many of which were held up by wooden planks and seemingly on the brink of

Drawing on experience gained from Hurricane Sandy and Typhoon Haiyan, the author (left) helps organize Cash-for-Relief in Nepal. Photo: Huizhen Zhuang

toppling. Most people only felt secure living out in the open, under tarps held aloft by boards or branches.

On a soccer field in Bhaktapur, Tzu Chi volunteers from Indonesia brought a large forty-person tent that allowed several families to live together comfortably in a much safer space. Even though the tent was nice and large, the ground became too wet for anyone to sleep comfortably whenever it rained. To resolve this, Tzu Chi later sent the newly developed multi-purpose folding beds.

In Bhaktapur's tent district, we encountered so many touching stories. There was one developmentally challenged girl who had been injured in the earthquake. Unable to walk, she was left to lie on the wet ground, where she had become covered in bedsores and developed an unpleasant odor. The others had pushed her out of the tent, but Tzu Chi volunteers set up a tent especially for her and brought a foldable bed to keep her off the wet ground.

At the beginning, residents of the tent districts appeared helpless and lost. Yet as group after group of volunteers accompanied them with patience and love and gave help wherever they saw a need, the residents gradually began to open their hearts and step back out from the haze. Many even got involved to help others and start a cycle of love and kindness.

Tzu Chi's medical team also carried out many mobile medical outreaches that both helped and touched survivors. One morning, a strong wind suddenly arose, and many locals' tents were knocked over. But Tzu Chi's medical tent unexpectedly stood firm. Only later did we learn that it was because many residents were working together to hold our tent in place. They said that this tent was not just their medical station, but also a spiritual haven. Their words and actions deeply moved us.

Twenty-five hundred years after the Buddha was born, achieved enlightenment, and shared the Dharma in Nepal, the country still maintains a largely agrarian tradition. The people live simple lives and are naturally warm and friendly. They are not very wealthy, but they are happy and content. Even after experiencing this major disaster, they retained their strength to persevere. We could clearly see the impact of the Dharma as their relationships reflected the warmth and friendliness of days gone by.

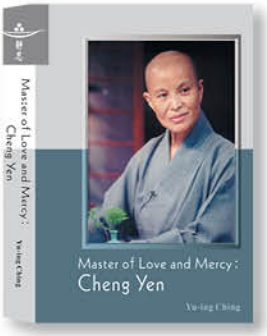
Though Nepal is poor, education is widespread and many people speak English well. Even in remote,

Dr. Wang from Hualien Tzu Chi General Hospital checks a patient in Nepal. Photo: Ruixi Luo

rural areas, the children can all communicate in basic English, which was an enormous help. As schools were out of session following the disaster, many students helped translate for us. In addition, many intellectuals, professors, and principals who were affected by the disaster also helped with communication. They were a great help to us, and they all seemed deeply touched by Tzu Chi's actions.

This disaster relief experience moved me to the core. First, I saw firsthand how Tzu Chi touches so many people. So many medical professionals and volunteers immediately rushed into the disaster zone. No one thought of themselves individually; they all considered the greater good. There were many challenges and difficulties along the way, but everyone knew this was something worth doing, as in helping others, we too gain. The Nepalese people who suffered this terrible disaster also deeply moved me. Even though they had to live in such difficult circumstances, they accepted it and continued to move forward. The strength to overcome came from within themselves, but it was also supported by a positive affinity forged through compassion and dedication.

Top: Earthquake survivors receive Tzu Chi's innovative, award-winning multi-purpose foldable beds.
Bottom: Volunteers help carry relief supplies for a recipient.



(Excerpt)

Master of Love and Mercy: Cheng Yen

"A woman's world is not within the boundary of her home. Equal to men, women are also entitled to serve society, the nation, and all mankind." — **Master Cheng Yen** —

In Chapter Fourteen, the author introduces the journey that led young Chin-yun Wong to become Dharma Master Cheng Yen.

Yu-ing Ching

As Mrs. Wong's voice filled the room, the music faded, the chanting no longer existed, and the walls disappeared. Looking up now and then from my notebook, I found the image of her turning into a blur and the city outside the window diminishing. I was transferred to the summer of 1960, to a small town called Fongyuan, and a position where I could remain unseen while keeping a watchful eye on Chin-yun Wong, a beautiful, long-haired girl who was only twenty-three.

"I love my family!" Chin-yun Wong said to herself on that summer morning. Her family was still sleeping soundly. As usual, she was up earlier than the servants.

Looking out the window at the summer sky that was pink with the first rays of sun, she proceeded to dress and continued to murmur, "Poor Mama is not in good health. My brothers and sisters have not yet learned to be on their own. My grandmother is old and weak. After Baba's death, I've been taking care of all of them . . . not only because I love them but also because it's the obligation of the eldest child. No! I can't follow my heart's liking!"

Shaking her head, Chin-yun went on to begin another day of serving her family, starting with grocery shopping—refrigerators were uncommon and the woman of the house had to buy food every morning.

Chin-yun walked through the town of Fongyuan and soon reached the open market. Peddlers gathered alongside a narrow street, crowding the next few blocks. Each shopper carried a basket made of bamboo or rattan; Chin-yun's was a large rattan one. When she finished with the shopping, and wished to be freed from the heavy load, a shopper could always find, among the children of the peddlers, some errand-boy to deliver the basket.

Chin-yun shopped in the rising sun that had quickly heated up the tropical island, dwelling in deep thoughts as she did the selecting, bargaining, and buying. When she finished, it was still early. She paid a boy a few coins and gave him her home address. As he walked in one direction carrying her basket, she headed in another.

She arrived at the Temple of Kind Clouds, went to Kind Clouds Sheh-fu, her friend and the master in charge, who was wearing a kind smile and a flowing gray robe.

After exchanging greetings, Chin-yun asked, "Kind Clouds Sheh-fu, please tell me what kind of women are the most fortunate under heaven?"

Kind Clouds Sheh-fu answered without hesitation, "The most fortunate women are those carrying grocery baskets."

Chin-yun was puzzled. Tilting her head to one side, she asked, "That's strange. I carry a grocery basket every day. Why don't I feel fortunate? As a matter of fact, I feel miserable!"

"You should go home and figure it out. When you understand what I mean, then come to me again," Kind Clouds Sheh-fu said and walked away.

With her mouth open and eyes wide, Chin-yun glared at the master's back. When the master was out of sight, she turned and went home reluctantly.

Kind Clouds Sheh-fu's puzzling words lingered in Chin-yun's mind for the rest of the day and remained a riddle for days to come. She tried her very best to solve the mystery, but the answer stayed beyond her grasp.

Life went on. Chin-yun rose at dawn, carried her rattan basket to the open market, shopped, then went home to oversee the servants preparing breakfast. After breakfast she read, meditated, and prayed until it was time to go to one of the family-owned theaters.

However, whatever Chin-yun was doing, she was also thinking: Why is a woman carrying a grocery basket the fortunate one?

Summer ended and autumn began. Early one morning Chin-yun was once again walking with a basket in her hand, heading for the open market. Her thoughts followed the same route:

Can a woman be fortunate because she has the grocery money to buy whatever she likes? If that is what the master means, then I doubt she is right. I strongly disagree that a woman's right is limited to spending grocery money! I definitely object that a woman's world is within the boundary of her home! In my opinion, women are equal to men and are also entitled to serve society, the nation, and all mankind!

When nearing the market, Chin-yun let out a deep sigh: If only I could step out of the four walls of my home and begin to serve first my society and my country and then all of mankind!

Chin-yun glanced at the basket she was holding, and the next moment she was astounded by a sudden enlightenment: A woman is fortunate when she carries a grocery basket for not only her immediate family but also for all living beings!

Motionless and almost breathless, she stopped in the middle of the busy street. Unaware of the passing pedicabs and bicycles and people, she went into a deep contemplation: Yes! I should broaden my field of loving. It is not enough to love my family that consists of only a few individuals. I must love my society and my country where there are many men and women, old and young, rich and poor, healthy and ill. But that is not enough either. I must love all living beings, because all lives are equal, and all beings are worthy of being respected and loved!

Thinking how wise Kind Clouds Sheh-fu was, Chin-yun smiled. She hastened towards the market on weightless feet, her mind filled with delightful thoughts: I'll go to Kind Clouds Sheh-fu as soon as the shopping is done. She will be pleased to know that I've finally figured out why a woman carrying a grocery basket is the fortunate one!

She stopped in the middle of the street and vocalized her determination: "I'll tell her that I've decided to take upon myself the largest grocery basket under heaven! In my basket there will be food to feed the bodies of all living beings, wisdom to nourish their minds, and love and mercy to heal their wounded hearts!"

Chin-yun frowned when she realized that at this moment she had only paper currency for meat and vegetables, but not even one ounce of spiritual wealth for the mighty items on the shopping list in her heart.

She thought, then lifted her chin and clenched her hands into fists.

"I am not worried, nor am I afraid," she said as she looked up at the clear sky. "I have much to learn about Buddhism and a long way to travel before picking up that invisible basket. When the time comes, I'll know exactly what to do!"

Excerpted from Master of Love and Mercy: Cheng Yen *by Yu-ing Ching (2nd edition, Jing Si Publications, 2014). For more information, please visit Jing Si Books & Café (directory on pp. 72-74) or* **jingsi.us.tzuchi.org**

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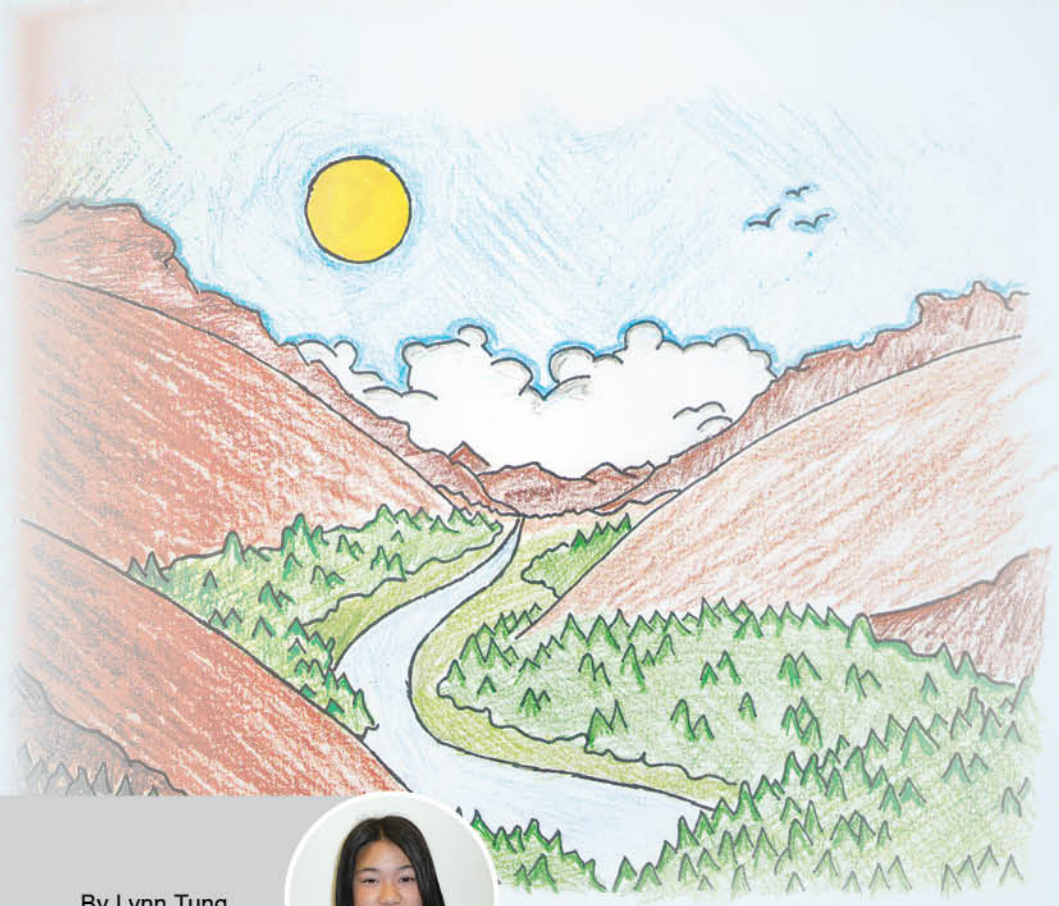
Naturaleza hermosa



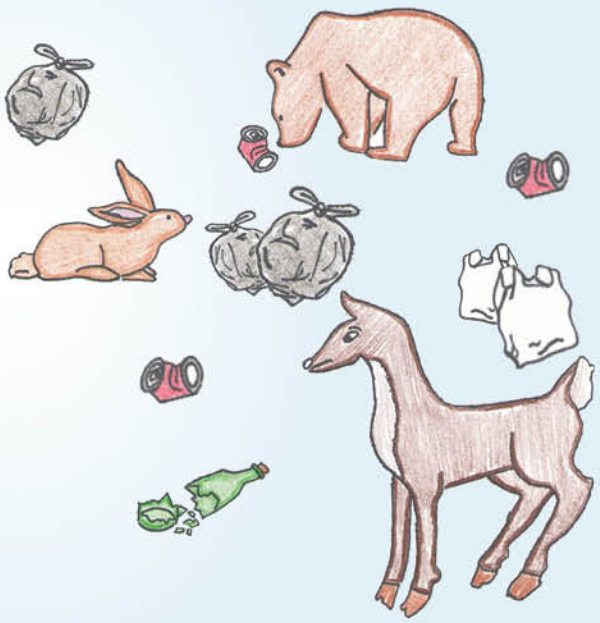
By Lynn Tung

From *Protecting Mother Earth*, a collection of stories about loving our Earth by kids for kids.

Collection Editor: Ralph Boyer
Collection Designer: Chinghui Chen
Spanish Translations: David Hoy & Emma Ong
Academy Teacher & Coordinator: Yali Li
Writers & Artists: Irvine Tzu Chi Academy Students

One day, there were campers staying overnight in the forest. When they left, the campers did not clean up their trash. They just left their plastic bottles, aluminum cans, and plastic bags lying around the campsite and next to the small creek.

Un día, había gente acampando toda la noche en el bosque. Cuando se fueron, ellos no recogieron su basura. Ellos simplemente dejaron sus botellas de plástico, botes de aluminio y bolsas de hule tiradas en el campamento y cerca del pequeño arroyo.



The animals of the forest suddenly noticed all of the rubbish left behind. They cried, "Oh no! Our beautiful forest now has so much trash all around..."

Los animalitos del bosque notaron todo el reguero que habían dejado, y gritaron: "¡Oh no! Nuestro hermoso bosque ahora tiene mucha basura por todos lados…"

A brave little bunny hopped out and declared, "All of us must help clean up this area of the forest and let the forest return to its previous beautiful state."

Un conejito valiente saltó y declaró, "Todos nosotros tenemos que ayudar a limpiar esta área del bosque, para que vuelva a ser tan hermoso como antes."

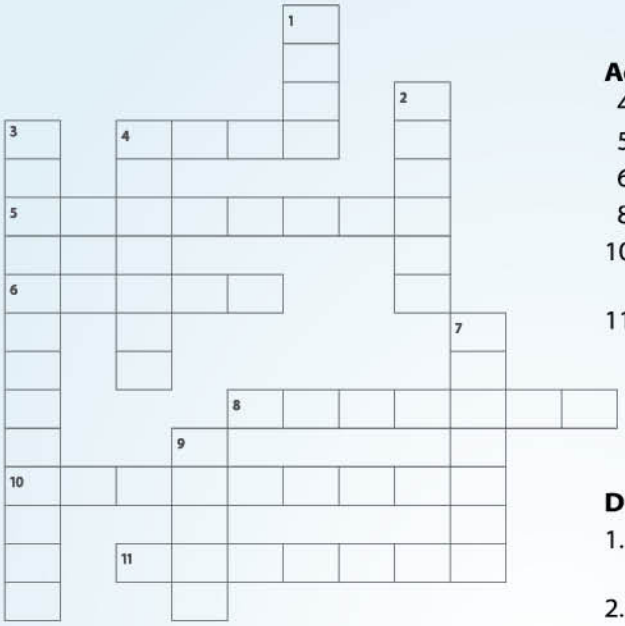
Every one of the animals nodded and said, "Of course! Let's all help clean and tidy up." They all worked together to sort the trash into separate categories and then neatly dropped them into the correct recycling bin.

Todos los animalitos movieron la cabeza y dijeron, "¡Por supuesto! Vamos a ayudar a limpiar." Todos trabajaron juntos para separar la basura en diferentes categorías, y luego cuidadosamente los depositaron en el bote de reciclaje adecuado.

In a very short period of time, the campsite was sparkling clean again. All of the forest animals happily danced around in a circle while holding hands. We should all learn to care for our own planet and to protect this beautiful natural world—just like the forest animals.

En un tiempo muy corto, el campamento estaba muy limpio otra vez. Todos los animales del bosque bailaban tomados de la mano en un círculo muy felices. Todos nosotros deberíamos aprender a cuidar a nuestro planeta y a proteger este hermoso mundo natural—justo como los animales del bosque. cuidadosamente los depositaron en el bote de reciclaje adecuado.

CROSSWORD: SAVE THE FOREST!



Answer key and more games in Issue 47!

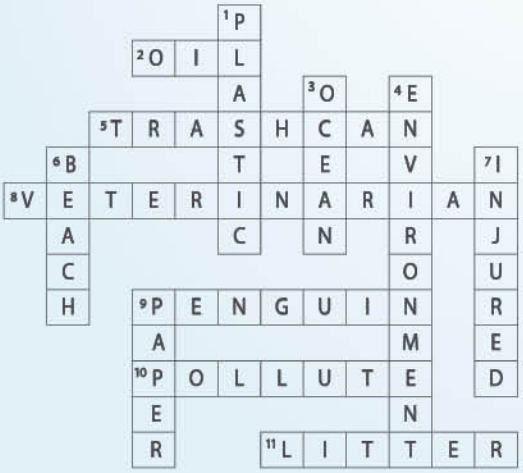
Across

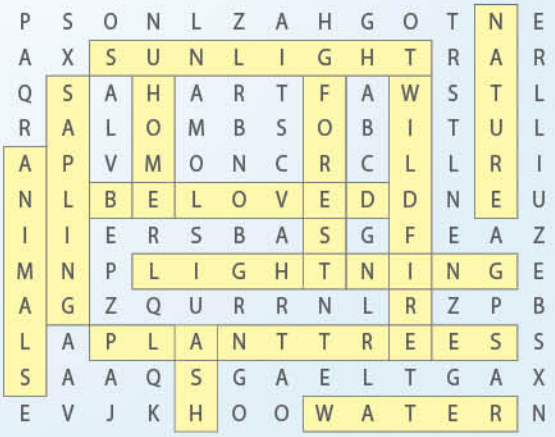
4. These were left behind, probably from soda.
5. All sorts of trash was left lying around here.
6. They stayed near this for its water.
8. Both bottles and bags are made of it.
10. The bunny wanted to make the forest ____ again.
11. They all worked together to clean the trash.

Down

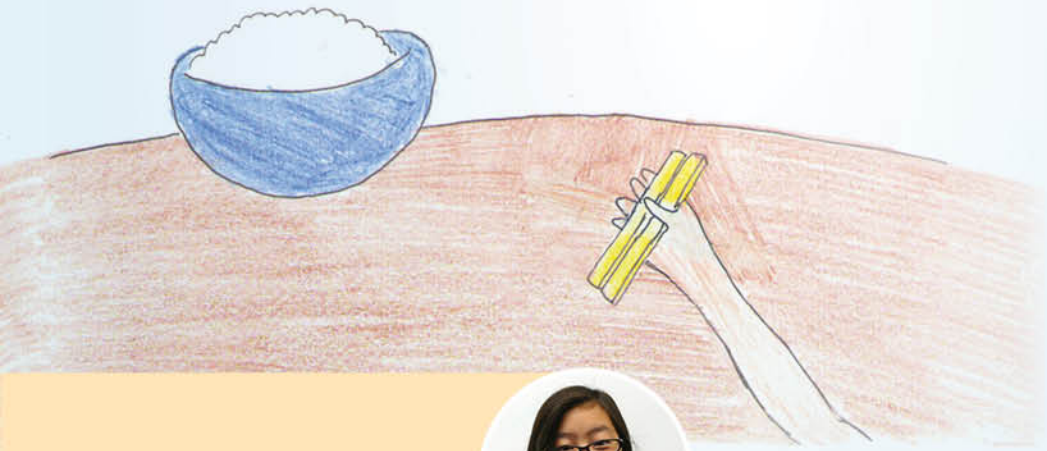
1. The campers used these to carry things, but then left them behind.
2. It's a beautiful place to explore, but you shouldn't litter in it.
3. The animals separated things and put them in the appropriate _____ ___.
4. They went to explore nature, but left their trash behind.
7. These might have held water before they were thrown on the ground.
9. This animal led the cleanup effort.

Issue 45 Answer Key





Don't Waste Food
No desperdicies comida



By Jussy Chiang

From *Protecting Mother Earth*, a collection of stories about loving our Earth by kids for kids.

Collection Editor: Ralph Boyer
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A long time ago, in a little village, there lived a rich person called Ming.

Hace mucho tiempo, en un poblado pequeño, vivía una persona rica que se llamaba Ming.

Ming always wasted her food. When she was done eating, she would throw the leftovers into the river in her backyard.

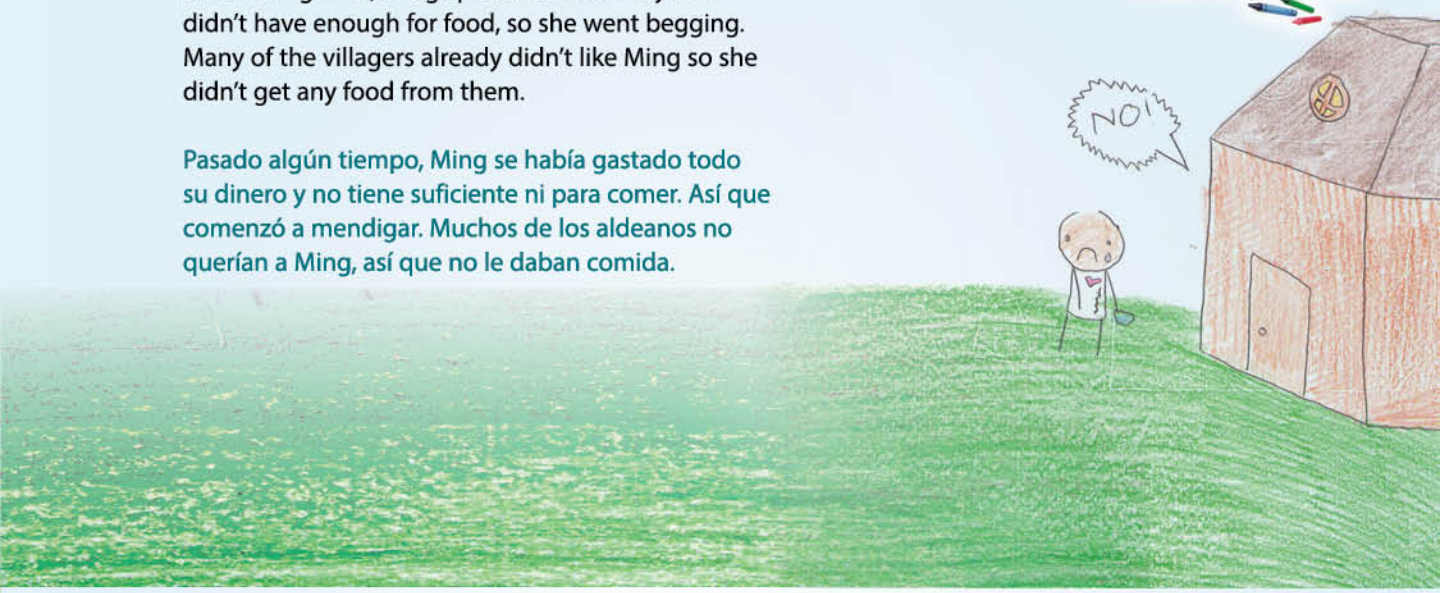
Ming siempre desperdiciaba su comida. Cuando terminaba de comer, ella tiraba lo que le sobraba en el rio de su patio trasero.

On the other side of the river lived a very poor person, whose name was BeiBei. Her family didn't have enough money to buy food, so BeiBei used the leftovers that Ming threw into the river.

Al otro lado del rio vivía una persona muy pobre que se llamaba BeiBei. Su familia no tenía suficiente dinero para comprar comida, así que BeiBei usaba los sobrantes que Ming tiraba en el rio.

After a long time, Ming spent all her money and didn't have enough for food, so she went begging. Many of the villagers already didn't like Ming so she didn't get any food from them.

Pasado algún tiempo, Ming se había gastado todo su dinero y no tiene suficiente ni para comer. Así que comenzó a mendigar. Muchos de los aldeanos no querían a Ming, así que no le daban comida.

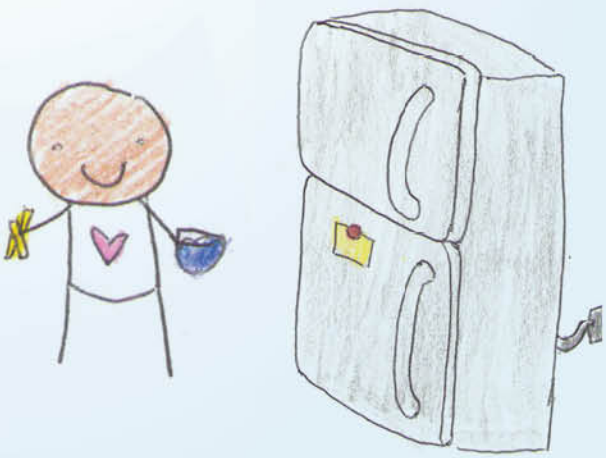


When Ming arrived at BeiBei's house, she was invited in for a meal. When Ming had finished eating, she said, "Thank you very much for the food!" BeiBei replied," You're welcome, but actually this food is all yours. I collected it when you threw it out."

Un día Ming fue a la casa de BeiBei quien la invitó a comer. Cuando Ming terminó de comer, ella dijo: "Muchas gracias por la comida." BeiBei le contestó, "De nada, pero en realidad toda esta comida es tuya, yo la recogí cuando la tiraste."

Since that day, Ming never wasted her food again. She also promised to help other people who needed support.

Desde ese día, Ming no volvió a desperdiciar su comida. También comprometió a ayudar a otras personas que necesitan ayuda.



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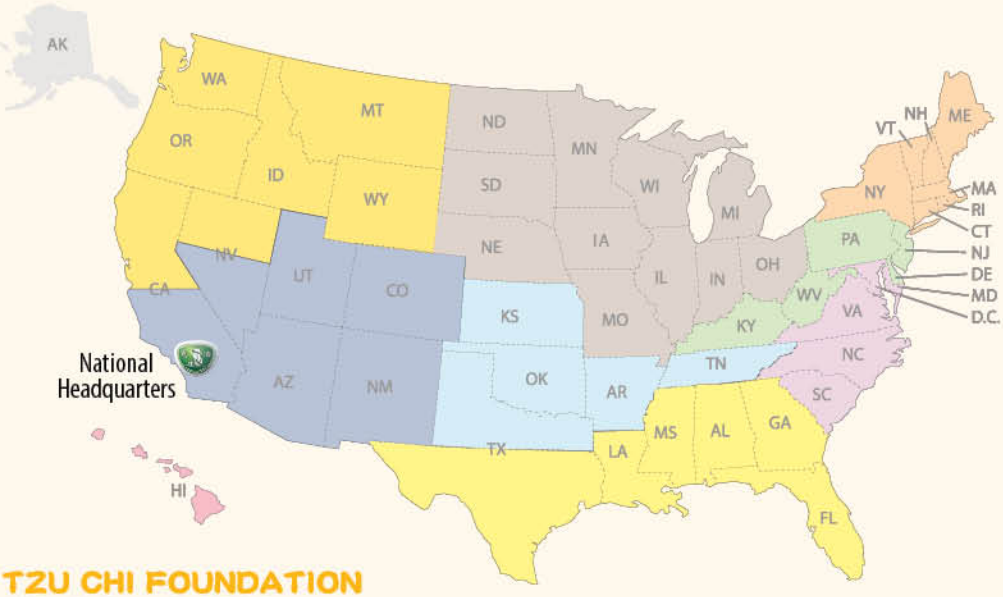

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Fax: 408-943-8420

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Tel / Fax: 510-879-0971

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Laguna Hills, CA 92653
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Fax: 949-916-5933

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ORANGE COUNTY, CA
Tel: 949-916-4488

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Sacramento, CA 95815
Tel/Fax: 916-568-5800

SAN DIEGO SERVICE CENTER
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San Diego, CA 92121
Tel: 858-546-0578
Fax: 858-546-0573

JING SI BOOKSTORE
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San Francisco, CA 94122
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Fax: 415-682-0567

JING SI BOOKSTORE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA
Tel: 415-682-0566

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Santa Rosa, CA 95401
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STOCKTON OFFICE
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Stockton, CA 95207
Tel / Fax: 209-957-7800

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Wilmington, CA 90744
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Ukiah, CA 95482
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MEDICAL CENTER
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Alhambra, CA 91801
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Fax: 626-281-5303

BUDDHIST TZU CHI
ACUPUNCTURE CLINIC
10414 Vacco St.
S. El Monte, CA 91733
Tel: 626-636-8706
Fax: 626-636-8736

BUDDHIST TZU CHI
DENTAL CLINIC
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TZU CHI COMMUNITY
CLINIC, WILMINGTON
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TZU CHI GREAT LOVE
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
429 E. Wildrose Ave.
Monrovia, CA 91016
Tel: 626-357-3286
Fax: 626-357-3287

TZU CHI GREAT LOVE
PRESCHOOL & KINDERGARTEN,
MONROVIA
206 E. Palm Ave.
Monrovia, CA 91016
Tel: 626-305-1188
Fax: 626-599-8098

TZU CHI GREAT LOVE
PRESCHOOL, WALNUT
1920 S. Brea Canyon Cutoff Rd.
Walnut, CA 91789
Tel: 909-895-2126
Fax: 909-927-8336

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Tel: 408-888-7903

TZU CHI ACADEMY
IRVINE
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Fax: 949-916-5933

TZU CHI ACADEMY
MONROVIA
Tel: 626-775-3675
Fax: 626-359-8199

TZU CHI ACADEMY
SAN DIMAS
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Fax: 909-447-7944

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Fax: 415-682-0567

TZU CHI ACADEMY
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Tel: 650-888-1582

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Tel: 925-785-7413

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San Dimas, CA 91773
Tel: 909-447-7799 ext. 569

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San Diego, CA 92101
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Fax: 619-677-3294

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Pembroke Pines, FL 33024
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Fax: 317-645-9907

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Orlando, FL 32808
Tel / Fax: 407-292-1146

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Atlanta, GA 30340
Tel / Fax: 770-458-1000

JING SI BOOKSTORE
DORAVILLE, GA
Tel: 770-458-1000

TZU CHI ACADEMY, ATLANTA
Tel: 770-986-8669
Fax: 770-458-1000

HAWAII

PACIFIC ISLANDS REGION
1238 Wilhelmina Rise
Honolulu, HI 96816
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Fax: 808-737-8889

JING SI BOOKSTORE
HONOLULU, HI
Tel: 808-737-8885

BUDDHIST TZU CHI
FREE CLINIC, HAWAII
100 N. Beretania St. Ste. 122
Honolulu, HI 96817
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TZU CHI ACADEMY, HAWAII
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Darien, IL 60561
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Fax: 630-960-9360

JING SI BOOKS & CAFÉ
CHICAGO, IL
Tel: 630-963-6601

TZU CHI ACADEMY, CHICAGO
Tel: 630-963-6601
Fax: 630-969-9360

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INDIANAPOLIS SERVICE CENTER
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Indianapolis, IN 46240
Tel: 317-580-0979

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KANSAS OFFICE
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Olathe, KS 66062
Tel: 913-397-6517

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NEW ORLEANS OFFICE
3300 Airline Dr.
Metairie, LA 70001
Tel: 504-782-5168
Fax: 504-832-2022

MARYLAND

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Fax: (301) 339-8872

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Tel: 617-762-0569
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JING SI BOOKSTORE
NEWTON, MA
Tel: 617-762-0569

TZU CHI ACADEMY, BOSTON
Tel: 617-762-0569
Fax: 617-431-4484

MICHIGAN

DETROIT SERVICE CENTER
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LANSING OFFICE
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Okemos, MI 48864
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MINNEAPOLIS OFFICE
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Arden Hills, MN 55112
Tel: 651-493-9388

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ST. LOUIS SERVICE CENTER
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St. Louis, MO 63132
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LAS VEGAS SERVICE CENTER
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Las Vegas, NV 89146
Tel / Fax: 702-880-5552

JING SI BOOKSTORE
LAS VEGAS,NV
Tel: 702-880-5552

RENO OFFICE
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Reno, NV 89509
Tel: 775-770-1138
Fax: 775-770-1148

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NEW JERSEY

CENTRAL NEW JERSEY
SERVICE CENTER
17 Round Hill Rd.
Holmdel, NJ 07733
Tel: 732-332-1089
Fax: 732-332-1439

MID-ATLANTIC REGION
150 Commerce Rd.
Cedar Grove, NJ 07009
Tel: 973-857-8666
Fax: 973-857-9555

JING SI BOOKS & CAFÉ
NEW JERSEY
Tel: 973-857-8666

TZU CHI ACADEMY
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Albuquerque, NM 87123
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5721 6th Ave.
Brooklyn, NY 11220
Tel: 917-909-0682

LONG ISLAND BRANCH
60 E. Williston Ave.
East Williston, NY 11596
Tel: 516-873-6888
Fax: 516-746-0626

JING SI BOOKSTORE
EAST WILLISTON, NY
Tel: 516-873-6888

MANHATTAN SERVICE CENTER
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New York, NY 10002
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Fax: 212-965-1152

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Flushing, NY 11354
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LONG ISLAND
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Fax: 516-746-0626

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Fax: 704-943-1031

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New Hills, NC 27562
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Fax: 919-363-6945

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CARY, NC
Tel: 919-439-4919

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Highland Hts, OH 44143
Tel / Fax: 440-646-9292

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Dayton, OH 45429
Tel: 937-431-8292
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OKLAHOMA OFFICE
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Oklahoma City, OK 73106
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PORTLAND SERVICE CENTER
3800 SW Cedar Hills Blvd.
Suite 194
Beaverton, OR 97005
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JING SI BOOKSTORE
BEAVERTON, OR
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PENNSYLVANIA

PHILADELPHIA SERVICE CENTER
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Philadelphia, PA 19107
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Fax: 215-627-1916

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1333 Banksville Rd. #201
Pittsburgh, PA 15216
Tel: 412-531-8343
Fax: 412-531-8341

TZU CHI ACADEMY, PITTSBURGH
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Fax: 412-531-8341

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Arlington, TX 76010
Tel / Fax: 817-548-0226

JING SI BOOKSTORE
ARLINGTON, TX
Tel: 817-548-0226

AUSTIN SERVICE CENTER
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Austin, TX 78723
Tel: 512-491-0358
Fax: 512-926-1373

CENTRAL REGION
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Richardson, TX 75080
Tel: 972-680-8869
Fax: 972-680-7732

JING SI BOOKS & CAFÉ
DALLAS
Tel: 972-680-8869

POINT COMFORT OFFICE
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201 Formosa Dr.
Point Comfort, TX 77978
Tel: 361-987-7130
Fax: 361-987-7139

SAN ANTONIO OFFICE
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San Antonio, TX 78258
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Fax: 210-566-3970

SOUTHERN REGION
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Houston, TX 77036
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HOUSTON, TX
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TZU CHI GREAT LOVE PRESCHOOL
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TZU CHI GREAT LOVE PRESCHOOL
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Houston, TX 77036
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Fax: 713-981-9008

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Reston, VA 20190
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Tel: 703-707-8606

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Bellevue, WA 98006
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KIRKLAND, WA
Tel: 425-822-7678
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MADISON OFFICE
726 W. Main St., #302
Madison, WI 53715
Tel: 608-268-7692

MILWAUKEE OFFICE
4790 Shagbark Ct.
Brookfield, WI 53005

TZU CHI

A BRIEF HISTORY...

In 1966, Dharma Master Cheng Yen founded the Tzu Chi Merits Society in Hualien with the support of thirty housewives who each put aside a couple cents of their grocery money every day to establish a charity fund. In the first year, they helped a total of thirty-one elderly, ill, and poor people from fifteen families. As word spread, more people participated and the program gathered strength. It spread beyond Hualien: first across the island and then around the world.

Today, Tzu Chi is a nonprofit charitable organization with ten million volunteers and donors in fifty countries worldwide. Over the past forty-nine years, Tzu Chi's four missions—Charity, Medicine, Education, and Humanistic Culture—have grown from the seeds of gratitude, respect, and love, and Tzu Chi's activities have expanded to include international disaster relief, bone marrow donation, community volunteerism, and environmental conservation.

In the United States, Tzu Chi operates nine regional service areas with more than eighty offices and facilities nationwide. Volunteers give back to their local communities through family services, emergency disaster relief, homeless services, school support programs, college scholarships, income tax reporting assistance, relief distributions, holiday care packs, free and low-cost medical clinics and outreaches, preventive health education, cancer support groups, character education curricula, community education classes, and production of positive, inspiring media.

Whenever disaster strikes at home or abroad, Tzu Chi volunteers deliver cash aid, hot meals, and emergency relief supplies directly into the hands of disaster survivors. Over the years, US Tzu Chi volunteers have actively provided relief after such major disasters as 9/11, Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy, and earthquakes in Haiti, Japan, and Nepal.

In recent years, Tzu Chi volunteers' charitable work has been increasingly recognized by the global community. Tzu Chi was granted special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council in 2010 and honored as a White House Champion of Change in 2013. Dharma Master Cheng Yen was presented with the Roosevelt Institute's FDR Distinguished Public Service Award and named to the TIME 100 list of the world's most influential people in 2011, and honored with the Rotary International Award of Honor in 2014.

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Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation
佛教慈濟基金會

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If everyone
contributes their love,
a crisis can be turned
into an opportunity,
and
a disaster into
a blessing.

Jing Si Aphorism by
Dharma Master
Cheng Yen