

COMPASSION & RELIEF

TZU CHI USA JOURNAL



Great Love in Fresno p. 8

Philosopher Peter Singer on Effective Altruism p. 27

Caring for Syrian Refugees in 3 Countries p. 36

Life Lessons in a Honolulu Senior Home p. 50





DHARMA MASTER CHENG YEN
FOUNDER OF
TZU CHI FOUNDATION

CONTEMPLATIVE WISDOM

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

Witness Phenomena to Realize Enlightenment

The Buddha comes to this world for one great cause, to open and reveal the Dharma to sentient beings.

Because we humans are deluded and thus unaware of the suffering that arises through the course of life, we commit all kinds of transgressions.

Without any control, we bring this karma with us as we transmigrate in the Six Realms, life after life.

The Buddha teaches us the Bodhisattva Way, pointing out that only by walking the Bodhisattva-path can we verify the truth of the Buddha-Dharma.

Only by going among people can we witness phenomena and realize enlightenment.

If we cannot witness all phenomena, we will be unable to realize the true principles.

Translated by the Dharma as Water Editorial Team

For video-enhanced multimedia eBooks of this issue, several years of back issues, and other Tzu Chi publications in English, Chinese, and Spanish, please visit issuu.com/tzuchiusa/stacks



With deepest gratitude to Grace Yang, Steven Voon, Olivia Chung, the Tapia family, and all Tzu Chi family and friends in the Central Valley, this issue is dedicated to the memory of Ana Tapia.

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The Heart of a Bodhisattva

At the time of spring, the start of the four seasons, everything is growing; the land is full of life and vitality and gives a feeling of freshness.

In the heart of the bodhisattva, it is always spring; a gentle breeze blows there, and the water of the Dharma nourishes their inner land.

When we first encounter the Dharma and experience a moment of understanding and awakening, we feel a sense of joy. This is an encounter with our Buddha-nature. This joy comes from touching the Dharma with our heart. A bodhisattva seizes this moment of joy and Dharma and keeps it always.

Bodhisattvas act in accord with the Dharma, and their hearts are broad and

pure. When they look, they look with the heart of understanding. They are always looking for ways to help people and solve their problems. At every moment, their mind is open to learning the Dharma, from anyone they meet, in whatever they do. When they successfully help a person, spiritual joy fills their heart. The spring sun is always shining deep in their heart.

Their heart is very big, embracing all the things in this world. This is what Buddhism teaches—to open our heart wide and embrace the universe. The Buddha tells us that our heart can create all things. When we give rise to unwholesome thoughts, we can create hell. On the other hand, if we give rise to wholesome thoughts, heaven can be here now.



Dharma Master Cheng Yen

Compiled into English by the Jing Si Abode English Editorial Team

Buddhists believe what happens in our world is the result of the karma all of us collectively create. If this karma is negative, the outcomes include natural disasters which bring suffering and sorrow. Yet, if we think and do good in our everyday life, we can bring good fortune and blessings to the place we live.

Bodhisattvas know that if people can have a good heart and good thoughts, they can create many blessings. Because of this, they take on the work of inspiring people to do good. When encountering others, they try to reach out to the goodness in the people's hearts and awaken their selfless love for others—Great Love—and then guide them to express this love in action.

They understand that to enjoy the fruits of blessings, one must first plant the seeds of blessings. That is why they encourage people to create blessings by doing good for others. When a lot of people are doing good, collective good karma is built up. When more and more good karma is accumulated, it “dilutes” the existing collective bad karma. Misfortune is then turned around, and people experience blessings.

The heart of the bodhisattva is full of goodness. This goodness is continually sprouting and growing in the eternal spring of their heart. With their goodness, they bring a power of transformation to our world. 🌿

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 49 (Due: April 30, 2016)

*What does "compassion in action" mean to you?
Any examples?*

Issue 50 (Due: July 31, 2016)

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

Issue 51 (Due: October 31, 2016)

What's the first thing you share with others about Tzu Chi?

Please email your answer, name, and city and state of residence to journal@tzuchi.us by the listed due date. We welcome contributions from all of our readers. Please also feel free to submit or suggest story ideas and drafts.

call for submissions



Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation

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Together as One

For Tzu Chi, it's always been important that we collaborate with quality partners. Because we're doing charity, we have to work with everybody; if we just stay by ourselves, we can never accomplish everything. So from the beginning, we've worked with a lot of government agencies, local communities, and various organizations. Red Cross is one that we've worked with from very early on, especially in disaster relief, and we've collaborated with many other churches and foundations as well to provide disaster relief where it's most needed.

In addition to disaster relief, recently we have been working with a few different organizations on environmental issues, such as conservation of water, protecting the environment, and how to change our habits to do that more effectively. This past summer, for example, we held an event in a few communities in Southern California, where we're still suffering from this severe drought. We invited Southern California Edison, the Gas Company, SolarCity, and several others to come help us share with the community about how much water we really have left in reserve, as well as ways we can save energy, protect the environment, and use less water—especially simple things like changing light bulbs to compact fluorescents or LEDs, and taking showers more efficiently.

That's just one way we work with the community: using our activities to share knowledge and resources, helping increase everyone's awareness of how serious some of these issues are, and sharing information about what each of us can do. It's important that we be part of our local community and bring awareness, as well as tools for prevention and preparedness.

This is very valuable for the community, and it's important for us as well.

Of course there are also a number of ongoing community projects where we work in tandem with other organizations to provide services. Near our national headquarters, we work closely with the East San Gabriel Valley Coalition for the Homeless to support homeless people throughout the cold winter. A number of churches donate their facilities, other organizations provide food, clothing, and other services, and Tzu Chi offers dental care and haircuts. All throughout the country, of course, we are also constantly collaborating with public elementary schools through the Happy Campus and Character Education programs.

So there are many important partnerships that Tzu Chi maintains to help the community at the organizational level. And at the individual level, it is equally important that we reach out and work with everyone. Tzu Chi is not really just Chinese, and we still need to diversify more. I think that Fresno is a good example. They're able to work with a lot of people coming from different backgrounds, cultures, and nationalities, and I believe there will be more and more of our branch offices that will be just like Fresno in the near future. We all have the same common goal—to help people in need—and the more we connect different groups of people together to do this, the more successful we will be. 🌱

Han Huang

Great Love in *Fresno*





As it has in so many places, Tzu Chi started in Fresno as a small group of Taiwanese immigrants. But it has grown into something much more—a local team as diverse as the country, with community roots that continue to grow deeper and wider. From frequent free medical clinics to prison visits and charity cases, this group of volunteers serves their community with compassion every day.



Fresno Past

Often overlooked, Fresno serves as a vital food source for the entire nation.

Shirley Tseng | Translated by Mei-li Hamilton

Photo courtesy of Roy J. Woodward Memorial Library of Californiana, Special Collections Research Center, California State University, Fresno



How did Fresno turn from a wasteland into the food basket of the world?

Outside of California, many people have never heard of Fresno. Just a short ninety-minute drive from world-famous national parks including Yosemite, Kings Canyon, and Sequoia, Fresno is the San Joaquin Valley's capital of finance, industry, and commerce, and California's fifth-largest city.

The original residents of the San Joaquin Valley were the Yokuts people. When the Spanish came to the valley in the early nineteenth century looking for locations to build missions, they saw a river running through a stand of ash trees and named it the Fresno River after the Spanish word for ash tree.

In the 1840s, John C. Fremont led four expeditions through the San Joaquin Valley. In his account, he wrote: "It is crowded with bands of elk and wild horses; and along the rivers are frequent fresh tracks of grizzly bear."



and Present

Photo: Chinghui Chen

When the Central Pacific Railroad extended south to the San Joaquin Valley in 1872, its president, Leland Stanford, decided to place a station near the river, which he named Fresno Station. The city of Fresno gradually developed around this station.

Fresno and the San Joaquin Valley enjoy a Mediterranean climate—warm and humid in the winter, hot and dry in the summer. At the time, the area was swampy after the winter rainy season and a dry wasteland in the summer. More than a century later, none of the swamps, wasteland, or even the wild horses of Fremont’s description remain. Instead, as you drive along Highway 99, you see an endless checkerboard of farms producing grapes, citrus, strawberries, vegetables, rice, and nuts. The San Joaquin Valley has become the food basket of the world.

Wasteland Becomes Food Basket

How did Fresno turn from a wasteland into the food basket of the world? Much of the credit is due to a single smart investor—a German immigrant named Bernhard Marks.

In 1875, Marks worked with a group of landowners and irrigation experts to create the Central California Colony, a tract of four thousand acres located three miles south of Fresno. They divided the tract into twenty-acre plots, dug irrigation channels, and offered the plots for sale. In the surrounding area, they planted palm, eucalyptus, and other drought-resistant trees. They then advertised the development, emphasizing the irrigation systems.

The Central California Colony successfully attracted immigrants from the East Coast and

even as far away as Europe, and Fresno grew into an agricultural center to support this growth. In 1888, Fresno held its first agricultural exhibition, and by 1903, Fresno County had forty-eight agricultural settlements, covering more than seventy-one thousand acres. Today, Fresno is one of the world's leading agricultural centers.

The importance of agriculture is even engrained into the city's flag, which was designed by a local resident in 1962. The colors of the three vertical stripes—brown, blue, and green—represent the region's three valuable assets: brown, fertile land; blue water and sky; and green farmland and trees. As an important local characteristic, agriculture is also a major feature of local tourism. In February and March, visitors are drawn by vivid flowers; in the summer, by fresh fruits and vegetables; and in the fall, by the Big Fresno Fair. Held annually since 1884, attendance of the two-week fair has steadily grown over the decades, reaching over six hundred thousand annually in recent years. Through a variety of programs, the Big Fresno Fair carries on its mission "to educate, celebrate and have fun."

Gradual Change in Old Fresno



Old Fresno Water Tower
Photo: Chinghui Chen

Today, Fresno is the fifth-largest city in California behind Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Diego, and San Jose, and its rich cultural heritage can still be seen in the nineteenth-century buildings that have survived to the present day. Of course, the functions of some of these buildings has changed significantly.

A good example is the Old Fresno Water Tower, built in 1894. This 109-foot-tall American Romanesque-style brick building once stored 250,000 gallons of water, which was enough to supply the needs of the entire city. The tower remained in use until 1963, but because of declining groundwater levels, the pump could no longer fill the tank and operation

had to cease. Although the pumping station was demolished, the tower has remained and is now protected as a national monument. Since 2001, it has served as a visitor center.

Late in the twentieth century, the city government began an effort to give the town center a new look. In 1992, Fresno opened a new City Hall, which broke from the traditional style of government architecture with a postmodern design envisioned by Canadian architect Arthur Erickson.

In August 2015, Fresno City Councilmember Paul Caprioglio invited Tzu Chi volunteers to visit City Hall and showed them before and after photographs of the city renewal effort that is reenergizing the city. As part of the renewal effort, the municipal government has worked with the California High-Speed Rail Authority to build a station in Fresno. Construction has already begun in Chinatown.

The San Joaquin Valley is also changing. The rainy season historically has lasted from November to April, with melting snow serving as a main source of water in the spring. However, since California's serious drought began in 2011, snow levels in the Sierra Nevada have become dangerously low. To adapt, local agriculture has had to abandon traditional irrigation methods and adopt new water-saving methods. In addition, farmers have had to rely more on groundwater by digging deeper and deeper wells. According to NASA studies, groundwater extraction has lowered the water table by fifty feet or more, causing the ground surface in some areas to sink as much as a foot a year.

For more than a century, Fresno has served as an example of how humans have adapted the environment to meet their needs. With the twin threats of global climate change and long-term overuse of resources, this fertile food basket faces an uncertain future and serious challenges. As in many places, the answer now lies in adapting humans' needs to meet the environment instead.



As inhabitants of the Earth, it is our duty and mission to take care of our planet.



Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen



A Story of Immigrants

Since the very beginning, Fresno has been driven by the innovation and hard work of immigrants from all over the world.

Shirley Tseng | Translated by Estella Fung & Colin Legerton

Fresno is a multiethnic city, a colorful mosaic of residents who hail from more than eighty different countries.

Back in 1874, Fresno was a barren stretch of land with a population of just six hundred, two hundred of which were Chinese who had worked in the mountain completing the Central Pacific Railroad. After the railway's completion, they settled in San Joaquin Valley and took up brickmaking, helping to build Fresno little by little.

In 1875, German immigrant Bernhard Marks founded the Central California Colony, which established an agricultural network for farmers in the area. Fresno soon turned from a bare wasteland into a fertile breadbasket, and immigrant farmworkers—who were Chinese, Scandinavian, Japanese, and South Asian in the early days, and primarily Mexican in the twentieth century—became essential to Fresno's long reign as the “capital of agriculture.”

The Other Side of the Tracks

Due to anti-Chinese sentiment at the time, the Chinese immigrants who helped build Fresno had to settle west of the railway tracks. The tracks marked an “iron border” which immigrants could not cross, and those who came later, whether from Japan, Armenia, Mexico, Portugal, or elsewhere, also congregated west of the railway tracks in Chinatown.

The Chinese set up a variety of businesses in Chinatown that provided daily necessities, services, and entertainment to the multiethnic immigrant community. Based on fire insurance maps of the 1880s, Chinatown was densely populated, a stark contrast from the nearby ranches and farms.

Legend has it that Fresno's Chinatown had many secret underground tunnels connecting buildings. While many dismiss this as nothing more than an urban myth, the elder generation

Saroyan, who won both a Pulitzer Prize and an Academy Award, was a renowned writer, a native of Fresno, and a son of Armenian immigrants.

has more to tell. Rick Lew reported, "There was a nightlife you couldn't see from the streets," claiming that he had walked the passages as a child, entering through a trapdoor in his grandfather's liquor store. In October 2013, some of these legendary tunnels were reportedly unearthed during the early phase of construction on California's high-speed railway.

A Helping Hand in Tough Times

The greatest hardship faced by immigrants in Fresno was what happened to Japanese Americans during World War II. Japanese immigrants first arrived in the San Joaquin Valley in the 1890s, with a reported three thousand Japanese grape pickers working in local vineyards by 1897. In the early 1900s, Japanese immigrants gathered and formed Nihonmachi (Japanese Section) adjacent to Chinatown.

After the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the U.S. government immediately declared war on Japan. Soon, Executive Order 9066 decreed that all citizens with Japanese ancestry must be evacuated from their homes and moved into assembly centers within six days. Thus began the forced relocation and internment of more than one hundred thousand people, which lasted throughout the war.

Facing the uncertainty of his future, one Japanese pastry shop owner in Fresno's Nihonmachi asked his Chinese neighbor to care for his shop.

With his limited luggage, he was housed in horse stables along with five thousand other internees in Fresno Assembly Center. Five months later, all were sent to remote internment camps throughout the country.

When the war wrapped up four years later, all internees were finally allowed to return home. The pastry shop owner returned to Fresno to find that his honest Chinese neighbor had kept his shop in good condition for him throughout those uncertain years. In 2015, this bakery still remains in the family. It continues to offer traditional Japanese pastries and confectioneries, as well as a heartwarming reminder of trust and friendship between different races.

The Human Comedy

"Americans! Greeks, Serbs, Poles, Russians, Mexicans, Armenians, Germans, Negroes, Swedes, Spaniards, Basques, Portuguese, Italians, Jews, French, English, Scotch, Irish. You name it. That's who we are."

To Thomas Spangler, a character in William Saroyan's award-winning 1943 novel *The Human Comedy*, it was this incredible ethnic diversity that defined Ithaca, California—Saroyan's fictional stand-in for Fresno—as he drove through a park on a Sunday afternoon.

Saroyan, who won both a Pulitzer Prize and an Academy Award, was a renowned writer, a native of Fresno, and a son of Armenian immigrants. His work expressed the Armenian experience in California and reflected the wide diversity of the local community.

A multi-talented artist, Saroyan's oeuvre included screenplays, poems, short stories, and novels. During his active career, he was as well-known as contemporaries John Steinbeck and Ernest Hemingway, and since his death in 1981, downtown Fresno's William Saroyan Theatre has carried on his legacy of bringing beautiful art to the community.

The Underground Garden

Another fascinating page of Fresno history was inscribed by another immigrant, Sicilian Baldassare Forestiere, who forged Fresno's famed Underground Garden with the blood, sweat, and tears of decades of labor.



Albert, a Tzu Chi volunteer of Armenian descent, stands beside a bust of famed Armenian-American writer William Saroyan. Photo: Chinghui Chen



In Forestiere's Underground Garden, a tree grows up to a ground-level skylight.
Photo: Chinghui Chen

When Forestiere immigrated to the United States from Sicily in 1901, his dream was to build a citrus empire. At first, he sustained himself by digging ditches on the East Coast, but he later moved to the outskirts of Fresno in 1906. To escape the sweltering heat of Fresno summers (with temperatures that can rise to 120 degrees), Forestiere spent his free time digging out underground rooms where he could rest away from the heat. Figuring that many people would enjoy the opportunity to visit a cool oasis in the summer heat, he relied on his own strength and primitive tools to dig bit by bit into the hard ground as he dreamed of turning his creation into a resort oasis. Forestiere never had a blueprint for his creation; all his plans existed only in his mind. In 1924, he told the *Fresno Bee*, “The visions in my mind overwhelm me.”

By the time he was featured in another *Fresno Bee* spread in 1930, Forestiere had been digging for twenty-four years. He had dug up more than ten acres underground with sixty-two rooms on varying levels and connected by multiple passageways. The rooms included living rooms, atriums, a kitchen, a small chapel, skylights, a fishing pond, and more.

Forestiere always loved his native Sicily, and he gradually started to grow its native fruit trees in his underground courtyards. He even created his own three-fruit hybrid by fusing lemon, orange, and grapefruit branches onto the

same tree. As the tree grew from an underground room and rose through the skylight, its three varieties of ripe fruits could be picked waist-high by a person standing on the ground. Alongside the trees, flowing grapevines wove a cultured beauty throughout the garden.

Forestiere's dream of turning his creation into an underground resort never came to fruition, but he continued to dig right up until his passing in 1946. The treasured relic

he left to humanity, the Underground Gardens, is now on the National Register of Historic Places, and has been called one of the world's “ten coolest underground wonders” by the CNN Travel website.

Into the Future

Over the past century, Fresno's agricultural industry has developed rapidly in nearly every way. What hasn't changed, however, is that when harvest time comes, the bulk of the work is done by immigrant farmworkers who have come from afar to take on the seasonal work of growing the food that feeds the whole country.

In 2001, another group of immigrants—Tzu Chi volunteers primarily from Taiwan—started holding regular medical outreach events in and around Fresno to care for these seasonal laborers and all people in need. Gradually, a variety of community groups and volunteers from many different ethnicities and backgrounds have joined, and the Tzu Chi volunteers of Fresno continue the city's tradition of transcending the boundaries of race, religion, and nationality. 🌿

Whether the road is smooth or rough,
always be grateful to the people who
paved the way for us.

Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen





Different Cultures, Same Compassion

Transcending all boundaries, Tzu Chi volunteers come together to deliver compassion

Colin Legerton

As in so many locations across fifty countries worldwide, Tzu Chi sprouted in Fresno, California, from the seeds of Taiwanese immigrants. First, Ling Cho got the organization rooted locally in Fresno in the early nineties by inviting Tzu Chi volunteers from Southern and Northern California to share their experiences with members of the local Chinese community.

In 2000, she passed the baton to Grace Yang, a restaurateur who moved to Fresno from Taiwan in 1973 and has never left. Tzu Chi started with the Taiwan connection, but it has now matured into a miniature United Nations, the kind of melting pot that the United States can and should be.

As I shared dinner with the local team one June evening in 2015, I was surrounded by natives of Malaysia, Vietnam, Persia, Canada, Taiwan, Mexico, the Philippines, India, the United States, China, Hong Kong, and Indonesia. In a group of just twenty, there was a cross-section of the entire world.

Local activities have become just as diverse as the people who carry them out. Before we shared dinner that Monday night, there was a study group held in Spanish on Saturday, another in Chinese on Sunday, and one coming up in English just two days later. Another had

been held in English the previous Sunday—this one in the state prison. Earlier that same day, doctors and volunteers were providing vision tests and free eyeglasses to elementary school students across town. Other volunteers were writing letters to prison inmates, while still more gathered at the home of a family with three blind, deaf, and mute adult siblings, learning about their unique challenges and working with community partners to find them the care and support they need.

As in many areas, the Tzu Chi team in Fresno is still small. They face limits on manpower, time, and funds. But the need is great, so they persevere. There is room to grow and improve, no doubt, but their example also provides lessons to be learned. A great difference is being made in the Central Valley community, because Tzu Chi volunteers reach out to the community, open their arms to people of diverse backgrounds, and connect with community partners to enrich and enhance all that can be accomplished together. 🌿

For more on the prison outreach program, please see Issue 46 (Winter 2015). For more on Tzu Chi in Fresno, please see Issue 35 (Spring 2013).

There is a kind heart in each of us.
If inspired, the love in us will be kindled.



Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen



Healthy Fresno: A Community Tradition

Tzu Chi and the community come together to care for hundreds of Fresnans.

Colin Legerton

At 5:30 on an April morning, the sun will not rise for another hour, but dozens of volunteers already have. They have risen, dressed, and made their way to Gaston Middle School, a brand new campus in a poor Fresno neighborhood, where they stand in line waiting to check-in and receive their assignments for the day.

The afternoon before, students were shooting hoops in what was then an empty gym. But it has now been transformed into a full-service clinic, filled with thirty dental chairs, private acupuncture and chiropractor rooms, an optometry station, and more. Some of the same people lined up now are responsible for the transformation, though many others pitched in as well.

One by one, the volunteers sign in and get to their stations to begin preparing for the day. Most are veterans of Tzu Chi clinics, but few wear Tzu Chi uniforms. They have connected through their schools, through Kaiser Permanente, or through positive affinities forged in previous encounters. The ones who do wear the familiar blue-sky-and-white-cloud outfits mill about to provide support and guidance.

This Third Annual Healthy Fresno Clinic has been envisioned and organized by Tzu Chi Mobile Clinic Director Steven Voon and his local medical team. But as the diversity of backgrounds and organizations represented in the early morning arrivals makes readily

apparent, this annual two-day event is already fulfilling Steven's long-term vision—Healthy Fresno is not just a Tzu Chi event; it is a local tradition.

**Healthy Fresno is not just
a Tzu Chi event; it is a
local tradition.**

It is also a major milestone on Tzu Chi's Central Valley path—a path that traces back to the early 1990s, when volunteer Ling Cho began holding tea parties to introduce Tzu Chi to the Fresno community. After Grace Yang joined in 2000,

she brought the group into the medical field. Moved by the incredible impact she witnessed during a medical outreach in Bakersfield, she suggested to the Tzu Chi medical team in Southern California that the Central Valley, a region largely populated by low-income, uninsured migrant farm workers, could also benefit greatly from similar service.

As a recent recruit to Tzu Chi, Grace had assumed that she could simply put in a request and the Southern California medical team would make the arrangements. But in keeping with Tzu Chi's principle of mobilizing local resources to serve locally, Grace was instead encouraged to arrange the event herself, with support from teams in both Southern and Northern California. Though overwhelmed and lacking in manpower, Grace and the local team thought of all the people who needed this event to happen; they persevered, found the right partners, and held their first medical outreach event on August 19, 2001.



Patients waited outside in the frigid morning air for treatment at the first Healthy Fresno in 2013. Photo: Nancy Ku

Soon after, Steven Voon joined the team in 2002, and he began to develop partnerships with many other community and medical organizations, helping to expand Tzu Chi’s medical reach throughout the entire Central Valley. During the first decade, volunteers held 278 medical outreach events of varying sizes. They received their first mobile medical van to facilitate these outreaches in 2008; now they have three. In 2012, the first permanent office was opened for weekly clinic services, while planning and fundraising are currently underway for a full-service clinic facility.

After more than a decade providing small-scale medical clinics throughout the region and holding occasional larger events in tandem with organizations like Kaiser Permanente, Tzu Chi took a major step forward in April 2013 by hosting the first annual Healthy Fresno free clinic—the first major multi-day clinic fully organized by Tzu Chi. Volunteers charged out of the gate, serving more than seven hundred patients—many of them already familiar with Tzu Chi’s regular weekly clinic—with over twenty-five hundred services in just two days.

Two years later, Joe, a local Fresnan, is amazed at how well the clinic is run. His fiancée,

a recently graduated dental assistant, served at the second annual event one year earlier. Today, he is accompanying an uninsured friend as he undergoes extensive dental treatment—so extensive, in fact, that he will need to return again on Sunday to have it completed. Having expected that “you get what you pay for” when it comes to a free event, Joe is impressed by how well-organized Healthy Fresno is. Distributing numbers to patients upon check-in eliminates the need to wait in outdoor lines and prevents cutting. Well-placed indoor waiting areas and well-conceived flow patterns reduce traffic and frustration. Patients remain calm and collected, passageways orderly and uncluttered.

After patients gather their numbers on the way into the school campus, they are free to wander outside with their friends and family, making their way from booth to booth to access community services as they wait. All around the courtyard, valuable resources are right at their fingertips: Covered California signups, car seat installation instruction from the California Highway Patrol, CPR demos with dummies. Edison High School students read stories in English and Spanish to the assembled young ones, while their parents sign them up for pre-kindergarten, connect with legal services, or find



community resources for transgender, disabled, and other disadvantaged communities. One community representative is especially bursting with excitement: typically it is difficult enough for these community organizations to find and connect with one another, let alone the many people who need their services.

Out on the lawn, a food truck rolls up. But there are no hot dogs, tacos, or pizzas inside. For a truly healthy Fresno, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, and knowledge is power. At this food truck, visitors are served whole-wheat baked tortilla chips, delicious mango salsa, and a health-conscious cookbook. They're introduced to MyPlate, the successor of the food pyramid, whose wise division and moderation can help stave off obesity, which runs rampant throughout the Central Valley, as well as health problems such as diabetes and asthma.

The wide range of organizations serving outside is mirrored on the inside, as Tzu Chi and its partners serve Joe's friend and hundreds of other patients with personal and compassionate care. Alongside Tzu Chi's vision mobile van sits another mobile clinic in which the Fresno Unified School District's pediatric nurse practitioner provides immunizations and physicals to young students. Several of the medical professionals serving inside the gym are Flying Doctors who have flown their planes in for the event. Others have come from Kaiser Permanente, another long-term partner. With the close relationship developed between Tzu Chi and Kaiser over many years, it took just one email to Kaiser to secure more than enough volunteers for the event.

Professors Harnak "Hank" Gill and Clara Escamilla embody the clinic's essence as a tradition for all of Fresno, not just Tzu Chi. Wherever you

walk throughout the clinic, you run into one of their students from California State University, Fresno. On this particular day, thirty or forty of their students have come to help, not to mention the other students who have also joined to serve their community. They have learned about the clinic through several different classes, and they serve in various ways, including interpreting, registration, and triage.

Maria, one of Clara's students, brought her husband and two daughters to volunteer with her. Another student, Zoua, had joined an earlier outreach with her nursing school class. Seeing so many underserved patients opened her eyes, and she just kept coming. Edward volunteered as an assignment for his interpreting class—in 2012. Moved by the experience, he just kept coming back, including volunteering for all three days of Healthy Fresno 2015, from set-up through take-down.

Obed followed a similar path, but in reverse. Finding Tzu Chi first as a patient in 2013, during a period in which he lacked both employment and insurance, he was so moved by the care he received that he later looked up the organization and started volunteering as an interpreter at the monthly clinics near his home. When a patient asked whether he was

in a medical interpreting program, it opened his eyes to a possibility he had never considered, and it drew him into Clara's class. Serving throughout the weekend, he was also able to bring his parents to receive dental and vision care.

What is perhaps most striking about this diverse group of volunteers—so many organizations, so many backgrounds, so many ethnicities, so many different paths to Tzu Chi—is what ties so many of them



Volunteer Angelica Robles-Trinh helps spread the word to the English- and Spanish-speaking communities. Photo: Greg Tylawsky

together: this is not their first experience at a Tzu Chi clinic. Whatever brought them the first time—the promise of much-needed care, extra credit for an interpreting or nursing class, or participation with a partnering organization—most have returned, time and time again. This is a community. Tzu Chi is the starting point, but this community extends beyond Tzu Chi, throughout Fresno. It is a community bound together by compassion. And it is growing.

Yet, even surrounded by the bustle of this growing event, volunteer Mike Trinh's mind is somewhere else. Healthy Fresno may be the biggest of Tzu Chi's medical outreach events, but for Mike it remains secondary. For over a decade he has seen it all, and the smaller events still move him most deeply. Back in the early days, before a gymnasium full of dental beds and medical equipment necessitated renting two moving vans to transport, he used to load

their only two dental beds into his Nissan pickup and drive out to where people needed the care most. Even today, those remote outreaches are where he sees the biggest difference being made.

In Mike's eyes, a big clinic is just crowd control. In the smaller outreaches, he sees the patients' faces and feels the compassion they are given. In Raisin City, a small town of four hundred just thirteen miles from Fresno, he sees the terrible living conditions—tarp roofs in 110-degree heat, up to ten people living in a two-bedroom house with only an external outhouse—and he knows that many of these people have no other way to access care, because they lack cars or local facilities.





Patients at Healthy Fresno are always treated to compassionate, personal care with a smile.
Photo: Colin Legerton



Waiting patients can also learn more about Tzu Chi in both English and Spanish.
Photo: Colin Legerton

One woman especially sticks in Mike's mind. He recalls her pouring her heart out as the dentist prepared for the procedure. Through a volunteer's translation, he and the dentist learned that she had just lost her husband and children and was still reeling with the pain. The pain had clearly been bottled up inside, and it came flooding out there in that dental chair. After three of her teeth were pulled, the dentist lamented that he had to "add to her pain." But Mike knew this wasn't true. In fact, they had subtracted from her pain. With the dentist's help, her physical pain would fade. More importantly, their compassionate ears gave her a chance to release some of the pain she had bottled up inside.


It is this type of experience that keeps Mike coming back time and again. He relishes seeing people who could not otherwise access or afford medical care receive the help they need, and he loves seeing personal interactions break down barriers and relieve emotional pain. These encounters are what drives him to encourage his employees to volunteer and what drives them to keep doing so.

The Fresno team is now fundraising for a permanent clinic. When operational, it will reach countless more people in need, just like Healthy Fresno. And volunteers will continue to journey out to provide care where it is needed, where where the power of compassion in action is expressed. 🌱

For the full 2016 medical outreach schedule, including Healthy Fresno, please visit fresnomedicalteam.org



This article is dedicated to Dr. Walter Fung, who passed away in his sleep on November 5, 2015, after dedicating more than a decade of his retirement to serving others with Tzu Chi. He will be dearly missed. For his story, please see "Dr. Fung's Unfettered Love" in Issue #35 (Spring 2013).

Get inspired, be mindful, and bring out love in everyone. Share resources, make efforts, and gather strength from everyone. 

Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen

Ana's Love Carries On

Though her life was cut tragically short, Ana's compassionate spirit continues to serve her community.

Colin Legerton

The sun has already begun to set, but the June heat remains sweltering.

The group of twenty—primarily women, a few with children in tow—gathers outside of the community's common room, at tables set in the shade of the community laundry room, for their monthly Tzu Chi study group. As one older lady shares her thoughts on compassion, her words are quickly translated into English—not from Chinese, but from Spanish.

The benefits of the shade are largely nullified by the dryer exhaust pumped through the wall, but inside is even worse, as the common room has been absorbing sunlight all day. In this punishing heat, gathering outdoors at least leaves open the possibility of a breeze, in theory anyway. But the summer heat is always fact here in Fowler, a small agricultural community just outside of Fresno, California.

Home of Juan Felipe Herrera—the nation's current poet laureate and the first

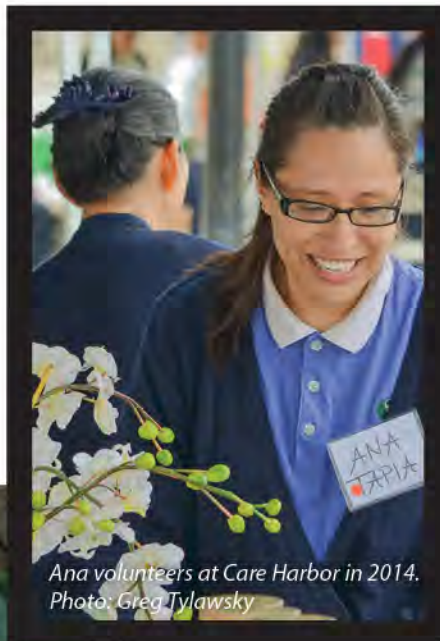
A star pupil from an early age, succeeding for herself was never enough.

Chicano to hold that honor—Fowler was also home to Ana Tapia, a remarkable young woman who served her family and society in life and in death has brought her Tzu Chi family together with her actual family, providing a new seed of hope for this trailer park community and an outlet for residents' compassion.

Ana was born in Mexico in 1992 to Artemio, a farmworker, and Irma, a factory worker. A star pupil from an early age, succeeding for herself was never enough. Growing up in a trailer park, she saw the struggles faced by her own family and neighbors every day, and she strove to serve them all: her family, her local community, and all of society.

Ana was first introduced to Tzu Chi by a friend. Because they were studying public health, her friend recommended volunteering at Tzu Chi's free clinic, where Ana quickly found a home. Not content with occasional volunteering, Ana participated regularly in English group study sessions and even joined the small group of non-Chinese-speaking volunteers who embarked on the

year-long volunteer certification training program.



Ana volunteers at Care Harbor in 2014.
Photo: Greg Tylawsky



Ana is remembered outside her family's trailer home. Photo: Colin Legerton



In addition to her volunteer work with Tzu Chi, Ana worked to support her family, volunteered at school to help students complete college applications, and was studying for a Master's degree in public health to better serve the community.

Though she filled her days with great responsibilities, friends and family described her as always smiling and never angry. She was the kind of person who understood the meaning of the Jing Si Aphorism "The most joyful and fulfilling life is a life of giving" long before she ever heard it. Her presence was such a powerful example that her sister Martina says, "Even though I am her older sister, she was my role model."

Beloved by her fellow volunteers and classmates for her positivity and thoughtfulness, Ana had begun to connect her family with her Tzu Chi family, inviting her mother and younger brother to help out at a Moon Festival event she emceed in September 2014.

Then, on November 7, 2014, a wheel flew off a truck on the freeway; it crossed the center divider and struck Ana's windshield, cutting her life tragically short at the age of just twenty-two.

It was only after this tragic accident that Ana's fellow Tzu Chi volunteers learned that she lived in a trailer park community half an hour down the road—a community where available work is inconsistent, incomes are low, and every day can be a challenge. As they comforted Ana's family, the volunteers considered how difficult it would be for them without Ana, both emotionally and financially. The volunteers thought about how Ana had worked not only for her family but for all people, and they determined to give back in her name and with her spirit.

With support from the Fresno volunteer community, which knew Ana well, and Northern California volunteers, who knew her through the volunteer certification training program, Tzu

Chi traveled to the trailer park in Fowler in early 2015 and provided free flu shots to the entire community. Because many participants expressed interest in the Tzu Chi story and ideals, Tzu Chi Fresno director Grace Yang considered inviting them to the biweekly English study group. However, she knew that many residents would be unable to make the lengthy commute Ana had made. And, unlike Ana, many did not understand English. Instead, Grace decided to bring the study group to them—in their community and in their language. On March 28, just four months after the accident, Tzu Chi held its first gathering in Fowler. Attended by twenty-nine people, including residents of the trailer park and some relatives from other areas, the discussion was led by Grace Yang with translation by Ana's sister, Martina, who picked up Ana's mantle of service.

In a new setting, surrounded by strangers, and joining a previously unknown group, participants at first were quiet and shy. But after just a few meetings, they grew more comfortable, their discussions grew livelier, and they became more engaged. From the springboard of Dharma Master Cheng Yen's Jing Si Aphorisms in the Spanish translation, they talked about topics such as what gratitude means in their daily lives and how to show understanding and forgiveness in the home.

By the fourth gathering, on that hot June night, Ana's father Artemio was the only man in the group, surrounded by two dozen women spread across several generations. Husbands stayed home to watch the children so their wives could participate in the evening study group. To express their gratitude, the women would return home and share with their husbands the major topics of discussion as well as leftovers from the delicious meal that Grace Yang had brought for them from her restaurant.

Today, at least three scholarships in Fresno have been named for Ana, and the connection she



Ana's sister Martina and volunteer Albert Avedissian share during the first Spanish study group in March 2015. Photo provided by Tzu Chi Fresno Service Center

forged between Tzu Chi and her local community is bearing fruit. Told of the origins of Tzu Chi—how thirty rural housewives with little to their names started putting a few coins a day into bamboo piggy banks—the twenty-odd women of the Fowler Spanish study group have begun to follow this example set half a century earlier. Understanding, as the original housewives did, how difficult—but also how valuable—it is to give to others even when one has little, members of the group have begun to set money aside every day. Their donations primarily support the medical outreach program, the power of which they first saw during the free flu shot distribution.

Several of the women have now passed the bamboo bank spirit to their children. One shared that her children dutifully place a portion of their allowance into the bank every Sunday and eagerly await the day they can personally deliver the filled bank to Tzu Chi.



A member of the Spanish study group returns a filled bamboo bank in June 2015. Photo: Colin Legerton



Led by Tzu Chi volunteers, the entire study group sings and signs the song "Una Familia" (One Family). Photo: Colin Legerton

As this Spanish-speaking Tzu Chi community grows in size and compassion, and its Dharma roots extend ever deeper and wider, Ana's loving spirit will continue to live on. 🌿

The most precious heirloom is a legacy of love and kindness.



Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen



It Takes a Village

The most good can be done when everyone pulls together.

Colin Legerton

On the afternoon of April 18, 2015, Healthy Fresno volunteers in the Gaston Middle School gymnasium were met by an unforgettable sight. A woman walked into the gymnasium leading a human train behind her—her sister's hand rested on her shoulder, and on her sister's shoulder, yet another hand. Three middle-aged siblings came to seek desperately needed medical care, the only one with sight leading her blind brother and sister.

Spanish-speaking Tzu Chi volunteer Linda Hernandez hurried over to help and learn their story. They were part of a large family—once eleven children—originally from Mexico. Three of the children had died young; three had lost their sight, speech, and hearing in childhood; the remaining five, all sisters, had moved to the Fresno area decades earlier.

The five sisters in Fresno all worked to support their three deaf, mute, and blind siblings, who lived in a dirt-floor adobe in rural Mexico. After their father died twelve years ago, their elderly mother had cared for all three by herself, supported by the funds sent monthly by her five daughters. But then the mother suffered a stroke at the age of eighty-four and could no longer care for them. After months of hard work, the five sisters were able to secure visitor visas for their mother and siblings, and the whole family reunited in Fresno.

But their reunion introduced new challenges. Because the five sisters and their husbands all worked to support themselves and their

handicapped siblings, no one could stay home to care for the newly arrived family members during the day. Therefore, the four needed to stay together to help one another. But none of the sisters' homes was large enough to take in four

new members, so they began an inconvenient cycle of rotating their mother and three siblings from house to house every other week, sleeping on couches or whatever could be found.

Compounding these logistical headaches were serious health problems. Beyond the obvious problems arising from

their handicaps, family members also struggled with diabetes, high blood pressure, and various other health issues. With so much time and energy spent working and caring for a suddenly enlarged family, how could they find time and money to see the doctor, especially during the workweek?

The family came to Tzu Chi's free clinic on that Saturday afternoon in April specifically to tend to their recently arrived siblings' dental health, yet they would soon gain much more. Moved by their predicament, Tzu Chi volunteers quickly began discussing how to help this family more significantly. Since that first encounter in April, the medical team has provided follow-up services and referrals for several of the siblings, while the charity team has started providing monthly donations to help the family cope with their new challenges.

Volunteers also introduced the case to Enrique Reade, a local funeral director who is active in the community, and who also happens

With so much time and energy spent working and caring for a suddenly enlarged family, how could they find time and money to see the doctor, especially during the workweek?

to be the person who secured the location for Tzu Chi's very first local medical outreach back in 2001. Moved by the family's plight, he quickly secured additional beds and blankets for the four family members and reached out to others in the community to provide further support.

This family's situation actually came to Tzu Chi's attention at the perfect time to inspire a brand-new cycle of love. The sisters and brothers happened to walk into the free Healthy Fresno clinic just three weeks after Grace Yang had held the first Spanish-language book study group session at Ana Tapia's trailer park community in Fowler, California. Two of the five sisters also live in Fowler, just blocks from the trailer park, and one even works with Ana's mother, Irma, at a local factory. After Ana was killed in an accident, this sister had been the factory employee tasked with gathering donations and sympathy cards from work and delivering them to Irma. As they were reconnected through Tzu Chi, it was clear that we each have times when we need help and times when we can provide it.

As the new Spanish study group began to fill bamboo banks with coins and love, this family provided the perfect opportunity for their first charity case. Study group participants met the family and learned the challenges they were going through. As they put coins into their bamboo banks each day, they knew precisely the difference that was being made in others' lives—people just blocks away from them, people managing challenges they could scarcely imagine.

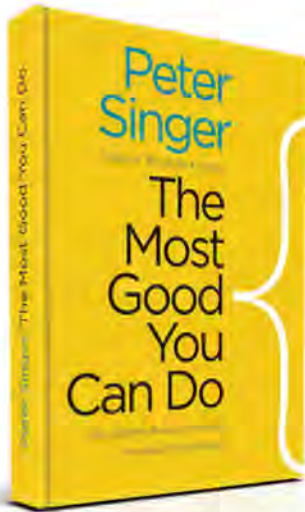
This family's needs are still great—more than any individual or entity can handle alone—long-term support from the combined forces of Tzu Chi's medical team, charity team, and Spanish book study group, as well as invaluable community partners like Enrique Reade, will help this family deal with the challenges they face and remind them that they do not face these challenges alone. 🌿

Unite for good causes, work together harmoniously, love and support each other, and cooperate to move forward.

Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen



Photo: Colin Legerton



Talking With... **Peter Singer on Effective Altruism**

*Princeton University professor Peter Singer, a renowned philosopher and ethicist, has been promoting animal rights and ethics ever since the publication of his first book, *Animal Liberation*, in 1975. In November 2015, he sat down with Tzu Chi volunteer and Princeton graduate student Tsung-Lin Hsieh to discuss his new book, *The Most Good You Can Do*.*

Tsung-Lin Hsieh: Thank you so much for taking the time and giving us this opportunity to talk. To start off, can you describe what “effective altruism” is for people who haven’t read your new book?

Peter Singer: Effective altruism is an approach to life that involves a significant commitment to concern for others, trying to make the world a better place, either for other people or other sentient beings or animals possibly, and it involves doing that using evidence and reasoning to try to make the biggest possible positive difference that you can with whatever resources you are using, whether it’s time or energy or money.

So, in contrast to more traditional charity, donating to charities or philanthropy or volunteer work, it’s not just a matter of saying,

It’s a matter of saying, “Where can I do the most good?”

“Well, this is appealing to me” or “This is what I’m interested in,” but it’s a matter of saying, “Where can I do the most good?” And, of course, to find out where you can do the most good, you need to consider the range of options available to you and think which is the one where you will achieve most.

TH: Can you tell us how you learned about Tzu Chi?

PS: I was in Taiwan, I think it was two years ago. I was there at the invitation of the Life Conservation Association, an animal welfare group that is run by Buddhist nuns in Taiwan, and they had a conference at which they invited me to speak. I had had contact with them before; I’d been to Taiwan once before to speak at a conference some

years ago, and they have translated some of my books about animals into complex Chinese characters. This time there was this conference for two or three days and then they said they would invite me and some of the other foreign guests at the conference to travel with them to other parts of Taiwan, and that included a visit to the city in which Tzu Chi was founded.

We looked there at the hospital and medical school that Tzu Chi set up, and we also went to the monastery where Shih Cheng Yen was, and we met her and we talked to her and other people involved with Tzu Chi about the work that they're doing. I was impressed in two ways. One is it's so remarkable that so much could be achieved from one person saying, "This is a bad situation where people can get no health care in this district and we should do something about that," starting out with no resources really at all. So that's an amazing story.

It's also, I think, very impressive the extent to which it's developed a huge membership: obviously an extraordinarily large proportion of Taiwanese are involved, but also an international membership as well. I was interested in that, because in writing this book, I was interested in examples of people who have found ways to do a lot of good. And this seemed to be one of them.

TH: I see. Since you've met Dharma Master Cheng Yen, can you say a little more about your experience with her?

PS: Well, I wish I could say more. There was a group of us who were there to visit her. She spoke to us and there was some discussion and questions and then she joined us for lunch. I found her very modest in the way she described what she had done and what others had done. I thought that she was clearly an impressive person who was, you could say, able to be very straightforward and relaxed with us, but it was not a long discussion that we had. I would have been interested in the opportunity to have a more detailed discussion about some of the questions and decisions that she made and to learn more from her about Tzu Chi.

Insofar as the medical school was concerned, I thought it clearly had an innovative attitude toward teaching and to the use of human bodies for dissection. I thought that was very interesting, the attitude of great respect for the person whose body it was, and getting to know the family. That's completely the reverse of the usual Western idea, which is that these are just anonymous bodies and you don't know anything about who they are. And that seemed to be, I thought, a superior approach to that taken in the West. I liked that.

We saw the hospital, and that itself was very impressive in terms of the way it treated people, irrespective, it seemed, of their ability to



pay for services, which was, I thought, excellent. It looked like a very high standard of care.

One of the things that we discussed and that initially surprised me—and that I have to say I'm still not quite sure about—was the fact that Tzu Chi also provided assistance not only in very poor countries but in wealthy countries, including the United States after Hurricane Sandy. That doesn't fit very well with the idea of effective altruism, because you would say, "Well, why are you giving money to people irrespective of the money they have?" In general, if you want to give five hundred dollars to somebody, you'd do more good by giving it to somebody whose annual income is perhaps five hundred dollars—and of course there are many such people in the world—rather than somebody whose annual income might be fifty thousand dollars. To him, another five hundred dollars doesn't make very much difference. And the explanation was that it was an attempt to demonstrate compassion for all and that nobody is excluded from that. I can see that that may have some kind of transformative effect if people understand that and appreciate it. I don't have a clear sense of whether that is having that effect or not, but it seemed



*Photo: Denise Applewhite,
Princeton University*

to me to be a possibly defensible explanation, let me say, for why that was happening.

TH: Since Tzu Chi is a Buddhist-based organization, we also promote vegetarianism. Can you also talk about that from your perspective?

PS: I was very pleased about that aspect of it—not only that we had a

vegetarian meal when we visited the monastery, which I would have expected, but that the meals in the hospital are also vegetarian. I think that's a significant contribution to the idea of having people respect animals and avoid causing harm to them unnecessarily. I think that, to me, that's a very important aspect of Buddhist thought in general, and it's one respect in which I think Buddhist thinking is clearly superior to traditional thinking in the West. But I had found previously in my encounters with Buddhists that actually very few Buddhists are vegetarians, disappointingly to me. I've been in Japan and very few Buddhists there—even among the monks in the temples, there are some stricter groups of Zen Buddhists who are vegetarian, well at least where the monks are vegetarian, but even they did not

really urge their lay fellows to be vegetarian. In Thailand as well, of course, although it's officially a Buddhist nation, you don't find many vegetarians. So I had been disappointed with the failure to actually live in accordance with what I would understand is a pretty central teaching of Buddhism, about compassion for all sentient beings. And therefore I was pleased with Tzu Chi, at least in its own institutions like the hospital, that they did practice that.

TH: I have heard about the benefit of being a vegetarian from different groups for different reasons, including for your own health, for the environment, for religious reasons, and to reduce animal suffering. Do you think those different organizations and reasons for promoting vegetarianism or veganism complement each other, or are they competing?

PS: They do complement each other. I mean, to me, the fundamental reason was the unnecessary suffering that we inflict on animals in order to produce them, particularly in huge factory farms that we now use to produce billions of animals every year. At the time I became a vegetarian, which was in 1971, that was really the reason that moved me. I then learnt that there's a lot of food wasted by feeding it to animals, that we grow so much

grain and soybeans and feed it to animals and only get back a small percentage of the food value that we feed to animals. So that's an environmental reason and also a reason relating to the world producing enough food so that everyone can eat sufficiently. I think that would be easier if we didn't waste so much grain and soybeans and feed it to animals, because it has an effect on the world market price.

But of course it was only in the 1980s or even later that we learned about the problem of climate change, and it was only later that we realized that livestock production is a major contributor to climate change, that the methane and other greenhouse gases emitted by the livestock industry contributes to it. So that was not a reason for me, until I'd already been a vegetarian for twenty years or something like that, but I do think it strengthens the arguments now.

As far as health is concerned, for me that's never really been an issue. I did some research in order to establish that one could be healthy as a vegetarian. Obviously, if the result of becoming a vegetarian was that you were sick a lot or you had a shorter life expectancy or your children didn't grow up healthy, that would be a reason for not being a vegetarian. But given that you could be healthy, I was never really

I think it seems clear that people in the West eat too much meat, and that's not healthy.



particularly concerned to make arguments that you were going to actually be healthier if you were a vegetarian than if you eat some meat.

I think it seems clear that people in the West eat too much meat, and that's not healthy. But I don't think it would harm me if I ate small amounts of meat. I don't think that would make me less healthy. But I also don't think it would make me any more healthy. So, for these other reasons I don't do it. But I noticed just the other week the World Health Organization said that eating processed meat is a cancer risk, and probably eating red meat is a cancer risk. So if these facts move more people to become vegetarians, then that may be a good thing, in other ways as well.

TH: What do you think about using religion to encourage people to become vegetarian or to help?

PS: Well, it depends on what you mean by "using religion," I think. If what you're doing is you're saying, here is a tradition which has some ideas at its foundation that are worth thinking about, and you may wish to incorporate that in your life and to practice some rituals, perhaps, as a way of life that embodies those ideas, I have no problem with that. If the religion has no other negative ideas that I would regard as undesirable, then I would see that as a good thing.

But if the religion perhaps also teaches some other things that I disagree with—maybe it teaches that it's wrong for people to have sexual relations with someone of the same sex or something like that—or even worse, of course, if it teaches people they should have hostile attitudes to people of other religions, then that would be a very bad thing.

In general, I think the idea that one should believe things purely on faith without evidence seems to me to be a tendency that I regret. Just as effective altruism encourages people to use evidence to decide what is the best thing to do, so I think, in general for our beliefs, it's good to encourage an attitude of not just believing things because somebody else has said so or because it's written in some scripture which is presumed to be sacred and infallible, but because one has looked at the evidence and decided that the beliefs are justified.

TH: Since there are a lot of young volunteers in Tzu Chi, can you give us some suggestions for if we want to do good?

PS: Absolutely. These are precisely the questions that effective altruism is concerned about. I discuss some of them in this book and there's a lot of discussion online. To me, the most obvious way is to help people in extreme poverty—the people who really are struggling to earn enough to feed their family adequately, who don't have safe drinking water, who

maybe can't send their children to school or to more than a few years of elementary school, who have no access to health care. These are the people who most need help, and these are the people where help can make the biggest difference.

The world is now in an unusual state, where there are quite a lot of people who are really, by historical standards, very wealthy. They don't have to worry about enough food; they don't have to worry about shelter from the rain or storms or anything like that; they can travel—all things that until a couple hundred years ago the vast majority of the world's population could not really do.

But at the same time, we still have quite a lot of people—it's falling, and I think it's now, in the most recent figures from the World Bank, it's gone below a billion—but there's still maybe seven to eight hundred million people who are in very extreme poverty. And because there are many of us who are so wealthy, this makes the world very unequal, but at the same time provides a great opportunity for us to help them at relatively modest cost to ourselves. We don't have to give away everything we have to help. We don't have to abandon our position and go and work in the developing countries. But we can make a big difference to their lives

by finding effective charities that are helping them and contributing to them, either with money or with time, and often students of course have more time than money, so they can volunteer to help and promote these ideas. But then hopefully after they graduate and start to earn money, they can donate as well.

There's very strong psychological data showing that one of the things that makes people more likely to help is that they see other people helping.

TH: Thanks. My next question would be about publicizing the good things you do. Some people think that if you're a Buddhist,

you should not show off. Or if you help people, you should not show off to people what good things you have done. What's your perspective on that?

PS: While one can admire the modesty of not showing off as a personal characteristic, the problem is that if other people don't know about it—what you're doing or what different people are doing—they are less likely to do the same. There's very strong psychological data showing that one of the things that makes people more likely to help is that they see other people helping. We are still a kind of animal that follows others in the herd. So I think it's really important to let people know—sure, in a relatively modest way, without puffing oneself up and so on—but it's important to let people



know that there are these people who are helping and that you're one of them and that you're just a normal sort of person and that they could do the same.

I don't exactly know how it's happened, but as I said, I think it's wonderful that Tzu Chi has such a high proportion of Taiwanese involved in this, and I wish that there were an organization that existed in the United States and Europe and so many other countries that would have that kind of proportion of people who are making some commitment to helping others.

TH: The reason why Tzu Chi people are encouraged to volunteer, to donate, is because Dharma Master Cheng Yen wants us to cultivate our compassion and practice Buddhism through volunteering. I guess that's somewhat different from the purpose of effective altruism.

PS: You could say the purpose of effective altruism is simply to do good and certainly it's not to practice any religion. But you said yourself that you're not a Buddhist, so you're not volunteering in order to practice Buddhism, is that right?

TH: Right.

PS: So are there many others like you who are not Buddhists who are nevertheless part of Tzu Chi?

TH: Oh yeah, there are.

PS: I'm absolutely no expert on Buddhism at all, much less on Buddhism in Taiwan—but I have spoken to Buddhists of various kinds, and to some extent it seems that the characterization of Buddhism as a religion—as if it were similar to Christianity or Judaism or Islam—is misleading, in that it's not really a theism, it's not really a belief in a god—not a god external to us anyway. So that changes the sense a bit. But also somebody said to me who was involved in Tibetan Buddhism that by comparison Taiwanese Buddhism is somewhat more secularized. For example, when I spoke to this person about Tibetan Buddhism, the idea of reincarnation was very important, that life has existed eternally and will exist eternally and we will have infinite numbers of lives that we will keep coming back in and so on. My impression, from the people I talked to with the Life Conservation Movement, is that that wasn't as central in Taiwanese Buddhism.

TH: Well, I guess it's not a central idea, but people do say that if you do good, you are accumulating positive karma, and if it doesn't come back to you within this life, it might

come back in your next life. So that's probably another motivation.

PS: Well, I suppose that is somewhat like that, and that's something which obviously you have to believe that you will have a next life in order for that to make sense to you. I guess I would prefer the idea that, as I say in this book, that there's evidence that it will come back to you in this life. Not in a mysterious way, but just in the fact that there is good research showing that people who are generous and care for others actually find their own lives more fulfilling.

TH: Yeah, that's a good point. Even within Tzu Chi, the spiritual and emotional rewards are what keep people going. I'd like to come back to the question of promoting Tzu Chi to non-Asian people. Before we end, can you say a little bit more about that?

PS: I would think it would be a very interesting idea to promote Tzu Chi to non-Asian people, because it seems to be an organization that's been very successful in promoting compassion and helping others, and also in building a community. And I think a lot of people need a community to do that. That is, it's much harder to be an altruist on your own. If you have a support group, people you mix with and do

things with, that strengthens it. So that's why I wonder whether there could be a version of it which would appeal to some of the same ideas that effective altruism appeals to, but perhaps with a stronger sense of this community, a stronger sense of some common beliefs about why you're doing this, but not the thing that you just mentioned, I think, not the idea that by doing good you will somehow accumulate merit that will mean that you are reincarnated into a better life. Because I'd say there would be very few people in Western nations who would accept that. I'm thinking of something that would appeal to people who mainly have an interest in sort of spiritual wellbeing in a broad sense. That's very common in America, and a lot of Americans will say, "I don't believe in any particular religious denomination or religious institution, but I do think that there's something spiritual about us." Something like that. So I think some somewhat slightly more Westernized, or let's say, less-specifically-Asian-focused version of Tzu Chi might perhaps appeal to Westerners on that kind of basis, and I think if that was so, then it could do a lot of good in promoting altruism and promoting compassion for all humans and for animals as well. 🌿

VITA Free Tax Preparation

Families earning less than \$53,000 last year can have their income tax returns prepared for free through Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation's VITA program. The VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) program offers free tax assistance to low- to moderate-income individuals and families who cannot prepare their own tax returns. Certified volunteers sponsored by Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation receive training to help prepare basic tax returns.

VITA services are offered in the following cities from late-January through mid-April. All locations offer free electronic filing.

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Chandler, Arizona | San Jose, California |
| El Monte, California | Rockville, Maryland |
| Oakland, California | Flushing, New York |
| San Francisco, California | Reston, Virginia |

For more information or to make an appointment, please call 877-8TZUCHI (1-877-889-8244) or email VITA@tzuchi.us.



Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation
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909.447.7799 | www.tzuchi.us



Love & Care for Syrian Refugees

*In Jordan, Turkey, and Germany,
Tzu Chi volunteers reach out with
love to those fleeing violence.*

Compiled by Tzu Chi USA Journal Editorial Team

In September 2015, a photograph cut straight to the hearts of countless individuals throughout the world. A small boy, only three years old, lay face down on a Turkish beach—not a peaceful repose, but a tragic image of a young life washed ashore like debris. He had fled Syria’s devastating civil war along with his parents and five-year-old brother, but only his father made it to Europe alive.

Since the Syrian civil war started back in 2011, more than four million Syrians have been driven from their homes to seek refuge abroad. More than half have settled in neighboring Turkey and Jordan, and Tzu Chi volunteers in both locations have made refugee care a priority project. As hundreds of thousands more strive to reach peace and stability in Europe, Tzu Chi volunteers in Germany have also taken it upon themselves to extend their helping hands.

Jordan

Tzu Chi volunteers in Jordan held their first relief distribution for refugees back on November 3, 2011. Materials were purchased by volunteers, and the recipient name list was provided by the local Al-Takaful Charitable Society. An Al-Takaful member explained, “I saw true humanitarian spirit in the interactions between Tzu Chi volunteers and refugees. Tzu Chi volunteers are sincerely caring for these suffering people.”

**Everywhere they looked,
they saw people sitting and
standing on roadsides, children
searching for something to eat
among piles of trash.**

Soon after, Tzu Chi Global Headquarters in Taiwan started a clothing drive for Syria; 188,000 pieces of winter clothing and blankets were later shipped to Ramtha, Jordan. From January 12 to 14, 2013, in the middle of the freezing cold, sleet, and rain, volunteers steadfastly organized and distributed clothing to 2,179 refugee families. Later that year, volunteers distributed gas stoves, blankets, and milk powder to help the refugees safely pass a difficult winter in a strange land. They also started paying regular visits to Dulyl Hospital in Zarqa, where they distribute clothing, daily necessities, and fresh vegetables to patients in three trauma centers.

For several years now, volunteers have regularly cared for refugees in Amman, and each month they also distribute living stipends and milk powder to refugees in Ramtha. Chiou Hwa Chen, Tzu Chi Director in Jordan, explains, “I don’t want to see them forced into stealing and crime. I hope that all refugees served by Tzu Chi can avoid this fate! But if they don’t have money and aren’t allowed to work, this can easily become a problem for the local community.”

Germany

Germany has accepted more Syrian refugees than any other European country, with one hundred thousand or more already in the country. Even though there are fewer than one

On October 18, 2015, volunteers distribute daily necessities and cash cards to refugees in Sultangazi, Turkey.
 Photo: Jinde Zhan

hundred Tzu Chi volunteers in Germany, they wasted no time in extending their love to those in need.

In spring 2015, Tzu Chi volunteers visited a shelter in Munich to distribute secondhand clothes and shoes. In Soest, several hundred miles north, volunteers hosted a lunch for refugees to express their sincere welcome. Through their interactions, volunteers deeply felt many refugees' helplessness and loneliness. In addition to helping with daily necessities, they also wanted to give refugees more opportunities to stand on their own two feet. Therefore, they turned to education.

Migrants are allowed to obtain work permits in Germany in certain situations, but lack of German language skills is a considerable obstacle to overcome. Because of the unprecedented influx of refugees from several countries into Soest, government officials struggled with how to care for and transition them. This past July, Tzu Chi volunteers met together with the local government to discuss the refugee situation.

to better understand their needs, and then hired a German language teacher to hold classes in three camps. Yet even this language education came with its own language barriers. Not only did the instructor and students not share a common language, even the migrants themselves came from different countries and spoke different languages. The first step was to divide the students into groups by their native language and then to assign a teacher's helper from each group who could communicate with the teacher in English and help pass instructions in their own language.

Tzu Chi volunteers encourage the migrant students to interact with the local community as soon as possible after learning enough German. As they teach the language, they simultaneously spread the seeds of love and blessings. They hope the positive message will help refugees onto a brighter and more peaceful path with greater opportunities and chances to help others in the future.



Volunteers visited the refugee camp



Turkey

In early 2014, Tzu Chi volunteer Faisal Hu decided to investigate the conditions of Syrian refugees living in Turkey's capital, Istanbul. He was supported by Professor Cuma, who is originally from Syria himself. Everywhere they looked, they saw people sitting and standing on roadsides, children searching for something to eat among piles of trash.

Many of those able to escape all the way to the Turkish capital were well-educated individuals, including landowners and entrepreneurs. However, with their homeland in chaos, they were forced to escape with nothing to their name. And as legal employment was unavailable for adult refugees, many families' livelihoods had become reliant on the labor of their youngest members.

With their father unable to work, twelve-year-old Yisila and her younger brother worked long hours to make just enough for the family's monthly rent. Another Syrian refugee, Fatima, said, "The kids stand at the window and look out at the Turkish children going to class. They watch them coming home from school and are so sad, they cry."

Unable to get the image of so many children roaming the streets out of their heads, Faisal and Professor Cuma instead dreamed of a future where the kids would be wearing backpacks and heading to school. They chose Sultangazi as their target area and applied for permission to open a Syrian school.

With land and support from the local government, financial scholarships from Tzu Chi, and Syrian teachers to plan out a curriculum, the Menahel Syria School opened in 2015, taking in

eight hundred young refugee students and providing them with a quality education from qualified teachers.

In the community of Sultangazi, volunteers now provide long-term support to 695 families. However, in the same district live thousands of other families unable to access support. Pained to see people in such suffering, Tzu Chi volunteers held a special distribution on October 19, 2015, for families who are not long-term support cases.

During the distribution, Professor Cuma said to all the recipients, "You are blessed to be able to receive help, but many more people are not. Can you tolerate receiving when your neighbors do not? God sees what you do. Do you wish to give for Him?" His words moved many of the refugees to take out some of what they had received and donate it back.

Outside the distribution, forty-six families who were not on the distribution list waited all day in case anything remained. As the distribution was drawing to its end, they grew increasingly nervous. They asked over and over, hoping for just a little food. The volunteers packed up the goods that had been donated back and found to their surprise that there was just enough to make up fifty portions. All the families who had been hoping for just a little were blessedly able to receive a full portion.

One of the refugees shared, "I hope that one day the world will not have weapons, and there will be no need for passports. There will be no distinction between Americans, Asians, and Arabs, and that all living on Earth will be brothers and sisters." May that beautiful day come soon. 🌿

Materials compiled and translated from Tzu Chi global website: tw.tzuchi.org.

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 volunteers visited care recipients in Thanh Hà, Hải Dương, Vietnam, on August 9, 2015, to deliver warmth and daily necessities to the needy. Here, a volunteer visits an ill woman. Photo: Yongzhong Qiu



▲ A sudden hailstorm in Paraguay on September 7, 2015, damaged more than a thousand homes. On September 16, Tzu Chi volunteers from Ciudad del Este visited the Presidente Franco district to distribute blankets, mattresses, tarps, and more to affected families. Photo: Jinsheng Song



Tzu Chi volunteers delivered rice to refugees in Mafraq, Jordan, on September 4 and 5, 2015. Photo Chiou Fiwa Chen



▲ Cambodia's rainy season typically lasts from May to October, but 2015 saw very little rain at all, leaving the soil dry and unproductive. After a local elementary school principal requested assistance, volunteers visited a small village in Kandal Province on August 23, 2015, to distribute rice and daily necessities to local villagers. Photo provided by Tzu Chi Cambodia Office



▲ Volunteers held a free clinic in Santa Lucía Utatlán, Guatemala, on August 23, 2015, to provide medical relief in a remote area where care is typically unavailable. Here, a dentist treats a young patient's teeth. Photo: Qiongyi Qiu



Mr. Simon Riley, principal of Ipswich State High School in Ipswich, Australia, was invited to experience recycling volunteer work at the Jing Si Abode recycling station in Hualien, Taiwan. On September 24, 2015, he and his family learned firsthand how volunteers turn trash into gold. Photo: Baoyuan Sun



▲ On August 22 and 23, 2015, Tzu Chi volunteers in Singapore held four Auspicious Seventh Lunar Month celebrations, sharing with locals the benefits of a vegetarian diet and encouraging them to pray together for a peaceful world. Volunteers also shared with children different ways that all of us can protect Mother Earth.

Photo Guiqiong Feng



▲ On August 31, 2015, Tzu Chi volunteers visited homeless friends at Cornerstone Day Centre in Manchester, England, to provide warmth and companionship. Here, local Tzu Ching collegiate volunteers help a gentleman write a wish on a piece of paper that will be folded into a crane.

Photo: Wugeng Tan



On August 15, 2015, Tzu Chi volunteers from Johannesburg, South Africa, held a winter relief distribution at Langaville Primary School. They hope that their gifts of rice and other goods will bring warmth and health to poor local families throughout the long, brutal winter. Photo provided by Tzu Chi South Africa Regional Office



▲ Tzu Chi volunteers in Paris, France, invited local community members to join a Mid-Autumn Festival celebration on September 20, 2015.
Photo: Wenguang Chen



▲ After an electrical fire burned several buildings in the Kapuk Muara community of Jakarta, Indonesia, many residents were left homeless, with nowhere to turn. On September 14, 2015, Tzu Chi volunteers visited these individuals to distribute daily necessities. Photo: Yulianti



In September 2015, Tropical Storm Etou delivered heavy rains to eastern Japan, causing several rivers to overflow and flood many areas. From September 13 to 18, Tokyo Tzu Chi volunteers helped residents of Ibaraki Prefecture clean up their hometown.
Photo: Meijing Su



From Toothache to New Life

A painful tooth and a chance encounter open up a whole new world.

Juan Lugo

I held my jaw with my right hand as the toothache just kept getting worse. It hurt just to drink water. As I walked up to the gas station, I noticed a homeless man pushing a shopping cart with a sign that read "Homeless. Please Help!" I thought to myself, "You people are always asking for help! I'm the one that works, I'm the one that pays taxes, and I'm the one with this pain!" As I came out, the homeless man had already pushed his cart up close to the door of the service station. As I walked past him, he asked me, "Can you help me out with some change for some coffee?" I just turned my head back and said, "Get a job!"

As I walked away, my tooth throbbed even more, so I brought my hand up to my jaw as if that would help. "Looks like ya got yourself a bad tooth," he said. "Yeah, I've had this for a few days now," I replied. He told me there was an event coming up later in the week where I could get it checked out, but I would have to get in line right then to register and receive a bracelet.

I asked myself, "Oh God, how did I get here?"

As the pain in my mouth intensified, I knew I had to do something... but wait in line? I was skeptical at first, but I went to the location the homeless man had mentioned and saw at least 150 people in line already. I walked up to the front and asked the people how long they had been there. They said since seven o'clock the night before. I had no other choice. I was down to just a few dollars. I worked thirty-five hours a week, but had no health insurance. Even though it meant I would have to take time off work, I had to get this tooth taken care of.

During his first encounter with Tzu Chi in 2013, the author immediately started volunteering.

Photo: Michelle Chen





*Like many others, the author braved the cold night to ensure needed treatment.
Photo: Michelle Chen*

I joined the line. I was already in pain and not about to leave. That night got pretty cold; I did everything I could just to stay warm. As I walked back toward the line at one point after purchasing coffee for myself and the people saving my spot, I heard that homeless man's voice again: "I see ya made it on down here!" He was almost at the front of the line! "How did you get way up here?" I asked him. He pointed to his friend and said, "That's what friends are for." As I walked back to my spot in line I noticed people from different cultures and backgrounds—we were all there for some kind of assistance.

As morning broke, I was in pretty bad shape. My cheek was swollen almost to my eye. I was hungry, so again I went to get some coffee and something to eat. But I could no longer eat, and to drink I had to take a sip, hold it away from the tooth for a minute, and only then swallow. As I was walking back to my spot, I saw that homeless man again. As I got near to him something just came over me; I pulled out a sandwich I had just purchased and offered it to him. His friend looked up, but didn't say anything. I couldn't eat anyway, so I gave his friend the other one. They thanked me, and I walked back to my place in line feeling pretty good.

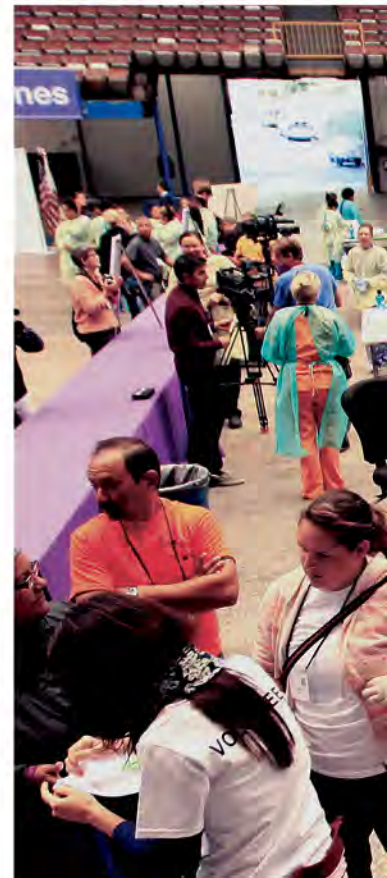
After a while, at 8:30 everyone was able to go inside and register for bracelets. I received one for Thursday. I requested the day off from work and got there late Wednesday night to be one of the first to be seen the next morning. That Thursday morning a TV crew asked me if they could do a story about me. I guess with the way I was dressed and the people around me, they assumed I was homeless. Although I was working, I could have been homeless. I couldn't afford anything except my rent and

basic necessities. I flat out said no. What if someone who knew me would see the story? What if they saw me getting help? I asked myself, "Oh God, how did I get here?"

When I walked down to the main floor, I kept seeing the words "Tzu Chi." I found the Tzu Chi information booth, and a woman there told me the Tzu Chi story. She spoke softly. She spoke of Master Cheng Yen, showed me some books, and told me how everything around me was there because of Master Cheng Yen's compassion. She went on to say that Tzu Chi is a volunteer-based foundation and that Tzu means "Compassion" and Chi "Relief."

It reminded me of my mom, how she would help people, even strangers. There were times when we were kids that we would come down in the morning and there would be strangers sleeping on our living room floor. "They are people that need help," she would say. "They need a place to stay. They are hungry and need to find work." Mom and dad helped many people. They did it for fifty years—never quitting, never asking for anything in return. Many of the things this woman was telling me about Master Cheng Yen were things I had already seen put into practice by my mom and dad.

As I listened to her, she reached behind her and pulled out the Bamboo Bank and explained that this is how Master, her disciples, and thirty





housewives started Tzu Chi with their small daily actions. I asked her how one becomes a volunteer, and she pulled out a vest from one of the boxes, just as I had seen in the books she showed me. Right then, at 10:35 in the morning on Thursday, October 31, 2013, I put on the vest, stepped into the booth, and became a Tzu Chi volunteer.

I asked about everything. Within an hour, I could tell you how many bottles it took to make an eco-blanket. I could almost tell you the whole history of Tzu Chi. I enjoyed sharing the story with Spanish-speaking people. I felt good translating, and again I thought of my mom. It had been one year to the day since she had passed away, and she would have done the same. I miss her so much.

When it was finally my turn to be seen by the dentist, he gave me antibiotics for the

swelling and instructed me to come back on Sunday. When I returned that Sunday and got my tooth taken care of, I went right back to the Tzu Chi booth, put my vest back on, and began to assist in whatever I could, all the way until we packed up the last pallet and the whole arena was completely empty.

I have been with Tzu Chi for two years. I go to Care Harbor outreach and other Tzu Chi events. As Master Cheng Yen says, "Only by giving all one has, can the satisfaction of a job well done be gained." I've made a vow to myself: I will share Master Cheng Yen's story and Tzu Chi's history, promote the Bamboo Bank, and translate Master's books into Spanish. 🌿

Treat the world as our classroom, where each person is a teacher and each encounter a lesson.



Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen



On his first day at Care Harbor, the author was one of more than 400 to receive dental treatment. Photo: Michelle Chen



Cultivating Good Habits

At Tzu Chi schools, teachers and students show that "We Care!"

Christina Rodriguez



Cultivating good habits takes much longer than a month worth of daily lessons and activities in a preschool setting or at home. Good habits and behaviors need to be part of our daily routine modeled by teachers and caregivers. Teachers and caregivers need to be genuine role models and remind themselves daily that young children are always aware of our behavior. They will be the first to recognize whether our actions are genuine or not. Starting early with our young children is key to building good character for life.

Often lessons we learn in the classroom are held on to only for a short time if not repeated daily. As we move on to learn new things, much is forgotten. As teachers, we hope that what we have taught stays with each child as the years pass. However, as with adults, if we don't put into practice what we've learned on a daily basis, we tend to forget and become complacent in everyday activities.

Many years ago, as a new Tzu Chi English teacher, I was preparing for a lesson about the origins of Tzu Chi and I read the Jing Si Aphorism of the month:

Starting early with our young children is key to building good character for life.

"Good deeds, good thoughts, become good habits" – Dharma Master Cheng Yen

As I contemplated the monthly Jing Si Aphorism that we review daily with the children I couldn't help but notice how true Master Cheng Yen's words were to the type of contribution I wanted to instill in each child that enters my classroom every year.

Throughout the years our Tzu Chi teachers have instilled this philosophy in every aspect of our lessons and activities. However, like many things we do, it often stops as we walk out of the classroom door and head home for the day. So we began to think about how we could make a far greater impact to the world around us through our young students. By starting in our classrooms with daily lessons and activities to build good character, we can then reach out to our students. Through our students, we can reach out to their entire family and through each family good deeds, good thoughts, and good habits can spread out into our community and to our world.

Photo: Ihsuan Tsai



By following in Master Cheng Yen's footsteps, we started teaching "one good deed every day" by incorporating the Bamboo Bank tradition as part of our daily activity in every classroom. Each morning the children are given the opportunity to do "One Good Deed" by giving to others in need through our Bamboo Bank. During our monthly lessons, our Character Education Program instills such topics as compassion for others, respect, responsibility, and taking care of our Earth.

In order to extend the lessons being taught in the classroom to all of our families at home, we created our "We Care!" character education program. Through our "We Care!" program we allow our students to be proactive in showing friends and family that "We Care!" about each other and the world around us, and that we can make a difference no matter how large or small.

During the first few months, students in our "We Care!" program explored many different ways students can be a part of helping our environment. Through hands-on activities, stories, and class discussions, we showed our students how each one of us can make a contribution to our community through one good deed every day.

Each week they were introduced to various concepts, such as:

1. Caring for Nature
 - Reducing waste
 - Picking up litter
 - Building a garden
2. Conserving
 - Energy
 - Water
 - Minimizing pollution
3. Respecting our Environment
 - Not wasting food
 - Preserving what we have (books and toys)
4. Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle!



The author shares an environmental lesson with her students. Photo: Tina Chen

After each weekly lesson, we sent home an activity for our students and their families to complete together. Each home activity came with directions and creative ideas to help incorporate each concept into daily life. Once the home activity was completed, our students returned their completed activity form with photos or a drawing of their family working together to build good habits. We encouraged all of our families to get their entire family involved and continue these valuable lessons even after the program had been completed.

The response from this program was amazing! Students returned their home activities with great enthusiasm and couldn't wait to share their activities, photos, and drawings with their friends and teachers. Parents were impressed that their children began to take part in more activities around the house. Students became more aware of simple things such as turning off the lights when they leave the room, recycling or repurposing items instead of putting them in the trash, and turning off the water while brushing their teeth.

Even though these things can seem so small and insignificant at times, if we consistently follow these good habits daily, together we can make a difference!

Let's spread the word to our family, our neighbors, and the world that "We Care!" about each other and our future! 🌱

One more good habit means one less bad habit.



Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen

A Life-Changing Experience

After joining the newest Tzu Chi school in Houston, a teacher learns she made the right decision.

Caroline Apkarian

At first, I did not know what to expect when I was hired to teach the upper three year olds at a bilingual school, but I quickly realized the great work that went into our school in Houston, Texas, and how far it had grown since November 2014. During my interview with the school's director, Mrs. Paula, I was informed that I may be going to California for the annual teacher training. Two days later I was told that I would be going.

By the time it became time to leave on August 27, I had only been at the school for two weeks, so it was very natural for me to be a little nervous about the situation of traveling with a group of people I did not know well. On top of the travels, I would also be sharing a communal sleeping area with my new coworkers, as well as a group of teachers from the Dallas school,

when we got to California.

As my director, myself, and the five other teachers from the Houston school were boarding a van to go to the airport, it was

very clear that this trip was going to change my coworkers and me. I didn't know how or why, but it just felt like something great was upon us and we were all going to benefit from it.

The love of the children and education formed a bond between them.

When we landed in California, it was late and we were tired but excited at the same time. We boarded a van and picked up the group from Dallas at the same airport. As we drove to San Dimas—one freeway to another, turn by turn—my group and I got butterflies in our bellies. The final turn took us up a hill where we saw the most peaceful and pleasant place. Even though it was dark, we felt the energy on the property. Upon opening the door to the house that we were all staying in together, I had a feeling that I had made the right decision in accepting the job to teach at Tzu Chi and coming to California.

The next morning, we woke up and off to Monrovia we went. Upon walking into the main building of the Monrovia campus all I could feel was the hard work, pride, and love within the walls that held the school up. The staff and the classrooms were evidence that this place was where great things happened, and that the children were provided everything that was needed for them to reach their potential.

As I sat in the training session watching and listening to presenters from Monrovia, Walnut, Dallas, and Houston, all I could think about



Students learn through play at the newest Tzu Chi school in Houston. Photo: Paula Wang



Tzu Chi teachers learn Tzu Chi's humanistic culture through tea ceremony. Photos: Sandy Yin

was how everyone was connected to each other in their schools. The love of the children and education formed a bond between them. We obtained a lot of useful information about lesson plans, and we were asked about our opinions and what we thought would benefit our students. I learned about the philosophy behind our foundation, how and what it means to teach for a Tzu Chi school, and why we teach and practice certain values and character traits within our schools.

The most important lesson I learned from this training was that we are not just teachers working for our schools, we are teachers working for a foundation that believes in the most basic pure thoughts and practices that most people and companies have forgotten about in today's world. "We can make the world a better place by planting good seeds. Only with those seeds can the flowers bloom and bear fruit." That is the foundation of what Dharma Master Cheng Yen has built and grown to make the world a better place for all people.

In training, we watched a video of all the great things our foundation has done for all those who are in need. I was so touched during the presentation that I spoke to my director, Mrs. Paula, and informed her that I wanted to become a Tzu Chi volunteer when we returned home.

At the beginning, I stated, "It was very clear that this trip was going to change my coworkers and me." I now have a greater understanding of what it means to be a human being by knowing and understanding the philosophy of our school. It makes me very proud that I work for a foundation that still believes in the same principles it was founded on. 🌱

Parents provide the mold and teachers provide the model; through each of their actions they teach children the right view of life.



Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen

Beautiful Moments



*Knowing that life is impermanent,
we should treasure each moment that much more.*

Allen Freese

One year ago, soon after I began working as a translator for the Dharma as Water team in Honolulu, Hawaii, I was invited to come along on monthly visits to a local nursing home. Before long, these monthly visits became weekly trips to the home, and with every visit, we encountered new challenges and more reasons to be grateful. Visiting this kind of care facility on a weekly basis has shifted my own perspectives on life and the aging process in many ways. Master Cheng Yen's teachings have helped me broaden my perspective and gain a firm sense of peace of mind as I visit this kind of environment.

One of her teachings that has resonated most deeply with me during these visits is

**I felt overwhelmed
and intimidated
simply by walking into
the nursing home for
the first time.**

that life is inherently impermanent. Through various incidents in my own life—accidents and injuries, family deaths, my parents' divorce—it has become clear that anything can happen to

me or any of my loved ones at any time. My experiences are not unique, and I know that, to one degree or another, nearly everyone has experienced some kind of loss. For some it may have been that a loved one moved far away, while for others it may have been the more painful loss of someone passing from this

life to the next. Now, making regular visits to a nursing home, where impermanence reigns in its many forms, I find myself facing a question similar to one I have contemplated since childhood: What can we really do when this kind of impermanence looms on a daily basis?

A hard truth our team has encountered over the course of our weekly visits is that any resident we share time with may not be there the next time we visit. Facing this kind of impermanence on a regular basis has the potential to be deeply disturbing. Death is a fact of life, but it is not something that most of us are willing to wrestle with on a regular basis. Yet, this is the truth we are faced with each week, just as the residents and staff there face it every day. Most residents know, on one level or another, that they are spending their final days there. Because of this, we make it our purpose to bring the residents joy and love during this time of transition as they consciously, subconsciously, or unconsciously prepare to move from this life to the next. As weekly visitors, we need a deep-seated sense of peace to deal with this truth, but it is not easy to cultivate.

While it takes a certain amount of wherewithal on our part to maintain our own spiritual grounding in such an environment, the staff who work there every day are also in need of the spiritual tools to properly care for both the residents and themselves. So, in cooperation with the home, we have held training sessions for the staff and management on topics including “Gratitude, Respect, and Love” and the “Four Infinite Minds,” which are loving-kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity. For care providers who regularly encounter death, the goal of these training sessions is simply to reinvigorate their sense of these values. Loving-kindness, for example, is not something anyone needs to be taught, for we all have it inherently. Through the training we provide, we do our best to remind these care providers the importance of loving-kindness while providing care to each of the many residents living there. For me, some of the most provocative discussions stemming

from these training sessions are those held afterwards among the staff and administrators, as they work to find better ways to integrate these values into their daily care and operations.

The individual case visits present us with an entirely separate challenge. At the beginning, I felt overwhelmed and intimidated simply by walking into the nursing home for the first time. I could hardly imagine how my presence and simple interactions with the residents could have any real impact. When we began to go on a weekly basis, we started to visit the residents on the second floor, most of whom are experiencing some sort of cognitive decline or dementia or cannot adequately care for themselves. These are people who often do not know the day of the week; they may spend most of their time out of touch with a broader sense of reality the way most of us tend to experience it. Yet, it has become clear that we have gradually formed affinities with them through the love we bring them.

There is one resident in particular whom I visit each week. She is showing signs of some sort of cognitive decline and is usually sitting in the communal TV room fumbling with a soft blanket she always carries with her. At first, I wasn't sure if she was really engaging with my

*Honolulu volunteers visit their nursing home friends.
Photo: Lisa Huang*




presence, even when she acknowledged me. She can speak, but her words usually don't make much sense, and most of the time she just mumbles. When there is no clear dialogue between us, all I can do is look her in the eyes, hold her hand, and smile along with the conversation I know she is trying to have with me. After several weekly visits, I came into the TV room one day and saw her sitting in her normal spot by the table. But this time she looked over at me, her eyes widened, and she got a big smile on her face. In clear words, she said, "Oh, you're here! How long are you staying today?"

Moments like this—when I see and feel firsthand the joy that I can bring to someone in this environment—are the moments that reaffirm my purpose for participating in the weekly case visits. Conversely, it is also through these regular visits that I have begun to find peace for myself in the face of impermanence. By cultivating a deep sense of acceptance and appreciation of every moment, I can consciously work to create more beautiful moments and good memories to appreciate. While there is ultimately an immediate feeling of sadness as I look back on happier times, I can still do so with peace and gratitude, knowing that I

have no regrets. Really, it is only because so many beautiful moments have been created that such feelings of sadness can exist in the first place. When my own grandmother passed away, would I have grieved so deeply if we had not created so many moments and memories together every summer since I was young?

Likewise, when I approach each and every resident with utmost sincerity, gratitude, respect, and love, I feel like I can create more beautiful moments and good memories with them. The excitement they feel to see me becomes a sense of excitement within myself to see them, and we are able to share a mutual sense of joy. It is like getting to spend time with my grandmother again. The joy and love I experience in these interactions does not cause me to forget about life's impermanence, but with the knowledge that life is inherently impermanent, I can more fully appreciate every beautiful moment I am lucky enough to experience. 🌿

Death is the new beginning of birth;
birth begins another life after death.
Birth and death, living and dying, are all
natural parts of the cycle of existence. 

Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen



Photo: Jin-de Liao

Thousands of miles from home, the author rejoins his Tzu Chi family to help the environment.

Abram Antler

When I arrived in Taiwan in late August 2015, I wondered how I would get a hold of volunteers and continue to serve as a volunteer myself after having been inactive with Tzu Chi in Greater Los Angeles for nearly one year. Once I found a suitable place to live, I went outside late one Sunday morning and unexpectedly found Tzu Chi volunteers asking for people to volunteer as bone marrow donors for those who had been diagnosed with Leukemia.

I continued to a very tall building in Taipei, where more volunteers were lined up and greeting all of the potential bone marrow donors. Though the chances that I will be a match for someone are very low, this opportunity to register went beyond the simple commitment to save a life. It was really about being introduced to people who are selfless and have one common goal: to be living bodhisattvas.

While I was there registering, I received a list of Tzu Chi's recycling centers throughout Taipei and was directed to the closest location.

Working with other people is a special gift we are given as individuals.

This recycling center I now go to is in a very interesting place. It is in a rather nondescript location just off of a very busy street that leads directly to the Presidential Palace—not far enough away from this busy street to be quiet, yet very well concealed. Many locals have difficulty finding it, and even the subway employees didn't look sure of themselves when they gave me directions. Finding this recycling plant, especially when I was arriving unannounced, was a challenge. Fortunately, it wasn't long before I saw Tzu Chi uniforms among the throng of businesspeople rushing off to work.

My first day of volunteering was met by many cheery people who were already at their destination, cheery not only for the extra assistance—up to two thousand pounds of recyclables come in each day—but also because Tzu Chi volunteers are always happy to be in the presence of others. Most of these volunteers were older men and women, but two younger disabled men widened the age range a little. It was not long before I was put to work unloading

a truck that came in and then boarding the same now-empty truck to go get more recyclables. Due to this very rapid interchange between arriving and getting busy with volunteer work, I was unable to learn names and barely even had a chance to introduce myself.

I had no preparation for how labor-intensive the work actually is. No one had ever told me about it when I volunteered in California, so I had to find out the hard way. The work, though plentiful, never really gets tedious, but what awed me that first time was volunteering with two men well into their seventies. I couldn't believe it! They worked solidly for the entire day, wiping off sweat in the ninety-degree heat as they hoisted large, heavy bags of recyclables into a truck and then went to get more. They never appeared tired and even enjoyed the work!

To fulfill Tzu Chi's goal to protect the environment and to make the planet cleaner and better for everyone and everything on it, volunteers drive to various places, including landfills, to find items that they can recycle, reuse, or resell. A couple of times, I went with the two elderly gentlemen to pick up recyclables from two stores and a movie theater. One of the volunteers would stay with the vehicle while the other man and I would round up cardboard, plastic, glass, and metal items to haul back to the truck. The bags for recyclables were literally big enough for me—a full-grown man—to fit into!

The fact that shop owners always stored these items in their basements meant that getting the items back to street level was challenging. Fortunately, the first store had a freight elevator, but the second store was a small convenience store, and we each had to carry two large bags up a flight of stairs, and then navigate through a crowded store full of employees stocking shelves and the morning rush of customers waiting in line to pay!

Think that was difficult? The theater was even more challenging! A theater produces a lot of waste, and since it is challenging for its managers to find the time to dispose of it in responsible ways as customers are surfacing to purchase tickets day and night, Tzu Chi volunteers are allowed to pick up these items. The bad news for volunteers: there is only one elevator that can be used at a time, so the only way to get all of the items is to make multiple trips up and down while one of the volunteers stays by the loading vehicle.

In addition to sorting, volunteers take bags, cardboard, and other materials that are tossed and secured in these trucks—sometimes an entire ton of recycled goods—and drive them to a recycling center, where they are purchased and made into items that are sold directly or used as raw materials to make new products. Drives of forty minutes to one hour are not uncommon at all! One day, after we dropped off the recyclables, a volunteer told me: "Trash turns into gold!" I had heard other volunteers say this before, but never had taken part in it directly, until now.

Another task I now have is taking apart old electronic items (e-waste) and old books that are no longer being read. Believe it or not, this task still isn't boring. In fact, I enjoy this activity more than anything else. It lets me see how calculators and other items are put together, something I always wanted to do as a child, but was too lazy to try until now. Now, though, I am put to work doing it, especially when the other volunteers are busy with other things. I deconstruct books with other volunteers, mostly elderly women who enjoy sharing their volunteering experiences with me when the work is routine and doesn't require intense amounts of concentration, but the e-waste is a solitary chore taken on within the confines of a rather small office. For me, that small office is a place where I am more than simply



*The author helps collect recyclables from local businesses.
Photo: Jin-de Liao*

a volunteer—it's a place where I can suddenly become someone else. I can fantasize about being an employee of a technical company designing a better product, or someone taking apart old items for any other reason. By engaging in these reveries while I am at work as a volunteer, the work turns from routine and tedious to very interesting. In fact, the last time I worked with e-waste, I got so engaged in the task that two different volunteers had to remind me to stop for lunch.

If asked to do something other than recycling, I would certainly consider it, because I want to once again be a committed volunteer helping to improve the lives of many people. Given the choice, though, I will always pick doing recycling as my main activity. Why? For numerous reasons, but three in particular: First, working with other people is a special gift we are given as individuals. So many of the volunteers are older people who regain a

special purpose to their life through Tzu Chi. Still other volunteers are young men and women with disabilities who find not only purpose, but also acceptance from fellow volunteers. This is why Tzu Chi is so respected as a volunteer organization, and why I enjoy working on this team. Second, I work alone too at times, and since there is always a purpose in doing the work, it becomes a motivating factor in and of itself. Finally, recycling makes the world a better place, keeping landfills from becoming burdened with items that are recyclable or reusable and even changing garbage into funds that are used to help countless victims of natural disasters and gripping poverty. 🌱

Turn garbage into gold, gold into love, and love into a pure stream that circles the world.

Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen

Conditions for Transformation

Dharma Master Cheng Yen

Translated by the Dharma as Water Editorial Team

In the Buddha's monastic community, Venerable Kasyapa was highly respected for his spiritual practice. Eight days after he became a disciple of the Buddha, he was able to attain a high level of realization, the state of Arhatship. Though he listened to teachings with his fellow monastics, he chose to live apart from them, leading an austere and simple lifestyle in nature. He would stay under trees, on the grass, and even in cemeteries.

Sariputra and Maudgalyayana, his fellow senior disciples, once tried to encourage him to live indoors with the rest of the monastic community. But Kasyapa answered, "The Buddha taught that life is full of suffering. This is all caused by the convergence of causes and conditions. When causes and conditions converge, we are bound, as if by a rope; in such a state I can never be free. I want to return to a natural state. I am willing to engage in any kind of spiritual practice that helps me cut off the causes and conditions that bind me in this world."

Kasyapa's perspectives on how to engage in spiritual cultivation were very different from everyone else's. In particular, when he went to beg for alms as part of his spiritual cultivation, he did not go to the houses of wealthy. Instead he always went to the most impoverished.

At that time, there was an old woman who was very ill and did not have anywhere to live. She often huddled next to strangers' houses. Whenever remnants of cooking oil or the water used for washing rice and vegetables was poured

out of the kitchen window, she would use her broken bowl to catch everything immediately. Even if it fell onto the ground, she would quickly scoop it up. This was how she kept herself alive.

One day, Kasyapa passed by. When he saw the old woman, he felt for her. So, he approached her and asked if she would be willing to share some of this leftover oil and water with him. Seeing Kasyapa, the old woman felt a great sense of reverence. But she told him, "I am a poor and lowly person. What I have here has already gone bad; furthermore, I scooped up these liquids from the ground. This is very unclean; how can I use it to make an offering to you?"

Venerable Kasyapa said, "I am happy to receive what you have in your broken bowl. Although it has gone bad, to me, it is a very precious drink." He brought his alms bowl close to her, and the old woman poured the rancid water from her bowl into his.

When Kasyapa received it, he thanked her and wished her well, and then he drank the bowl of rancid water in front of her.

The old woman was very happy. With deep reverence, she knelt in front of him. She was very happy and grateful to have the opportunity to make an offering to such an eminent monk. Soon after, she passed away.

This old woman was then reborn in heaven. She realized that the blessings and virtue she attained in making her offering to Kasyapa had led her to be born in heaven. Thus, she came

**Make great vows to benefit all sentient beings,
then carry them out in action.**

Dharma Master Cheng Yen



Storytelling by the Master

to where Kasyapa was sitting in meditation and scattered celestial flowers upon him to express her gratitude and reverence.

It was because Kasyapa had asked for alms from the poor that such a transformation was possible.

Subhuti, another senior disciple, had a completely different outlook than Kasyapa. Due to his compassion for suffering beings, Subhuti would only ask for alms from the wealthy, while Kasyapa did the exact opposite. One time, the two met and discussed this.

Subhuti asked Kasyapa why he went to so much trouble to live an austere lifestyle. Kasyapa reproached him and asked if Subhuti only went to the rich because of his craving for flavorful food. Subhuti then admonished Kasyapa in return, saying, “The impoverished are already poor. Why do you still ask them to share their food?”

Hearing this disagreement, the other disciples asked the Buddha, “Whose lifestyle is right? Whose is wrong?”

The Buddha then called Kasyapa and Subhuti to Him. He explained, “You should follow karmic conditions. The purpose of every aspect of our lives is to create conditions for transformation. So, do not be attached; go with the causes and conditions that come your way. Since we have a connection with every sentient being we encounter, we must accept everyone’s alms according to conditions.”

Subhuti always strictly upheld the Buddha’s teachings. So, after hearing these words, he let go of his attachment to asking for alms only from the rich. He realized he also should teach the impoverished and ask them for alms too.

Kasyapa, however, held fast to his ways. He felt, “I have worked so hard and have finally cut myself off from the influence of sense objects; my senses are not influenced by external conditions. Right now, I engage in spiritual practice in a very natural state, so when interacting with the poor, I live such a carefree life. Why should I contrive to create more affinities with this human world?”

Even though he insisted on staying his course, the Buddha still admired and praised Kasyapa’s conviction. Thus, after the Buddha entered Parinirvana, Kasyapa was asked to sit at the highest seat. He was the only person able to assemble everyone in the Sangha to compile the sutras; this was because he was the only one who had everyone’s respect.

When we read this story, we must not think that we need to practice the same way Kasyapa did, by living in a cemetery or drinking rancid water. Our causes and conditions are different, as are the times we live in. Living in this modern era, we encounter all kinds of people, so we must share teachings with everyone. I often say, “We must teach the rich to help the poor and teach the poor that they are rich.” But we must have the same steadfast resolve as Kasyapa as we go out in the world and transform people. 🌿

Bags of Blessings

Recipe provided by Vegetarian Cooking Team / Tzu Chi University Continuing Education Center
Instructor: Lily Chang

Ingredients

- | | |
|----------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1 stalk celery | 3 oyster mushrooms |
| 1 package tofu skin (approx. 8 sheets) | 6 stalks asparagus |
| 1 bunch bean sprouts | 1 stalk spinach |
| 1 tender bamboo shoot | 1 carrot |
| 5 shiitake mushrooms | |

Directions

1. Soak tofu skins in mixture of soy sauce, sugar, and water.
2. Prepare stock by boiling sprouts in water.
3. Blanch celery, then soak in cold water.
4. Dice remaining ingredients.
5. Pour sesame oil in a heated pot. Stir-fry ingredients from Step 4. Add salt and white pepper powder to taste.
6. Fill tofu skins with ingredients from Step 5 to approximately 70% full. Use celery to tie shut.
7. Steam filled tofu skins from Step 6 for 10 minutes.
8. Thicken stock by stirring in a small amount of corn starch mixed with water.
9. Cover bottom of plate or serving dish with bean sprouts. Place filled tofu skins on top of sprouts, and pour thickened stock over top. Serve and enjoy!

Seasoning

- 5 tbsp. soy sauce
- 5 tbsp. sugar
- 3 tbsp. water
- 1 tbsp. sesame oil
- Salt & white pepper powder to taste
- Corn starch

A wholesome life begins with
vegetarianism.



Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen



◀ Every Friday, Tzu Chi Atlanta volunteers visit Cary Reynolds Elementary School in Doraville, Georgia, to deliver food backpacks that provide underprivileged students with delicious, nutritious food for the weekend. Here volunteers hold their weekly distribution on October 2, 2015. Photo: Xiuyue Lin

▶ Tzu Chi volunteers in San Diego, California, held an Auspicious Seventh Lunar Month event on August 23, 2015. The event was an opportunity to share valuable environmental tips with the community, such as how to save water and electricity in everyday life. Photo: Liu Liu



◀ The Valley Fire, which spread through Northern California in September 2015, destroyed nearly two thousand structures as it became the third-most destructive fire in California history. In late September, volunteers distributed emergency cash cards to 307 Middletown families to help them through the aftermath. Photo provided by Tzu Chi Northwest Region



▲ Tzu Chi volunteers joined the annual NGO Conference at the United Nations in New York from August 25 to 27, 2015. Here, Tzu Chi Executive Vice President Debra Boudreaux shares Tzu Chi's disaster relief experience with representatives of other nongovernmental organizations. Photo: Pamela Leung



▲ On August 24 through 28, 2015, Greater Washington DC Region Tzu Chi volunteers distributed school supplies to elementary school students from low-income families in Maryland as part of the ongoing Happy Campus Program. Photo: Mark Tsai



▲ Tzu Chi volunteers in Canada teamed up with Asian-Canadian Special Events Association (ACSEA) to hold TAIWANfest 2015 in Vancouver from September 5 through 7. Volunteers organized a number of colorful activities that encouraged the community to reduce emissions, cherish resources, and love the Earth. Photo: Jiahui Han



*San Diego Tzu Chi volunteers held a free medical clinic at Mountain Empire High School, just miles from the California-Mexico border, on September 20, 2015. Here, a volunteer helps a wheelchair-bound patient to his doctor.
Photo: Bin Li*



*▲ Tzu Chi volunteers held a free medical clinic on October 18, 2015, to provide much-needed medical care to low-income, uninsured individuals in the Dallas suburb of Richardson, Texas.
Photo: Peng-Fei Wu*



*▲ In October 2015, South Carolina suffered devastating flooding and at least seventeen deaths in the wake of historic rainfall brought on by Hurricane Joaquin. On October 18, Tzu Chi volunteers visited the hard-hit community of Summerton, where they distributed emergency cash cards and blankets to thirty-three affected families. Here, a volunteer explains that the funds on the card are collected from the generous donations of countless kindhearted people all around the globe.
Photo: Mark Tsai*



▲ Volunteers from the United States joined local Haitian volunteers in organizing a rice distribution event for underprivileged families in Cité Soleil, Port-au-Prince, on September 15 to 19, 2015.
Photo: Grace Wong



▲ On August 9, 2015, volunteers held Tzu Chi Good Health Day in Flushing, New York, to provide a number of free medical consultations and health screenings to the local community.
Photo: Rongguang Chen



▲ Local Tzu Chi volunteers were invited to join the Holy Name Medical Center's Eighth Annual Health Festival in Teaneck, New Jersey, on September 26, 2015. Here, volunteers help patients register for the free health event and provide information about valuable community resources.
Photo: Yuying Xu

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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(Excerpt)

Return to Our Pure Nature

In Chapter Five, Master Cheng Yen shares examples of loving-kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity.

Shih Cheng Yen

All beings on this planet are all one family, and as a family, we have the duty to help one another. In October 2012, Hurricane Sandy, a Category 3 storm, brought devastation and destruction to communities on the northeast coast of the United States. Tzu Chi volunteers in the United States held street fundraising campaigns for the victims of the storm. Meanwhile, donations also poured in from overseas. Even impoverished nations such as Haiti, Cambodia, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka showed their compassion for the victims of the storm by contributing as much as they could through acts of giving and love.

Immediately after the catastrophic storm, Tzu Chi volunteers were among the first to enter the disaster areas. Entire cities lost electricity as a result, so volunteers had to use candles and flashlights and wear headlamps as they prepared and delivered hot meals to the disaster victims. These meals not only provided nutrition and sustenance, but also comfort by showing the victims that there were people who cared and were ready to help them.

However, matters worsened for disaster victims when, just shortly after Hurricane Sandy, a blizzard struck the coast. The severe weather conditions brought even more suffering to the people of these areas. Tzu Chi volunteers in New York and New Jersey braved the storm to set up outdoor distribution centers to provide much needed supplies. In a disaster of such magnitude, it was apparent that local manpower and material supplies were insufficient, so Tzu Chi volunteers from Boston rushed in to offer their assistance. Supplies from California and Texas were delivered in a cross-country road trip, arriving just in time for the relief efforts.

The disaster-stricken areas were scenes of terrible devastation. Although the majority of residents had relocated to temporary shelters or to homes of relatives, some people chose to stay in their wind-blown and flooded homes and were in desperate need of help. Tzu Chi volunteers visited each of these occupied homes and offered their compassion and love. The volunteers also worked quickly to assess the extent of the damage, compiling a database of information on those who were in need of help to prepare for even larger aid distributions.

During the relief aid distributions, there were many inspiring moments and touching stories. Before the storm, many residents of Long Island lived very comfortably in oceanfront mansions along the coast. After the storm, these same residents waited in long lines at distribution centers to receive much needed cash cards. One of the recipients said, "I never thought I would

receive help from an Asian organization, especially not a 600-dollar debit card and a kit of daily necessities. But it's a great feeling to know that someone out there cares."

At distribution centers, Tzu Chi volunteers bowed deeply to each recipient as they handed out the supplies. They were humble and gentle in their interaction with the recipients. They also took the opportunity to share about Tzu Chi's spirit and its projects. They told people about Tzu Chi's humble beginnings from thirty housewives in Hualien saving two pennies a day in bamboo piggy banks as a relief fund for the poor. Many who heard this story were very touched and found it incredible.

On Staten Island, there was an old man who was not on the government-issued list of aid recipients because he did not have the necessary identification documents. Still, on the evening of our distribution, the old man came to ask for help. Tzu Chi volunteers asked, "Are you missing your documents? Our distribution is over for today, but please come back tomorrow."

When the volunteers came back to the distribution site the next morning, the old man was still standing in the same spot. He had waited there for nine hours. Recalling how cold the night had been and seeing the old man shivering in a corner at the relief site, the volunteers felt terrible and quickly put a jacket on him. Filled with concern, the volunteers asked, "You could have just gone home last night and returned today, why did you spend the whole night out here in the cold?" The old man replied, "Because the supplies I am about to receive today is all that I have in life right now."

At the distribution site, a young woman told the volunteers, "My religion often speaks of heaven, and I have been looking for it every day, hoping to find it. Today, the aid you give me provides the help I need the most. Your love and care has put my heart at ease and has truly shown me a glimpse of heaven."

Some people think, "The United States is such a wealthy nation; why do people there need our help?" Regardless of how wealthy a person is, being suddenly stricken by such disaster is like being knocked to the ground. That is the moment when a person is most in need of support. Therefore, wherever disaster strikes, as long as we can reach the area, it is our duty to provide for those in need with our love and care, to relieve them of their suffering with our efforts, and to inspire the love in their hearts.

An earth-shattering disaster should bring about world-changing awakening. It is during these times that the actions of sentient beings can affect the whole world. By joining together, our collective kindness becomes an even greater force. 🌱

Excerpted from Return to Our Pure Nature by Shih Cheng Yen (Jing Si Publications, 2015). For more information, please visit Jing Si Books & Café (directory on pp. 72-74) or jingsi.us.tzuchi.org



Caring for Ourselves

To fully care for others, we have to care for ourselves, too.

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

As a licensed psychotherapist, clinical supervisor, and Tzu Chi volunteer, I have found my two decades in mental health so far very rewarding. I am recognized for my compassion and for going above and beyond, all of which people have come to expect due to my selflessness, kindness, and joy. I work hard to care for and support every patient I see, but sometimes my sincerity and empathy for them leave me at risk for stress and even depression. This is especially true when I am working with patients whose suffering is often unresolvable and ongoing.

A few years ago, I provided mental health services and emotional support for a young single mother whose six-year-old boy suffered from a terminal brain tumor. I remembered crying so many times as I put my own child to bed at night, because I could only imagine how helpless and hopeless this mother felt putting her son to bed, never knowing if he would wake up the next day. I still remember how pained I was, holding the mother's hand as her son took his last breath. Looking back, though, I am grateful I was able to be with this young mother at the darkest moment of her life. She touched me tremendously, and I grew so much a person.

In order to have the strength to continue to do what I do and do it well, I have learned the importance of maintaining a healthy balance between my professional and personal life through self-care. I keep my mind and body in shape by eating well and getting plenty of sleep. I try to find activities that bring me pleasure and rejuvenate me, such as baking and gardening with

my child and going out to a nice restaurant with my family. I enjoy connecting with others as often as I can. I have a strong network of friends, both professional and personal, whom I can talk with, especially when I am in need.

Try to make an effort to replenish yourself too! Here is a list of self-care activities that you can try, if they fit your interests and personality:

1. Exercise
2. Pick up a hobby
3. Cook or bake
4. Read a fun book
5. Cuddle with your pets
6. Watch a good movie
7. Get a massage
8. Learn to forgive yourself and others
9. Set limits for yourself
10. Ask for help when you need it

I hope to continue to grow, learn, and move forward in my life, both professionally and personally. Over the years, I have learnt to appreciate the importance of self-care in order to continue walking this Bodhisattva Path. Self-care gives me the strength to continue to do what Dharma Master Cheng Yen has always taught us Tzu Chi volunteers to do: selflessly contribute with a mindset of gratitude, expressing sincerest care and support to each and every individual in need. I hope that self-care can help you too! 🌿

The Turtle Cleanup

Una tortuga llamada limpieza



By Kiana Wang



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

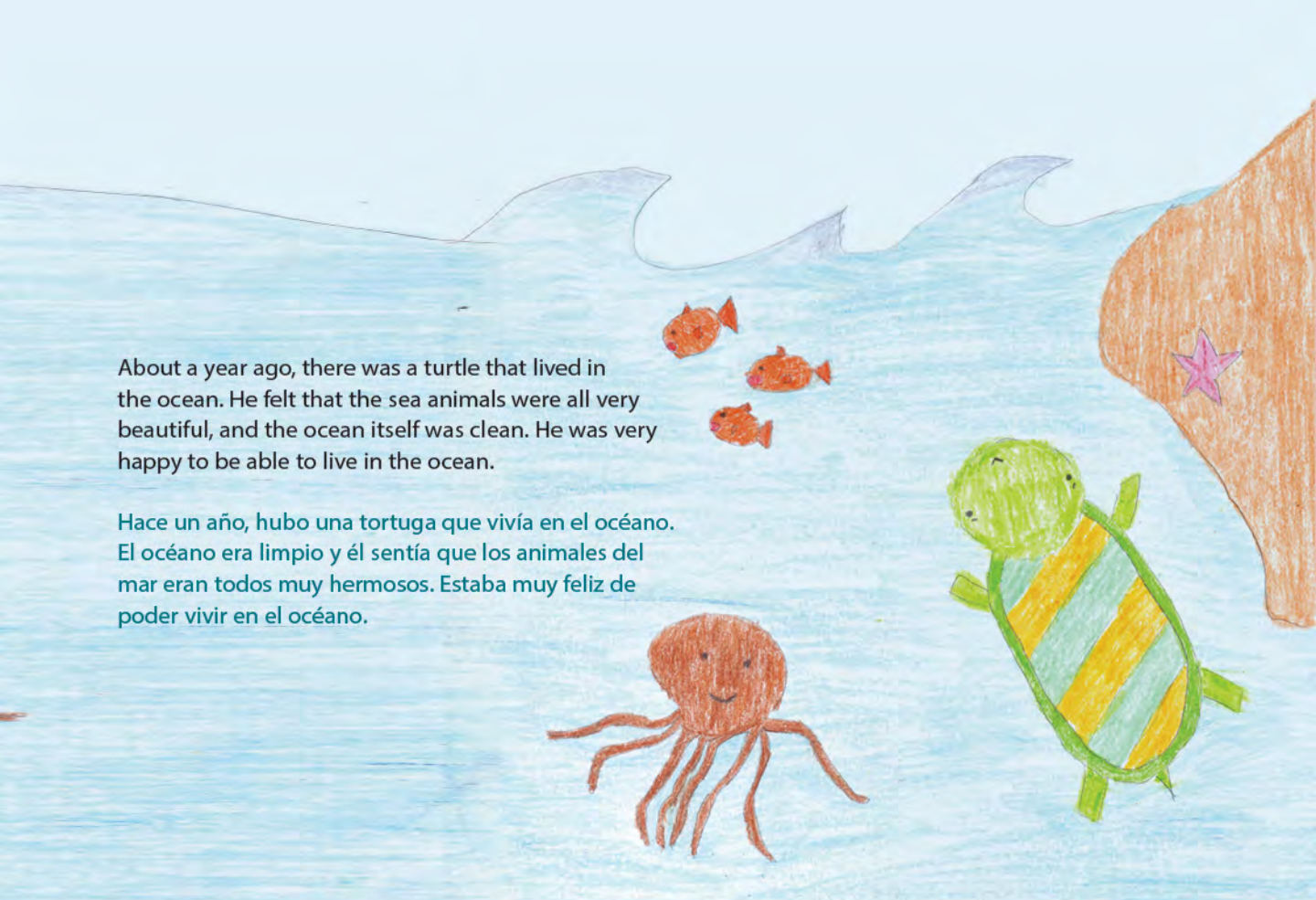
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About a year ago, there was a turtle that lived in the ocean. He felt that the sea animals were all very beautiful, and the ocean itself was clean. He was very happy to be able to live in the ocean.

Hace un año, hubo una tortuga que vivía en el océano. El océano era limpio y él sentía que los animales del mar eran todos muy hermosos. Estaba muy feliz de poder vivir en el océano.

This turtle felt that the ocean was the most beautiful place in the world. He swam in the ocean and played with his friends. One day, he and his friends discovered trash in the water. The turtles had all thought that this would be impossible!

Esta tortuga consideró que el océano era el lugar más hermoso en el mundo. Nadaba en el océano y jugaba con sus amigos. Un día, él y sus amigos descubrieron basura en el agua. ¡Las tortugas pensaron que esto era imposible!



The turtles tried to find the direction from which the trash was coming. They ended up on a beach. In the past, the turtles had enjoyed coming there and had played there often. But now, there was trash everywhere.

Las tortugas trataron de encontrar de cual lado venía la basura. Llegaron hasta una playa en la que antes, habían jugado ahí a menudo y en la que las tortugas gozaban de llegar allí. Pero ahora, había basura por todas partes.

The turtles felt very sad and wondered who had littered on the beach. Now that the beach was no longer clean, the turtles didn't want to return there. One day, one of the turtles saw some humans playing on the beach; when they left, they just threw their trash into the ocean.

Las tortugas se sentían muy tristes y se preguntaban quien había tirado basura en la playa. Ahora que ya no era limpia la playa, las tortugas no querían volver allí. Un día, la tortuga vio a algunos seres humanos jugando en la playa. Cuando se fueron, lanzaron su basura en el océano.



The turtle returned to the ocean to tell his friends that humans were the ones littering the beach and polluting the water. They all decided to teach the humans a lesson and let them know that polluting their beach was not okay.

La tortuga regresó al océano para contarle a sus amigos que los seres humanos fueron los que estaban tirando basura en la playa y contaminando el agua. Todos decidieron darles una lección a los humanos y hacerles saber que el contaminar su playa no estaba bien.



The turtles gathered all of the other turtles in the ocean. They came up with a plan to gather all of the trash that the humans had tossed into the sea and deliver it back to the beach. The turtles wanted the humans to see exactly how much trash they had dumped into the ocean. The result was that all of the beaches were filled with trash.

Las tortugas reunieron a todas las otras tortugas en el océano. Se ideó un plan para reunir toda la basura que los humanos habían lanzado al mar y a dejarla de vuelta en la playa. Las tortugas querían que los seres humanos vieran exactamente cuánta basura habían echado en el océano. El resultado fue que todas las playas se llenaron de basura.

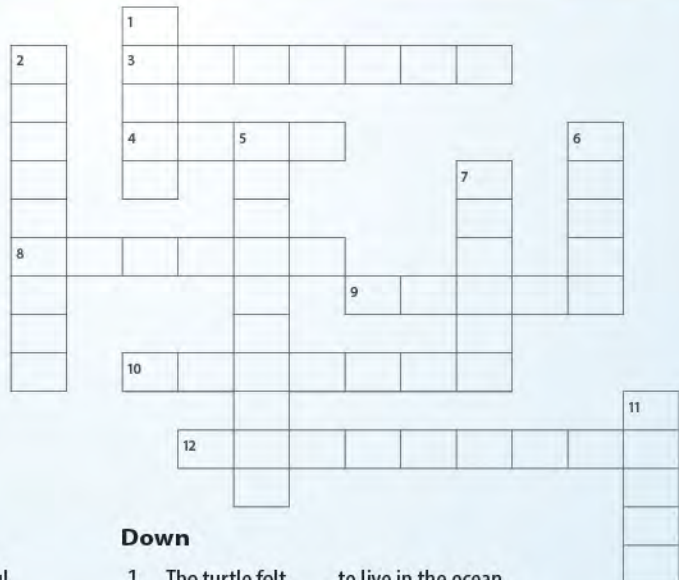


When the humans returned to the beaches, they found that they were filled with the trash that they themselves had littered. With all of the trash on the beaches, they couldn't relax and enjoy all that the beaches had to offer. Therefore, the humans apologized to the turtles and promised to never litter in the oceans again. After this, the humans and turtles could enjoy the beach together, without all the pollution.

Cuando los humanos regresaron a las playas, encontraron que estaban llenas de la basura que ellos mismos habían tirado. Con toda la basura en las playas, no podían relajarse y disfrutar de lo que las playas tienen para ofrecer. Por lo tanto, los seres humanos pidieron disculpas a las tortugas y prometieron nunca tirar basura en los océanos. Después de esto, sin toda la contaminación que había, los seres humanos y las tortugas pudieron disfrutar de la playa juntos.



CROSSWORD
The Turtle Clean Up



Across

- 3 The turtle felt that all of the sea ____ were beautiful.
- 4 To get rid of the trash, they had to come up with a ____.
- 8 The hero of the story.
- 9 All the trash was moved from the ocean to here.
- 10 The turtle gathered all of his ____ to help make a difference.
- 12 After their hard work, the ocean became ____ again.

Down

- 1 The turtle felt ____ to live in the ocean.
- 2 The humans had been doing this to the water
- 5 The humans ____ to the sea animals for throwing litter in the ocean.
- 6 The turtle was shocked to find this in the ocean.
- 7 They were responsible for polluting.
- 11 The turtle and his friends worked hard to ____ the ocean.

WORD SEARCH

The Beautiful Ocean

(see story on next page)

X	C	A	F	H	E	W	J	K	P	L	S	D
Y	S	Z	V	A	V	E	E	M	A	Z	C	C
B	N	L	E	C	E	T	Z	V	O	L	R	F
E	E	F	F	O	R	T	S	A	M	X	E	B
A	H	Z	V	A	Y	L	E	C	L	E	A	N
U	Z	H	I	A	O	C	E	A	N	T	T	A
T	L	I	V	I	N	G	B	T	R	N	U	E
I	A	P	B	G	E	B	R	I	C	M	R	I
F	F	S	E	A	A	Q	F	O	A	E	E	V
U	G	H	J	E	A	X	V	N	R	O	S	C
L	E	N	V	I	R	O	N	M	E	N	T	O
R	S	T	A	O	S	W	I	M	Z	U	P	A

Circle the following words and phrase from the story.

Words are written down and across, but not diagonally.

OCEAN

VACATION

LIVING

CLEAN

CARE

CREATURES

BEAUTIFUL

EVERYONE

SWIM

ENVIRONMENT

EFFORTS

SEA

Answer key and more in Issue 48!

Issue 46 Answer Key

Crossword: Save the Forest!





The Beautiful Ocean

El hermoso océano

By Nelson Lo



Every summer, Shaun goes on vacation to the beach. Five years ago, the ocean was clean and beautiful; but now, nobody wants to go to the beach, since the water is black and dirty.

Cada verano, Shaun se va de vacaciones a la playa. Hace cinco años, el océano estaba limpio y hermoso, pero ahora, nadie quiere ir a la playa porque el agua está sucia y negra.



Far away, on a cliff by the shore, there's a factory. It is the factory that's pouring oil into the ocean! A layer of oil covers the ocean, thus nobody dares to swim in the ocean.

A lo lejos, en un acantilado de la costa, hay una fábrica. La fábrica es la que está echando el aceite en el océano! Una capa de aceite cubre el océano, por lo tanto nadie se atreve a nadar en el mar.



The neighborhood works hard to scoop up the oil, but the factory continues pouring oil into the ocean. The oil kills all of the creatures in the sea, and nobody wants to play here anymore.

El vecindario trabaja duro para limpiar el aceite, pero la fábrica continua echándole al océano. El aceite mata todas las criaturas en el mar, y ya nadie quiere jugar ahí.



The neighborhood is very angry at the factory, so they protest against it. The factory has no choice but to close down. The ocean becomes beautiful again, and people begin to come back to it as before.

Los vecinos ya están muy enojados con la fábrica, así que protestan en contra de ellos. La fábrica ya no tiene otra opción más que cerrar. El océano se vuelve hermoso otra vez, y la gente comienza a regresar a él otra vez como antes.

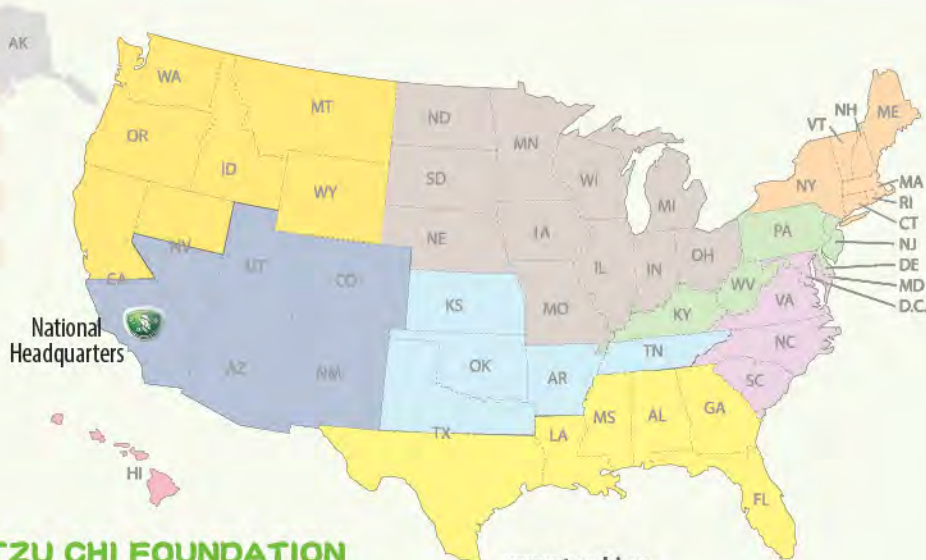


Shaun thinks that in order to protect all of the living creatures in the ocean, humans need to care for the environment. Protecting the environment requires everyone's efforts.

Shaun piensa que para proteger a todas las criaturas vivientes en el océano, los humanos necesitan cuidar el ambiente. Proteger el ambiente requiere los esfuerzos de todos.



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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.



SPREAD THE SEEDS OF LOVE



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*If everyone exercises
the love in their
heart, then goodness
and blessings will
accumulate, creating
a cycle of kindness.*

*Jing Si Aphorism by
Dharma Master
Cheng Yen*

