

COMPASSION & RELIEF

TZU CHI USA JOURNAL

integrity · honesty · respect

empathy · teamwork

honor · perseverance

感恩 · 尊重 · 愛

filial piety · tolerance

integridad
honradez

fairness · generosity

道德 · 誠實 · 慈悲 · 孝順

responsibility · discipline

sincerity · trustworthiness

respect · solidarity

understanding · courage

reliability · morality · dignity

kindness · compassion



Building Character Through Education

Disaster Relief across the USA
The Fall and Rise of New Orleans
Three Easy Steps to Save the Earth





DHARMA MASTER CHENG YEN
FOUNDER OF
TZU CHI FOUNDATION

CONTEMPLATIVE WISDOM

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

Developing Flawless Wisdom

Even if we learn the teachings and do good deeds,
if we do not change our habits,
it is like letting the Dharma-water flow into our hearts
yet quickly leak out again.

When there are leaks in our wisdom,
we can only cultivate blessings, but not wisdom.

Therefore, with utmost reverence, we repent.

We change our past negativities and cultivate purity for the future.

When we learn the Dharma with a pure heart,
we can create blessings for the whole world.

In doing so, our wisdom-life will grow,
and we will cultivate both blessings and wisdom.

Compiled into English by the Dharma as Water Editorial Team

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The Robe of Gentleness and Forbearance

In the Lotus Sutra, there is a passage that describes the way one should share the Dharma with others. The passage says:

Dwell in the abode of great compassion

Wearing the robe of gentleness and forbearance

Sitting on the seat of sunyata

(the empty nature of all phenomena)

This is the way to expound the Dharma


The "abode" refers to our heart. Dwelling in the abode of great compassion, our heart is all-embracing, our compassion so vast and great that it includes all humanity. All the people in the world are our family.

Yet with so many different kinds of people in the world, how are we to get along with everyone? We must wear the robe of gentleness and forbearance. In Tzu Chi, I have called the uniform that Tzu Chi volunteers wear "the robe of gentleness and forbearance," for by wearing it we remind ourselves of this spirit and strive to live it.

Some Tzu Chi volunteers have told me that once or twice someone made them so angry that they wanted to take off their Tzu Chi uniform and change back into their own clothing so they could confront the person or answer them back. I told them that this was not the right mentality. The robe of gentleness and forbearance is not just a physical piece of clothing we wear; it is to be worn in our heart all the time.

Gentleness and forbearance are qualities that are inherent in us—they are in our Buddha-nature. We have forgotten our Buddha-nature, and the way to return to it is to practice gentleness and forbearance. When people see us, what they see is our demeanor and attitude, and this can reveal a great deal about our inner state and practice. Just as we must wear clothing on our body, we need to keep this gentleness and forbearance in our heart always.

The third line says, "Sitting on the seat of sunyata (the emptiness of all phenomena)." I often tell our volunteers that doing good and

A Buddhist monk with a shaved head, wearing traditional brown robes, is shown in profile, looking towards the Earth as seen from space. The Earth is a large, glowing blue and white sphere in the center of the frame. The background is a dark, starry space with several bright stars. The monk's expression is serene and contemplative.

From Dharma Master Cheng Yen's Talks
Compiled into English by the Jing Si Abode English Editorial Team

helping others is something we as human beings should naturally do. Therefore, we should not expect to gain anything for doing them, even merits or blessings. This is true unconditional giving. When we give in this way, our heart will be free of inner impediments or attachments. Then we naturally feel inner peace and freedom from afflictions.

Every day, I tell people that we need to keep our heart free of afflictions. What are afflictions? Do we only experience afflictions when we are in adversity or some kind of suffering? Actually, any time we are attached to something we are experiencing afflictions. When things are going well for us and we are so pleased that we forget ourselves—that is also affliction. When we have been very active in volunteer work and feel we have done a lot for others—that too is affliction.

When we do good, we should not keep count. If we keep holding on to what we have done, it will be a weight in our heart that

makes peace and inner freedom impossible. We should let go of it, just as when we are walking we need to lift up our back foot in order to take a step forward. Letting go and having a mind free of attachments—this is to sit on the seat of sunyata, the empty nature of all phenomena.

As Buddhists, how should we share the Dharma with others? Through both words and actions. When we explain the Dharma teachings to others, they can hear words of the Dharma. When we live out the teachings—by giving with gratitude without expecting anything in return—they can see the Dharma in action.

With a heart of great compassion, with a manner gentle and forbearing, with a mind free of attachment—this is how we should expound the Dharma. This is also our practice in everyday life. 🌿

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-seven 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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CEO'S NOTE

Life Learning

When I visited Hualien this past July, I heard Dharma Master Cheng Yen tell the story of a recent visitor from the United States. During his visit, he showed Master a photograph of his young daughter chatting with a goose by the bank of a river. It was a heartwarming image: a young girl, just two or three, connecting with another creature in the way that only an innocent child can.

But the photo had been taken long ago, he explained. Now his daughter is a high school student of sixteen, and he longs for the carefree days of her childhood. Now she spends each day at school, and each day he worries about her safety. With so many instances of violence in American schools, he just hopes that she will never be affected.

Considering the truly worrying phenomenon of violence in schools, Master Cheng Yen offered an apt analogy: just as seeds require the right combination of soil, water, and sunlight if they are to sprout and grow, so too do children need to be nurtured from an early age in a positive environment that allows them to grow in body, mind, and spirit.

Because every child needs the right environment in which to grow, education cannot only be about knowledge, but must also focus on character. This is why Tzu Chi volunteers all across the United States provide programs that nurture children with compassion and lead them to grow as individuals. Not only do volunteers hold weekly Tzu Chi Academies in twenty-two cities nationwide, they also regularly offer specially-designed character education programs in several public schools, as well as at Tzu Chi's own schools in California and Texas.

Each of these programs is aimed at providing students with opportunities to develop positive character regardless of the environment they grow up in. Whether these children live in poor homes without daily necessities, or even in violent neighborhoods where they fear for their safety, through the nurturing care of Tzu Chi volunteers, they are taught to develop a moral compass that they can always rely on and are guided to forge strong values so that they can make the right decisions no matter what they face in life.

With so many temptations in our society today, it is more important than ever that all children have the opportunity to develop moral values early on in their life journeys. Dharma Master Cheng Yen often reminds us that we need to recruit more volunteers—more bodhisattvas—because there are so many children out there who need this positive guidance in their lives. Only when there are many good people will society be harmonious and the world be free from disaster, and it will take many such people to reach this goal.

In a country as big as the United States, this is not an easy target to achieve. But, as Master Cheng Yen reminds us, “Nothing is easy to the unwilling. No road is too long for those already on it.” I am truly grateful to Tzu Chi's education team and to all Tzu Chi volunteers who pave that road each and every day by spreading Great Love in schools all across the country. Thank you for your dedication and for the difference you make. 🌱

Han Huang

Building Character through Education

As the children of today grow into the adults of tomorrow, it is not enough for their minds to be filled with knowledge. Their hearts must also be filled with kindness, compassion, integrity, gratitude, respect, and love.

Through Tzu Chi Academy, Happy Campus Program, Character Education Program, Tzu Chi Great Love schools, and partnerships with public schools, volunteers all across the country cultivate the pillars of the future by nurturing the love in their hearts.

CAMP MANDARIN CLAS

物惜福
接邊牛



ALCOLM X 2013 SUMMER

且知足。
及以善

A 2013 summer camp student in San Francisco copies a Jing Si Aphorism: 愛護身邊物，惜福且知足。(Let us cherish and be content with what we have and take good care of everything around us.)
Photo: Colin Legerton



Students respectfully serve tea to one another.
Photo: Sheng Ping Liu

Providing What They Need

Fay Chou

I was lazy. I loved to watch TV. I didn't exercise. And I didn't help around the house." That was before. Now, Lisa has changed. She is friendlier toward others. She helps her mom around the house. She no longer talks back to her teachers. Elsewhere in her class, Fanny says of her classmates, "We often argue, but now we understand everyone is special in his or her own way." Such is the fruition of Tzu Chi's character education program in Lytle Creek Elementary School.

Tzu Chi volunteers first started serving the San Bernardino community many years ago by providing free medical clinic outreaches, book donations, winter relief distributions, and family care. Since the free clinics were often held at Lytle Creek Elementary, then-principal Edwin Gomez had a chance to witness firsthand the warm care of Tzu Chi volunteers as they served the community.

Wishing to instill that same selfless spirit in his own students, he asked Tzu Chi volunteers to start teaching biweekly character education lessons at his school.

When the program first started in 2006, there were only six Tzu Chi volunteers involved. They often gathered at volunteer Diana Mu's house and brainstormed until they could not think anymore. They would go to her house after work and labor late into the night to make props that could be used to teach gratitude, respect, and love. They started with first and second graders and accompanied these students as they advanced through elementary school. By the summer of 2013, some students had received Tzu Chi's character education for six straight years, building a strong moral foundation for the rest of their lives.

“For the first time, they understood the joy of doing something meaningful together.”

Creating a Positive Environment

San Bernardino is the second-poorest city in the whole country behind only Detroit. The students who attend Lytle Creek live in one of the poorest areas in San Bernardino, in the shadow of a power plant surrounded by barbed wire and prone to occasional loud explosions. Due to its poverty, the city is dangerously crime-ridden and violent.

Feeling deserted and forgotten, in the early days local residents often responded to Tzu Chi's free clinic events with surprise and disbelief. "Why are you here?" they asked. But those who received medical care became familiar with Tzu Chi. Maria had attended Tzu Chi's free clinic three times in the past, and was anxiously awaiting the next one. After receiving so much help, she thanked the volunteers profusely, saying, "You take such good care of me. You are wonderful people, really nice, so nice!"

All of Maria's children go to Lytle Creek. "My youngest son tells me, 'Those Chinese ladies are so adorable! When the kids come to the class, they are just amazingly nice to them.'" Because of Tzu Chi's classes, her children have begun to change. "Now they take their plates to clean after dinner and brush their teeth without my having to remind them."

With so many temptations in poor communities like San Bernardino, Lytle Creek teachers asked Tzu Chi to design lesson plans specifically geared at teaching children how to resist temptations. In addition to teaching the children how to protect themselves, not to trust people blindly, and not to go off with strangers, the volunteers

designed age-appropriate monthly themes to encourage positive behavior and strengthen the children's sense of responsibility. For instance, the first graders were taught how to take care of themselves. The second graders learned about common courtesy, the fourth graders about taking responsibility, and the sixth graders about giving.

As school teachers have schedules to keep and goals to meet, some were a little reluctant at first to give up forty minutes of class time for a character education lesson. However, when the students started becoming calmer and more polite while also improving academically, their teachers discovered that they actually had more time for class management. Therefore, other teachers began asking Tzu Chi volunteers to go teach in their classes as well, and parents told the school that they wanted their children to attend Tzu Chi's classes. When other schools heard about these positive results, they also requested this service from Tzu Chi. Unfortunately, though the interest is there and the results are positive, it is difficult to find enough qualified teachers



Students enthusiastically participate in Tzu Chi's character education class. Photo: Fay Chou



By tearing down old decorations and announcements on the last day of school, students learn that, though young, they can still give and help others. Photo: Fay Chou

able to volunteer during the school day, so this program has not yet been able to expand to meet all these needs.

Since 2012, one other Southern California public school has also begun to enjoy Tzu Chi's character education: Charles H. Lee Elementary in Azusa. In addition to regular classes every other week, Tzu Chi volunteers teach character education in school-wide assemblies twice a year. Second-grade teacher JoAnn Chiles said, "The story of Tzu Chi's bamboo bank era and the video about Tzu Chi's relief efforts after Hurricane Sandy opened the kids' minds and hearts. Now the kids are a lot more caring."

Although not officially part of the character education program, second graders of Ekstrand Elementary in San Dimas, California, received a full-day environmental protection lesson on March 28, 2013, when they learned how to make compost. Tzu Chi volunteers presented a compost bin to the school that day and brought twenty-four buckets of compost for the kids to use on their small vegetable gardens. Principal Lucinda Newton greatly appreciated Tzu Chi's work with their students: "The more you know and understand about the world, the more you will know how to take care of it and coexist with it."

On the last day of school in 2013, one of Lytle Creek's character education classes was

assigned to clean the cafeteria walls, while the other class was tasked with cleaning up the playground for the kindergarteners. The lesson focused on "giving." It showed the children that even though they are young, they can still give and help others. They happily tore down old posters and announcements from the walls in the cafeteria and had a ball picking up trash, wiping down picnic tables and chairs, cleaning up the slide, and sweeping sand back into the sandbox. For the first time, they understood the joy of doing something meaningful together. "Teamwork! Teamwork! Teamwork!" they shouted as they shook hands and hugged one another after their hard work. "How do you feel?" Tzu Chi volunteers asked. "Great!" "It feels good to help people!" "We should do this more often!"

Taking Their Lessons Home

Even when surrounding neighborhoods are violent, schools like Lytle Creek are supported by their communities, so they remain reasonably safe from gang violence. But what happens when children go home? Can they stay safe and bring the lessons of character education into their everyday lives?

Fanny's home is full of people. There are more aunts living there than she can count, and her grandparents live with them too. Fanny's father works two jobs. Since he used to change



jobs often, her family was always on the move. But now Fanny has been at Lytle Creek for three uninterrupted years, and she feels she has learned a lot from Tzu Chi's character education class. "It is not a normal class. It teaches about behavior and your attitude. And culture. It changed my behavior, especially after seeing those videos about people's conditions. We should help people if they need help and be respectful."

Tammy was born in Mexico. She came to the United States with her family when she was two and has lived in many different places since then. However, she was lucky enough to stay in Lytle Creek Elementary for the past six years and has benefited from Tzu Chi's character education classes since first grade. Tammy says she has learned about kindness, helping others, and saying good words.

Kelly's parents are divorced. She likes to go to school because she can play with her friends. But going to school also makes her nervous because "anything can happen." Graduating from elementary school makes Kelly sad. She worries that she will never see her friends again, including the Tzu Chi volunteers, whom she calls "nice, friendly, and awesome." She likes to hear them read Jing Si Aphorisms aloud from the posters, even in Chinese. "I would like to learn at least three foreign languages: Chinese, Japanese, and French."

Although she is only twelve, Kelly already feels the pressure of life. When asked about her expectations for the future, Kelly replies, "I can't tell, because anything can happen. I don't know anything about the future." Luckily, Kelly has found a way to release her stress: through reading. Her mother, Concepción, says Kelly did not like to read before, but now she reads for hours on end.

From Concepción's account of happenings

in their neighborhood, it is not difficult to understand Kelly's anxiety. "About two years ago, a neighbor's body was found right in front of our house. The body was cut open. It was covered with blood, terrible. The police shut down our street, the siren was sounding, the kids sat on the floor crying. We were all crying, because it was unbelievable.

"Another time, a young guy passed our house, running with a bag of drugs. There were helicopters, police, sirens. . . . The guy jumped from our car to the next house and they caught him right there."

Concepción reports that in the park that they cross when she takes her kids to school, young men are frequently robbing people, even using weapons. "It's difficult, because as we live here, we live with the violence." Although Concepción loves exercising, she stopped going to her aerobics class in the park after a man was attacked nearby during her class. "They opened the man's stomach," Concepción recalls. "It was shocking. We all said, 'Oh, my God!' Where can we find safety? What's going on in our city?"

Since a lot of people are unemployed, Concepción says many people knock on her door asking for food and work. "They say they will cut our grass for ten dollars, or, 'For thirty dollars I will clean your car.' They just keep on lowering their prices because nobody will hire them."

Will the children of this community face the same dire future if they are not given a moral compass to guide them?

It Takes a Village

Jeanette Perez began teaching at Lytle Creek recently, at the end of 2012. Although it was a bigger school with more students than she was used to, she was not concerned that

she did not know anyone there at the time. "I came to work for the kids. I know them. They know me. That's enough."

Ms. Perez believes it is crucial to have the support of parents for the children to truly benefit. "Parents and teachers must work together. It's a partnership. When there are no consequences at home, when you don't get reprimanded, you just don't care."

Even though she has only been at the school for a few short months, Ms. Perez sees the clear impact that Tzu Chi's character education class can make on her students. Right after the tea ceremony class, "the kids were all calm for the rest of the day. They were at ease and at peace with themselves."

"They must read a hundred-page book per week. It's the standard," she explains. "At the beginning of the school year, they weren't reading that much. Punishment is losing recess, lunch detention, etc. Now many have developed the habit of reading." Her most rewarding moment, says Perez, is when the class reviews

something taught months ago, and a student exclaims, "Oh, I get it now!"

"Even if I get through to just one student, it will all be worth it. It makes you want to come back the next day."

Master Cheng Yen has said, "There are no students who cannot be taught; only teachers who do not know how to teach." An African proverb also tells us, "It takes a whole village to raise a child." Education is important. Even more important are caring parents, teachers who know how to teach, and the love of caring people. When teachers, parents, and volunteers work together, children benefit. 🌱



#92, 103, 105

The children's names have been changed to protect their identities.

Over time, we can build great character, achieve great success, and cultivate great virtue.

Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen



*After cleaning up the playground, students feel the joy of helping others.
Photo: Fay Chou*

Character Education

in Public Schools

Judith Legerton

Ever since I was in first grade I wanted to be a teacher. I wanted to share with my students the joy and adventure of learning; of becoming a productive, caring, and moral person; and of always reaching for the stars for themselves and others. My dream came true when I began teaching in 1968. I spent my career teaching elementary school in California—the majority in second grade—and retired in 2010, having lived my dream. Along the way, I hope that I instilled in my students the desire to keep learning, to treat others with dignity and respect, to be a valuable member of their community, and to give back to others.

Character education is an important part of every child's growth and development. Ideally it is taught in the home with the parents as role models and guides. Often this is not the

Youth Honor Adults for Mentorship, Encouragement

Recently the young men and women of the La Cañada second ward of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints hosted an appreciation dinner for several local community leaders and teachers. Each youth invited an adult who had been an influence for good in their life. As each young person introduced their guest, they shared personal experiences illustrating how their guest had made a difference in their life. The teachers, coaches, instructors, scout advisors and community leaders had taught, mentored and encouraged these young people to be their best selves and to face challenges with a good attitude.



GOOD INFLUENCE — Judi Legerton, left, a Glendale teacher was honored by Jacob Walters for being an influence for good in his life. Youth from the La Cañada ward of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints honored numerous mentors, coaches and community leaders for their good influence.

See YOUTH, page 20

case, so schools need to teach our students how to become moral, ethical people who are contributing members of their communities both locally and nationally.

Today, character education is taught more formally than it was when I began teaching. There are many programs that deal with specific topics such as drugs, bullying, being safe and avoiding "stranger danger," as well as more general programs that address etiquette, manners, being truthful, and so on. There are specific programs written for each grade level and a specific number of minutes allotted each week, as mandated by the California State Board of Education.

What is a Friend?



In one exercise, second graders consider what it means to be a friend.

In recent years, though, there has been increasing emphasis on higher scores on yearly state exams, which leads school districts and teachers to stress the subjects that are tested at the expense of other valuable topics such as character education. Although a certain number of minutes are mandated for character education and programs are available, it is often difficult to fit in the required minutes while preparing for the standardized tests, so character education is often shortchanged.

In my experience, teachers respond to this in a variety of ways. The first step usually starts on the first day of school. The teacher begins by having games and activities for the children to get acquainted and learn about each other to start building a community where it is safe to learn and grow as a person. The safer the community, the more learning will take place.

For example, one year one of my second-grade students had prosthetic legs from the knees down. On the first day of school we introduced ourselves and talked about ourselves. This young man told his classmates about his legs and how he dealt with them, giving an example of a mule ride he took to the bottom of the Grand Canyon. The other students asked many questions which he answered honestly and forthrightly. He was very independent and expected to be treated that way. This led to a great discussion on how we are all different and how we want to be treated by others.

Character education is an important part of every child's growth and development.

We brainstormed ways to be of assistance to him and to each other, role-played them, and practiced them. Through these exercises, the students became more aware of and kinder to each other.

One day, one of the young man's prosthetic legs came off during recess. The other students retrieved it, gave it to him, and got a yard duty teacher to help him. They were protective of him and did not allow any other students to tease him. As this boy progressed in school, the students continued their close friendship with him, and no one teased or bothered him.

There are many other examples of how teachers deal with character education in the classroom. There are certain topics, such as bullying, that are more prevalent at school, so teachers will focus more on these issues that affect their students on a daily basis. They grab "teachable moments"—such as instances of bullying, stealing, or littering during recess and lunch—to engage in role-playing, show videos, do problem-solving exercises, have small group and whole class discussions, make posters to encourage and promote a desired behavior, hold hands-on activities to solve problems, and so on.

One time, I had a student who was bullied during lunch. After lunch, the whole class brainstormed together on how we could each help the student, the ways that the student could help himself, and what other students



A friend is someone who shares with you.

Maria



A friend is someone that I can depend on.

Sheila



A friend is someone who sticks up for you.

Mike



could do when they witnessed bullying. We made a poster of ways to help and put it up in front of the classroom, students wrote down the things they could do to help and pasted them on their desks, and they role-played what to do when certain situations arose—situations that they thought of themselves. We reviewed the list over the weeks that followed and reported back real-life success stories: how they either stood up for themselves, helped someone else, or reported the situation to a teacher when it was too big for them to handle on their own. So, although character education may not always be handled formally, it is taught through teachable moments and lessons that address what the students are facing at a given point in time.

In addition, I thought it was important that my students not only know how to respond to negative situations, but also how to create and appreciate positive ones. "Random Acts of Kindness" are rarely recognized, but I found that highlighting these acts was a good tool to encourage students to look for good in others and to motivate them to do good for others. At the beginning of the year, I would show my class a gold-colored coin and tell them that I would give it to someone who completed a "Random Act of Kindness," such as picking up trash, helping a fellow student on the yard, or helping a classmate with class work. When I saw a student doing such a good deed, I would give that student the coin in front of the entire class and tell everyone what that student did to earn it. Then that student would be in charge of the coin. When he or she found a classmate doing a

good deed, he or she would have a few minutes to tell the class about the good deed and then give the coin to the deserving student.

Eventually, I would have two or three coins circulating through the class at any given time. The coin usually changed hands within a week, and many students would receive it several times throughout the year. The students became more thoughtful of others and began to enjoy helping others. At the end of the year we would celebrate together all of the "Random Acts of Kindness" they had performed. As my students journeyed out of elementary school and into the rest of their lives, I always hoped that the character lessons they learned would help them become positive, contributing members of society.

As I watched *USTzuChi360°* videos online, I was also impressed with the quality of the character education lessons offered by Tzu Chi, and the joy, loving-kindness, and compassion with which the teachers taught them. They are doing a marvelous job aiding teachers in this very important area of education. The schools and students are lucky to have them. 🌱

Good morals provide hope for humanity and are the foundation for happiness

Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen



A friend is someone to play with and to share with.

Patricio



A friend is a nice person.

Romany A.



A friend is someone that talks with you.

Lupita



The Quiet Dignity of Tea

Meishiang H. Hsieh | Translated by Phil Hsieh

*Serving tea is an opportunity
to learn the joy of giving.
Photo: Brian Cheng*

Before I gave my first introductory lesson on tea drinking at Pathfinder Academy Community School in San Jose, I had to keep reminding myself to stay calm. I felt like I would be exploring totally unknown territory. After all, Pathfinder is not an ordinary place. It is a charter high school primarily for youths who have been in and out of the juvenile justice system or have been rejected by regular schools.

For more than ten years, Tzu Chi volunteers have been visiting Pathfinder once a week to show the students that there are people who care about them. Each week, volunteers serve lunch to students, faculty, and staff, giving them a rare opportunity to learn about some of the

many aspects of Chinese culture. However, this visit was the first time these students would be exposed to Chinese tea culture: a gentle, refined custom that is unfamiliar to most Americans, not to mention these hyper-energetic students who never sit still for very long in a classroom. Further complicating the matter, an exam was scheduled for the same day as the visit, and we were told that some students would be absent for the whole day just to avoid taking the exam.

It was a chilly November morning. At the peak of morning rush hour, another volunteer, Nancy Wang, and I spent an hour and a half on the highway before finally arriving at the school. I was a little nervous as we finally got out of the car.



When the bell rang, there were only a few students slouching in their chairs. Latecomers ambled in as if they were early. The wait for the students seemed endless. Nineteen students finally showed up—five more than we expected. In addition, seven teachers and even the principal joined us. As the room was filled with the soothing melody of "Three Variations of Yangguan Pass" being played on the guqin (Chinese zither), we were amazed to see the students slowly begin to sit up straight.

We asked them all to calm themselves through a short meditation: breathing in silence and exhaling with a smile. The students were surprisingly focused, and the room felt like a silent forest. Only the music filled the air. One teacher later told us that it was hard to get these kids to sit quietly for even three minutes. On this day, they stayed attentive for an entire hour.

Imperfection Enriches Flavor

We welcomed each student joyfully and treated them as honored guests. We then told them the legend of "Oriental Beauty" tea.

"Like the tea leaves themselves, the story is both sweet and beautiful. In early summer, small green leafhoppers love to bite the young leaves of the tea trees. Their bites create holes about the size of a pinpoint, causing the leaves to curl up and turn yellow. This natural phenomenon produces a unique honey fragrance. While this kind of tea falls into the category of oolong tea, it also resembles black tea in several respects. When prepared, this tea has a red color and a smooth aftertaste. In a transparent tea pot, you can see the tender tea leaves dance about beautifully in the water. As one story goes, Queen Elizabeth II liked the tea so much that she named it Oriental Beauty."

Many of these teenagers grew up deprived of love. With this in mind, we continued the

story with a metaphor: "Our life journey is full of imperfect moments but, just like those tea leaves bitten by insects, it can produce a sweet fragrance of maturity. The hills and valleys of our lives make the journey fascinating and worthwhile."

Through detailed examples, we led these youths into the lives of Hakka tea farmers. The students began to appreciate the hard work and care involved in growing and preparing tea, from harvesting the tea at the plantation to processing and brewing.

We then placed dried tea leaves on a spatula and passed it around for close-up appreciation. We also demonstrated the preferred way of holding the spatula to make it easy for the next person to receive it. This gave the students the opportunity to see that even a seemingly trivial action can help make a connection between people. By simply observing tea leaves, the students could learn to appreciate the importance of being considerate to others.

We brought up another important point: Oriental Beauty tea requires insect bites, which precludes the use of pesticides. As a result, tea drinkers can enjoy a refreshing beverage free of pollutants. By this point, the students were all eagerly looking forward to tasting the tea.

VIP Treatment

The tea we brought to the class had been finely selected. First we demonstrated the proper way to serve tea and then invited a few volunteers to come up and serve the principal and teachers. We were all a little shocked when five husky male students stood up to volunteer. They followed our procedures and moves perfectly, without missing any details. They walked in straight lines, made sharp ninety-degree turns, greeted the faculty members with a fifteen-degree bow, and then knelt down to



*Volunteers share the joy of tea with students of Pathfinder Academy.
Photo: Brian Cheng*

serve them. The whole classroom was filled with smiles, joy, and whispered praise.

This may have been the first time these teachers experienced the Chinese tradition of showing respect to teachers. With a cup of tea in her hand, one of the teachers was so moved that tears appeared at the corners of her eyes. "This makes my whole week worthwhile," she told us.

Later, the students served each other, each treating the others as VIPs. We also taught them a prayer to contemplate while sipping tea: create a good intention during the first sip, then speak kind words, and finally do good deeds. After drinking the tea, we invited everyone to share their thoughts and impressions.

One student said that the feeling of being respected was so good that he decided to treat his family the same way. This prompted a teacher to explain, "In the process of growing up, most of these students rarely, if ever, experience the joy of being respected." Volunteer Irene Yang told the students, "If you keep thoughts of gratitude, respect, and love in your mind, they will become second nature. In return, you will be treated with respect and kindness." As final remarks, the principal reminded students that

Tzu Chi volunteers come to the school every week. He encouraged students to pay this love forward by giving something back to their community or helping Tzu Chi's efforts.

When the bell rang again, it was time to say goodbye. The students lined up and hugged us one by one to say thank you. Many asked us if they could help clean the room before the next class. To us, they were so kind and innocent. Who said these were troubled youths? I prayed for them, and I hope that this tea-drinking experience will leave them with a warm and profound memory and plant the seeds of kindness.

I strongly believe that as long as they feel respected and cared about, these so-called "troubled youths" will not become a burden to their communities, and society will see fewer troubled families and more kind families devoted to love. 🌿

When our mind is calm and still, we will naturally be disciplined. When we are disciplined, we can live in peace and happiness.

Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen

Believe. Achieve. Succeed.



Tzu Chi Volunteers

Each summer, before the new school year dawns, twenty-five thousand low-income families in the Greater Dallas area are invited to the mayor's annual Back to School Fair. For these families, the fair is their one opportunity to receive free uniforms, school supplies, immunizations, and physicals before the school year begins. Even as early August temperatures soar well into triple digits, thousands of parents and children line up before dawn and wait patiently for hours to receive these necessities.

Since 2005, Dallas Tzu Chi volunteers have been a constant presence at the Back to School Fair, respectfully presenting uniforms to students with a ninety-degree bow. In 2012 alone, volunteers distributed three thousand uniforms in all sizes. The same year, they were joined for the first time by six students from the Barack Obama Male Leadership Academy at B.F. Darrell (BOMLA) who gave up their free time to put compassion into action by helping other students.

This partnership came about through BOMLA's principal, Nakia Douglas, whose deep connection with Tzu Chi dates back over a decade. Douglas explained that his relationship with volunteers like YuanLiang and Mei Ling "isn't just a friendship, this is a family." So when he found himself unexpectedly called on to start a new school—the first all-male public high school in North Texas—he knew he could count on his Tzu Chi family for support. Three years

later, this thriving partnership has provided a wealth of valuable lessons and opportunities for the young men of BOMLA.

Nakia Douglas began his career teaching kindergarten, first, and fourth grade. He then moved into administration as a school principal. "I still see myself as a teacher," he said, "I just have a larger classroom with more students." When he received the call to lead the newly-conceived BOMLA, he embarked on a yearlong journey to learn the best practices of other successful schools. He then integrated those methods into the core values of BOMLA.

The young men who attend the Barack Obama Male Leadership Academy at B.F. Darrell are surrounded by positive role models and examples of success. The name of their school reminds them each day of the nation's first African-American president as well as the city's first African-American principal, Benjamin Franklin Darrell: two men who made history with their lives. And every day they interact with their principal, a man who is deeply and personally invested in each student. Principal

In June 2012, Principal Douglas led four students to Hualien to experience Tzu Chi culture firsthand. Photo: Kunlin Jiang





*In monthly Jing Si Aphorism classes, volunteers share inspiring words with students.
Photo: Pengfei Wu*

Douglas strives to prepare his students for life both through their classroom lessons and by example, reminding them always that “character is what a man does when nobody’s looking.”

The mission of BOMLA—to develop young men into effective leaders—is not just to impart knowledge, but also to build character. In a community where many students come from impoverished backgrounds without a father figure in their lives, Principal Douglas, who also grew up without a father, provides a positive role model, showing them how to become better husbands and fathers.

Prior to the foundation of BOMLA, Tzu Chi volunteers supported Principal Douglas at his previous school by providing uniforms, physicals, and immunizations for his students each year. As soon as BOMLA opened in August 2011, Tzu Chi volunteers began providing monthly Jing Si Aphorism classes to all of the school’s students. Through games and discussions, volunteers reinforce the core values of BOMLA through the wise words of Dharma Master Cheng Yen.

In June 2012, Tzu Chi and BOMLA drew even closer when Principal Douglas and four students visited Tzu Chi’s spiritual home in Hualien. According to Principal Douglas, the visit made an immediate, deep impact on him and his students. He said, “When we were volunteering at the hospital, going to the Silent

Mentor visit at the hospital, and going into the recycling plants, the student’s minds started churning. The first question they asked me was ‘What can we do back at the campus?’”

Principal Douglas answered their question with one of his own, “What do you think you should do?” These questions led to conversation and action. After their return, the students started recycling projects and online tutorial programs, and began to develop into leaders in their school and community. “The trip served the exact purpose it needed to,” Principal Douglas explained.

Nurtured by Principal Douglas and their teachers, and further inspired by their experiences with Tzu Chi in both Dallas and Hualien, the students of BOMLA are already giving back to their community and becoming positive role models. The partnership between Tzu Chi and BOMLA is still growing, but it is already bearing fruit. 🌱



Compiled from reports by Xiaoqi Wang, Citong Wang, and Jichun Wu, and episodes of USTzuChi360° and Life Wisdom.

Propriety is revealed with every action and every movement.

Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen



Opening a Window to the World

Colin Legerton

Waiting for the bus with his girlfriend on a summer afternoon, nineteen-year-old JaQuan Rice seemed to have his whole life ahead of him. A moment later, it was taken away. The shooters, aged fourteen and twenty, will likely spend the rest of their lives behind bars; the victim's girlfriend will spend hers with the physical scars and the haunting memory.

In that single brief moment, one life was lost, two were thrown away, and one was forever scarred. But more could have easily been at risk. Neighborhood children can often be found running around that bus stop; at 1 PM on a summer Monday, they could easily have been caught in the crossfire. Instead, dozens of neighborhood children were safely ensconced in the building up the road, being educated and nurtured in the classrooms of Malcolm X Academy.

Here in Hunters Point—one of the poorest and most violent neighborhoods of San Francisco, California—safe spaces are vitally important. Outside the school walls, children are faced with poverty, drugs and alcohol, unstable homes, and the ever-present possibility of violence. But these children did not choose where they were born. The Buddha taught that we all come into this world because of karma; our birth in this life is the result of the causes and conditions of our previous lives. Whatever led us to this life, we can still improve our own future—both in this life and the ones beyond—but only if we encounter the right conditions and create the right causes.

Each day, San Francisco Tzu Chi volunteers provide the conditions to grow, succeed, and improve by bringing hope and encouragement to students at six local elementary schools through the Happy Campus Program. To encourage students to attend school, they provide uniforms to families who cannot afford them and recognize perfect attendance with monthly smoothie parties. For many students, these smoothies are not only an encouragement to keep learning and a recognition for their accomplishments, they are often their only opportunity to enjoy fresh fruit in any form.

In addition, volunteers tailor programs to address specific needs in each school. For the recently immigrated low-income families of Gordon J. Lau Elementary, volunteers distribute weekend food backpacks. At two other schools they have provided individual tutoring sessions several times a week.

At Malcolm X, the need is especially great, so "Happy Campus" has steadily morphed into "Happy Family." Recognizing that only so much can be accomplished during the eight hours of the school day, volunteers have begun to reach out to help students in the remaining hours of their day by connecting with their families as well.

Volunteers have been able to venture into neighborhoods like Hunters Point because of their strong connections with the students, who eagerly and cheerfully lead them home. Often, their "blue sky and white cloud" uniforms are immediately recognized by parents even as they approach.

At the first home they visited, volunteers received quite a shock. After opening a front door that lacked a knob, they found a living room which had a television but no couch or chairs, a kitchen with a refrigerator but no food, bedrooms without beds. They learned that none of the children in the house had ever slept in a bed.

Understanding that more stability in their home life would help these students have the confidence to grow in their studies and their character, the volunteers set out to help this family furnish their house. Following the philosophy of "reduce, reuse, recycle," volunteers found furniture online that others were simply giving away and moved it in. They saw a clear change in the young children—they were no longer ashamed to tell their friends about their lives at home; they were excited that they now slept in beds.

With these positive results, volunteers then furnished several more homes and are still just beginning. Volunteers bring in furniture one piece at a time, ensuring that they increase



their interaction with each family and that each family can gradually become accustomed to their newly furnished homes. By extending their support from the classroom into the home, the volunteers help students feel supported in all their environments and provide them with the conditions to succeed.

Tzu Chi's support does not stop at the school gates, nor does it end at the conclusion of the school year. Each summer, the local YMCA runs a free six-week summer camp at Malcolm X Academy. During the camp, children are given a safe space to read, learn, and play; they are fed nutritious breakfasts and lunches and offered opportunities to experience the world through organized trips to the zoo, museums, and amusement parks: places where they can learn, play, and experience new environments where people act and behave differently than in the world they know.

Each Tuesday and Thursday, volunteers supplement the YMCA's program with Mandarin and flower arrangement classes, math tutoring, and special lunch meetings where volunteer mentors engage one-on-one with their young mentees. Just as they do throughout the school year, mentors eat, chat, and play board games with their young mentees, who are often struggling, troubled, or outcast students. For perhaps the only time in their week, these children engage with someone who is focused completely on them—someone they can count on being there every single week, someone they can confide in, someone who cares.

In class, volunteers choose a different theme for the students' focus each summer. In 2013, it was Jing Si Aphorisms. Each week in Mandarin class—a class led by college students and their high school aids—the young students were taught a new aphorism. They learned the meaning and how to both say and write it in English and Chinese. And then, the volunteers brought the aphorisms to life.

To give meaning to the aphorism "We need to overcome difficulties, not be overcome by them," students were taught the story of

eighth-century Dharma Master Jianzhen, who vowed to spread the Buddha's teachings to Japan and then embarked on five unsuccessful journeys across the sea before succeeding on his sixth attempt. They not only learned his story but had a chance to reenact it for their families and friends on the final day of the camp in a choreographed performance recreating the boat journey. Through weeks of practicing their performance, they learned firsthand that overcoming obstacles requires perseverance.

The students were rewarded in the fifth week of camp with a half-day journey to Chinatown—a field trip which both reinforced their Mandarin lessons and offered them a window to the world beyond Hunters Point. Most of the children had never left their local community before; even some of their YMCA teachers had never visited Chinatown, a mere five miles up the road. Gathering new experiences in a fortune cookie factory and a Chinese-American heritage museum, the children also learned a lesson that directly applied to Master Jianzhen's story when they visited the Gold Mountain Monastery. "Oh," one student observed excitedly, "so a temple is just like a church!"

The Buddha taught that each person has the same inherent Buddha-nature. To be realized, that pure, innate nature needs to be uncovered and nurtured, and children need consistent positive guidance so that they can grow and learn. Even with the inner capacity to do great things, they need to be shown a path on which to foster their inner goodness.

In Hunters Point, volunteers have heard some parents say that they just hope their children will not follow the same path they



*Malcolm X students visit Gold Mountain Monastery in Chinatown. For many, this is their first trip outside Bayview-Hunters Point.
Photo: Colin Legerton*

did. They want their children to leave their dangerous neighborhood and accomplish something greater. But focusing on the negative is not enough; children need a positive goal to strive toward and someone to show the way. So Happy Campus volunteers often ask the children about what they want to be when they grow up. Once, a little boy's answer gave them quite a shock: "I want to be a robber!" he answered excitedly. Digging deeper, they learned that he wanted to make money so that he could provide for his mother. His goal was noble, but he lacked guidance, so he misguidedly followed the wrong path—the only path he knew.

In the meantime, he followed the example of the most successful people around him—drug dealers—by becoming a dealer in his own way. Whenever he found a sticker or small item on the ground, he would put it in his folder and later sell it to a classmate for a couple pennies. With his folder of assorted items, he started accumulating money a few cents at a time.

With the constant care and companionship of Tzu Chi volunteers, the boy's eyes were opened to the value in helping others. He began to donate the coins from his deals into a bamboo bank and eventually changed his

answer to the question: first, "I want to be a Tzu Chi," and then, "I want to be a parole officer." With both answers, he expanded his view. From the beginning, he wanted to help his mother; now he wanted to help many others.

Like many young students whose parents are in jail, government housing, or violent domestic situations, the boy vanished from school one day, transferred away to a new community. But on a rainy day not long after, volunteers saw him again as he stepped off a bus near his old school. He ran through the rain toward the volunteers, tightly grasping his bamboo bank full of coins. But he tripped and fell, and his coins were sent flying across the asphalt. As he picked them up one by one and returned them to the bamboo bank, the teary-eyed volunteers accepted his heartfelt contribution.

The greatest gift children can receive is neither money nor things. They need genuine care, consistent interaction, and wise guidance. Given the right opportunities, all children can cultivate the goodness that is already inside them, and the world will be a better place for it. 🌱



Magical Seaweed

One day, as volunteer Roxanne Buchwitz was eating her lunch, a little girl came over and pointed to some seaweed on the table. "What's that?" she asked. Roxanne let her try a piece, and then the girl asked for another. "Well," Roxanne answered, seeing the opportunity before her, "if you want another piece, you'll need to finish your homework first." To her surprise, the girl immediately did just that.

Before long, Roxanne was visited by a little boy: "If I clean up some trash, can I have some seaweed?" Word of the delicious, mysterious seaweed spread among the students, and a new reward system was born. Students earned

a point each for examples of good behavior and for remembering to raise their hands and greet their teachers politely. For correctly reciting a Jing Si Aphorism the week after it was taught, three points. If they misbehaved, points were taken away. Each time a child successfully reached ten points, he or she was rewarded with a pack of seaweed for an after-lunch snack.

Each seaweed pack costs just a quarter, but the motivational value is priceless. The positive reinforcement for good behavior builds positive habits, and the children learn that they can truly achieve when they set a clear goal, understand the steps that lead to that goal, and persevere to accomplish them. 🌱



Tzu Chi Academy Seeds of Goodness

Tzu Chi Volunteers | Translated by Hua Jung Lee & Cassie Pan

Each weekend, in twenty-two cities across the country, thousands of students attend classes at their local Tzu Chi Academy. The humanistic education that Tzu Chi offers at these academies is focused not simply on knowledge learning, which most traditional Chinese schools provide, but also on nurturing children's character through activities such as storytelling with Jing Si Aphorisms, tea ceremony, environmental protection exercises, and so on. Many parents choose to send their children to Tzu Chi Academy each weekend because of this humanistic education.

These classes are based on the Jing Si Aphorism Teaching model developed by the Tzu Chi Teachers Association. Through this model, teachers adapt Dharma Master Cheng Yen's Jing Si Aphorisms into curriculum that stresses manners, character, and life education. Teachers first choose Jing Si Aphorisms that are age-appropriate, simple, and easy to remember, then they bring the concepts to life through storytelling and inspire their students to live their lives with such values and character. The purpose of providing humanistic education is to foster children with vision and character to guide them through their lives.

Teachers Lead by Example

In order to successfully deliver Jing Si Aphorism lessons, teachers first study Jing Si Aphorisms themselves. Through their own experience, they provide a model of high moral standards in their classrooms. They create a loving atmosphere with bright smiles and caring attitudes and give students a feeling of home at school. Thus, students become more active and sharing in this warm environment.

"Dharma Master Cheng Yen taught us that in order to start a cycle of love, we should treat children with sincerity so children will respond with sincerity," said Xiufang Shen, a Tzu Chi Academy teacher in Cupertino, California. In such a learning environment, both teachers and students have the support to review what they learn from their own mistakes and purify their minds.

Zhimei Wang, an eighth-grade teacher at San Jose Tzu Chi Academy, shared that older children do not like to simply follow teachers' directions. In order to inspire them, she looks for learning opportunities in real life that students can learn from. Ms. Wang has confessed to her eighth grade students that she used to punish her own children when they made mistakes but always felt very sorry afterwards. She also constantly shares suggestions for better ways for them to interact with their parents and tells them about touching moments in her own life. "I hope they will remember that only if we keep a peaceful, clean Earth can we enjoy our own lives. Children in the United States have more resources, so they should take more responsibility in society."

Teachers are often the ones who gain the most by delivering Jing Si Aphorism lessons. Xiaorong Zhu, a teacher from Irvine Tzu Chi Academy who also holds a doctorate in Chemical Engineering, said with a smile that she used to be tough and aggressive in business. When she shouted in her office on the third floor, people on the ground floor could hear her clearly. But she has changed dramatically after seven years of teaching at Tzu Chi Academy, since she has seen that what follows us in life is not our success, but rather our morals and conduct.

One reason Jing Si Aphorisms make an effective curriculum is that they offer an opportunity for people to consider values and actions in a calm, cool setting. During this process, it is easy to uncover and eliminate our anger, greed, and ignorance. Through self-reflection, we have the opportunity to clear away our confusion and unrealistic expectations.

Parents Provide the Model

It is extremely important for parents to be good role models. Master Cheng Yen said that it is difficult to solve children's behavioral issues if they receive negative influence from their family. And if such issues are not addressed, they may create problems for society in the future. Therefore, Master Cheng Yen encourages teachers in elementary and middle school to help children build positive character. She said, "From early childhood education to elementary school, teachers need to educate children to be polite, respectful to teachers, able to take care of themselves, and willing to share chores, in addition to passing on basic knowledge. Moving up to middle school and high school, teachers' responsibilities are to teach students to be responsible for themselves without overly relying on their parents."

Paulina Luan, CEO of Tzu Chi Education Foundation, added, "In order to be children's role models, adults should vow to correct their own negative behaviors." Jinyan Yang, a parent at San Jose Tzu Chi Academy in Northern California, and Mengjie Lin, a parent at San Dimas Tzu Chi Academy in Southern California, have demonstrated this by taking action in their own lives.

Jinyan Yang has been a Tzu Chi volunteer for more than a decade. She first enrolled her daughter in Tzu Chi Academy when she turned four, and then sent her to learn Chinese and receive character education every Saturday for six years. She and her husband left the engineering field to open a pizzeria several years

ago. Following the Jing Si Aphorism, "When we are capable, we should do good deeds," they developed three delicious vegetarian pizzas and vowed to donate one-third of the amount earned on Tzu Chi volunteers' orders to Tzu Chi Foundation.

On December 8, 2012, fourth and sixth grade students of San Jose Tzu Chi Academy donated their bamboo banks to help victims of Hurricane Sandy. Six days later, there was a school shooting in Newtown, Connecticut. Hearing the sad news, Ms. Yang immediately contacted parents of her daughter's classmates. She held a pizza sale on the last day of school before winter break and donated all the proceeds to Tzu Chi to help Hurricane Sandy victims.

Ms. Mengjie Lin transformed her daughter's birthday party into a charity party to support victims of Hurricane Sandy. Ms. Lin and her daughter carefully designed an invitation that asked invitees to bring a donation instead of a gift. More than seventy people attended, bringing a total of \$850 in donations. These actions even inspired one of the guests to hold a charity party for her child's birthday as well.

Through their actions, Ms. Yang and Ms. Lin delivered an important message to their children—one of the most valuable things we can do is to help others.

Giving with Gratitude

Many schools in New York and New Jersey were shut down before Thanksgiving 2012 because of Hurricane Sandy. In Washington, DC, Tzu Chi Academy hosted a special Thanksgiving event on November 17 in which volunteers introduced "The 80/20 Lifestyle" to encourage children to be grateful to others and cherish what they have.

Attendees learned the origin of The 80/20 Lifestyle in Myanmar. Tzu Chi provided disaster



relief there after Cyclone Nargis hit in 2008 by distributing rice and other goods to many affected families. Some relief recipients were so thankful that they decided to also help others by grabbing a handful of rice each day to save and donate to those in even greater need. From their example, Master Cheng Yen began teaching the concept of eating only to eighty-percent full and donating the twenty-percent savings to help others.

In September 2012, Dallas Tzu Chi Academy invited twenty students who had been honored with special recognition to serve tea to their teachers: a symbol of great respect to their elders. With the tea, these students expressed sincere gratitude to their teachers. The first sip was to express gratitude to their teachers for the valuable lessons they learned, the second to appreciate the teachers' patience for always forgiving their mistakes, and the third to tell their teachers that they will never be forgotten.

Ms. Qijiu Chang has been teaching fifth graders in Dallas Tzu Chi Academy for nine years. It is moments like this, when her students serve her tea with sincere appreciation, that touch her heart and encourage her to continue doing what she does. She hopes her students can take the spirit of Jing Si Aphorisms home and put it into action.

Buddhism in Daily Life

Though Buddhist scriptures may seem complex, they are excellent materials for learning that can be integrated into our daily lives. In late 2011, New Jersey Tzu Chi Academy teachers drew inspiration from the Compassionate Samadhi Water Repentance to encourage children to have the courage to admit their mistakes. Teachers of younger students used a short play called "The Rock in Our Heart" to illustrate that when we commit

Students in Irvine, CA, experience the joy of helping others. Photo: Yi-Jiuan Lo



In Hawaii, students and teachers tend their organic garden together. Photo: Weixin Guo



During their June 2013 graduation ceremony, New Jersey Tzu Chi Academy students respectfully serve tea to their parents. Photo: Renjie Li



Students in Irvine, CA, learn respect through tea ceremony. Photo: Yi-Jiuan Lo



San Francisco Tzu Chi Academy students perform "Kneeling Lamb" to show gratitude to their parents in May 2013. Photo: Youcai Fu

a mistake and hide it in our heart, or when we dwell on another person's mistake, we carry a heavy burden, just like a rock in our heart. This is reflected in the aphorisms, "Getting angry is actually punishing oneself for the mistakes of others" and "Forgiving others is being kind to oneself." The teachers reminded their students to learn to have an open mind and a kind heart, to have the courage to admit their own mistakes, and to accept the mistakes of others.

In the older classes, students and teachers discussed ideas and then implemented them into a short play that addressed the greed, anger, and ignorance of human nature. Teachers taught the children the importance of speaking with sincerity and honesty, and encouraged them to employ a "spiritual eraser" by taking responsibility for their mistakes, genuinely repenting, and then erasing the mistakes by ensuring that they never occur again. When faced with another's mistake, they should use the "spiritual eraser" to eradicate the mistake from their mind instead of lingering on it.

In May 2012, Cupertino Tzu Chi Academy held a graduation ceremony featuring 120 teachers and students performing the Sutra of Profound Gratitude toward Parents together. Even though they had only thirty days to practice, everyone was able to find time to rehearse so that they could make the best of the performance, and all participants volunteered to be vegetarian for one month prior. One mother who attended was so touched that she too vowed to become vegetarian for a month.

Volunteers at Tzu Chi Academies throughout the United States use every opportunity to educate children about the importance of compassion and proper values, even encouraging their students to create their own Halloween costumes with recycled products to show their appreciation to Mother Earth.

Love Crosses an Ocean

Since 2008, Tzu Chi Academies nationwide have been collecting books, school supplies, and stuffed animals to donate to children in South Africa. Volunteer teachers also encourage their students to write letters to the children receiving these goods, so that their students can experience the joy of helping others and learn how to share their compassion with those who need help.

Tzu Chi has already built seven elementary schools and three kindergartens in South Africa. Their once-empty libraries are now filled with more than seventy thousand books, forty thousand school supplies, and even six thousand toys.

The children in South Africa are very thankful for these gifts. They make their own thank-you cards to send to the donors, filling them with messages like "Thank you, Tzu Chi friends!" and "I send my love to you!"

Receiving these thank-you cards, children learn that even something that seems insignificant to them can mean the world to someone else, so they begin to understand to appreciate what they have, and learn that by helping others we create great joy for ourselves.

Even though Tzu Chi Academy classes are held just once a week, through the collaboration of teachers and parents, seeds of compassion are planted in the next generation for the benefit of all humanity. 🌱

Children learn that even something that seems insignificant to them can mean the world to someone else.

No matter how knowledgeable a person is, the most important things are to remember one's roots and look after one's character.

Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen

Compiled from reports by Liting Chen, Xiaoqi Wang, Shufen Huang, Yucui Lin, Cixi Zhao, Cifu Huang, Longsheng Fang, Qilin Hou, Lengsheng Deng, and Anyu Yuan.



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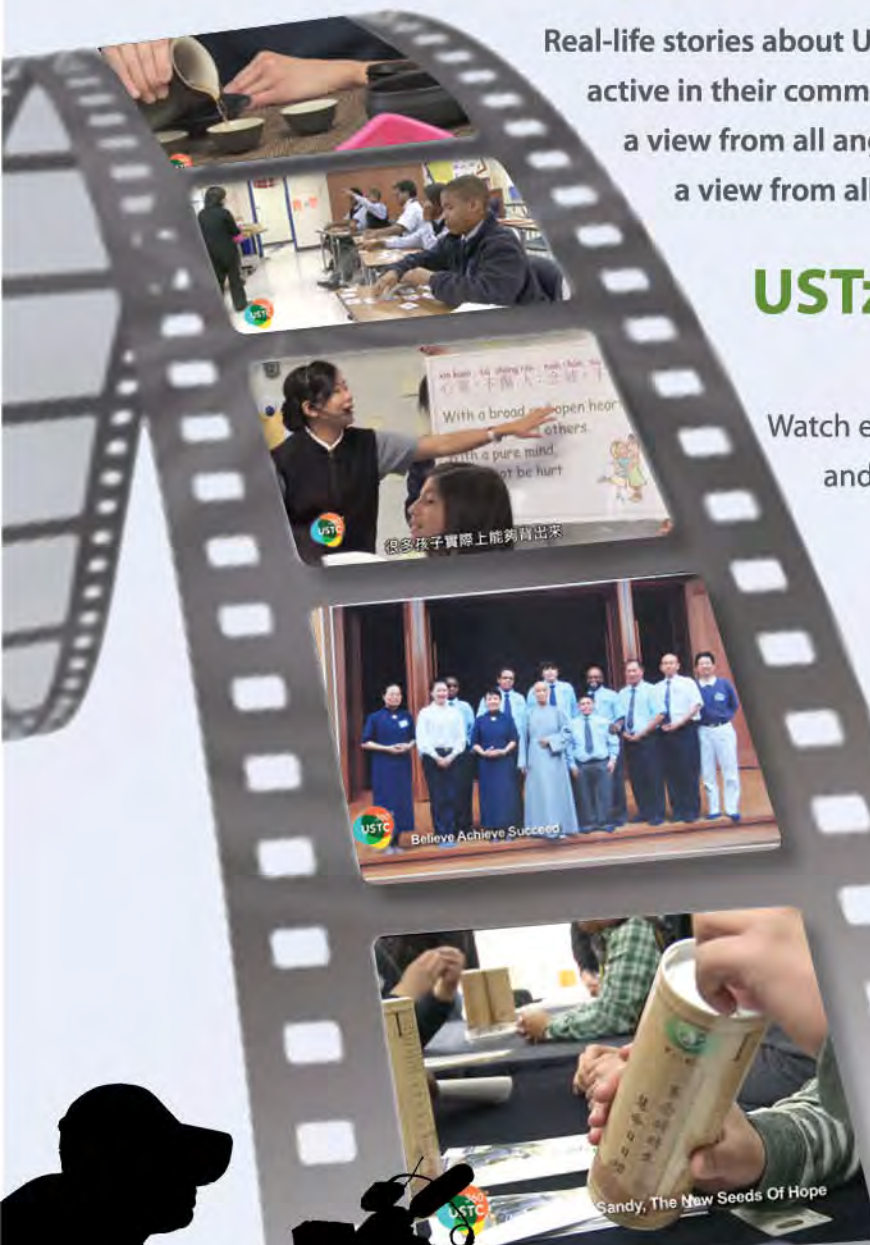
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3 Easy Steps to Save the Earth

Shao Wei Chia & Johan Alwall

1. Eat less meat
2. Use less air conditioning
3. Drive less

In recent years, the world has seen an increasing frequency of large-scale disasters: major droughts in the U.S. Southwest, Africa, and China; floods in the U.S. Midwest, Southeast Asia, Europe, and China; wildfires in the U.S. and Europe; and an increasing number and intensity of hurricanes and typhoons affecting the Caribbean, the U.S. Southeast and Northeast, and South and East Asia.

Each of these disasters has caused enormous damage, with thousands of homes destroyed, families scattered, and hunger or starvation from failed crops, not to mention massive loss of human lives. There is growing evidence that this increase in disasters can be attributed to human activities, including pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

So what can you and I do about it? The founder of Tzu Chi, Dharma Master Cheng Yen, has been continuously urging everybody to reduce their environmental impact by living a simpler life.

In fact, this is not as difficult as it might sound. Here are three easy steps to make a real impact for the environment while at the same time improving health and quality of life:

1. Eat less meat
2. Use less air conditioning
3. Drive less

Please remember, we did not inherit the Earth from our parents; we are merely borrowing it from our grandchildren.

1. Eat less meat

The livestock sector is responsible for a higher share of greenhouse gases emissions than world-wide transport.¹ Besides the effects of the animals themselves, this is due to the intensive industry surrounding meat production, including:

- Production of mineral fertilizers from oil used in feed production;

“We did not inherit the Earth from our parents; we are merely borrowing it from our grandchildren.”

- Land-use changes for feed production and grazing;
- Fossil fuels used in transport of animals and feed;
- Fossil fuels used in production and transport of processed and refrigerated animal products.

What is even worse is that a majority of the crops planted around the world are used to feed livestock instead of feeding people. To produce one pound of meat, on average ten pounds of crops are needed which otherwise could have been used to feed the millions of starving people in the world.² For every meatless meal we eat, we reduce the demand for livestock, and therefore contribute to a cleaner and more equitable planet.

Besides the benefits to the environment, vegetarianism has been associated with many health benefits. A vegetarian diet is rich in vitamins, minerals, fiber, and other compounds which provide antioxidant, anti-inflammatory,

anti-carcinogenic, and other properties that contribute to disease prevention.³ Vegetarians also tend to consume fewer calories, fewer saturated fats, and less cholesterol than non-vegetarians. This has been shown to improve physical health and prevent chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and obesity.

Many might find it difficult to abruptly change from a non-vegetarian diet to a vegetarian diet, but everybody can start off by simply reducing their meat intake and gradually working towards vegetarianism. We can all do it!

2. Use less air conditioning

Air conditioning has become part and parcel of our lives, but when we use it to reduce the indoor temperature by just a few degrees, we are in fact doing major harm to the planet. No less than two-thirds of households in the United States own at least one air-conditioning unit.⁴ Altogether they use approximately 8% of all the electricity produced in the United States,

at an annual cost of more than \$15 billion to homeowners!⁵ As a result, 195 million tons of CO₂ are released into the atmosphere. That's an average of almost two metric tons per year for each home with air conditioning!

Besides CO₂ emissions, the chemicals used in air conditioners are also very harmful to the environment. The type of refrigerant used in modern air conditioning units, HFC, is considered one of the highest global warming potential gases.⁶ In other words, for any given amount, HFC traps substantially more heat in the atmosphere than CO₂.⁷

With such shocking statistics, how can we help? In fact, there are many ways we can reduce our dependency on air conditioning:^{5,8}

- Improve insulation and air sealing, which prevents heat from entering the house;
- Dispose of inefficient electrical appliances that create excess heat;
- Consider "cool" exterior finishes such as light-colored paint and roofing that absorbs less heat;
- Cool using air movement and ventilation such as ceiling or house fans;
- Avoid direct sunlight on windows by using external window shades; or
- Simply open the window at night to let the fresh air in!

If our hearts are calm and content, we will feel naturally cool!

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3. Drive less

The number of vehicles in the world is steadily rising. Already in 2009, there were over 175 vehicles per 1000 people worldwide—1.2 billion cars!⁹ In the United States, things are even worse: there are on average 1.6 cars for every 2 people, including children! This increase in the number of cars worldwide is truly alarming, since pollution from transport is one of the main factors for air pollution and global warming. For the United States, transportation accounts for the second-largest portion (27%) of greenhouse gas emissions.⁷ The good news is that it is easy to reduce our carbon footprint from transportation. If the distance is not too far, consider cycling or walking. Doing so not only helps reduce CO₂ emissions but also has significant health benefits. If a destination is too far for biking, consider public transportation or carpooling, or take your bike to the bus stop, subway, or train station, combining the best of both worlds!

These are some small efforts that each and every one of us can make to help protect our Mother Earth. Some people might think, "What impact does it have if I reduce my carbon footprint? My contribution is so insignificant!" But when many drops of water gather together, they create a powerful, purifying river. If one person is willing to start taking action, he or she can influence others to "get onboard." As the trend spreads, the impact will be tremendous. Saving the world is not impossible, but it takes the efforts of every single one of us! 🌱

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

Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen



Tzu Chi Vision Mobile Clinic

慈濟大愛醫療巡迴車
守護眼睛的健康

Say Good Things,
Think Good Thoughts,

and to good deeds



TZU CHI

Serving With Compassion

Debut of the Vision Mobile Clinic

Photos: Liliane Yong

Liliane Yong | Translated by An Ning

East of Los Angeles County lies the Inland Empire, a region comprised of Riverside and San Bernardino counties. It is home to approximately four million inhabitants. The Inland Empire was once a major center of agriculture, including citrus, dairy, and viticulture. Since the 1970s, agriculture gradually declined as population rapidly grew, precipitating the acceleration of residential and commercial development. However, the Inland Empire's unemployment rate has exceeded the national average since 2007, and even reached a high of 12.5% in June 2012. As a result of the high unemployment and housing foreclosure rates, the number of Inland Empire residents relying on public assistance has been consistently increasing.

In 2012, Tzu Chi Medical Foundation and Molina Medical held the first Care 4 a Healthy I.E., a three-day large-scale free medical outreach event serving Inland Empire residents. From

June 21 to 23, 2013, they jointly held the second annual installment in the National Orange Show Events Center in San Bernardino. The event provided medical, acupuncture, dental, and vision screening services and was attended by over two thousand patients who received a total of 4,831 consultations.

On the day before the event, a group of five volunteers led by Chenwei Hsu departed San Francisco at 3:30 AM. Steven Voon, Tzu Chi Medical Foundation's community outreach director, traveled south from Fresno with dental equipment and tools to help with setup. The brand new Tzu Chi Vision Mobile Clinic made its debut at the event, serving patients alongside the Dental Mobile Clinic. A new software system for registration and electronic medical processing was also used for the first time in a Southern California medical outreach event. Keng Cheng, Tzu Chi Headquarters IT manager, and two volunteers assisted with network setup





Molina Medical and Tzu Chi work together to serve the community. Photo: Liliane Yong

and system configurations, as thirty new laptops were readied for volunteers under the guidance of retired computer engineer Ron Boudreaux.

A Clinic on Wheels

At 3 PM on June 21, a small opening ceremony was held onsite for the debut of the Tzu Chi Vision Mobile Clinic, a clinic-on-wheels that was made possible by the persistent efforts and blessings of many individuals. Now, patients who visit the Vision Mobile Clinic not only receive eye examinations but also glasses if they need them.

Dr. Sam Yel, an ophthalmologist who happens to be the brother-in-law of long-time Tzu Chi physician Dr. Eugene Taw, carefully examined each eye patient. The collection of a wide variety of glasses was donated by Tzu Chi volunteers Ronghe Jiang and Shuyun Chen, a husband-and-wife team who have been running a glasses factory for years. Mr. Jiang said: "We are very happy that this vision mobile clinic is here to help those with poor vision who are unable to afford eye insurance."

As patients put on their new glasses, many kept saying, "I stopped reading books, magazines, and newspapers because my eyes got tired easily. Now I don't have to worry about these issues. I can read. This is great!"

Health insurance in the United States often does not provide for vision or dental coverage. As a result, the lines for vision and dental treatment were filled with eager patients. Dr. Yel had originally only been scheduled for one day, but he decided to stay for all three days after seeing the lines. Volunteers worried that he might be too tired and asked him to take a break, but he replied, "I'm alright! I'm alright! Let's not make the patients wait too long!" Volunteers were touched and motivated by his spirit of selfless love and kindness.

A Team Effort

Three years ago, Korean-American dentist Dr. Kwang-Soon Chung happened to write down Tzu Chi's phone number as he saw the Dental Mobile Clinic drive by. Now that he is retired, he hopes to do something meaningful to give back to the community, so he contacted Tzu Chi to participate in medical outreach activities. Dr. Chung was born in North Korea. When he was one year old, his parents fled with him to South Korea through a difficult journey. He later came to the United States, where he was able to receive a good education and become a dentist. He sincerely offered his encouragement to the few dental assistant trainees, "To become a dentist or a dental assistant requires that you be burdened with the high cost of tuition. Tzu Chi is providing you with an opportunity to learn a skill for free. You must cherish it and be diligent in your learning."

Than Kyaw, a Burmese-American teenager, earned a Tzu Chi scholarship a year ago to start his education at the University of California, San Diego. This year, he again received the scholarship. When he found out that the outreach event needed many volunteers, he decided to register as a volunteer to express his appreciation for Tzu Chi. He also invited his sister to serve. A total of two hundred volunteers served at this event, including medical professionals and the volunteers who supported them by handling registration, data entry, and crowd control. Volunteers from Tzu Chi Education Foundation presented tea ceremony and flower arrangement demonstrations. There were also many volunteers who actively promoted environmentalism, encouraging visitors to use reusable cups and reduce their waste. The collaboration and generosity of all volunteers made a great positive impact infused with Tzu Chi's humanistic spirit. 🌿

When the unfortunate cannot find help,
those who are blessed must go to
them.

Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen

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A Garden of Learning

Mary Carlson

*Students learn that different plants grow at different rates.
Photo: Jeannine Fung*

One morning early this summer, students at Tzu Chi Great Love Elementary School in Monrovia, California, stepped outside to an exciting sight: a new raised garden bed filled with soil and ready to be planted. Each child was handed a pumpkin seed and given some space to plant, and within moments the seeds were happily ensconced in the dirt and being watered by proud and hopeful children. One student asked, "Will all of the seeds grow?" With water, sunlight, and a little luck, all of the seeds are in fact now growing and changing each day to the delight of the students.

A week later, with new seedlings peeking out of the dirt, students were clamoring over the three watering cans at the school, all willing to water the plants and shoo away any predators. In order to facilitate the participation of all grade levels, watering cans of all shapes and sizes were added to the garden, as well as a mister to help encourage the leaves to grow. Benjamin, a first grader, took on the responsibility of watering the plants in the late afternoon, and he especially enjoys observing the growth spurts of the plants when he returns to school each morning.

Classes also went to the garden to draw the lifecycle of a pumpkin plant and to observe how leaves of each type of plant differ. To the amazement of students, the leaves of the plants only emerged after the seedlings had sprouted and become firmly rooted in the dirt. One student, Luke, was excited to discover a small curly leaf peeking out between the seed leaves soon after the plant sprouted. He and others in the summer program became interested to see that each plant grew at a slightly different rate as well.

Students remembered which seed was which and took great pride in measuring and comparing plant heights and leaf sizes of "their pumpkins." Older students began to notice that one of the tomato plants already had small green tomatoes forming. Another worried that the tomatoes would be easy pickings for

The space attracts budding scientists and nurturers, and it encourages students to develop keen observational skills and wonder at the magnificent powers of nature.



Benjamin waters plants each afternoon. Photo: I-Jou Chen



our local birds and asked about creating a scarecrow for the garden! Proud gardeners were eager to give parents and visitors a brief tour of the garden and its newly established inhabitants.

As the weeks passed, students could clearly identify each plant by leaf shape and by the fruit or vegetable already visible. Indeed, one student taught a new arrival to the summer program that the pumpkin plants have rounder leaves than the tomato plants. So many students wanted to water the garden that they were in danger of overwatering the plants, so the gardeners expanded their efforts to include the agapanthus plants in the school's flowerbeds as well.

During the summer program at Tzu Chi, students also learned a great deal about healthy foods and eating, and what better way to teach students about including fruits and vegetables in their diet than to have them participate in growing those foods. At lunch, students started saving watermelon seeds and plum stones to contribute to the garden. Small seed starter trays were created so that students could find homes in which these seeds could grow. When seedlings formed, students, such as Jason in kindergarten, took their plants home to grow them in family gardens.

Students were also given tomatoes, cucumbers, okra, peas, and sunflowers to plant in the garden. And this was just the beginning. Parents have already begun bringing in seeds and plants for the students to include in the fall garden. The space attracts budding scientists and nurturers, and it encourages students to develop keen observational skills and wonder at the magnificent powers of nature. It also allows students that live in an urban area to understand the process by which food is grown and brought to markets like the farmer's market in Monrovia.

During walking field trips around Monrovia, students have begun to identify plants in

neighborhood gardens, including tomatoes and sunflowers. One student noticed a strange machine near a garden and asked what it was doing next to the plants. She had found a composter. Many students recalled the large compost pile they observed during a field trip to the arboretum and its vegetable garden. They learned that food waste and plant trimmings can be broken down over time to become nutrient-rich compost. Two students, Abigail and Janice, even began to make their own compost by putting lunch scraps and brown material, such as leaves and twigs, in a small container. In the fall, students in the upper elementary will expand on this experiment with a true compost pile to nourish the garden.

The school principal, Randi Carbajal, was excited to see students taking ownership of this new space, so she decided to expand the garden from one raised bed to five! Beginning in the fall, students will plant an herb garden with basil, lavender, mint, rosemary, sage, and thyme. They will also create a fall-to-winter garden with lettuces, radishes, and other late season plants. Finally, a complementary garden with plants that attract bees and other beneficial insects will be added so that students can learn about the importance of natural and organic produce. Luckily, Monrovia's climate is mild enough to allow the garden to flourish into the winter months. In addition, a trip to a nearby farm is in the works for fall so that students can see what can be accomplished at a larger scale with orchards and fields.

With so much going on in the garden, it is likely many classes in the fall will continue to be held outside in order to encourage students to take full advantage of this wonderful new space at the school. 🌱

Weeds do not easily grow in a field planted with vegetables. Evil does not easily arise in a heart filled with goodness.

Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen



▲ On July 21, 2013, Tzu Chi volunteers in Brazil went to Ferraz de Vasconcelos, a suburb of São Paulo, to conduct a free clinic. Here, a boy has his eyes examined. Photo: Yihui Chen

More than two million refugees have fled Syria since civil war broke out in March 2011, many of them to neighboring Jordan. On May 3, 2013, Tzu Chi volunteers went to Al-Dulayl Private Hospital in Zarqa, Jordan, to visit Syrian refugee patients and present them with relief goods and well-wishes. Photo: @ihua Chen



► From June 21 through 23, 2013, Tzu Chi volunteers teamed up with RS Polri Kramat Jati Jakarta Timur hospital to hold a free medical clinic for low-income residents in Jakarta, Indonesia. Here, a volunteer consoles a child who has just had surgery to repair his cleft lip. Photo: Metta Wulandari



► On May 30, 2013, South Africa Tzu Chi volunteers held a winter relief distribution outside Ladysmith, KwaZulu-Natal, at an elementary school that Tzu Chi built in 2001. Volunteers also promoted environmental protection by mobilizing the students to sort recyclables. Photo provided by Tzu Chi Ladysmith Service Center





In May 2008, Myanmar was seriously damaged by Cyclone Nargis. Following immediate relief, Tzu Chi started rebuilding three schools in Yangon. The first, Thingangyun No. 4 Middle School, was dedicated in March 2010. On June 16, 2013, a combined dedication ceremony was held for Mayangone No. 1 High School and Ahlone No. 4 High School. Each of these new schools provides students with a beautiful, safe place in which to learn and grow. Photo: Mingsheng Li



On June 30, 2013, Tzu Chi volunteers from San Diego, California, traveled to Tijuana, Mexico, to participate in the graduation ceremony of Escuela Primaria Tijuana Tzu Chi, which Tzu Chi built in 1996. Here, an outstanding graduate is presented with a scholarship. Photo: Meijing Lin



▲ On July 1, 2013, the Steveston Salmon Festival was held in the city of Richmond, British Columbia, to celebrate Canada Day. Tzu Chi volunteers were invited by the city to promote environmental protection and show the public how to sort recyclables properly. Photo: Yarong Huang



▲ On June 30, 2013, Tzu Chi Kindergarten in Johor Bahru, Malaysia, held a Parent-Child Sports Event to draw parents and children closer together through fun games and activities. Photo: Huiyuan Zhong



臺灣佛教慈濟慈善事業基金會 瓜地馬拉聯絡處
 Fundacion Budista Tzu Chi de Taiwan en Guatemala
 愛灑人間 義診
 Regando amor por todo el mundo
 JORNADA MÉDICA



Tzu Chi volunteers held a free clinic on June 23, 2013, in the remote village of Plan Grande, Palencia, Guatemala, to provide medical assistance to local villagers. Photo: Wulizhu Ye

On June 29, 2013, Tzu Chi volunteers attended the International Day event in Karlsruhe, Germany. Volunteers introduced Tzu Chi's philosophy and promoted environmental protection and vegetarianism. Photo: Mingzhu Wang



On May 29, 2013, Alan Curtis (second left) of the Eisenhower Foundation visited Jing Si Hall in Hualien. He was impressed by Master Cheng Yen's ideology of purifying people's minds in order to eliminate disasters in the world. Photo: Meifeng Yang



Tzu Chi volunteers in New Zealand regularly deliver love and care to elderly stroke patients at the seven stroke clubs they have adopted. On June 27, 2013, volunteers invited these patients and their families to visit the Tzu Chi office for a wonderful time together. Here, an attendee shares love by putting a donation into a bamboo bank. Photo: Jianzhong Li



The author shares his story in December 2012, at the Grand Opening of EcoVerse in San Diego. Photo: Tsung-Chang Sung

We thought we understood the insurance and what to expect, but the scale of the disaster created a myriad of problems we could not have anticipated. There was no electricity for nearly a month, and shortages of resources made cleanup, security, and recovery virtually impossible at first.

The scope of the damage to homes and lives meant extraordinary measures had to be taken by various government entities. But they were going through the same confusion and shortages we all were.

Once the fire was finally put out, it was time for recovery to begin. A huge meeting area was set up in the center of the devastation so that the gas and electric company, the county tax assessor, insurance companies, water departments, telephone and cable companies, and a host of other entities could help guide us through the morass of procedures we had to undertake. It was not easy for anyone, but they did the best they could.

Here, we could find out what resources we qualified for. If you had insurance, this line here. No insurance? Over there. Low income? Wait here. Labor union? Try the north side of the room. Mortgage? Bank representatives will be here tomorrow.

Along with hundreds of others, I waded through these lines like a prisoner getting my food ration. Then, in the midst of all this jumble of people, computers, flyers, TV cameras, and noise, I spotted a little folding table where two people sat quietly, watching all the chaos unfold.

They looked completely out of place: peaceful in the face of disarray, perfectly relaxed as bedlam reigned over and around them.

Curious, I asked what they were doing. "We are giving money to those who lost their homes in the fire." Surprised, I asked them what qualifications were needed. "You have to have lost your home in the fire." They told me that they were from the Tzu Chi Foundation and that their mission was to help those in need.

The simplicity of their mission was elegant and powerful. I signed up and continued on, trying to figure out where to go next, trying to figure out where my final destination lay.

As I worked my way through the stacks of paperwork, dug through the ashes, found clothes to wear, arranged for shelter, and worked on securing what was left of my home, I thought of all the thousands of people who had lost their homes. I thought about those selfless people from the Tzu Chi Foundation. I thought of how far they had come to help, even with no personal stake in the disaster. It made me think.

At various times, I was reminded of how little people knew about what was going to happen. We learned to recognize fellow survivors by their thousand-yard stares. Every so often, we would stop to chat with them.

At some point, I went to the Tzu Chi office to pick up a check for \$400, which we used to buy work boots, rakes, hoes, and a wheelbarrow. Then we began to look at ideas for our new home. As we cleared the charred timber, stucco, concrete slabs, and metal appliances from our



lot, other families would come by and ask about our plans. We could see the uncertainty in their eyes. How could they tackle such a project? They were not builders. They were underinsured. What steps did they need to take? Where would they begin? How much money could they budget? How would they contract with builders and construction workers? What needed to be done first? When would insurance settle? Should they get a lawyer?

Rebuilding after a complete loss is an incredibly challenging and frustrating experience. You need to understand not just the process of building, but contracts, local ordinances, and the insurance industry. You need to create a house plan, have the soil re-compacted, obtain licenses and permits, and learn the new and updated building codes.

As we cleaned our lot using the gifts from Tzu Chi, I realized that even though we had lost everything, we too had something to give: our experience from my parents' loss. Just like Tzu Chi, we could provide for others!

Quickly, I gathered names and phone numbers of other fire survivors and then invited them to meet with me at the new local fire relief center. I asked them if they would like to form a resource group to exchange ideas, find discounts, increase purchasing power, and share information. The group took off and similar groups soon formed in other parts of the county. Now we see this kind of group building whenever people lose homes to disaster.

We met once a week and brought in speakers from various industries to teach us how to rebuild both our homes and our lives. We were able to influence many novice builders in sustainable building practices, and at one particularly memorable meeting, seventeen families signed up for new, economical, eco-friendly photovoltaic systems to be installed in their rebuilt homes. As such a large group, we were even able to wrangle discounts from

major suppliers and merchants.

What started out as an informational resource group soon grew to be much more, and we met together each week for five years. We became a family. We would go out together after meetings and have dinner. We would call each other to find out if anyone knew of a good landscaper, cabinetmaker, plumber, or drywall person.

Many of the group's members helped the others as they built. In our group, ninety percent rebuilt their homes, compared to less than half of those who did not attend.

What goes around comes around. The Tzu Chi Foundation provided inspiration, a seed really. This seed grew into the Cedar Fire Rebuilding Resource Group, which helped hundreds of people rebuild their homes. These rebuilders learned how important community is, and in rebuilding their homes, rebuilt their sense of community as well. We celebrated our successes together and provided comfort through the challenges that we all faced.

Eventually, I became a general contractor specializing in automatic gates. My wife, through her community involvement, was offered a job in the local chamber of commerce and is now the executive director of Lakeside's most active community organization.

Ten years after our old house burned to the ground, the one we rebuilt is still standing tall. We hope never to leave.

Thank you, Tzu Chi Foundation. 🌱

The seeds of blessings must be sowed whenever their fruits are harvested to ensure that the virtuous cycle continues indefinitely.

Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen



Right Place, Right Time

Kent Terry

Tzu Chi volunteers serve Illinois flood survivors with gratitude, respect, and love. Photo: Yahmei Hsieh

Two men of similar age, different background, and quite different religious beliefs walked the streets of the flooded area of Marseilles.

What wasn't different was the compassion each had in his heart for the plight of the residents, many of whom had lost everything in the devastating flood of April 18, 2013.

Chong, Deputy Executive Director of Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation Midwest Region, his wife Yahmei, Executive Director of the Midwest Region, and two staff members had come to Marseilles on a Saturday morning a couple of weeks after the flood to consider the city for a possible charitable donation.

The Red Cross, a partner organization that often works in conjunction with Tzu Chi, had asked that I take Chong and his group through the affected area and tell the story of the flood.

I felt like a TV commentator as Chong videotaped me telling the various stories about what had happened. Actually, the first story was one of the most painful. As we went by the school gym, they were tearing up and discarding the beautiful, but now ruined, gym

floor into a dumpster.

As we moved deeper into the affected area and closer to the river, the damage to the homes became more apparent. I took Chong to see a friend's home whose drop-down living room which was once an asset now became a terrible liability, as the flood water reached five feet in his home and drywall had to be stripped all the way to the ceiling.

We talked to a young couple who had been married less than a year and now had to deal with the loss of most of their belongings and damage to their home. I showed Chong the piles of discarded lumber, wallboard, and ruined furniture outside one house and noted how every house had this the first week and often there were four or five piles before the house was emptied.

He was stunned at the power of the water near the dam that had pushed several homes off of their foundations and had literally ripped out the road. Our last stop was the Barnes home, the home that I had worked on for two weeks preparing it for rebuilding, and Chong and Yahmei met with the owner, Karen.



Volunteers inspect the damage after heavy flooding. Photo: Yahmei Hsieh

Although it is not pronounced exactly "sushi," that is about as close as I can come to the pronunciation of "Tzu Chi." This Buddhist charity was founded in 1966 when Dharma Master Cheng Yen asked her thirty followers to put a few cents each day into a bamboo tube to help the poor. From this simple gesture of compassion, the charity has grown to have some ten million volunteers and donors in more than fifty countries.

During my visit to the Tzu Chi Midwest headquarters in Darien, Illinois, I learned so much more about the Tzu Chi organization and how this evolved from the Buddhist religion. While it is far too easy to look at differences in religion, and as an example there are thousands of different variations of the Christian faith in the United States, in my visit with Chong and his wife Yahmei we focused on some essential similarities between Buddhism and Christianity.

Both religions stress a calmness of spirit. In Buddhism, this is accomplished through meditation, while in Christianity this is typically through prayer. While I have a file card system of Bible verses that I rotate daily to provide spiritual guidance, the founder of the Tzu Chi organization, Dharma Master Cheng Yen, wrote

a book of simple aphorisms, or sayings, that help guide their followers.

Yahmei gave me a copy of this book, and the advice found within these sayings is truly universal to the human condition. For example: *A person with a generous heart and compassion for all beings leads the most blessed life.*

It was, of course, the Tzu Chi stress on compassion that benefited my flood-ravaged community. Compassion is universal, but not always demonstrated, and Marseilles residents were incredibly grateful for the visit of Tzu Chi to our community.

On another Saturday afternoon, a couple of weeks after Chong and I walked through our damaged city, Chong, Yahmei, and about twenty volunteers from Tzu Chi gave gifts to almost one hundred Marseilles families affected by the flood. They included blankets, personal care items, and a generous check to help them through the rough times ahead.

As I prepared to leave following my visit to Chong and Yahmei at their headquarters in Darien, I asked Chong, "What exactly is karma? I have heard the term used often with your religion."

Chong's answer put everything in perspective, "Right place, right time: in the right place, at the right time, with the right people, doing good deeds creates good karma, which results in a blessed life." 🌿

*Originally printed on July 16, 2013,
in The Times of Ottawa, Illinois.*

Compassion is not only expressed through words; it is to be realized through service to humanity.

Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen



Bringing the **Light of Hope**

Mei Ling & Shirley Wu | Translated by Colin Legerton

Where once there were homes and trees, now the land is swept clear. Photo: Peng-Fei Wu

At the time, the tornado siren was going steadily, but we all thought the tornado was in the south. Suddenly, the whole city was quiet, so I quickly grabbed my son and hid in the shower. I covered him with a pillow and laid on top of him in order to keep the tornado from taking him away. I heard a lot of things breaking, and it felt like the whole house was shaking. After the tornado left, my son opened the door, and we saw that everything was gone," Lisa said, still trembling.

Another survivor added, "After the tornado, the whole town was silent. You could only hear screaming and see people climbing out of debris. It was chaos everywhere. My house was still there, so I was lucky. Some people were injured themselves but were still going over to give first aid to people who were hurt even worse. It was really a frightening scene."

On May 15, 2013, three tornadoes struck the southwest suburbs of Dallas. Six people were killed and dozens more injured, with roughly a hundred families left homeless. On May 18 and 20, Tzu Chi volunteers made two visits to Granbury, Texas—one of the hardest-hit areas—to deliver blankets and emergency cash cards in collaboration with the local government and the Red Cross.

As volunteers distributed goods in Granbury on May 20, another major tornado devastated Moore, Oklahoma, so the volunteers soon turned their attention there. Beginning on May

25, they made the seven-hour roundtrip journey on three consecutive weekends to distribute cash cards and comfort the affected community. They again worked hand-in-hand with Red Cross representatives who helped to identify disaster victims and verify that no one received cash cards more than once. Tzu Ching collegiate volunteers also supported the effort.

The stories volunteers heard along the way were heart-wrenching. Dawn had placed all her personal belongings in storage as she cared for her elderly parents. But the tornado destroyed her storage unit, and she was left with nothing but Tzu Chi's debit card. Beverly's uninsured home was severely damaged in the tornado, her husband was out of work due to injury, and they still had three children to support. For her, the debit card was like a light at the end of a dark tunnel. She hugged a volunteer tightly and would not let go.

For residents of Moore, the devastating EF-5 tornado was a chilling reminder of the one they suffered in May 1999. Over the volunteers' six days of relief distributions, they helped 643 families in their recovery from this latest disaster. Volunteers lit a light of hope that grew into a fire—a fire that warmed survivors' hearts. 🌿

Having the strength to help others is a blessing.

Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen

Sandy's Gone, Love Remains

Peter Chu & Fang Yuan Chou (NY)

Yu-Tsui Lin & Mei-li Lin (NJ)

Translated by Mei-li Hamilton

When Hurricane Sandy hit the East Coast, it caused severe damage across a wide area. Months later, many families are still deeply affected by the storm, but Tzu Chi volunteers continue to working nonstop to provide compassionate relief.

New York Volunteers Assist Immigrants

Many of the people in the New York metropolitan area who were affected by Hurricane Sandy are undocumented immigrants. Because of their status, they cannot receive assistance from the government. Many also do not have a stable income. So Tzu Chi volunteers have begun to provide long-term assistance to those who need it.

On May 25, 2013, volunteers from Tzu Chi's New York office went to the Shorefront YM-YWHA of Brighton-Manhattan Beach to distribute cash cards to families affected by the hurricane. This was the third major distribution of 2013 held in Brooklyn, where some of the poorest immigrants live. In addition to distributing cash cards and canned food, volunteers held an event to greet and offer their loving care to attendees. Volunteers even made a special effort to call people who had attended the first two distributions and invite them to this event.

Many people who witnessed the selfless devotion of Tzu Chi volunteers throughout the recovery effort after the hurricane have now become volunteers themselves. These new volunteers come from many different countries,



Attendees share wishes and blessings for a brighter tomorrow.
Photo: Peter Chu

including China, Pakistan, and Mexico. One of those new volunteers is Susanna, who helped at distribution events in March and May. Another is Zexiang Chen, who observed, "Helping others is in fact also helping yourself." Chen's home in Staten Island was flooded by seven feet of water. The first-floor ceiling is still a mess. He added with a laugh, "Volunteering can help me temporarily forget my worries."

Tzu Chi volunteers prepared a "Blessing Wall" where people affected by the hurricane could write their hopes for the future on paper Bodhi leaves, and volunteers placed a basket at the wall to collect donations for those in need. Not only did they collect money from attendees, but they also received donations from people who brought back bamboo banks that they had received during the previous two events. In fact, they received so many donations that the basket filled almost immediately. Donations had to be transferred to a larger container, which also filled quickly.

Two brothers from the Philippines received goods during the distribution in March and were given bamboo banks. Even though they are still out of work, they continue to put coins into the bank every day. They brought their donations back to this event but kept the bamboo banks so they could continue to carry on the spirit of the bamboo bank by giving rise to a kind thought each day.

Marleni, an immigrant from El Salvador, has been depositing four or five coins into his bamboo bank every day since the January distribution event. Though he lost nearly all of his belongings in the hurricane, "in comparison with the people hit by the Oklahoma tornado, I am lucky, and I hope the money I have saved in the bamboo bank can help."

New Jersey Volunteers Help Firefighters

Many coastal communities in New Jersey were hit hard by Hurricane Sandy. Tzu Chi held disaster relief distributions throughout the area and built strong connections with many of the affected towns. Among the strongest of these partnerships is with the borough of Keansburg. Even though he was personally affected by the storm, Keansburg Mayor George Hoff helped contact storm victims and accompanied Tzu Chi volunteers as they distributed aid. At the time, he said, "In the future, we will definitely work together again, just not as a result of disaster."

Mayor Hoff kept his word. As Keansburg residents are largely of Irish heritage, the Saint

Patrick's Day Parade every March is an important event. This year, Mayor Hoff invited Tzu Chi volunteers to join the parade. The audience applauded the volunteers: some shouted "thank you" as others bowed with two hands clasped.

Keansburg's fire station and firefighting equipment were severely damaged by the hurricane. The town sought financial help from government and charitable organizations, but they were unsuccessful in getting assistance. They raised money locally and worked to repair their facilities in stages, but progress was slow and the firefighters and town leaders became increasingly concerned.

So, Mayor Hoff asked Tzu Chi for help. He wanted to be sure that firefighters had the equipment needed to help save lives, keep residents safe, and carry out their work safely. Tzu Chi New Jersey volunteers responded, donating two thermal imaging cameras, two sets of oxygen equipment, natural gas detectors, and thirty-four pairs of fireproof gloves.

Fire Chief Brian Pigott said that Tzu Chi's donations are a tremendous help, but just as important are the mutual love and friendship between the people of Keansburg and Tzu Chi.

The world may have nearly forgotten Hurricane Sandy, but many of its victims are still struggling. Tzu Chi's love and care encourages them to face the future bravely and know they are not alone.



Volunteers donate new supplies in Keansburg, New Jersey. Photo: Yu-Tsui Lin

360
USTC #85, 91, 110, 112, 119

For more on Tzu Chi's Hurricane Sandy disaster relief, please see Issue 36 (Summer 2013).

Love & Care for All

愛 與 關 懷
ài yǔ guān huái

Lyrics: Rio Lee, Lee Tzu-Heng 作詞：李壽全·李子恆

Music: Rio Lee 作曲：李壽全

Translation: Tzu Chi USA Humanistic Culture Development

Department translation team, Rev. Heng Sure, Judy Lao

Video: Emily Chen

Let us pray for peace in our land

誠 心 祈 求 天 下 無 災
chéng xīn qí qiú tiān xià wú zāi

Keep our hearts from sorrows and pain

人 皆 平 安 遠 離 苦 難
rén jiē píng ān yuǎn lí kǔ nán

Bless us all with joy and hope

願 持 善 念 廣 大 地
yuàn chí shàn niàn fū dà dì

Love and care for each one in this world

世 界 充 滿 著 愛 和 關 懷
shì jiè chōng mǎn zhe ài hé guān huái

Photo: Peter Lin

Tzu Chi songs are composed based on the teachings of the sutras and Dharma Master Cheng Yen. When we sing the song, we are reminded of the way of the bodhisattvas in daily living. Please visit "The Song of Bodhisattvas" on www.us.tzuchi.org to watch a music video for this song.



During a free clinic in Fallbrook, California, on July 28, 2013, Tzu Chi volunteers utilized a computerized data-entry system to manage patient records. This system tracks a patient's medical history and past treatment, making clinic operations more efficient and organized than ever before. Photo: Meijing Lin

▶ *On July 13, 2013, Tzu Chi volunteers participated in the annual SeaFair in Seattle, Washington. They introduced Tzu Chi's philosophy, environmental protection, and vegetarianism to attendees. Photo: Tingzhang Xu*



▲ *On June 8, 2013, Tzu Chi volunteers in Austin, Texas, celebrated the Dragon Boat Festival by teaching community members how to make vegetarian zongzi (Chinese tamales), which were later sold for charity. Here, a volunteer shows how to fold the bamboo leaf wrapping. Photo: Zongzhe Chen*



In support of the "Jing Si Aphorisms into Hotels" movement, Tzu Chi volunteers visited hotels in Virginia on June 24, 2013, to offer this life-changing book to hotel owners. Printed in four languages—Chinese, English, Japanese, and Spanish—copies of Jing Si Aphorisms are placed in hotel rooms for guests to read and even take home. Photo: Chun Mei Lee



◀ On June 22, 2013, Tzu Chi volunteers mobilized local residents for a community clean-up in Long Island, New York. Together, they made their hometown even more beautiful. Photo: Jiaxin Zhang



▲ After a forest fire broke out in Yarnell, Arizona, at the end of June 2013, many houses burned down and nineteen firefighters were killed. Tzu Chi volunteers assessed the situation on July 12-13, then distributed cash cards to people affected by the disaster and paid respect to the firefighters who gave their lives. Photo: Luca Ye



▲ Tzu Chi volunteers in Las Vegas, Nevada, presented copies of Jing Si Aphorisms to Clark County Detention Center on July 9, 2013, with the hope that these simple words of wisdom will help inmates turn their lives around. Here, Chaplain Bonnie Polley accepts the books on behalf of the center. Photo: Audrey Cheng



The Southern California Chinese Relay for Life was held on June 22, 2013, to celebrate the centennial of the American Cancer Society. Tzu Chi hosted a booth promoting environmental protection and vegetarianism and also passed out green ribbons and souvenir bracelets to attendees to raise cancer awareness. Photo: Ruoshan Gu

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On June 23, 2013, Chicago Tzu Chi volunteers awarded college scholarships to qualified students from low-income families. Here, volunteers give scholarship recipients and their families a tour of the facility and introduce them to Tzu Chi Foundation. Photo: Qingxiang Lin



On June 29, 2013, Tzu Chi volunteers in New Jersey held a Happy Healthy Life Camp for children. Attendees learned about being filial and doing good deeds through fun games and activities. For lunch, the students made instant rice with cold water as a way to experience simple living. Photo: Renjie Li



From June 14 to 16, 2013, the city of Eagle Pass, Texas, on the border between the United States and Mexico, experienced seventeen inches of rain in just thirty-six hours. Although the flooding was severe, affected families were unable to receive government aid. On June 29, Tzu Chi volunteers distributed cash cards to 350 local families to help them through this ordeal. Photo: Roger Lin



On July 6, 2013, Asiana Airlines Flight 214 crashed at San Francisco International Airport, causing three deaths and injuring more than 180 passengers. Tzu Chi volunteers held an interfaith prayer ceremony on July 13 to offer love and comfort to survivors and families of the victims. Here, a volunteer pays her respects to the deceased. Photo: Shengyan Xu



Remembering Hurricane Katrina



Part One: The Fall and Rise of New Orleans

Shirley Tseng | Translated by Jeff Steward

Photo: Shirley Tseng



From September 4, 2005, Tzu Chi volunteers provided relief distributions and free medical clinics, such as here in the Astrodome. Photo: Allen Yeh

I arrived at the Phoenix airport and prepared to catch my flight to connect through Houston to New Orleans, travelling to report on the conditions seven years after Hurricane Katrina. The airline agent informed me that I would need to transfer through Dallas instead due to a flight delay. As I rushed to another terminal, I could not help thinking that when Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans on August 29, 2005, displacing three hundred thousand people, the majority sought refuge in these two cities: at the Astrodome in Houston and the George Brown Convention Center in Dallas. Within a week after the disaster hit, Tzu Chi volunteers and Tzu Chi International Medical Association (TIMA) members from all over the United States had rushed to these two shelters to carry out aid distributions and free medical clinics. Some even drove a mobile clinic nearly two thousand miles for support.

New Orleans is wedged between the Gulf of Mexico and Lake Pontchartrain and bisected by the Mississippi River. For three hundred years, the residents of New Orleans have been threatened by flooding in the spring and hurricanes in the summer. As New Orleans's population has increased, most of its swamps have been drained to become residential areas. Dikes were constructed to control the flooding of the Mississippi. When the dikes were not good enough, flood diversion channels were added to divert the water; when streets were still flooded, houses were built higher and large water pumps were installed.

Allen Zhuang moved to New Orleans in 1994. He explained, "Before Hurricane Katrina, we were evacuated several times because of storms." Being threatened each year by hurricanes and flooding, New Orleanians were accustomed to evacuation orders even before Katrina. At Tulane University, Dr. Mark VanLandingham added with a smile, "We call it an 'evacuation.' I'd get to see my friends and have a few days away and then come back and start classes."

Hurricane Katrina, a Category 5 hurricane, hit New Orleans hard and the rain and waves it brought flooded many places, which was not unexpected. But no one foresaw that it would cause as many as fifty-three breaches of the levees around New Orleans. Water from Lake Pontchartrain, the canals, and the flood diversion channels poured into the city. After the hurricane passed, the water did not retreat, but rather rose sharply over an ever-growing area. Eighty percent of the city was flooded, and some low-lying areas were under more than ten feet of water. Due to flood damage, the pumps completely malfunctioned. Residents who evacuated the city originally thought they could go back home after a few days. They never expected that they would be unable to return to New Orleans for several months and that even if their house had not been washed away, everything had changed beyond recognition. The entire city of New Orleans was in ruins.

Is This America?

Millions throughout America watched New Orleans being flooded on the news. They saw people trapped on their roofs for several days; they saw large shelters in vile conditions and government agencies straining clumsily to adapt. In the past, these scenarios seemed only to appear in third world countries, so many could not help but think, "Is this America?" After Hurricane Katrina, many nongovernmental organizations which had previously only helped developing countries began to move to New Orleans to assist in disaster relief and reconstruction.

The local people of New Orleans also put forth great effort to help themselves. Many parishioners of Our Lady of Guadalupe Chapel lost their homes in the worst-affected Lower Ninth Ward, so the church established a shelter across the street for homeless people and offered free breakfast and lunch every day.

Mingdong Chen's hotel was on high ground, so it was less affected by the disaster and he could continue to operate his business. As a result of a staff shortage, the Chen family of four had to service more than two hundred rooms. The water and power had not yet been restored, so they used water from the swimming pool to flush the toilet and do the cleaning. Many out-of-town visitors who were stranded in New Orleans took shelter in his hotel. He also housed reporters as well as rescue workers. In February 2006 and January 2007, TIMA medical staff visited New Orleans twice to hold free medical clinics. They too stayed in Chen's hotel. He modestly said, "In order to help the disaster areas to rebuild as soon as possible, this is all that we can do."

The work of rebuilding also included a psychological component. Throughout 2007, Tzu Chi collaborated with the Louisiana State University Department of Psychology to set up counseling centers within Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) "Welcome Home Centers" in downtown New Orleans to offer intensive counseling for traumatized residents.

The Wild Wild West

Administrators at Tulane University, founded in New Orleans nearly 180 years ago, knew well the mission the school had within the community. Overcoming all difficulties, they showed great initiative to resume classes at the end of 2005. The Dean of the School of Social Work, Dr. Ron Marks, said, "We worked with several nongovernmental organizations to assist children, families, and communities in all aspects of rebuilding. We also completely redesigned the curriculum to require that all students must do an internship within the community."

As demographer and professor at Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, Dr. Mark VanLandingham has done research primarily targeting Southeast Asia for many years. As Tulane University did not have many projects in Southeast Asia, he had intended to move out of New Orleans. But, after Katrina struck, his home and school were flooded, and he started to become interested in a new research topic: How many New Orleans residents would move back? How long would it take?

He understood that this was a golden research opportunity, but if he did not do it, no one would. So he began a research project on post-Hurricane Katrina demography. In 2006, he observed a strange phenomenon; with so much work still to be done and the city right in the middle of reconstruction, the streets were full of either uniformed military and police personnel or middle-aged men driving brand new trucks: construction workers, plumbers, carpenters from all over. He gave a vivid description, "It was like the Wild Wild West."

Learning from the bitter lessons of Katrina, Tulane University established the Disaster Resilience Leadership Academy (DRLA). Through the four categories of social psychology, leadership analysis, emergency management, and environmental science, courses were established to train humanitarian aid personnel



Remembering Hurricane Katrina



*Tulane University took service as its post-Katrina mission.
Photo: Shirley Tseng.*



The resilient cypress extends its roots out from the water, finding a way to survive. Photo: Shirley Tseng

for disaster relief. The Graduate Academic Director of the DRLA, Dr. Charles Figley, has extensive experience in the field. When Tzu Chi provides emergency relief, special care is always taken not to cause secondary damage to the local area. Dr. Figley also stressed the same point: "Relief must be particularly careful; we are on the land of the disaster survivors. We will leave. Therefore it is our responsibility not to cause any harm to the environment."

Fragile Wetland Ecosystems

Dr. Doug Meffert of the DRLA teaches Environmental and Hazards Sciences and is an expert in environmental biology with an in-depth understanding of the symbiosis and coexistence of all living things. New Orleans and the surrounding wetlands are the best laboratories, so he often takes his students into the wild for field observations so that they can apply classroom learning in the field. He said, "New Orleans wetlands are one of the planet's most fragile ecosystems. The United States is a developed country capable of investing a lot of capital into restoring our natural resources. What we are learning and doing here has very deep implications for many parts of the world. In the future, many of our Disaster Resilience Leadership Academy students will go out into the world. If we cannot even solve our own problems here, there really is no hope for other areas."

The surrounding coastal wetlands were formed by deposits of alluvial silt from rivers over thousands of years. Until two or three hundred years ago, these large coastal ecologies were

cypress swamps. These wetlands maintained freshwater ecosystems and also served as a buffer zone from strong waves when hurricanes hit. Dr. Meffert explained, "Two to three miles of wetlands can reduce the height of waves by one foot; thirty miles of wetlands can make waves ten feet lower. In the last 150 years, through Mississippi coastal embankments, transport canals, extraction of natural gas and oil, as well as all sorts of coastal developments, human beings have restricted the water flow that can create new wetlands and have also blocked the alluvial silt."

Over the years, Dr. Meffert has constructed a restoration plan with conservation research conducted by Tulane University and the Audubon Society. He said, "Man has already drastically changed ecosystems, and wetlands are no longer playing their role. The population here is large and dense, and there is a necessity for dikes. But the problem is that dikes are blocking the hydrological functions that have protected the wetlands for thousands of years. So, in considering whether to build dikes or use the natural way to protect the population, we must tread very carefully."

The Phoenix Rises from the Ashes

Large-scale dikes block the Mississippi River from providing alluvial sediment; without sediment filling in the gap, New Orleans is gradually sinking. About half of New Orleans is already below sea level. Because of global warming, sea levels continue to rise. In another hundred years, New Orleans may really become completely uninhabitable.

However, this future is still distant for New Orleanians. For them, this is the land where their family has lived for generations. The city is their root; its unique culture and jazz tradition ingrained in their life. Though they are knocked down again and again by natural disasters, each time they stand back up and carry on with their lives.

Reverend Anthony Rigoli of Our Lady of Guadalupe said, "Katrina destroyed a lot of things, but it did not destroy the people's faith." Seven years after Hurricane Katrina, the New Orleans population had already reached seventy-five percent of pre-Katrina levels. The majority of original residents have returned to their homes, and there is a new group of professionals who have moved into the city.

Dr. Marks, the Social Work Dean, said, "The education system in New Orleans used to be terrible. After Katrina, the government launched a completely new education system. Many young people working in social or educational fields moved to New Orleans from all around the country. Our healthcare system is also better than it used to be, and every community is beginning to have its own local medical facilities." Dr. Figley, who has helped New Orleanians recover mentally since 2008, remarked with tears in his eyes, "I couldn't be happier here. I feel that I have been part of a phoenix rising."

The tourism industry, one of New Orleans' largest economies, is also gradually recovering. In the Lower Ninth District, the place where the dike broke has become a new attraction. Tourists from around the world wander the New Orleans French Quarter just as before, experiencing the unique flavor of New Orleans food and enjoying the distinct character of every street corner where the city's creative street artists perform. Street painter Ricky Fox developed



Photo: Shirley Tseng

a new style because of Katrina; his friends in construction work send him pieces of abandoned building materials which then become the canvases

he uses to produce his works of art. Even door locks, handles, and other metal scraps have become part of his creations.

The New Orleans native cypress trees are highly resilient and can grow on dry land or in the swamp. If the soil does not have enough nutrients, the cypress roots steadily protrude from the surface to draw oxygen from the air. These protruding roots are shaped like domes, similar to a man's knee, so they are called "cypress knees."

Seven years after Hurricane Katrina, there are still abandoned houses in some areas, many streets are still uneven, and the residents still have a long road of reconstruction ahead of them, but New Orleans residents are just like "cypress knees": full of vitality and resilience. As for the long-term threats posed by damage to ecosystems, hurricanes, and global warming, they can only offer their sincere and devout prayers.

Each year during hurricane season, Our Lady of Guadalupe appeals to Catholics to join in the Hurricane Prayer: "Our Father in Heaven, through the powerful intercession of Our Lady of Prompt Succor and Saint Jude, spare us from all harm during this hurricane season and protect us and our homes from all disasters of nature. Our Lady of Prompt Succor and Saint Jude, hasten to help us. We ask this through Christ Our Lord. Amen." 🌿



Remembering Hurricane Katrina



Part Two will be featured in Issue 39 (Spring 2014).

A moment of disaster does not constitute a lifetime of hardship. With faith, we can manifest our innate abilities and determination.

Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen



A Child's Wisdom

Dharma Master Cheng Yen

Compiled into English by the Dharma as Water Editorial Team

*The heart of a Bodhisattva practitioner is filled with compassion.
They always think of ways to benefit sentient beings.
No matter where they go, they are never afraid.
Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen*

A long time ago, there was a widow who underwent much hardship to raise her small child. She was exceptionally wise. She made sure to foster her son's wisdom and guide him to help others. Even if he grew up physically healthy but inflicted harm on society, she would have considered herself a failure in raising him. Because she was a devout Buddhist, she wanted him to understand the wisdom of the ancients and the ethical code that guided their morality and conduct. So, she often took him to temples to listen to the sutras.

At temples, whenever she saw a spiritual practitioner, she would respectfully bow. This instilled a sense of respect in her son. Then, after listening to the monks explain the Dharma, the mother and son would continue learning by reviewing what they heard. On their way home, she would ask him, "What did we learn today?" Because she had him memorize these teachings, he quickly developed understanding, which deeply entered his heart. He would study the Dharma day and night, seeking the truth like someone hungry seeking for food.

However, they lived in a country where the king was greedy and ruthless. He did not rule with virtue, but with tyranny. He had taken so much of his people's wealth that most lived in poverty. Many were angry but afraid to speak out. This king knew that he was treating his people

unkindly, so as he grew older, he began to think, "After I die, I may go to hell and endure endless suffering for my wrongs."

Rather than changing his ways, the king came up with a plan. "I need to collect even more gold, silver, and treasures. Then I can bribe Yama, the King of Hell, to pardon me for my wrongdoings. Then I will be released from punishment."

So, once again, he took action to seize his people's wealth. He searched all homes and confiscated any money he found. He issued a stern decree that anyone found hiding even a single gold coin would be sentenced to death. Everyone was enraged by this decree. They loathed the king, but they dared not speak out or disobey. This went on for three years.

At that time, the boy was only ten years old, yet he felt the suffering of the people and devised a plan to put a stop to the king's cruelty. So, one day, he went to his mother and said, "When my father died, didn't we put a gold coin in his mouth?" This was a local funerary custom.

His mother responded, "Yes, we did."

Then the child said, "Mother, can I take it out and offer it to the king?"

The mother knew that her child must have a good reason for such a suggestion, so she told him, "Do what you think is wise." Thus, the boy



Storytelling by the Master

dug up his father's grave, opened the coffin, and took the coin out of the corpse's mouth.

The child then went to the palace gates and said to the attendant, "I want to offer gold to the king." When the attendant reported this to the king, the king became very curious. By this time, his people did not have even a scrap of iron, let alone gold. How could this child possibly have any gold? So, he had the attendant bring the child into the palace.

The king asked him, "Where did you get that coin?"

The child replied, "When my father died, we placed this coin in his mouth to bribe the King of Hell."

This seemed to match the king's intentions exactly, so he became suspicious, "Since you took the coin out of his mouth, does that mean your father has no money to bribe King Yama?"

The child responded with what he learned from Buddhist teachings, "Blessing follows those who do good deeds, misfortune follows those who commit evils. Blessing and misfortune are like shadows. Can we escape our shadow by walking away from it?"

"This physical body is temporary. When we die, our spirits follow the karma we have created. This is something no one can alter. There is no way to bribe the King of Hell. As you can see,

this coin was still in my father's mouth.

"My king, because you gave generously and created blessings in your past lives, you were blessed to be a king in this lifetime. So why are you committing so many evil deeds? If you share your wisdom with your people and use your position to help the poor, you can create many blessings. Then there is no need to bribe King Yama."

After the king heard this, his heart opened and he finally understood. He repented his actions and quickly gave an order to reverse his decrees. All the people he had wrongfully imprisoned were set free. He returned all the money he had seized to the people and even opened up the royal treasury to give aid to the poor. Thus, a child's wisdom saved many from suffering. This is how one small child's wisdom influenced a king and saved an entire country.

When the Buddha reached this point of the story, he said, "Did you know? I was that child. In my past lives, I manifested in many forms, in many countries, and as people of all ages, all to teach and transform others." So, as we learn the Buddha's way, we must do the same. No matter who we are or where we find ourselves, we must work with others in this world to benefit all sentient beings. 🌿

Mu Shu Vegetables

Recipe provided by Vegetarian Cooking Team
Tzu Chi University Continuing Education Center
Instructor: Jimmy Chiu

Ingredients:

1/2 head Cabbage
1/2 large Carrot
2 cups Mung Bean Sprouts
3-5 grams Dried Black Fungus
1 Egg
1 package Mu Shu Wrappers
Vegetarian Hoisin Sauce

Directions

1. Beat egg and set aside.
2. Soak dried black fungus. When soft, wash clean and cut into thin strips.
3. Bring a pot of water to boil. When water is boiling, add black fungus and bean sprouts for 30-60 seconds, then remove and set aside.
4. Cut carrot into thin strips.
5. In a heated pan, add cooking oil and beaten egg. Scramble egg and set aside.
6. Sauté carrots, cabbage, black fungus, and bean sprouts, then add seasonings. When evenly mixed, add the scrambled egg, mix together, and set aside.
7. Steam Mu Shu Wrappers.
8. Lightly smear Hoisin Sauce on Mu Shu Wrappers. Add filling in center and roll into wrap.

Seasonings:

1 tablespoon Soy Sauce
1 teaspoon Sesame Oil
1/2 teaspoon Mushroom Essence
pinch of White Pepper Powder
Salt (to taste)

A vegetarian diet is not only good for
our health, but also good for the earth.

*Jing Si Aphorism
by Dharma Master Cheng Yen*

Photos: Joanne You





Snow Journal

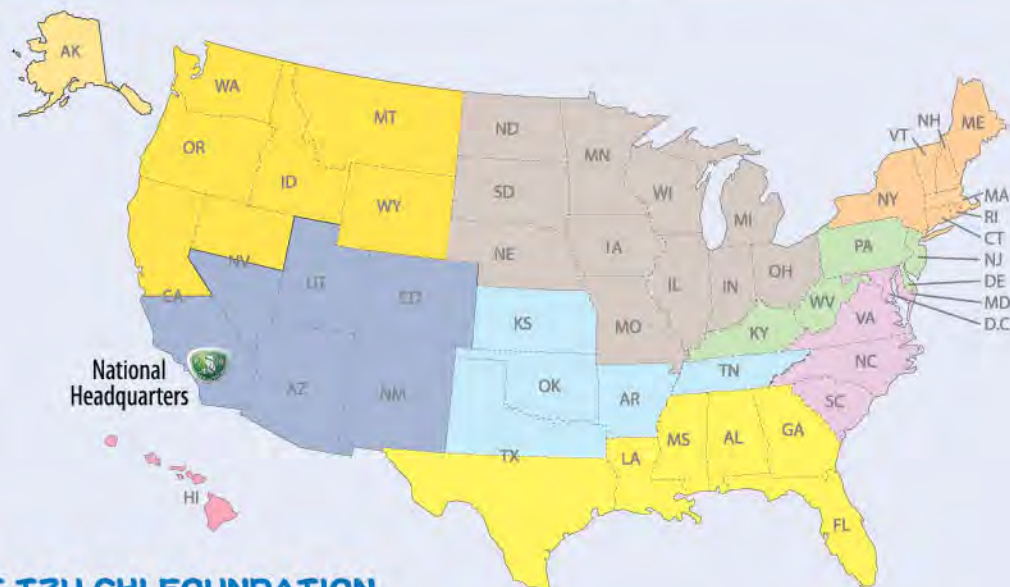
*The sky is cloudless
Pieces of snow drift to the ground
The trees are covered with white
The pine tree sways in the wind*

*The sky is colorless
Darkness covers the earth
It is a long time until sunrise
No birds are in sight*

*It is the last of winter
And the start of spring
Cold winter wind needs to leave
The cycle of seasons keeps on going*

Ashley Lin
Seventh Grade Class
Washington D.C. Tzu Chi Academy










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TZU CHI

A BRIEF HISTORY...

On April 14, 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. During the first five years, 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: across the island and around the world.

Today, Tzu Chi is a nonprofit charitable organization with ten million volunteers and donors in more than fifty countries worldwide. Over the past forty-seven 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 nationwide. Volunteers give back to their local communities through family services, emergency disaster services, 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, Hurricane Katrina, the 2010 Haiti earthquake, and Hurricane Sandy.

In recent years, Tzu Chi volunteers' charitable work has been increasingly recognized by the global community. In 2010, Tzu Chi was granted special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council. In 2011, Dharma Master Cheng Yen was recognized with the Roosevelt Institute's FDR Distinguished Public Service Award and named to the 2011 TIME 100 list of the world's most influential people. In 2013, Tzu Chi was honored by the White House for its Hurricane Sandy disaster relief efforts.

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True wealth is
measured in virtue;
true character is
measured in
filial gratitude.

*Jing Si Aphorism by
Dharma Master
Cheng Yen*

