

COMPASSION & RELIEF

TZU CHI USA JOURNAL

GREAT LOVE TRANSCENDS RELIGION

- ◆ DHARMA AS WATER
- ◆ MIDWEST TORNADO RELIEF
- ◆ THE 80/20 LIFESTYLE



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DHARMA MASTER CHENG YEN,
FOUNDER OF
TZU CHI FOUNDATION

CONTEMPLATIVE WISDOM

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

The Pure Spring of the Heart

Everyone's mind was originally clean and pure.
But as thoughts arise, subtle afflictions fly up like dust.
The Dharma is like water;
it can wash away the dust of greed and anger and ignorance.

Let the Dharma fill your heart.
Sincerely vow to wash away the ignorance in your mind
and let the clear spring of your heart flow forth.
As we bring our cleansing streams together,
people's hearts will be purified,
and this world will become a Pure Land.

Compiled into English by the Dharma as Water Editorial Team



CEO's Note

5 Love Without Borders
Han Huang

Words from Master Cheng Yen

6 Life, Work, and the Religious Spirit
Dharma Master Cheng Yen

Great Love Transcends Religion

10 Tales of Interfaith Collaboration
Tzu Chi Foundation

16 Dharma & Gospel: Together in My Life
Peggy Lo

19 The Search for Nuns in Haiti
Yuru Chou

23 A Visit to the Sisters of St. Anne
Shirley Tseng

26 Filling the Void with Love
Liliane Yong & Adam Paiz

29 A Relay of Love
Michelle Chen

31 Winter Relief
Colin Legerton

Medical Corner

35 The Advantages of the 80/20 Lifestyle
Stephen Denq

Education Corner

38 Real Magic
Charlene Haney

40 Tzu Chi Global in Action

Dharma as Water: Great Repentance

44 Understanding the Power of the Mind
Dharma Master Cheng Yen

47 Stock Options: Source of Happiness
or Pitfall of Greed?
Tina Tuan

Song of Bodhisattvas

48 The Mind Creates Afflictions
Lyrics: Sixi Wang, Music: Ziheng Li

49 Tzu Chi USA in Action

Living Bodhisattvas

52 Andy Kaoh: Saving Hearts
Fay Chou

Storytelling by the Master

56 A Wake-up Call
Dharma Master Cheng Yen

Vegetarian Style

58 Romeo & Juliet
Vegetarian Cooking Team

Disaster Relief in the USA

59 Gratitude from Silverado
Leslie Paskus

60 Love & Care to Tornado Survivors
Tzu Chi Volunteers

Young Bodhisattvas

62 Harrisburg Tornado Relief
Nicholas Lo



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a view from all angles,
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Several stories in this issue
are also featured on
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LOVE WITHOUT BORDERS

Han Huang

In the course of our disaster relief work, Tzu Chi frequently has the opportunity to collaborate with various government organizations. When I speak with these groups, people often tell me that they are touched that Tzu Chi, a Buddhist organization from East Asia, does not limit its assistance to just Buddhists or Asians, but rather helps all people regardless of their background. I tell them that this comes from the Buddhist concept of compassion that forms the foundation of Tzu Chi.

For Tzu Chi, Buddhism is at the heart of everything we do, as is compassion ("tzu"). Both are even right in our name: Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation. The Buddha taught that our compassion should not make distinctions. He taught us to be compassionate not only to all humans, but even to extend our compassion to all living beings. So our hearts should not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, or nationality.

This spirit of inclusiveness has brought many volunteers of various religions to Tzu Chi, and I am always glad to see Christians and people of all faiths volunteering together under a Buddhist banner. It is a testament to the openness of their religions as well that this can happen. Though there are many differences between our beliefs, their foundations are the same: love and compassion.

This past March, acclaimed Israeli singer David D'Or visited the United States to hold several charity concerts for Tzu Chi in New York and Los Angeles. Though he is Jewish, he came to sing in Buddhist halls because he shares with Tzu Chi the common dream of a world filled with peace and love.


Two decades ago, when Tzu Chi's first hospital

in Hualien was just starting up, the remote rural location made recruiting doctors difficult. The first doctor to come forward and join the hospital was Yinghe Chen, a devout Christian. Twenty years later he continues to serve Tzu Chi General Hospital faithfully, now as its superintendent.

Master Cheng Yen founded Tzu Chi on the principle of "Compassion in Action." Following her lead, Tzu Chi volunteers go out into their communities and around the world, putting compassion into action by helping whomever they find in need, without regard to religion, ethnicity, age, or any other criteria.

Since Tzu Chi began international disaster relief work in 1991, volunteers have helped disaster survivors in seventy countries, including Afghanistan, Pakistan, Mexico, North Korea, Ethiopia, and many more. Most follow religions that are different from Tzu Chi's, but their beliefs do not affect the love and care that is delivered to them.

The willingness to look beyond religion in aid work is certainly not unique to Tzu Chi. Many religious-based groups are the same way: whether Buddhist, Christian, Muslim, or Jewish, they go anywhere and help anyone. Frequently, Tzu Chi collaborates with these groups all over the world. Despite our differences we work together each and every day.

What I have seen through my years with Tzu Chi is that the differences between us, whatever they may be, are never stronger than the bonds of our common humanity. As Master Cheng Yen has said, "No matter whether the water is in a well, stream, or river, it is always water. It is the same with religions. They all begin with love." 

LIFE, WORK, *and* THE RELIGIOUS

I often say that Tzu Chi is a religious organization, and it is because there is a spirit that informs all our work, a sense of mission that inspires our efforts. When I use the term "religious," I don't mean subscribing to a certain set of beliefs or doctrines such as that of Buddhism or Christianity. To me, being religious is about finding life's true meaning and purpose, which in turn gives us direction. We each have our own path or direction in life. My life path, for example, is the monastic path. I have chosen to step outside the bonds of worldly love to embrace all humanity as my family. When there is a disaster somewhere and people are suffering, it breaks my heart and I feel deeply for their suffering. Everyone is my family so their suffering is my suffering, their hardship my hardship. This is what it means to leave one's small family and live for the big family of humanity, and this is the path I have chosen for myself—to shoulder humanity's burdens.

People ask me, "Isn't this a very difficult load to carry? Isn't it too much and too exhausting?" It is indeed not easy. Working for the wellbeing of humanity involves many different kinds of work. In Tzu Chi we work in the fields of charity, medicine, education, and humanistic culture, including international disaster aid, running a bone marrow registry, environmental protection activities, and

mobilizing a network of volunteers in the community. Every day, we visit impoverished families to provide love, care, and financial aid, give medical care to the general public in our hospitals, and regularly hold free medical outreaches for those who cannot afford medical care. We run schools in order to properly educate our next generation so that they can grow up with the right values and become people of character and integrity who can work for the good of society. We also have a television station to offer wholesome programming so that the minds of people in our society will not be constantly contaminated by the sensationalism, violence, and distorted values widespread in the media today. This is our daily work. Should a disaster happen in any part of the world, it pains me just as if I am living in that country myself, and therefore we do our best to help, in what ways we can.

Yes, the work is difficult and it is a considerable load to shoulder. The heartache, pain, worry, and weight of responsibility I feel every day is very heavy indeed. But I take it on happily and willingly. Though I could have lived a solitary life of contemplation, I have chosen this path and so I carry all its accompanying burdens without complaint. Because I do it willingly, I embrace everything that comes with it joyfully.

As my life work is to be of service to

SPIRIT

From Dharma Master Cheng Yen's Talks

Compiled into English by the Jing Si Abode English Editorial Team



humanity, I must look after my health if I am to continue this work. I make sure that I am healthy in body and mind so that I can work. This is because this work is my life purpose; I live to carry out such work and make a contribution.

But for some, their work is only a means to earn a living. The purpose of working, to them, is to make money to support their daily needs. When they think in such a way, their minds are not oriented toward service but toward making money for themselves. They are not happy when working since it is something they do because they have to, in order to support themselves. The work is a chore and it becomes tiring. It is not something they do willingly.

When people make money in order to achieve a certain quality of life, there is often never a point where they feel they have enough. When they are in this mindset, they will always set their sights on more. Gaining one dollar, they think of how nice it will be if they have nine more to make an even ten. Having ten dollars, they will think about having a hundred dollars. Having a hundred dollars, they will think of having a thousand, and on it goes. The bar keeps getting raised higher. I call this mindset "having one but always lacking nine." Despite having much, such people still feel there is something lacking.

Therefore, they are never really happy and at peace. Such a life is actually not very pleasant.

But there is the possibility of another way to live—that of living to work, living to make a contribution to the world. Instead of living to gain, one lives to give. When we were building the Tzu Chi Hospital in Hualien, there was a woman who decided to hire herself out as a maid so she could earn money for the project. Not being wealthy, she did not have money to donate, but being able-bodied, she felt what she could offer was her labor. She signed a contract with a family to serve as their maid for three years. She essentially indentured herself so that she could help me build the hospital. Despite the menial and physically draining work, she felt very happy. It is a kind of happiness that people who work only to make money for themselves do not experience. Instead of being tired, she felt a lot of energy and joy because she was filled with a sense of purpose and love.

This is the kind of life I would call a religious life. All religions teach the spirit of love, whether Christianity, Islam, or Buddhism, and when we are inspired by this love, we will feel a sense of purpose and willingly dedicate ourselves to working for the good of the world. When we do so, we will live to work rather than work for the sake of making a living. This is the happiest life. 🌿

A group of men, likely of South Asian descent, are gathered around a large, shallow pool of bright blue water. They are wearing white shirts and white turbans. One man in the foreground is leaning over the water, his head near the surface. Another man to his right is also leaning over, with his hands held out over the water. The water is rippling, and a small, dark object is visible on the surface, creating a ripple. The overall scene suggests a religious or cultural ceremony, possibly a baptism or a purification ritual.

**GREAT LOVE
TRANSCENDS
RELIGION**



Although we are in different countries with different religions, we share the same compassion and love for people on this same planet. Love is like water. Even if we drill water from different grounds, the water is the same.

– *Dharma Master Cheng Yen*

Tales of Interfaith Collaboration

Source: Tzu Chi Foundation
Compiled by Fay Chou
Translated by Colin Legerton

Since Dharma Master Cheng Yen founded the Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation in 1966, it has been not only a charity organization, but also a religious one. Religion is important, Master Cheng Yen has explained, because it provides guidance and purpose for life. The inclusive nature of Tzu Chi has led to many people of various religions joining the organization as volunteers and donors over the years: including Christians, Muslims, Jews, and many without religious beliefs.

As Tzu Chi has provided disaster relief in more than seventy countries, the religious beliefs of those to be helped has never been a consideration. Master Cheng Yen has taught that no matter which religion or which corner of the world one calls home, all are connected as one community. So Tzu Chi's history is filled with moving stories of volunteers who help others in need regardless of their ethnicity, religion, or nationality.



Students celebrate the new Najmieh Girls High School in Bam, Iran. Photo: Linzhao Yan

Joining Tzu Chi and Local Culture

On December 26, 2003, the ancient city of Bam in southeastern Iran was struck by a 6.7 magnitude earthquake. Nearly ninety percent of the local buildings and infrastructure was damaged or destroyed, while more than twenty-five thousand were killed and another forty thousand injured. More than seventy-five thousand people were left homeless.

Within seventy-two hours after the earthquake, Tzu Chi volunteers were already in the disaster region distributing blankets, daily necessities, first aid kits, sleeping bags, heaters, and school supplies. Medical volunteers provided treatment to over six hundred people. Over the next few months, Tzu Chi shipped twenty-five hundred tons of rice to the region to provide for ongoing needs. Amanollah Askari, the retired director of the Bam Education Bureau, found himself especially moved by the dedication he saw in a Tzu Chi doctor. One day, the doctor was providing medical treatment to disaster survivors; several days later he was seen carrying enormous bags of rice.

As many schools were toppled in the earthquake, Tzu Chi implemented a long-term plan to support seventeen hundred elementary

and middle school students by rebuilding five schools. Master Cheng Yen advised that the schools' architecture should incorporate characteristics of both Tzu Chi culture and the local culture. A Catholic architect from the Philippines, Felino A. Palafox, Jr., was placed in charge of the project. In order to ensure airflow and cool temperatures without air conditioning, Palafox employed the regional "wind tower" architectural style. He also incorporated the slanting roof feature of East Asian architecture, thus combining local and Tzu Chi culture in the schools' designs.

Ground was broken on the schools in April 2005, and they were opened for use in March 2007. These schools, built by a Buddhist organization and a Catholic architect in an Islamic country, truly paint a beautiful picture of collaboration across religions. Mr. He, a local volunteer translator and Chinese Muslim, was very moved by Tzu Chi's help. He said, "I wish that Muslims were all Tzu Chi volunteers, and Tzu Chi volunteers were all Muslims."

Allah's Plan Includes Tzu Chi

Four years earlier—on August 17, 1999—another Islamic country, Turkey, was hit by a 7.6 magnitude earthquake. Nearly forty thousand people were killed or injured, and more than six hundred thousand were left without homes. A Tzu Chi disaster assessment team arrived in the area the very next day to deliver blankets and sleeping pads to disaster survivors and to plan for further assistance.

Just a month after the earthquake in Turkey, another earthquake struck about one hundred miles from Tzu Chi headquarters in



Tzu Chi volunteers deliver love and warm blankets to earthquake survivors in Iran.

Photo: Linzhao Yan



In March 2007, five schools rebuilt by Tzu Chi were opened for use in Bam, Iran. Photo: Linzhao Yan

Hualien: the worst disaster to strike the region in a century. Though still dealing with their own disaster, the relief team in Turkey immediately sent forty volunteers to support the relief effort near Hualien.

For Faisal Hu, the back-to-back earthquakes provided an impactful first encounter with Tzu Chi. As he interacted with the disaster assessment team, Hu saw the volunteers approach disaster relief with positivity and humility. The encounter led Hu, a devout Muslim, to completely change his opinion of Buddhism. He realized that this Buddhist organization was not just about chanting and bowing, but rather making active and positive contributions to the world.

After erecting two hundred large tents to shelter Turkish disaster survivors from the wind and rain, Tzu Chi decided to construct a Great Love Village of three hundred homes and four classrooms. According to local tradition, it is customary to sacrifice a lamb before breaking ground to ask for Allah's blessing for smooth construction. But when Tzu Chi volunteers saw a frightened lamb tied to a bulldozer, they

were unable to bear its pained bleats. They appealed to the chief engineer, "We came from far away to care for the living creatures here: not just disaster survivors, but even this little lamb. Please don't let the Tzu Chi Great Love Village be polluted by the blood of this innocent lamb!"

The chief engineer explained, "We are not killing the lamb, but rather sending him back to Allah." But the volunteers persisted: "Don't you feel that our coming from such a long distance and then asking you not to sacrifice the lamb is also Allah's plan?" The chief engineer prayed on it, and decided to respect the Tzu Chi volunteers by not sacrificing the lamb.

Shortly after construction began, so did Ramadan, the Islamic month of fasting. Each year during Ramadan, Muslim believers refrain from eating and drinking after sunrise each day in order to learn patience and humility. Only after the sun has set can they break the fast. As construction was ongoing, Tzu Chi volunteers not only had to adapt to rapidly dropping temperatures, but also overcome the decreased strength of workers who fasted each day. In order to complete the project before winter, Faisal Hu drove out in all directions

I am a Muslim serving people in need in the community through a Buddhist organization because in Tzu Chi, humanity is the main focus, and we believe that we are all human and need each other. - Dr. Homayoun Ghovanlou, Dentist



Disaster survivors salvage what they can from the wreckage of Turkey's 1999 earthquake. Photo: Yanxue Li



I've been involved with Tzu Chi for twenty-two years in Brisbane. And I feel I belong. I'm a Catholic sister and you're all Buddhists, but we are one. We have the same love in our hearts.

- Sister Angela Mary Doyle, Catholic Nun



During the opening ceremony of the Great Love Village in Gölcük, Turkey, in January 2000, volunteers hand daily use items to the new residents. Photo: Fengqi Lin

appealing to villagers to come and volunteer. Within days, store owners, officials, students, laborers, teachers, and soldiers were working side by side to complete construction of the village.

After the village was complete, Tzu Chi established an office in Istanbul to continue to provide for all those in need in Turkey. Faisal Hu was placed in charge, becoming the first Muslim head of a Tzu Chi branch office.

A Self-Reliant School

In the late 1990s, at a time when many across the world were beginning to associate Islam with terrorism, Elder Habib Saggaf, a beloved Indonesian Islamic religious leader, worked to show the world that Islam is a warm religion capable of bringing peace and happiness.

In 1998, on the day after a major riot in Jakarta, Elder Habib began to build the religious community of his dreams—Desa Waru Jaya. Later, he added the Al-Ashriyyah Nurul Iman Islamic Boarding School, where he provided free dormitory housing and care for orphans and children from impoverished families. Elder Habib placed strong emphasis on cultivating morality and religion and stressed the importance of caring for one another, in the hopes that the young people at his school could receive a quality education, open up their worldview, and be accepting of others.

In October 2003, Tzu Chi began to provide Nurul Iman Boarding School with a monthly

No matter whether the water is in a well, stream, or river, it is always water. It is the same with religions. They all begin with love.

Dharma Master Cheng Yen

After months of dedicated farming, Elder Habib Saggaf and his Nurul Iman students celebrate their first harvest in July 2010. Photo: Slamet Mulyono



supply of rice at the recommendation of the Indonesian Social Affairs Minister. At the time, the school had three thousand students. By 2004, it had grown to six thousand students, rendering the existing facilities insufficient. To support Elder Habib and the students, Tzu Chi Indonesia stepped in to build a new two-story building with twenty-six classrooms.

For several years, Tzu Chi provided fifty tons of rice to the school each month. But then, Elder Habib began to take steps to make the school more self-sufficient. Following Master Cheng Yen's suggestion, he reclaimed part of the school's land as a rice paddy. Tzu Chi Indonesia volunteers provided rice seedlings to grow in the paddy, and also taught the students how to make bread in the school's rundown kitchen. Cans for separating recycling from trash were

set up on either side of the school's main road, and Elder Habib also dedicated a portion of land to producing and packaging organic fertilizer. By implementing these initiatives to grow rice and produce fertilizer, Elder Habib not only found ways to earn money for the school, but also taught his students to love the land. As Tzu Chi's humanitarian spirit fit the spirit of the Koran, he took Tzu Chi as his model.

Now, with the help of Tzu Chi and Christian churches, Nurul Iman has expanded further. Though Elder Habib passed away in late 2010, his school continues to educate students according to his philosophies, teaching them to respect all people, to learn from people of different backgrounds, and to recognize the beauty in every religion.

Ambassador Becomes a Volunteer

Raphael Gamzou, the former Israeli representative in Taipei, joined Tzu Chi's volunteer recycling efforts in 2007. Fearing neither the odor nor the heat, he and his wife joined other volunteers to separate trash and do recycling every week. Two years later, after Typhoon Morakot devastated the island, the southern island region suffered a severe shortage of potable water. Through Gamzou's hard work, water purification systems were donated by the Israeli government and businesses to disaster survivors in the area.

In August 2010, Gamzou's four-year term in Taipei came to an end. Before he left the island, he and his wife visited the Jing Si Abode in Hualien and bid farewell to Master Cheng Yen, who stated that she hoped this first seed of Tzu Chi in Israel would promote the spirit of love and show that all people are one family. Gamzou promised to do so not only in Israel, but wherever he was sent across the world.



*When the school day is over, Nurul Iman's classrooms become dormitories, and their hallways become dining rooms.
Photo provided by Tzu Chi Indonesia Office*

Gamzou has since been asked how he, a Jewish man with no Buddhist background, came to respect and admire Master Cheng Yen. He answered that Master Cheng Yen's philosophy holds many similarities with the fundamental beliefs of Judaism; that her work is to repair the world, a worthy task that deserves everyone's respect.

Gamzou's wife also introduced world-renowned Israeli singer David D'Or to Tzu Chi. D'Or has since become one of Master Cheng Yen's disciples and has held several charity concerts on behalf of Tzu Chi, most recently in March 2012. In addition, he has set many of

Master Cheng Yen's Jing Si Aphorisms to music in order to spread the message of love through song. He has stated that as Tzu Chi supports those in need, when he sings for Tzu Chi he sings to comfort the world.

David D'Or believes that true belief does not differentiate religion as long as there is love. As Master Cheng Yen has said, "In Tzu Chi we embrace people of all religions, for all religions teach love. Different religions may use different terms to speak about love; the essence of the spirit is the same. This love is the spirit of religion." 🌿

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Never ending toil, not to be asound

“ I love Master Cheng Yen very much. And I think that we should teach her teachings to all humanity, actually, to people all over the world.

- David D'Or,
Acclaimed Israeli Singer ”

David D'Or performs during a Tzu Chi charity concert in September 2008.

Photo: William Chen

Dharma and Gospel: Together in My Life

Peggy Lo



The author (second from left) poses before the Hualien mural that inspired her college essay. Photo provided by Peggy Lo

When my mom first started volunteering for Tzu Chi, I was already active in a local high school church youth group. Looking back, I was more of a social Christian at the time. I believed in God, I prayed, and I occasionally read the Bible, but I did not have a disciplined way of studying or practicing my faith. Meanwhile, I was fascinated by the story of Master Cheng Yen and the incredible work she did and inspired people to do. So, when I was invited to participate in the Hospital Volunteer Camp in Hualien the summer before my senior year of high school, I jumped at the opportunity.

I was so moved that I wrote my college application essay about the experience, focusing on the mural in the lobby of Hualien Tzu Chi Medical Center, the image of the Buddha comforting the sick. During the camp, I learned that the hospital was a place for healing not just the body but also the spirit, and I was moved by the dedication of the

volunteers, the smiles of the patients, and the joy that comes from reducing another's suffering. Surprisingly, the biggest mental adjustment of staying at the Jing Si Abode had to do with culture rather than religion. I did not enjoy waking up at 3:20 each morning, but I did enjoy the physical part of the morning recitations. When everyone sang the offering song before meals, I simply prayed a prayer similar to the words of the song.

After I returned home, I became more involved with Tzu Chi and even started a Tzu Shao group for high school students in New Jersey. I was inspired by Master Cheng Yen and the message that carrying out volunteer work not only helps recipients, but also helps and changes the volunteers.

Around that time I started to question traditional, organized Christianity. My questions were not being addressed or discussed in youth group and the people there were not very encouraging about my involvement in Tzu

Chi, so I stopped attending youth group. Though I still identified myself as a Christian, I did so with the caveat that I was spiritual but not religious because I did not want to be tied to organized religion.

Since I have been involved with Tzu Chi for many years, I am sometimes asked whether I have ever thought about becoming a

Buddhist. Even during the periods of my most intense involvement in college, I never seriously did. For a long time I could not pinpoint why I felt this way, except that, to me, Buddhism always felt more like a philosophy because I connected with it on an intellectual level but not on an emotional or spiritual level. All along, I admired the work Tzu Chi was doing and I was always touched by volunteers' testimonies of transformation. Whenever I prayed to be somewhere where I could be of great use, I always found myself back in Tzu Chi. But I never felt a desire to become a Buddhist.

In August 2009, my Tzu Chi involvement deepened as I started translating with the Dharma as Water team. Not long after, I began attending Grace Cathedral in January 2010. Ever since, these two aspects of my life have enhanced and strengthened each other. I constantly see echoes of one in the other. In the very first sermon I heard at Grace Cathedral, an Episcopal church, the priest said that we should always remember to focus on the moon and not the finger pointing to the moon. I laughed immediately, because this was also a constant reminder from Master De Ren, who was the Tzu Ching advisor in Hualien.

Master Cheng Yen has said that she is not creating a new form of Buddhism, but rather taking Buddhism back to its roots. She emphasizes upholding and practicing the



The author celebrates her 2010 baptism with her family. Photo provided by Peggy Lo

Buddha's teachings. Similarly, the Dean of Grace Cathedral, Dr. Jane Shaw, writes that the earliest converts to Christianity were asked not "What do you believe?" but "How has your life been transformed?" and that we should return to this perspective. So I find that I am attracted to people and places that root their practice in the beginnings of their tradition and stress the importance of

personal transformation and the quality of interactions with others, rather than focusing on a list of defined beliefs and rituals.

In my translation work with Dharma as Water, I have become much more aware of how language and words can both expand and restrict my understanding. The realizations I attain from actively studying and practicing Christianity also help me translate Master Cheng Yen's words across cultures because I am not just translating the words but also the spirit behind the words.

For example, the word "xin" in Chinese can mean both "heart" and "mind," but when we translate, we need to pick one. This shows me that seeing the heart and mind dualistically is a somewhat artificial separation. Similarly, in Hebrew the word "lebab" means "mind" and "will" and "heart." Knowing this, I am very conscious when I read the Bible that it is a translated work that needs to be read in the context of the language and time in which it was written. Instead of trying to parse the words themselves, I need to find the meanings to which they point.

At the same time, I am learning tremendous respect and appreciation for the words. When I translate Master Cheng Yen's teachings on the Water Repentance Sutra, I try to convey exactly what is being said: no more and no less. I cannot gloss over something because

I do not fully understand it, nor can I add something extra because I understand it well. This makes me very aware of what I read. Meanwhile, I am taking a class called Education for Ministry which helps students think about their personal theology and how they can minister to others in their daily living. We read the Old Testament last year and are reading the New Testament this year. In this class, too, I have learned the importance of reading and reflecting on the original words because they often differ from the stories we hear growing up or in popular culture.

Frequently I encounter echoes across the two worlds, often quite unexpectedly:

In Tzu Chi, we talk about turning this turbid world into a Pure Land. Similarly, I learned that some people believe that the Kingdom of God is here on earth; it is not a destination, but something we take an active role in creating right here, right now.

I used to translate the "Tzu" of Tzu Chi as "kindness," but then learned that a more accurate translation is "loving-kindness." Soon after, I started noticing the word "loving-kindness" when it came up in my daily Bible readings or in the Psalms. Now, that concept and feeling has been reinforced in my mind.

In Buddhism, the Threefold Karma is karma of speech, body, and mind. At church, we confess to God that "we have sinned against you, through our own fault, in thought, word, and deed."

In fact, I even see a great similarity in the path of each religion's teaching. For forty-two years, the Buddha used countless skillful means to teach the Dharma in various ways, but he later forsook that method for direct teaching. The Buddha explained when expounding the Lotus Sutra that the path to enlightenment is straight. There is only one path, a broad and spacious path, which is the Bodhisattva Path. When Jesus came, he pierced through the

numerous temple laws that were in place and said that there are two commandments above all: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength" and "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (adapted from Mark 12:28-34). Seeing this, I understood that in both cases the many means and laws point to the most fundamental tenets of the religion. It is easy to get caught up in the laundry list of rules, but we must find the true message at the heart.

Translation work for Tzu Chi strengthens my faith because the similarities unlock my understanding of certain concepts and the differences reaffirm why I am a Christian. I believe that there are many paths to God, or to the Tathagata or the Ultimate Truth, and this happens to be mine. As Dr. Robert Gregg, emeritus professor of Religious Studies at Stanford, said during a recent Grace Cathedral forum, "Listening to others will help you grow in your understanding of your own tradition." That is definitely true for me. 🌿



The author (left) prepares to sweep the streets of San Francisco. Photo provided by Peggy Lo



The author (back row, second from left) and her fellow Tzu Ching college volunteers attend a leadership retreat in 2002. Photo provided by Tzu Chi Foundation



The Search for Nuns in Haiti

Yuru Chou | Translated by John Ueng

Tzu Chi volunteers connect with Haitian nuns in March 2010. Photo: I-Hwa Cheng

In early March 2010, I arrived in Port-au-Prince as part of Tzu Chi's disaster relief team. My focus was on mid- to long-term rebuilding projects. The powerful earthquake in January that year left Port-au-Prince in complete shambles, with even government agencies displaced. Under such circumstances, searching for partnering schools or hospitals to rebuild became extremely challenging.

Despite her very busy schedule, Dharma Master Cheng Yen remained deeply committed to the Haitian people and the Tzu Chi volunteers helping them, so she made time for daily teleconference meetings with the disaster relief team to guide all their progress and developments.

As most Haitians are Catholic, many turned to their churches for help after the earthquake. As such, Tzu Chi began cooperating with several local church leaders in late January to conduct relief distributions at their locations. Thus, at teleconference meetings, volunteers would often give updates on the status of projects with local churches. During one such meeting in early March, Master Cheng Yen suddenly asked us, "What about the nuns? There should be many nuns in Haiti also."

Before she founded Tzu Chi, Master Cheng Yen was visited by three Catholic nuns in Hualien. An exchange on religion ensued, and, before their departure, the nuns expressed admiration for Buddhism's great teachings of compassion and the equality of all living beings. But they emphasized that the Catholic Church was more active in building hospitals and homes for the aged to care for people in need around the world, and left Master Cheng Yen with the question, "What concrete contributions has Buddhism made to society?" These words from the Catholic nuns stayed with Master Cheng Yen. They sowed the seeds of the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation, and also gave her a special kinship with Catholic nuns.

A few days after she first asked about nuns during the teleconference meeting, Master Cheng Yen again raised the same question. But the disaster relief team still did not have an answer. Right after the meeting, I received a call from Master De Chen of Tzu Chi Headquarters' Department of Religious Affairs, assigning me the task of finding nuns. Accepting the task, I was immediately filled with concerns. I wondered, "Where in the world am I going to find nuns? I haven't even



On March 16, 2010, Tzu Chi volunteers delivered relief goods and care to the Sisters of Congrégation de Gilles de Marie Reamis Immaculée, who were in desperate need of supplies. Photo: I-Hwa Cheng

Nations interagency coordination meetings, or speaking with visitors at our coordination center, I always mentioned our search for nuns in need of help.

Seeing our commitment and diligence, our bodyguard-driver Feron Robenson, though indifferent at first, gradually took steps to help. On March 13, he told us that he heard about a Catholic school operated by nuns that had suffered severe damage. Though he knew only the area, not its exact location, we still asked him to take us there immediately.

We spent almost the entire morning asking for directions, looking for streets, going up hills, then down hills, zooming in on the right location, until we finally located the Collège of St. Francois primary and secondary school situated on a steep hill within a quiet residential neighborhood. Not only was the school completely destroyed, the office and dormitory had also become dangerously cracked and uninhabitable, so the ten resident nuns were forced to camp out in the yard. Though it was fortunate that no one was hurt, their short supplies of food were soon to run out.

Upon our inquiry, the Mother Superior relayed to us that there was another mission out there that had also suffered severe devastation and some casualties. Night was coming, so we decided to head out at first light the following day. A similar search routine ensued as we followed vague instructions to find a mission in the hills in need of help. After an entire morning of driving past countless tent cities and collapsed buildings, we finally spotted a church with a priest and some nuns. They thanked us for coming but declined our offer to help because they sustained only minor damages and could take care of themselves. Upon our inquiry, they referred us to another mission even higher up in the hills, Congrégation de Gilles de Marie Reamis Immaculée, which had suffered extensive damage and needed help.

made any progress yet in mid- to long-term rebuilding projects.”

As I stepped out from the meeting room into the hot, humid night, I looked up at the silky starry night of Port-au-Prince, trying to clear my mind and figure out a way. The beautiful night sky did not calm my turbulent mind as it ruminated over how I should maximize my time and resources while multitasking. On one hand, I felt great uncertainty for the road ahead. On the other hand, I firmly believed in Master Cheng Yen’s wisdom in this mission. Lacking insight into what tomorrow would bring, I adopted her teaching as my recipe for success: “If it is the right thing to do, just do it.”

No Stone Unturned

Due to the security risks in Haiti, Tzu Chi volunteers were required to have protection at all times in the form of bodyguards who doubled as drivers. After receiving my new task, I went out in the early morning to wait for the arriving bodyguard-drivers by their usual rest area. When they arrived, I found some food for those who had not yet eaten breakfast, and listened to their stories about the earthquake and its aftermath. After our ice-breaking session, I announced our new program to find and help local nuns and appealed for their aid. I asked them to reach out to their contacts in the community to find orphanages, schools, or clinics run by nuns who were in need of help. Not only that, anywhere I went and anyone I met, whether scouting venues for rebuilding projects, attending United

So we continued our search, winding around one hill after another on the mountainous roads. After several more hours of driving, we finally found the congregation, which runs a total of ten schools and several health centers. Two nuns were killed in the earthquake and their buildings were completely flattened. When we arrived, the forty-six surviving nuns only had food for another ten days.

Amidst the Ruins

The same night we found the Collège of St. Francois, we immediately reported back to Master Cheng Yen. Danel Georges, a Haitian entrepreneur who had become a Tzu Chi volunteer, happened to attend the meeting and was so moved by our sincerity in carrying out our search that after the meeting he promised to take us to another mission. On March 15, he took us to three schools and a clinic run by the Congregation of Sisters of St. Anne. Located in the most heavily damaged area of Port-au-Prince, the schools and clinic had all been reduced to rubble. Even two months after the earthquake, the air was still thick with the rotten odor of human remains buried beneath the wreckage.

Danel also took us to St. Anne's Haiti headquarters, where one nun had been killed and three nuns were injured, to complete our damage assessment. Their office and dormitory buildings were severely fractured and structurally unsafe, so the fifteen nuns that survived were living in tents out in the yard. In the make-shift kitchen set up under a large tree, a few shriveled bags of rice and beans were all they had to live on. The nuns explained to us that though they were all very hungry, they

Lacking insight into what tomorrow would bring, I adopted her teaching as my recipe for success: "If it is the right thing to do, just do it."

would not refuse anyone who came to them for food so long as they still had food left.

Danel told us about his special affinity with Sisters of St. Anne. He had been raised by his mother, a single parent, and used to be very rebellious. In his teenage years, he once visited the Sisters of St. Anne with a group of friends and shared his goals in life and vision for the world with the head nun. The nun told him that among this group of teenage boys he was the one she really believed would one day make great contributions to society, so she encouraged him to work hard. The nun's encouragement boosted his confidence greatly and he remembered her like a loving mother. After that, even as he struggled with his academic pursuits and racial prejudice while studying abroad, he never lost his confidence.

That same afternoon, Danel also took us to St. Anne's Collège Marie-Anne primary and secondary schools, and Christ The King Secretarial School. Among all the St. Anne schools that collapsed in the earthquake, the primary school had the most students. The adjacent Christ The King Secretarial School was the top technical school in all of Haiti.

We also heard about another mission in the hills of Carrefour outside Port-au-Prince that had completely collapsed. Though we had no more specific details about its location, we headed out to find it on March 16. By now, our bodyguard-driver Feron Robenson had proven to be a master of directions: a human GPS. He took us through the busy city of Carrefour, then drove along a dirt road through a huge dry riverbed, following directions gathered from the locals. As the population began to



The buildings of Little Sisters of St. Therese of the Child Jesus were completely flattened in the January 2010 earthquake. Photo: Yuru Chou



Tzu Chi Haiti volunteer Danel Georges (left) brings Tzu Chi and the Sisters of St. Anne together. Photo: I-Hwa Cheng



With the help of Tzu Chi driver-bodyguard Feron Robenson, Tzu Chi volunteers traveled through the wreckage to find nuns in need. Photo: Yuru Chou

become sparse, the roads became very rocky. After braving several steep hills, we finally arrived at the Little Sisters of St. Therese of the Child Jesus. What appeared in front of our eyes was truly the typical disaster area of the earthquake: there was nothing but rubble everywhere we looked, the school buildings had fallen, and the chapel, dormitory, and office buildings were severely cracked and damaged. One nun had passed away, many were injured, and the sixty-five who survived were forced to live wherever they found space, often in tents exposed under the sweltering sun: tents that became too hot to inhabit during the daytime.

Determined to Overcome

After learning that all four missions urgently needed help, we not only conveyed the love and care of Master Cheng Yen and Tzu Chi volunteers around the world, but also immediately delivered emergency supplies that included food, tents, and plastic tarps to support them in continuing their good work to serve their communities. We went back to visit them several times to ensure they had sufficient food. We also invited the ill and injured nuns to Tzu Chi's free medical clinic at the soccer stadium.

These missions all had schools and clinics that had collapsed and were in urgent need of reconstruction, and thus assessment for mid-

to long-term rebuilding projects went into full gear. After much discussion and assessment, it was decided that Tzu Chi would help rebuild Collège Marie-Anne and Christ The King Secretarial School. Construction began on January 21, 2012.

At first, finding local Catholic nuns seemed an impossible mission, but we held steadfast to the spirit of the "Four Immeasurables": loving-kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity. This is the spirit of selfless love that guides us to find a path where there is none, builds bridges where we need them, leads us to push forward with perseverance, and enables us with wisdom.

As Master Cheng Yen has taught, "as long as we are determined, then nothing is impossible." After the experience of searching for nuns in Haiti, I now have a deeper appreciation for Master Cheng Yen's urging: "The mission of charity requires wisdom, one cannot forge ahead at will based on enthusiasm alone. Only when driven by love with sufficient perseverance, endurance, compassion, and wisdom can the relief effort in Haiti foster development for the long term. I hope that Tzu Chi volunteers working as living bodhisattvas can develop good affinities with the people and the natural resources of Haiti, and turn this land stricken with poverty and suffering into a prosperous land full of loving and caring people." 🌿

True skill is persistence despite difficulty. True patience is overcoming obstacles despite challenges.

Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen





A Visit to the Sisters of St. Anne

Shirley Tseng

We left downtown Montreal and reached Lachine, Quebec, after a thirty minute drive. In 1864, when the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Anne moved their operation center to Lachine and set up a school for local children, Lachine was just a poor rural community. Even today, it remains a low-income city where twenty percent of the residents are poor and fifty percent do not have high school diplomas. "The Sisters go wherever there is a need," Sister Lucille Goulet explained as she turned the steering wheel. "We will visit the Mother House first. Some call it our headquarters. But to us, it's the Mother House."



The Mother House

The hundred-year-old Mother House serves as offices, conference rooms, worship chapel, health facility, and living quarters for about three hundred sisters of the Congregation. It is also the final resting place of Mother Marie Anne, foundress of the Sisters of St. Anne. Just as Jing Si Abode in Hualien serves as a spiritual home for Tzu Chi volunteers around the world, so does the Mother House for St. Anne Sisters in North and South America, Africa, and the Caribbean.

I visited the Mother House in mid-March, when piles of snow still stood along the roadside. Trees shook their bare branches in the chilly wind. Yet the compassionate smile of Mother Marie Anne brought warmth to

my heart. In the front yard of the Mother House, her statue has stood for many decades guarding the community. With her arms stretched slightly forward, she seems to tell the statues of a boy and a girl running before her, "Go out and spread the mission."

"Our foundress was always with children," explained Sister Lucille. "Do you see the key that the girl holds in her hand? Mother Marie Anne gave the key of education, the key to life, to the children."

Noticing a sapling among the group of statues, I asked, "What does the sapling stand for?" Sister Lucille said thoughtfully, "When we go out to the world, it is very important to



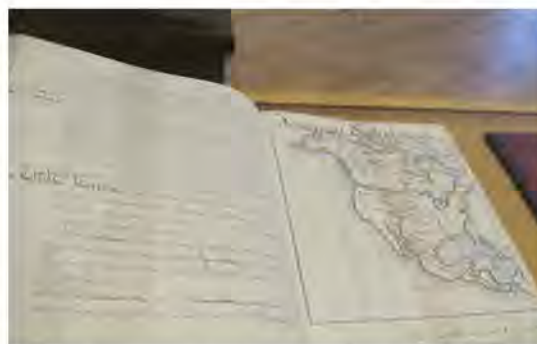
Outside the Mother House, statues remind the Sisters to guide children with education and keep their roots firmly planted in the spiritual foundation.
Photo: Shirley Tseng

have our roots planted deep in the spiritual foundation.”

Mother Marie Anne was born as Marie-Esther Sureau Blondin to a poor rural family in Québec, Canada. Her parents were unable to afford education for her, so she remained illiterate until, at the age of nineteen, she knocked on the door of a convent. She treasured the opportunity to learn and worked very hard. She knew from her own experience how unfortunate it was to go without education, so in 1848, she went to see Bishop Bourget of Montreal and proposed to organize a congregation devoted to youth education and charitable works. Bishop Bourget gave her his blessings and asked her to “try, seek, and pray.”

When the congregation was founded in 1850, Mother Marie Anne began her work under difficult conditions. The need for education and healthcare was seen everywhere, so the congregation gradually spread its work across Canada to the Pacific Coast (including Alaska and the Yukon), south to the United States of America, and overseas to Japan, Haiti, Chile, Cameroon, and most recently the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

“It’s Compassion in Action,” Renaude Grégoire told me. I met Renaude at the Social Justice Bureau office in the Mother House, where she works closely with sisters around the world to form a social justice network. Through



Lacking resources in their early days, the Sisters prepared handmade textbooks for their students. Photo: Shirley Tseng

the posters and the albums she showed me, I witnessed the works of “Compassion in Action.” In Chile, sisters from the United States and Chile organized a group of volunteers to renovate homes for earthquake victims. In Haiti, sisters reached out to the community immediately after the 2010 earthquake. In Congo, a sister with medical training cared for a child. Sisters in Western Canada marched on the streets with a banner to advocate “Water for Life, Not for Profit.” In the United States, sisters provided an after-school program to new immigrant children with English and computer tutoring as well as free medical exams.

The Museum

Before the Congregation of Sisters of St. Anne moved to the current Mother House in 1909, the Sisters had resided in another building about a mile away. That building now houses artifacts of the Congregation as the Sisters of St. Anne Historic Center.

We drove through Avenue Esther Blondin, a street named after the foundress of the Congregation, and headed for the museum. Michèle Cesari, my museum guide, welcomed us at the door. She told me stories of Mother Marie Anne, explaining the paintings that hung along the hallway. At the end of the hallway, I saw another sapling: a light in the shape of a sapling with strong roots was projected on the floor in front of the artifacts display room.

The main focus of the Sisters of St. Anne has always been education. In the early days,



For over a century, the Mother House has served as the spiritual home of the Sisters of St. Anne. Photo: Shirley Tseng



With hard work and ingenuity, all difficulties can be overcome. Here, a simple chair has been transformed into a wheelchair. Photo: Shirley Tseng

resources were extremely scarce, especially in rural areas, so the Sisters created their own textbooks. They wrote every word on paper by hand, drew illustrations by hand, punched holes in every page, and bound the pages together into completed textbooks. For geography textbooks, they painstakingly drew detailed maps. The museum displayed two pages of a music book from this era. On one page, musical theories were explained on lines of beautiful handwriting. On the opposite page, musical scores were written clearly, one note at a time.

Medical resources were also scarce in those days. Large black-and-white photographs hanging on the walls of the museum told stories of the Sisters caring for the sick with limited equipment. Among the artifacts, an old chair sat on the floor. It had once been an ordinary chair, but four wheels and a footrest

Mother Marie Anne gave the key of education, the key to life, to the children.

had been added to turn this simple chair into a makeshift wheelchair that could transport patients who were too weak to walk.

At the end of the tour, Michèle gave me a present. It was a small, oval-shaped wooden plaque with a violet and a few words. She told me that she had painted the violet, which is a symbol of humility: one of the most respected characteristics of Mother Marie Anne. Above the violet, she copied one of Mother Marie Anne's most quoted aphorisms, "The deeper a tree sinks its roots into the soil, the greater its chances of growing, branching out, and producing fruit."

The Roots

Musing over what I saw during my short visit, I understood why Tzu Chi had decided to help rebuild three schools for the Sisters of St. Anne in Haiti. Tzu Chi had carefully assessed the practical and legal aspects, such as quality of education and land ownership. But, there was also something more. As Head of the Congregation Sister Rita Larivée said, "There must be a greater force that brought us together." After visiting Tzu Chi global headquarters in Hualien and meeting Master Cheng Yen, Sister Rita felt that Tzu Chi and the Sisters of St. Anne are "two sides of the same coin."

Indeed, although Tzu Chi and the Sisters of St. Anne do not share the same religion, they both grow their roots in the soil of religious faith to be nourished by it. The language and the methods they use to pass on the message may be different, but their message is the same: compassion and love. Putting compassion into action, they spread their love to the world. 🌱

The deeper a tree sinks its roots into the soil, the greater its chances of growing, branching out, and producing fruit.

Venerable Marie Anne Blondin

Filling the Void with Love

Liliane Yong & Adam Paiz

As he sat waiting in the Buddhist Tzu Chi Free Clinic, Paul Sanguesa was in the midst of a major transformation. After three decades as a thief, drug addict, and malcontent, he was now clean, sober, and employed. But he was still damaged. His teeth were in poor shape and he suffered from a void in his heart: the void that had led him to drugs, alcohol, and jail in the first place. Paul was struggling to leave his past behind, but his physical wounds were not easy to repair, the emotional ones even less so.

Paul's mental suffering started early in childhood. He recalled, "My life as a child was for the most part a feeling of loneliness and lack of love." Spurred by those feelings, he acted out to gain validation from the wrong crowd. In response to his poor behavior, his father beat him. Paul fell into a negative spiral, fearing more beatings as he acted out to gain more attention.

Paul's behavior was motivated by his internal wounds. "I always portrayed the tough and 'don't care' type of attitude around others, but I was really afraid of not being liked or accepted by others." Those feelings soon fueled a deeper fall. "I ran away from home when I was twelve, quit school at thirteen and started my life of crime, alcohol, and drugs."

Like many other unfortunate children, Paul eventually entered the revolving door of the prison system. "I started with juvenile hall," Paul said, "then the county jail at eighteen years old, and then the state prison." This cycle continued for decades. His family, his mother and his children, could only watch as Paul continued to spiral downward.

At forty-two, Paul found God and began to change his behavior. Paul said, "I was facing a long prison term, and I met this guy who told me that God told him to tell me to test Him. I was in the county jail waiting for court, and I prayed to God, who didn't even know me at the time, asking Him to get me out of the mess I created. If He did, I would seek Him out three days later.

"God answered my prayers. I was let out of jail, but I forgot all about what I had promised God in return for getting me out of jail, so thirty-five days later I was back in custody with a new set of criminal charges filed against me." After this relapse, Paul finally gave up his old ways for good.

Though determined, Paul was still at the beginning of a long journey. As an ex-convict,



Paul guides a patient during CareNow in the Los Angeles Sports Arena, October 2017.
Photo: Tony Yong



Dr. Shirley Chen checks up on Paul's teeth in 2009. Photo: Liliane Yong

he had difficulty finding a job, so he stayed at the Salvation Army Adult Rehabilitation Center for six months to receive training and guidance. "I learned more about God. I graduated from the rehabilitation program and went to school to become a drug and alcohol counselor."

At this point in his journey, Paul found himself waiting at the Buddhist Tzu Chi Free Clinic in Alhambra, California, looking for care. "The drugs had taken a toll on my teeth and health. My graduation was coming up, and my teeth were cracked, so I sought dental care through the State Department of Rehabilitation. But I was rejected there and other places as well. My kids were going to be there for my graduation, and I lost all of my self-esteem and hope. I prayed and prayed to God for help to get my teeth fixed, and I ended up at the Buddhist clinic in Alhambra." Paul wanted desperately to show his family that he was a changed man, whole and clean. But his ragged teeth served as a graphic reminder of the life he once lived.

Tzu Chi dentist Dr. Shirley Chen interviewed Paul about his dental problems. "She asked me some questions, and told me she was going to fix my teeth before my graduation, exactly what I had been praying to God for months to no avail. I know it was an act of God working through Shirley and all the loving people at the clinic."

In addition to help for his teeth, Paul found something deeper at the clinic. "Tears were welling up in my eyes as I talked to these ladies, because they actually listened. I felt a genuine loving affection that I had never experienced before, not even with my own family. Shirley hugged me and I felt loved, like it was from God."

The visit to the Tzu Chi clinic was a pivotal moment for Paul, for his physical wounds as well as his emotional ones. Connecting with Shirley and the other volunteers, Paul found something other than alcohol and drugs to fill the gaping void in his heart, and he uncovered a determination to give back. "Shirley just had this peace and calm like she was really concerned: genuine concern. I didn't really understand what gratitude meant till that happened. Now I really understand, because I experienced it. Whatever I can do to help, to help pay back and show you that I appreciate it, that I'm grateful, I will do."

True to his word, Paul became a Tzu Chi volunteer. A few short days after the Haiti earthquake in 2010, he gathered with other volunteers to pack relief supplies to send to Haiti. As he joined together with the others to kneel on the floor and pray after assembling the packages, Paul felt right at home. "Tzu Chi volunteers have shown such love to me, I want



Paul packs first aid kits for Haiti after the January 2010 earthquake. Photo: Liliane Yong

to pass on that love by helping others. This event is one way that I can repay Tzu Chi."

I felt a genuine loving affection that I had never experienced before, not even with my own family. Shirley hugged me and I felt loved, like it was from God.

helped the dental staff tirelessly, but still found time to laugh and enjoy the work. Finding joy in

Outside of Tzu Chi, Paul also helps recovering addicts still living the life he once lived. He offers guidance from his own experience and manages transitional housing. In this way, he tries to keep others from making the same mistakes that he once made, and offers them a safe place in which to make their own transitions. Paul considers sharing his story as one of the ways he can help others. "When I think about the past, I realize that I've wasted so much time, worried my parents, and damaged myself. I hope that the young people can learn from my tragic mistakes, and not emulate them."

his new life, Paul has a chance to reflect on his past: "I'm looking at it differently now. The truth is I made wrong choices. I surrounded myself with bad people." But now Paul realizes, "When you do things from your heart, there's a value that money can't buy."

In October 2011, Paul invited his girlfriend, Lorraine, to volunteer with him at the CareNow LA clinic. Each morning, they joined other Tzu Chi volunteers at the Los Angeles Sports Arena at six o'clock to begin a long day of work. They

Paul's transformation had to come from within, and it required hard work and great determination on his part. But Paul also credits Dr. Shirley Chen and Tzu Chi for the help and inspiration that he has received: "I recognize that Tzu Chi and Shirley have helped me greatly. I want the world to know about the power of God and the special gift of love that God has expressed through the Alhambra clinic. For this help, I am eternally grateful and would do whatever I can to express my gratitude to God and the Alhambra clinic."



#26



During a Tzu Chi charity concert in October 2011, Paul presents flowers to actress Lily Pan, who played a drug addict's mother on a Da Ai Television miniseries.
Photo: William Chen

To purify people's hearts, one must give with a loving heart, guide with wisdom, and accompany with patience.

Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen



Syahidah and her mother read up on vegetarian instant noodles at Jing Si Books & Café in San Dimas, California. Photo: Michelle Chen

A Relay of Love

Michelle Chen | Translated by An Ning

In 2010, Syahidah Ishak, a lecturer at Institut Profesional Baitulmal in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, was stricken with an acoustic neuroma. Benign tumors of the inner ear, acoustic neuromas frequently appear later in life and cause hearing loss, lack of balance, and facial numbness, among other symptoms. At only thirty-three years of age, Syahidah was a very young patient.

In October 2010, Syahidah underwent surgery to remove a small portion of the acoustic neuroma behind her right ear. Unfortunately, the surgery damaged the nerves on the right side of her face, leaving her bedridden for a full month and causing a host of complications. As a result of the botched surgery, Syahidah was unable to completely close her right eye or drink without using a straw. She was left with balance problems in her right foot, and was able to write only very slowly, one stroke at a time. More seriously, she suffered from severe dizziness and a constant feeling that she may collapse at any time.

Syahidah did not abandon hope after the failed surgery. Her doctors suggested she undergo further surgery to remove her tumor, but her bad experience led her to consider options outside Malaysia. She began to scour the web and found Dr. Rick A. Friedman of the House Ear Clinic and St. Vincent Medical Center in Los Angeles, California. Since Dr. Friedman is a specialist in acoustic neuromas, she decided to reach out to him and seek further treatment in the United States.

With the promise of better treatment, Syahidah began to prepare for the cost of traveling to and seeking treatment in the United States. She secured a loan from a bank. She sold T-shirts, umbrellas, lamps, used books, and other items through her blog. She tutored five students once a week. She negotiated to reduce her monthly auto loan payment. She contacted all the government agencies, social welfare institutions, and civil organizations she could think of. She asked for support through her blog. Donations flowed in from relatives, friends,

blog readers, newspaper and magazine readers, and television audiences. Malaysia Airlines stepped forward to sponsor her roundtrip ticket to the United States.

To help offset the high cost of treatment, a friend suggested she seek out Tzu Chi for assistance. Syahidah immediately went online to search for information and called the local Tzu Chi branch office. Tzu Chi Malaysia volunteers made multiple visits to understand her condition and decided to subsidize a portion of her surgery cost. Through collaboration with Tzu Chi global headquarters in Hualien, volunteers in Malaysia made arrangements for volunteers in the United States to support Syahidah during her stay by providing companionship and love.

Though Syahidah is a Muslim woman and Tzu Chi is a Buddhist organization, there was an immediate and heartfelt connection between patient and volunteers.

observed, "This is a relay that crosses race, religions, and borders."

After Syahidah's arrival, Dr. Friedman and his team conducted a pre-surgical evaluation, several tests, and then surgery to

remove her tumor. This time, her surgery was very successful. With strong resilience, Syahidah quickly recovered her strength and energy; she was soon able to move about as before.

Flora Yeh supported Syahidah and her mother throughout the entire treatment process. Before their return to Malaysia, Flora even arranged for them to visit Tzu Chi USA headquarters in San Dimas, California. They went for a leisurely stroll around the open grounds, taking in the mild breeze and basking in the warm sunshine. Syahidah said, "It's been a long time since I enjoyed such tranquility and comfort." Upon entering Jing Si Books and Café, Syahidah was immediately drawn in by everything she saw in front of her. As a farewell gift, Flora presented Syahidah and her mother with vegetarian noodles, vegetarian instant rice, and a copy of Master Cheng Yen's *Jing Si Aphorisms* to take home to Malaysia.

Through the strength of love from Tzu Chi volunteers in Malaysia, Hualien, and the United States, Syahidah's journey for medical treatment in Los Angeles was a remarkable success. By spring 2012, she was recovering well and had returned to her teaching position at Institut Profesional Baitulmal. Through her blog, she offers support and fundraising assistance for other patients who are unable to afford their own surgery costs. Grateful for the loving care she has received from Tzu Chi and many other friends and supporters, she vows to spread the message of love whenever an opportunity arises. 🌿



Syahidah chats with Flora Yeh. Staples behind her right ear mark the location of her surgery. Photo: Michelle Chen

On October 10, 2011, Syahidah and her mother flew across the ocean and landed in Los Angeles, where several local volunteers were already prepared to accompany them throughout their stay. Though Syahidah is a Muslim woman and Tzu Chi is a Buddhist organization, there was an immediate and heartfelt connection between patient and volunteers. As volunteer Flora Yeh

A blessing is something to be created, not wished for.

Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen

Winter Relief

Colin Legerton

At about a quarter to seven on a Thursday night, I walk past the Tzu Chi Mobile Dental Clinic toward the fellowship hall of St. Martha's Catholic Church. The sky is already pitch black, but Southern California winters are always fairly mild, and temperatures the past week have climbed comfortably into the seventies. Though it is still early February, I see a few people walking around in short sleeves.

From the parking lot to my left, a young woman in her early- to mid-twenties lugs her backpack toward the fellowship hall. With a glint of recognition she calls over to me: "Hey! You guys did the best job last week!" My role was simply to sign her in for her turn in the dental van, but clearly she wants to share with someone how pleased she is by the dentist's handiwork. "Last time I got them cleaned, I paid like a hundred bucks, and they didn't even do as good a job as you guys."

Inside, dinner is about to begin. More than a hundred people sit around a dozen tables, waiting for the woman with the microphone

to finish saying grace. As soon as she does, volunteers set out from the kitchen in the back and deliver trays of food to those seated: first soup, then taquitos with rice and beans, dinner rolls, and finally a choice of two types of cake.

As everyone eats, a group steps up onto the stage. The soloist introduces them as the choir from St. Joseph's Church, and explains that they will be singing hymns that they typically sing in church on Sunday, most of them in Spanish. She apologizes to the non-Spanish speakers, but adds, "the love of God does not have any language."

As the choir sings in the background, first voices alone and then accompanied by an accordion, diners carry on with their conversations. Some leave their tables to sign up for dental service, showers, medical treatment, and haircuts. Others flag down volunteer waiters to ask for second helpings. It is another busy night at the East San Gabriel Valley Coalition for the Homeless (ESGVCH) Winter Shelter.



As director of the winter shelter, Robert McKennon sees the program help thousands of homeless each and every year. Photo: Wen Ren

The Shelter

Started in 1990, the winter shelter program provides homeless residents of the San Gabriel Valley with warm shelter and various services each winter. Though there is no permanent shelter in the area, the winter shelter provides a home for over one hundred days each year, sheltering those who need it through the cold and rainy season.

Across Los Angeles County, sixteen independently-run winter shelter programs are overseen and largely funded by Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA). Among these, East San Gabriel Valley alone is faith-based. Each year, seven churches across the valley open their doors for roughly two weeks apiece to shelter the local homeless community. These churches, in turn, are supported by a network of neighboring churches that provide food, volunteers, and other support.

Through this system, residents have access not only to shelter and three meals a day, but also to the mobile dental clinic and haircuts provided by volunteers from the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation, medical service offered by Azusa Pacific University nurses, mental health counseling, veteran services, showers, homeless case management services, and even opportunities to move into transitional housing.



In the Tzu Chi Mobile Dental Clinic, dentists and assistants are hard at work providing relief. Photo: David Hoy

In the winter of 2010-11, the sixteen winter shelter programs in Los Angeles County provided shelter and services to 11,735 homeless individuals and 605 homeless families. Of these, 441 individuals and 198 families were successfully placed into emergency, temporary, or permanent housing.

One Fewer Concern

On this particular Thursday evening, most residents have finished dinner by half past seven, so volunteers begin to clear the chairs and tables one by one. By eight, several rows of army green cots already stretch up and down the hall. More are on the way.

In a small alcove to one corner, a couple Tzu Chi volunteer barbers work their trade for grateful clients. The location is not glamorous—just a few folding chairs on the path toward the bathroom—but the service is warm. On the opposite end of the hall, several young volunteers sit behind a folding table, calling names from the shower waiting list and handing out soap, shampoo, and towels. As guests gather these necessities and head out to the mobile shower unit, they pass near the Tzu Chi Mobile Dental Clinic, where dentists and their assistants are hard at work.

One of the dental patients this evening is Joanne. As she walks over to sign-in, she spots Sherry Kao from the Tzu Chi Free Clinic in



Tzu Chi Mobile Dental Clinic: Serving with Compassion. Photo: Lina Lee



Tzu Chi volunteer barbers offer a needed, and often overlooked, service to homeless customers. Photo: Lina Lee

Alhambra, and smiles. Joanne is impressed that Sherry still remembers her from a visit to the clinic weeks before. "She listened to my story," Joanne tells me. "It's nice to see a friendly face."

Joanne offers to share her story again. It unfolds as a tale of dominos falling one after another: it is not an easy story to listen to and one that is likely all too common among people in this room. In mid-2010, as the economy struggled, Joanne suddenly found herself without a job. Left with more time and less income, she and her husband began fighting more frequently. Their relationship soured and they soon separated. With no money, she soon found herself unable to pay the rent. Her own brother had her evicted from her home. She started living out of her van, but then it was impounded. All the while she looked for work, but with no phone and no car, her prospects seemed dim.

Running out of options, Joanne called 2-1-1 for community services in early December 2011 and learned of the winter shelter, at that time being held at St. Christopher's Catholic Church in West Covina. She visited the shelter on a day when the Tzu Chi Mobile Clinic was parked outside. So, unexpectedly, she was able to have a broken tooth filled. "I used to take

very good care of my teeth," she explains, "when I had insurance and even when I didn't. But now I just can't afford it. So when I found out this was here, it was a godsend."

The shelter opened up several opportunities for Joanne. She enjoyed a hot meal, a shower, and a haircut. She also learned about the Tzu Chi Free Clinic in Alhambra, which she later visited to have some warts removed. On this evening, she returned to the dental van for follow up on her filling. What she really needs is a crown, but these are too expensive for Tzu Chi to offer for free. Without insurance, even the cheapest crown would cost Joanne more than two-thirds of her monthly unemployment check.

For now, lacking a more permanent solution, Joanne can simply care for the tooth and hope for the best. Still, the fillings leave her with one fewer worry. As she searches for a way to start moving back toward the life she once had, she can at least keep her health. With access to the winter shelter and the dental van, there is no need for that domino to fall.

A Legend

As the clock reaches nine, most of the shelter's temporary residents are settled onto their cots; many have already fallen asleep. Occasionally, a name is called for a turn in the mobile shower, but the fellowship hall is becoming ever quieter. The dentists are treating their final patients for the evening. The signup sheet filled up quickly this evening, and there is not enough time to see everyone. Several have been asked to come back on Friday evening when the dental van returns.

In the winter of 2010-11, the sixteen winter shelter programs in Los Angeles County provided shelter and services to 11,735 homeless individuals and 605 homeless families.

The barbers have just finished with their final clients. They sweep up the remaining hair from eighteen grateful customers and head off to wash up before calling it a night. Just after they leave, a man walks over, still clearly wet

from the shower. A huge grin stretches across his face as he runs one hand across the hair on the side of his head.

"Where did she go?" he asks.

"She just went to wash up; she'll be back in a minute. She did a good job, didn't she?"

"Wonderful. I came back to thank her." The man says that most barbers simply do not know how to cut his extra-curly hair. This evening, he showered immediately after his haircut, taking extra care to shampoo and condition so that he could accurately evaluate her work. His big grin shows that she passed with flying colors. "She's a legend in my eyes for cutting a black man's hair."

As he waits to express his thanks, another man walks by, this one coming from the dental van: the last patient of the evening. Though mute, he makes a beeline for the Tzu Chi volunteers standing near the haircut station so that he can mime his appreciation. Curling his left hand into a fist, he indicates a hole where his fingers meet his palm. He uses his right index finger to mime filling the hole. Moving his hands up to his face, he demonstrates a throbbing pain in his jaw with a pronounced grimace. Then he stops. He smiles and gives a thumbs-up. Again, he grimaces in mimed throbbing pain. Then again, he smiles and gives a thumbs-up. Satisfied, he continues on to find his cot.

One Community

Only five weeks and two more host churches remain before the winter shelter will close down for the season. The program will return in eight months, on the first day of December, just as it has for the past two decades. But in the meantime, there is no permanent homeless shelter option in the San Gabriel Valley. Still, the East San Gabriel Valley Coalition for the Homeless (ESGVCH) will be available at its permanent location in Hacienda Heights, feeding four hundred families each Saturday with donated food and offering other services to help those in need. The shelter also offers several opportunities for more permanent solutions as Veterans Services, Volunteers of America, and other partnering organizations visit each week to meet with homeless visitors and help them find solutions.

These connections can help residents of the winter shelter find needed services and greater hope for a brighter tomorrow. But they are not the only connections that define the winter shelter. Robert McKennon, director of the ESGVCH, credits the diverse group of churches, organizations, and volunteers for the success of the winter shelter program as it has grown from just a dozen or so visits each night two decades ago into a movement that can now help more than one thousand people each winter.

McKennon also credits the winter shelter itself for giving people from different backgrounds and various groups an opportunity to come together when they would not have such an opportunity otherwise. Every winter, this shelter shows that the community cares. And the volunteers—coming together from every culture, religion, and background for the same worthy cause—demonstrate that we truly are a community when we unite as one. 🌱



#43, #50

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

Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen



Many of the shelter's residents take advantage of free local bus service. Photo: David Hoy



Medical Corner

*The author works with patients during a 2008 medical outreach event in McFarland, California.
Photo: Michelle Chen*

The Advantages of the 80/20 Lifestyle

Dr. Stephen Denq

Since the beginning of 2012, Master Cheng Yen has been promoting the concept of eating only eighty-percent full and saving twenty percent to help others. During a teaching on January 11, she explained, “A handful of rice is about thirteen hundred grains, which is equivalent to one bowl of cooked rice. If everyone saves fifteen grains of rice, then one hundred people will save enough for one bowl of rice. Our international disaster relief is based on this same concept: many drops of water come together to form a river. Love is very powerful when gathered.” If each of us reduces our food consumption by eating only until we are eighty-percent full, we can use the twenty percent saved to alleviate the suffering of others. This practice would not only benefit those receiving the twenty percent, but reducing our portions would also benefit us with greatly improved health.

In my twelve years of medical practice, the three medical conditions I encounter the most are high blood pressure, diabetes, and

high cholesterol. Whether it is the patients I see at my office or the ones I encounter in Tzu Chi’s medical outreach events, I often have to prescribe multiple medications for these conditions. In fact, treating diabetes alone can often take up to five medications.

As an alternative to relying on multiple medications, I believe that eating only until we are eighty-percent full can help solve each of these health issues. When one eats less, one loses weight, and weight loss is directly linked to lowering blood pressure, blood sugar, and cholesterol. Thus, whenever I participate in medical outreach, I emphasize the benefits of “The 80/20 Lifestyle” to all my patients.

Although the 80/20 Lifestyle is a wonderful tool for ensuring good health, promoting this concept to patients is not always easy. Therefore, I like to introduce this concept step-by-step over the four medical outreach visits we conduct in each location every year. During the first visit, we emphasize dieting for one’s own



health. During the second visit, we introduce the idea of dieting for the environment. In the third visit we begin discussing the 80/20 Lifestyle. The fourth visit explains how these wonderful ideas are connected and combined.

The topic of the first visit, "Diet for Your Own Health," emphasizes building a healthy body through eating simple, vegetarian food and not overeating. Many Americans are obese today, myself included. But since I started observing a vegetarian diet in May 2011, I have already lost fifteen pounds in just ten months. During this time, I have learned to consume less salt and oil. I began to eat simple food composed of nuts, vegetables, and fruits, so I spend less time on food preparation and cooking. By eating simpler and not overindulging, my body has become healthier and fifteen pounds lighter.

Medications for diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol are prescribed only after dieting has failed, and are typically the last line of defense. Because it has been reported that an eight-percent decrease of body weight can lower blood sugar as effectively as one or two medications, weight loss is the preferable method of treatment. Besides improving these three conditions, those who choose a vegetarian diet will also have increased fiber intake, which can reduce the likelihood of contracting colon cancer.

Finally, one concern I frequently hear is that vegetarianism might lead to malnutrition or anemia. In my case, after eight months of

Eating to just eighty-percent full not only ensures that we can remain healthy, but that those in need can become healthy as well.

being a vegetarian, my blood work is completely normal. Thus, from my experience, "Diet for Your Own Health" makes perfect medical sense.

At a recent medical outreach event, a Los Angeles volunteer shared

her vegetarian experience with me. She said that she had been struggling with high blood pressure, diabetes, and high cholesterol for many years. About two years ago, she became a vegetarian. Because she has decreased her daily caloric intake and lost weight, she feels lighter and happier. She used to visit her doctor once every three months to follow up on her various medical conditions, but her visits were decreased to just twice a year because of her stable medical condition. Then, this past October, her doctor told her, "Your numbers are all normal. You are no fun anymore. I will see you back here in one year."

The other key component of the 80/20 Lifestyle is the concept that we can use the twenty percent we save in food costs to aid others. There are over seven billion people on earth, one billion of whom are hungry. If we reduce our consumption and never waste food, we can easily overcome the world hunger problem. Eating to just eighty-percent full not only ensures that we can remain healthy, but that those in need can become healthy as well. Eating to only eighty-percent full is a simple way that each of us can bring compassion into action and make a positive difference for ourselves, others, and the world. 🌱

A healthy mental attitude is vital to good health, which in turn leads to a happy and fulfilling life.

Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen



Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation
www.us.tzuchi.org

The 80/20 Lifestyle

Be healthy: Reduce your meal portions to 80%

Be generous: Use your 20% savings to help the poor

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



Real Magic

Charlene Haney



The author, principal of Tzu Chi Great Love Elementary School in Monrovia, California, embraces a student during a Mother's Day celebration in April 2012. Photo: Michelle Chen

Every day spent as a teacher is an opportunity to effect change in the life of a young person. Most days, you wonder if what you're doing is working. Are they "getting" it? Do they truly understand the concept? Is my preparation for all those hours at home helping these children to learn?

I had a child once whose family life was troubled. A naturally bright student, this little girl was manifesting some behavior which can only be described as "giving up." At home, things were tough: Mom and Dad were splitting up, trying to live separate lives but still care for their child. Both parents were good people, striving to do what was right even through the end of a relationship. This little girl was worried about her parents, her family, and her home. She was scared of the transition from one home to two; frightened of the new schedule that naturally must follow such a split. She was struggling to find her way through each day.

One day, in writing class, the little girl's eyes started to light up as we read a book together about magical things. The book transported her to a place far away, where elves, fairies, and

magic were a part of everyday life. As we read together in class and, moreover, as we discussed the meaning of the book, this little girl starting to re-enliven. As the characters in the book spoke and interacted with the magical world, this little girl was filled with wonder and hope. Her smile returned, her eyes no longer looked haunted, and her little body once again wiggled with excitement.

Seeing this change in her reawakened me to magic: the magic of childhood. Children today, perhaps more than ever, need magic in their lives: not the kind that comes pre-packaged from a DVD, or from commercial television, or from a so-called super hero, or from the false gods of sports, TV, or the internet. Children need the magic that comes from an adult who commits herself to protecting young childhood, who commits to being a good example, who commits to service without asking for anything in return.

Too often in this hectic world, as parents and as teachers, we can lose sight of what children really need. Though such a simple concept, what our children need more than



anything from us is time: time to just sit with them, to read with them, to explore with them, to feel with them. Our children need us to make the time to listen to their ideas, to smile at their young attempts at humor, to feel along with them as they struggle with a problem. Most importantly, our children need us to believe in them and to keep the magic of their childhood alive.

In this case, this little girl needed a teacher to create a safe place to believe in the unseen—in fairies, in elves, in the magical world of a child's imagination. She needed someone to affirm, "Yes, it is really all right for you to believe and hope." Once this child felt this safety and love, she began to write...and dream...and imagine. Her writing became descriptive and magical, full of wonderful turns-of-phrase and loads of imagination. Her writing began to transport her—across lands, across time, across her own feelings of grief and anger.

She began a journal to record her daily thoughts, feelings, hopes, and, inevitably, anger. Tentatively, she shared this writing with me. It spoke in ways she could not. It provided a perfect way for us to communicate with each other during this difficult transition in her young life. We began to write back-and-forth to one another in her journal, and I began to leave her a few magical thoughts, then a few tiny magical drawings. Working with her parents and other teachers at school, together we began to incorporate more books about magical things. Her parents began to leave small treasures around both houses for her to find: a tiny glass jewel, a tiny bag of fairy dust, a tiny trail of footprints across her bedroom dresser.

Parents and teachers alike began to find that our group support of this little girl was, in turn, transforming us too. As we worked together to help make this child's life a bit better and help her find her inner light again,

Our children need us to believe in them and to keep the magic of their childhood alive.

we found our own. Was it magic? The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines the term "magical" as "giving a feeling of enchantment." Indeed, we

all felt a bit "enchanted" as we helped this child rediscover her own hope and joy.

Slowly, over time, this magical child found her smile again. She began to hope and dream again. She began to love with her whole heart again. She began to give out that love through service to those around her. Today, many years later, that little girl continues to serve others, and one can still see the magic shining in her eyes. As Graham Greene wrote, "There is always one moment in childhood when the door opens and lets the future in."

What is the point of magic? Not the sleight-of-hand, on-a-stage, abracadabra kind of magic, but real magic: the transformation and healing that can come from purposeful attention to another human being, the kind of magic that can come from losing oneself in service to another.

Becoming part of Tzu Chi schools has taught me further the truth of the power of collective action through love. Each day, I am blessed to serve the children and families in our school. As we build and grow Tzu Chi's first elementary school in the United States, I am honored to learn and grow myself. Though the journey to make our school thrive is not easy, the good we put out into the world cannot be measured. When I read Dharma Master Cheng Yen's *Jing Si Aphorisms* each morning, I am always drawn to the one I need the most—"Do not ask for less responsibility to be free and relaxed; ask for more strength"—and the one that keeps me inspired—"Our future accomplishments are determined entirely by how every second in our life is put to use. The future is the culmination of many 'nows.'" Both of these aphorisms, and the little girl of this story, remind me to never lose sight of the magic that love and service can create. 🌱

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

Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen

▶ In recognition of Tzu Chi's ongoing humanistic charity work in the region, the City Council of Marikina, Philippines, passed an ordinance to rename Azucena Street as Tzu Chi Street. Vice Mayor Jose Fabian Cadiz officially put up the new street sign on May 13, 2012.
Photo: Angeli Adviento



▶ On May 13, 2012, Tzu Chi volunteers from France and Germany gathered in Paris, France, to celebrate Mother's Day, Buddha Day, and Tzu Chi Day by praying for world peace and harmony among all living beings.
Photo: Baoyu Lin



▲ Tzu Chi volunteers in Myanmar invited students on Tzu Chi academic stipends to a three-day field study. The students earned an appreciation for farm life on March 26, 2012, as they gained hands-on experience in a rice paddy. Photo: Jiangshan Li



▲ On April 22, 2012, Tzu Chi Canada volunteers celebrated Earth Day by weeding flower beds and planting saplings at King George Park in Richmond, British Columbia. Photo: Xinhua Zhu



A fire on March 17, 2012, destroyed thirty-one houses and displaced 159 residents in the slum district of Holy Spirit in Quezon City, Philippines. On March 22, Tzu Chi volunteers conducted a relief distribution and offered their loving care to those affected. Photo: Yansha Na



While celebrating Mother's Day, Buddha Day, and Tzu Chi Day on May 14, 2012, volunteers in Argentina conducted a free clinic and relief distribution in Gualeguay. Here, children learn to brush their teeth correctly. Photo: Minghui Wu



▲ In Kuching, Malaysia, Tzu Chi International Medical Association (TIMA) organized a community health screening event on April 6, 2012, and invited medical staff from local hospitals to provide care to the community. Photo: Bili Zhang



▲ Tzu Chi volunteers in Brisbane, Australia, held a retreat for the students and parents of Tzu Chi Academy on April 14, 2012. The theme was "Appreciate What You Have." Learning to love the earth, students picked up trash, studied environmental protection, and learned how to sort recyclables. Photo: Yujia Zhou

▶ In Sint Maarten, on the Caribbean island of Saint Martin, volunteers invited the neighboring communities to join their Mother's Day, Buddha Day, and Tzu Chi Day celebration on May 13, 2012. Here, local children contribute the contents of their piggy banks to Tzu Chi's charity fund. Photo provided by Tzu Chi Sint Maarten Office




▶ After El Salvador suffered severe flooding in October 2011, Tzu Chi volunteers constructed temporary housing for many who lost their homes in the town of Sacacoyo. On February 22, 2012, volunteers presented the housing units to the residents and also distributed food, furniture, and clothing. Photo: James Huang



▲ On February 10, 2012, Tzu Chi volunteers in Jordan distributed relief goods and hot meals to low-income families of the Wadi Abdoun district in the capital city of Amman. Photo: Qiu Hua Chen



▲ An overflowing river in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, caused heavy flooding in the town of La Granja. Tzu Chi volunteers inspected the area on March 10, 2012, and returned to distribute daily necessities on March 29. Photo: Feitao Gao



Dharma as Water: Great Repentance

Deeply concerned about the state of our world today—a world facing the crises of climate change, environmental degradation, instability and unrest, and eroding of moral values—Dharma Master Cheng Yen has appealed to her followers to engage in the practice of repentance.

Though the collective problems of today's world seem beyond the control of ordinary individuals, the Master tells us that each of us in fact contributes to the problem in many different ways; that is why each of us needs to return to his or her own heart and mind, and deeply reflect.



Understanding the Power of the Mind: Part I of the Repentance Series

From Dharma Master Cheng Yen's Talks

Compiled into English by the Jing Si Abode English Editorial Team

The mind is very powerful; with one thought, we conjure up many things. The Buddha describes the mind as a dexterous artist. With a stroke of his brush, the artist can paint all sorts of things, bringing to life the image in his mind. Whatever comes into his mind, he paints. The mind can create anything and everything. This is how we create our world.

The land around us was once a wilderness. Yet, according to the plans in their minds, people developed this land, building on it. Isn't this an example of the mind being like an artist, creating different scenes in the world? All that we have around us are products of the human mind.

Yet, our minds are hardly ever at peace, resting in contentment. Instead, driven by our desires, we continually conjure up new plans to create more and more projects; we are never satisfied. With all our never-ending pursuits, we create chaos in our minds and lose ourselves.

When our minds are chaotic, our actions become wrong, and such actions create many problems. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that we recognize the importance of having right thoughts and taking good care of our minds.

If we are able to take good care of our minds, we can be like Buddhas. If we do not, we may become like animals, without wisdom. In Buddhism, we speak of the ten realms of existence: heaven and hell, the realms of humans, animals, hungry ghosts, and asuras, as well as the realms of the sravakas,

pratyekabuddhas, bodhisattvas, and Buddhas. The first six are unenlightened realms; the latter four are enlightened. Depending on the direction of our thoughts, we can experience any of the ten realms. With a compassionate, wise thought, in that moment we can be in an enlightened realm. With a greedy, stingy thought, we can be in an unenlightened one. Therefore, whether we are like Buddhas or animals all depends on whether the thoughts in our minds are wholesome or unwholesome. It all depends on the direction or nature of our thoughts; that is why we must take good care of our minds.

The origin of good and evil

In life, we all do both good and evil. In Buddhism, we say that good and evil are empty in nature because they do not intrinsically exist—they arise as a product of causes and conditions. For example, as our senses make contact with the external environment, temptation arises and we do something we should not. If our senses had not encountered the conditions, temptation would not have arisen, and we would not have carried out the wrong action. It is due to the encounter of our sense organs with the external environment that we come to do either good or evil. This "encounter" also includes our encounters with people. If we do not come in contact with people, for instance, what unpleasantness would arise between us and others?

But whether we do good or evil depends on what thoughts we have in our minds. For example, in our relations with others, we can choose whether to be generous and giving or

petty and competitive. We can choose to work with others for the collective good or to be in opposition with others for self-interest. It all depends on the direction of our thoughts.

We need to understand that what we do creates causes and conditions, and we will eventually reap the consequences. All people, no matter rich or poor, clever or simple-minded, undergo karmic retribution. No one is above this natural law.

This message is in fact not difficult to understand. It shows us the importance of taking care of our thoughts and guarding our minds.

Creating unwholesome causes

Through our deeds, our words, and our thoughts, we create a lot of wrongdoing without being aware of it. Thus, we sow karmic seeds, and the conditions we experience now are their fruits. For example, we may encounter people who do not like us; this is because we have somehow formed negative karmic affinities with them sometime in the past. When we created the cause, we were unaware; in fact we have created many unwholesome causes unawares. But if we can begin to be aware, we can make changes.

The following illuminates some common ways we create unwholesome causes.

Lost in the past or future

Our minds often run wild with fantasies, but fulfilling them is like chasing a rainbow.

For example, we think about things beyond our reach or want to do things that are in fact beyond us. These all constitute deluded thinking. Thinking about the past or the future does not help us. When we do so, we often lose touch with the present moment. What is most important is to take hold of this moment and put into action our resolutions.

Our senses

We commit wrongdoings as a result of our six sense organs: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. This is because when these senses encounter the external environment, we react. Temptation can arise as well as other unwholesome states of mind. Acting on these, we then do things that are wrong. As a result, we create a lot of afflictions and troubles for ourselves. But if we are mindful and aware, we can avoid this. This is the meaning of taking good care of our minds.

Different kinds of attachments

In reaction to external circumstances, we develop many attachments. These attachments can take the form of desire or craving, but there is also attachment to views or notions. For instance, we may become upset with someone over a small matter. Because of our personalities, we cannot just let it go. In our spiritual practice, however, we should cultivate a broad and pure heart towards others—a heart that is tolerant, forgiving, and not petty. If we cannot do this, we will always be getting into conflicts with others. We should learn to recognize that external circumstances are separate from our inner state of mind. Instead

of getting caught up in external circumstances, we should be mindful of this separateness and take care not to let our minds get attached or tainted by it.

The vicious cycle

If we do not take good care of our minds, we will develop more and more inner impurities and delusions. It will then become harder for us to cultivate ourselves and engage in spiritual practice. Our unwholesome habits will get in the way, causing us to react to people with petty minds and accumulate more wrong actions.

In Buddhism, we speak of the ten unwholesome acts of the body, speech, and mind. With the body, we can commit killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct. In our speech, we do wrong by speaking abusively, telling lies, using insincere flattery, or gossiping and bearing tales to create division and conflict. In our minds, we give rise to greed, anger, and ignorance.

If we are not mindful, we will habitually carry out these ten unwholesome acts. As we do so, we accumulate more and more afflictions, which cause us to carry out further wrong actions. We not only tire ourselves out in the process but also taint our hearts, making our minds more deluded. It is a vicious cycle. So, we truly need to be mindful and take good care of our hearts and minds.

Reflections

The mind is truly powerful; it can create heaven or hell for us and lead us to do good or evil. Therefore, if we wish to avoid mistakes, we will need to become more aware of our thoughts and the direction of our minds.

We have already made many mistakes, and that is why we need to repent. Repenting is not only about realizing our errors and being remorseful for them. We also need to make a fresh start and not repeat the mistakes. Because our minds determine our actions and the arising of an unwholesome thought can lead us astray, to truly begin anew, we will need to take good care of our hearts and minds always. 🌿

Stock Options: Source of Happiness or Pitfall of Greed?

Tina Tuan



Tzu Chi volunteers bring the lessons of Dharma as Water into their everyday lives. Photo: Tina Tuan

Silicon Valley's hottest social network company with over eight hundred million active users, Facebook filed its paperwork for an initial public offering (IPO) on February 1, 2012. Facebook's SEC filing revealed that it is looking to raise five billion dollars and has a valuation estimated at \$100 billion. It could be the biggest initial public offering ever. It has been reported this IPO may create more than a thousand new millionaires.

On February 4, 2012, thirty Tzu Chi volunteers from Silicon Valley gathered in Sunnyvale for a biweekly Dharma as Water book study. The news of Facebook's upcoming IPO started the discussions. "A lot of people in the Silicon Valley are very jealous of Facebook employees right now. We all think, 'Wouldn't it be great if I had worked at Facebook?' However, a true Buddhist practitioner should know that all material wealth is impermanent, just as the stock option's value is only a number on paper. It's better to lead a content life than to pursue money endlessly," said Grace Chen.

Another member of the study group, Arthur Chih, had been through the IPO roller-coaster with his previous employer. He was overjoyed to see the stock price steadily increasing after the IPO. Every day he woke up hoping the price would go even higher. However, what goes up must come down: one day the stock price started heading the opposite direction. Day by day, the price declined more and more, as did Arthur's peace of mind. His mood changed as frequently as the stock price fluctuated, as he constantly hoped the price would return to an all-time high. One day, he realized he was totally entrapped within his own greed and decided to end the emotional roller-coaster by selling all of his stocks. Arthur said, "I came to realize, if I am committed to live my life as a Buddhist, then it really doesn't matter if I have more money or less money. My lifestyle won't change because of money."

During the boom time in Silicon Valley, Emily Polivka, a Tzu Chi Commissioner, had worked for several start-up companies, each with high aspirations of an IPO. At the time, many people in Silicon Valley jumped from one startup to another, hoping to hit the jackpot with the right company, and Emily witnessed many around her become extremely frustrated by the futile pursuit of fast money. She learned a major lesson from a friend of hers. He had become very wealthy thanks to stock options, but he had the wisdom not to fall into the greed trap. After a major earthquake struck the island of Formosa in September 1999, he sold his shares and donated much of the proceeds to the earthquake reconstruction efforts of his favorite charity, Tzu Chi. Had he chosen instead to hold onto those stocks, they would have eventually lost seventy-five percent of their value! "This true story really echoes Master Cheng Yen's teaching: there are two things in life that cannot wait—taking care of your parents and doing good deeds," said Emily.

That night's reading assignment from Dharma as Water focused on the "Five Hindrances"—the five causes of afflictions, which are greed, anger, ignorance, arrogance, and doubt. The discussions about stock options resonated well with the first hindrance: greed. We all need to remember Buddha's teaching from twenty-five hundred years ago that material wealth is eventually taken away by five forces: natural disasters, man-made calamities, corrupt officials, thieves and robbers, and unfilial children. Wealth can never truly be considered our own, so we should not fall into the trap of greed. After all, happiness comes from contentment, not greed. 🌿

Retain a pure heart without greed and we shall
have peace and serenity.

Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen

“Wealth can never truly be considered our own, so we should not fall into the trap of greed.”

Repent the Obstruction of Affliction: The Mind Creates Afflictions

懺悔煩惱障：煩惱意業生
chàn huǐ fán nǎo zhàng: fán nǎo yì yè shēng

Lyrics: Sixi Wang 作詞：王思熙

Music: Ziheng Li 作曲：李子恒

Arrangement: Yumin Wang 編曲：王豫民

Translated into English by the Dharma as Water Editorial Team

The mind is like a refined artist

心如工筆繪畫師
xīn rú gōng bǐ huì huà shī

All conditions are created by the mind

一切境界心所現
yī qiè jìng jiè xīn suǒ xiàn

One mind can manifest the Ten Dharma-realms¹
一心能現十法界
yī xīn néng xiàn shí fǎ jiè

Good thoughts lead to good conditions
心存善念境是善
xīn cún shàn niàn jìng shì shàn

The remedy for these Three Obstructions²

消除三障有妙方
xiāo chú sān zhàng yǒu miào fāng

The teachings of repentance are like pure water
懺悔法門如淨水
chàn huǐ fǎ mén rú jìng shuǐ

Today with utmost sincerity, we repent

今以誠懇懺悔心
jīn yǐ chéng kěn chàn huǐ xīn

We can wash away all evil and defilement

洗淨諸惡眾垢穢
xǐ jìng zhū è zhòng gòu huì

That can paint with all kinds of colors

能畫各種諸顏色
néng huà gè zhǒng zhū yán sè

The state of mind changes as thoughts arise

心境又隨意念轉
xīn jìng yòu suí yì niàn zhuǎn

Ten Dharma-realms arise from one mind

十法界由一心顯
shí fǎ jiè yóu yī xīn xiǎn

Evil thoughts lead endlessly to evil

惡念存心惡無邊
è niàn cún xīn è wú biān

Is to recognize our wrongs, be shameful, and repent

慚愧知罪與懺悔
cán kuǐ zhī zuì yǔ chàn huǐ

They wash away all wrongdoings of sentient beings

能洗一切眾生罪
néng xǐ yī qiè zhòng shēng zuì

With this compassionate Samadhi-water

運此慈悲三昧水
yùn cǐ cí bēi sān mèi shuǐ

We openly repent our previous wrongs

發露過愆懺前非
fā lù guò qiān chàn qián fēi

¹ The Ten Dharma-realms are discussed in Master Cheng Yen's teaching on page 44.

² The Three Obstructions—afflictions, unwholesome actions, and karmic retribution—will be discussed in Issue 34.

Tzu Chi's "Send Love to South Africa" project collected over 70,000 books in 2009, benefitting more than 6,000 students in nineteen schools. When the project was re-launched in 2012, volunteers in New Jersey took on the responsibility of organizing and packing for the East Coast. On February 25, 2012, 165 volunteers sorted and packaged 503 cartons of books, stationery, and toys. Photo: Jixin Chen



◀ The 56th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women—focused on “the empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges”—opened at United Nations Headquarters in New York on February 27, 2012. Tzu Chi held a parallel event where two guest speakers discussed food security and practical ways to improve the lives of rural women. Photo: Fang Yuan Chou



▲ For the third consecutive year, certified Tzu Chi volunteers in New York offered free tax-reporting services through VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) in February through April 2012. Three times as many people took advantage of the program as last year; many reported that they appreciated the trustworthy and excellent service. Photo: Fang Yuan Chou



▲ Tzu Chi joined forty other community organizations for “Going Green in Queens 2012” in New York on March 24. Volunteers advocated energy conservation and environmental protection while displaying the DA.AI Technology line of eco-friendly products manufactured from recycled plastic bottles. Photo: Suman Zhou



The 20th Annual VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster) Conference was held May 8-10, 2012, in Norfolk, Virginia. At the conference, Tzu Chi volunteers and members of one hundred other organizations discussed effective ways to respond to disasters and conduct disaster relief. Photo: Mark Tsai



▲ On May 8, 2012, the Interfaith Council of Southern Nevada met at the Tzu Chi office in Las Vegas. Impressed by Tzu Chi's efforts, especially in international relief, several members invited Tzu Chi volunteers to their houses of worship to speak about environmental protection and compassionate giving. Photo: Grace Wong



▲ The American Association of Tissue Banks (AATB) held its 16th Annual Spring Meeting in Puerto Rico in March 2012. This year, AATB invited a diverse group of faith-based organizations, including Tzu Chi Medical Foundation, to discuss organ donation and proper treatment of corpses. Photo: Michelle Chen

On February 11, 2012, Tzu Chi volunteers in Northern California conducted a Bone Marrow Registration at the Tri-Valley Tzu Chi Academy, hoping to find a match for a local young leukemia patient. Several attendees commented that Tzu Chi's efforts have inspired many who were previously hesitant to now participate in this worthy cause. Photo: Meituan Kuo





▲ In February 2012, Hawaii's Dharma as Water Editorial Team started holding monthly training classes for new local volunteers. On March 17, 2012, these new volunteers cooked and served hot food to the homeless at the Institute for Human Service to spread the roots of love deeper into the community. Photo: Weixin Guo



▲ In Flushing, New York, Tzu Chi and the Long Island Blood Center partnered for the tenth year to offer a spring blood drive on March 11, 2012. Several blood donors took this opportunity to give back to society after benefitting from Tzu Chi's free clinic services in the past. Photo: Peter Chu



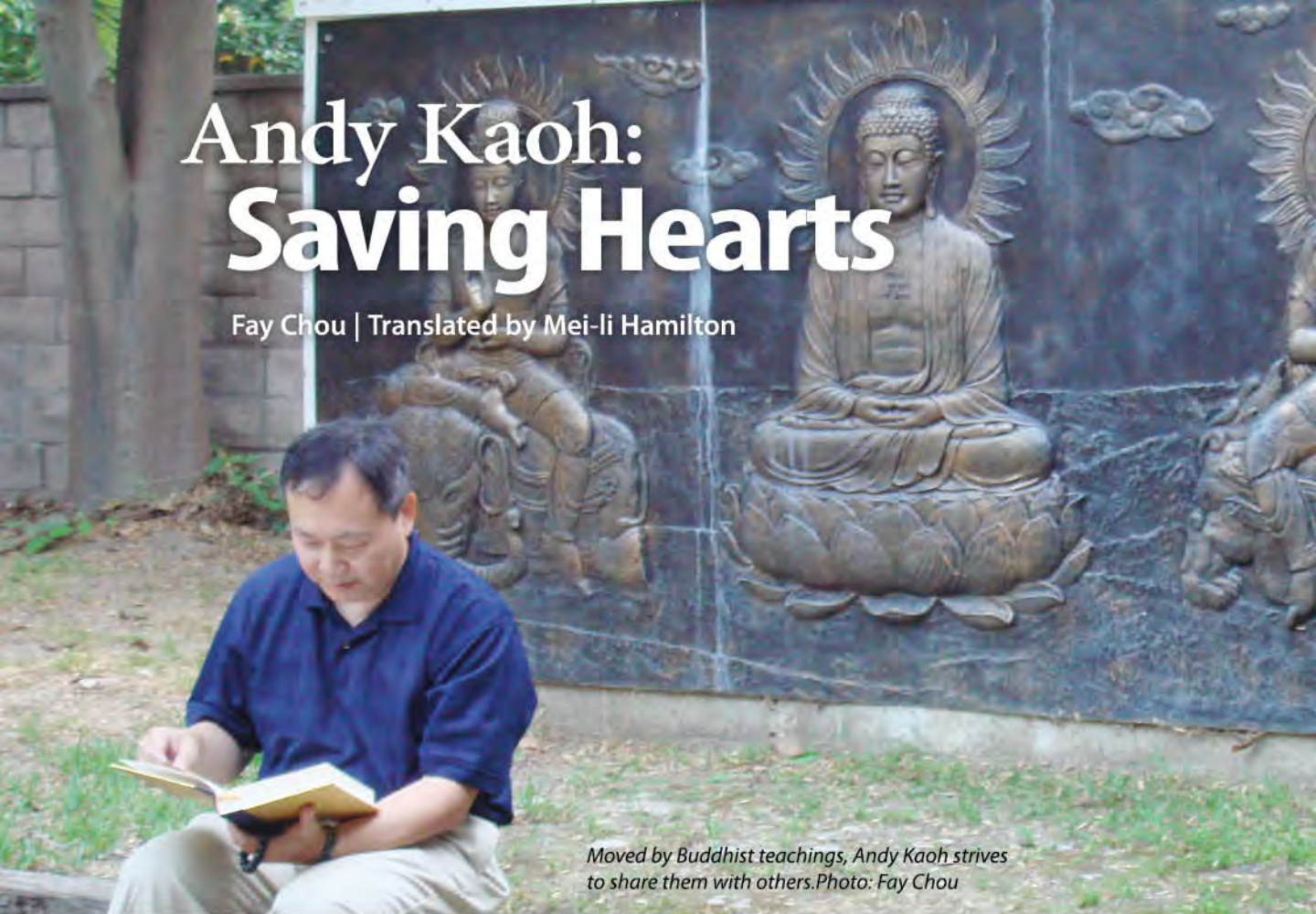
▲ In Las Vegas, Nevada, Tzu Chi again hosted a HepBFreeLasVegas screening on February 19, 2012. Twenty-eight people were screened for Hepatitis B and also enjoyed a free vegetarian lunch and an informative health lecture. Photo: Audrey Cheng



▲ On February 21, 2012, Mayor Gary Kovacic of Arcadia, California, presented Tzu Chi with the Mayor's Certificate of Commendation to recognize its "outstanding humanistic efforts around the world" and "continuing volunteer work in support of Arcadia residents." Tzu Chi CEO Han Huang accepted the award on behalf of all Tzu Chi volunteers. Photo: Luca Ye

Andy Kaoh: Saving Hearts

Fay Chou | Translated by Mei-li Hamilton



Moved by Buddhist teachings, Andy Kaoh strives to share them with others. Photo: Fay Chou

When Andy Kaoh was a young boy, he saw his mother crying when she heard a friend was diagnosed with cancer. In those days, before advanced treatment methods, cancer was a death sentence. Moved by her plight, Andy decided to become an oncologist to save people's lives by fighting cancer.

In his sophomore year of high school, Andy and his family moved from Vietnam to Hawaii. Andy studied pre-med for a couple of years, but dropped out when he could no longer pay tuition. He started an electronic game business in Arizona, with a friend, to try to make enough money to go back to medical school.

One year later, Andy's mother was diagnosed with cancer, so he returned to Hawaii to take care of her. Fortunately, her cancer went into remission after surgery. When Andy returned to Arizona, he discovered that his partner had sold their company. He put all his belongings into a car and drove to California to start over again.

Five years later, his mother's cancer returned

and she passed away. Andy had been very close to his mother. As he dealt with her passing Andy hoped that they would meet again in heaven, but he found himself questioning what really happens after death.

Andy began visiting a number of religious sites, seeking to understand where his mother truly was. One day, he walked into a temple and asked Buddha, "If you are truly as great as people say, please tell me where my mother went."

Andy had recurring dreams where he looked for his mother everywhere, but could not find her. In one, he found himself in a deep hole, looking up to a dark, starless, distant sky. He realized that he was deep within the earth and that the "sky" he saw was actually the surface of the earth. On another occasion, he dreamt he was walking on a two-foot-wide path through a rice field, with black water on either side. Fire burned on the black water. Inside the water, he saw people. When Andy started to study Buddhism a few years later, he realized that these dreams had described Hell.



Finding Spiritual Strength

Andy built another business. After several difficult years, he was able to save eighty thousand dollars; he thought he could finally buy a house. Instead, he learned that when one is down on his luck even hard-earned money can disappear quickly and unexpectedly.

One night, a group of homeless people near his warehouse started a fire to keep themselves warm. The fire grew out of control, burning down his warehouse and all the merchandise inside: \$340,000 worth of his own inventory and that of his supplier. Andy not only lost everything, he fell into serious debt.

For a long time afterwards, Andy had trouble sleeping at night. He struggled with what had happened and why, thinking, "What did I do wrong? Why am I being punished like this?" But then he told himself, "It doesn't matter, I will correct what I did wrong. One day I'll earn lots of money to clear all my debt; I'll help others and loan money to those in need."

Andy's landlord suggested that he start a business raising tiger shrimp and importing them to the United States. He flew to Taipei to seek advice from some friends of his father, but had no success. Along the way, he visited a temple, still hoping to find where his mother had gone after death. He took four free books about Buddhism with him when he left.

Reading one of the books on his flight back to the United States, Andy was deeply touched by the very first sentence: "Animals are scared when we kill them. We are smarter than animals; we



Visiting the poster display in Tzu Chi's San Dimas headquarters, Andy was moved by the deeds of volunteers across the world. Photo: Shirley Tseng

should relieve their pain, not cause it."

Andy remembered holding down a turkey for his mother while she killed it, and he realized now that the saying, "animals are gifts from heaven for us to eat," did not make sense. The book explained that human beings are so selfish that they celebrate their birthdays by putting animals to death. Although not a Buddhist, Andy felt these words were written just for him. Killing is bad enough; to be in the business of killing would be even worse. So Andy decided not to pursue a career of raising and importing shrimp. Finding this spiritual sustenance, he began to feel that Buddhist teachings held the answers he sought.

Saving Hearts Saves Lives

In those hard times, Andy lived on a dollar per day. He could only afford one loaf of French bread each day to keep from starving. When a man asked him for a quarter one day, Andy refused, because he would not have enough left to buy bread for himself. That night, Andy could not sleep. He decided, "From now on, I'll give them one dollar, five, ten, twenty dollars. I won't let anyone in this world be hungry again!" After he found success, Andy stayed true to his word.

One Thanksgiving, Andy enjoyed a feast with some friends. There was so much left over that the hostess begged everyone to take some home. Stopping at a red light later that night, he

Seeing Bibles in many hotel nightstand drawers, Andy began to wonder: if hotels have Bibles in their rooms, why not Buddhist books?

heard several people searching for food in a garbage bin. Faced with this stark juxtaposition, he thought, "This world is so unfair."

A few days later, Andy saw a Salvation Army fundraising advertisement: "\$1.50 is enough to give a homeless person a Christmas dinner." He went to the Salvation Army and found that they needed five thousand pounds of turkey to feed five thousand people. Andy found a supermarket willing to sell him turkey for forty-seven cents per pound and proceeded to fund local Salvation Army Christmas dinners for the next several years.

Andy also began to take time out to help the homeless. As he did, he often smelled alcohol on some of them. He decided then that giving food was preferable to giving money as it ensured his donation was used for nutrition, not alcohol. He learned that even in helping others, it is important to be careful and make wise choices.

Looking back at the lowest point of his life, Andy said, "I refused to give twenty-five cents to someone in need because I didn't have a kind heart. Later, I had a kind heart, but I didn't have wisdom. By giving money, I satisfied my ego, but that didn't help the people I gave money to. Now I have gained some wisdom; I know that if people don't change their lifestyle, money will not save them. So, how can a person be fundamentally changed?" He realized that to save lives he had to save hearts, just as Dharma Master Cheng Yen has been teaching for several decades.



Promoting Jing Si Aphorisms

Due to his business, Andy travels frequently. Seeing Bibles in many hotel nightstand drawers, Andy began to wonder: if hotels have Bibles in their rooms, why not Buddhist books?

Thanks to Andy Kaoh and hardworking Tzu Chi volunteers, many hotels now offer their guests the inspiration and encouragement of Master Cheng Yen's Jing Si Aphorisms. Photo: Susan Cheng

After learning more about Buddhism, Andy realized that Buddhist sutras are quite numerous and often too difficult to read. He hoped to find an easy-to-read book to place in hotels: one that would describe universal truths and provide guidance for life. Though Andy held this hope for over a decade, he never found the right book.

In 2011, Andy discovered Dharma Master Cheng Yen's *Jing Si Aphorisms* in the nightstand drawer of a newly-opened hotel in Taipei. Thumbing through the book, he found that it was full of deep meanings written in simple phrases. The wise sayings were printed in four languages: Chinese, English, Japanese, and Spanish. "This is it!" Andy exclaimed. He knew this was the book he had been seeking.

Andy decided that he would push this book into hotels and motels in the United States, so he ordered one thousand copies from Tzu Chi. Through the dedicated promotion of a Tzu Chi volunteer and hotel owner, thirty hotel owners agreed to have the book placed in their hotel rooms at a hotel association trade show in June 2011. Realizing that one thousand books were not enough, Andy ordered four thousand more. On September 17, 2011, Tzu Chi presented more than 4,600 copies of *Jing Si Aphorisms* to sixty hotel owners.

Learning that one hotel owner was interested in more than seven thousand copies for a hotel in Las Vegas, Andy was ecstatic. "Wonderful!" he said. "The more the better! I'll give the book to anyone as long as they want it, cherish it, and don't ignore it." Andy figures that if even one out of a million can read and learn a truth from the book, it is worth his effort.

Andy also believes that those who are ill or have a lot of time on their hands are more likely to think about the meaning of life, and that when the heart is calm, one can accept the truth more easily. So, he hopes to also place *Jing Si Aphorisms* in hospitals and prisons. Not long after the book donation ceremony, he ordered ten thousand more copies to give away. "The promotion of *Jing Si Aphorisms* is just beginning; the whole world needs this. Buddha taught us that enlightenment is the purpose of learning Buddhism; I'd like to see people find themselves through this book."



In May 2011, Andy (left) led a group of Tibetan Buddhist lamas to Tzu Chi Headquarters in San Dimas, California, to tour the campus and meet volunteers. Photo: Shirley Tseng

“Money-Keeper” for the Poor

On the day of Andy’s father’s funeral in 2004, a dozen men Andy whom did not recognize showed up and insisted on carrying the coffin. Andy’s father, Mr. Kaoh, had been a medical doctor in the Japanese army. He saved many lives during World War II by bribing Japanese officers. These people he saved had been grateful ever since.

That day, Andy learned much about his father that he had never known. He remembered that when he was growing up in Vietnam, a friend of his father visited every week. Andy’s mother always prepared food for him and his father gave him money. He learned now that this friend had come to Vietnam alone, contracted tuberculosis, and was unable to get a job. Andy’s parents took care of him for years.

Mr. Kaoh’s friends also told Andy of a three-story house that his father had built while in Hanoi. He lived on the third floor, homeless people lived on the second floor, and the kitchen that supplied food all day to the homeless people operated on the bottom floor.

Andy inherited compassion and kindness from his father. He believes that he has found success in business because he has a sincere desire to help the poor and feed the hungry. As Andy sees it, all his money is to be given away; he is only the money-keeper.

Even though Andy is the biggest advocate of

offering *Jing Si Aphorisms* in hotels, he knows that it cannot be done without Tzu Chi volunteers. After finding the book, he considered hiring people to promote and distribute it to hotels, but he realized that it would take a lot of explanation and that hotel owners might think he had ulterior motives. But with the help of Tzu Chi volunteers, the first step of his wish has been achieved.

During a visit to Tzu Chi Headquarters in San Dimas, California, Andy observed that “Tzu Chi has accomplished a lot because the organization really puts its heart into its work.” As he viewed a poster display of Tzu Chi’s community works, he saw what volunteers have done all across the globe. He was left speechless.

Later he opined, “This world has disasters happening in every corner. Because I’m tied down by daily business, I can’t go to disaster areas...” He went silent as he started to choke up. His tour guide, Humanitarian Culture Development Department Deputy Director Lusha Lee, jumped in, “Some of us go to the front lines; you stay behind and help with logistics, right?” Andy laughed, vigorously nodding his head, and said, “That’s it! You’re right. I’m very grateful to you!”

He continued, “When reading, I am often touched by the Buddha’s mercy and read with tears in my eyes. The Buddha hopes we recognize a truth: to be selfless without reservations. Helping others is one way to open the door to wisdom. I hope everyone can understand the wisdom of the Buddha.”🙏

The Buddha’s teachings are not only to be studied but realized through actual practice and compassionate acts of giving.

Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen



A WAKE-UP CALL

Dharma Master Cheng Yen

Compiled into English by the Dharma as Water Editorial Team

Working with others is essential to progressing in our spiritual practice.

We must be vigilant and constantly self-reflect.

**When we remain untouched by conflict,
we learn the wisdom of an unwavering heart.**

-Dharma Master Cheng Yen

Tzu Chi volunteers work together to better serve those in need. In Tzu Chi, as in any organization, people bring different habits, religious and cultural backgrounds, and experiences with them. By always having gratitude, respect, and love in our interactions with others, we transcend differences and create a beautiful group that exists in unity and harmony. If the members of the community are not understanding, it is easy for these habits to spark disputes and create disharmony.

When the Buddha was alive, his monastic community also had to address the issue of how to work with new people from many different backgrounds. The monks led an orderly life with prescribed activities at certain times. In the evening, they recited the Buddha's teaching for the day. Some worked late into the night and had to rely on a timekeeper to wake them in the morning. Everyone took turns serving as the timekeeper.

One time, a new monk who had just left his lay life to follow the Buddha was chosen

to be the timekeeper. Yet he could not tell when he should wake people up. So he started calling for everyone to get up whenever he awoke, whether it was early in the morning or late at night. He disrupted the rhythm of everyone's rest. During the day, the monks started drifting off while the Buddha taught. At night, no sooner had they fallen asleep than they were awoken by the timekeeper. After a few days of this, the monks were completely exhausted. They became angry and discontent, so they gathered to discuss this problem.

The Buddha saw them huddled together, so he asked, "What is the matter?"

One of the monks stepped forward. "This new monk cannot tell time. He wakes us up at all hours of the night. He is disrupting our routine, and we are too tired to listen to your teachings!"

The Buddha walked over and sat down with a smile. Everyone surrounded him to listen as he addressed their situation. The Buddha told them this story:



Storytelling by the Master

In ancient times, there was a group of spiritual practitioners who studied under a renowned teacher. For years they had a rooster who crowed at the same time each morning. This is how they knew when to wake up and study. But one day, the rooster unexpectedly passed away. Suddenly they did not know when to wake up, and when they did, they could not tell what time it was. So they searched for a replacement.

It just so happened that one of these practitioners would often practice in a cemetery to learn about life and death. There he saw a rooster running around between tombs. He caught it, then brought it back and locked it in a cage, hoping that it would crow at the right time.

But the captured rooster had no sense of time. It crowed whenever it wanted to, day or night. It failed to crow at the right time and crowed at all the wrong times. It greatly disrupted the routine of these religious practitioners, and everyone quickly became exhausted.

One day, when the rooster began crowing at the wrong time yet again, one of the exhausted spiritual practitioners yanked open the rooster's cage, dragged it out, and snapped its neck. At this moment, their spiritual teacher came out.

This teacher stood next to the dead rooster, sadly shook his head, and sighed. He told the practitioners, "Didn't you know that this rooster grew up in a cemetery? It grew up in the wild, so it never learned to crow at the proper time. That is why it disrupted your routine. You killed it without it ever understanding what it had done wrong. It just never learned to do this."

At this point, the Buddha addressed his monastic followers. "You must realize that this monk who has just arrived has never been trained in the ways of the monastic community. He is the rooster that grew up in the cemetery. All of you are the practitioners who got angry at the rooster. As for me, I am that teacher. I hope you now understand my teaching and can eliminate your anger. Do not keep repeating the same mistake."

In spiritual practice, and in daily life, we must interact with others. When we are in a group, let us treat each other with love and help newcomers learn the ways of the community. Some people are disruptive simply because they do not know about or understand the rules. If we are affected by these disruptions, instead of giving rise to anger, let us practice patience and understanding. This is how we can work in unity, harmony, mutual love, and concerted effort according to the Buddha's teachings. 🌿

Romeo & Juliet

Recipe provided by Vegetarian Cooking Team
Tzu Chi University Continuing Education Center

Ingredients:

1 stick Wheat Gluten
10 Snow Peas
8 Water Chestnuts
½ stalk King Oyster Mushroom
Handful of Peas and Carrots
1 tbsp Oil
Sesame Oil
Potato Starch

Dark Seasoning:

1 tbsp Fermented Sweet Rice
2 tbsp Sugar
1 tbsp Ketchup
1 tsp Chili Bean Paste
2 tbsp Water
1 tsp Vinegar
Minced Ginger
White Pepper Powder

Light Seasoning:

1 tsp Salt
1 tsp Mushroom Essence
1 tsp White Cooking Wine
Minced Ginger
White Pepper Powder

A wholesome life begins with vegetarianism.
Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen

Directions:

1. Mix dark seasoning in a bowl. Mix light seasoning in a separate bowl. Set both aside.
2. Bring a pot of water to boil. Add a little salt and oil, then snow peas, water chestnuts, and king oyster mushroom. After ingredients have cooked for three minutes, drain and set aside.
3. Mix 1 tsp potato starch and 1 tbsp water in a small bowl. Slowly add to the light seasoning.
4. Heat the cooked vegetables briefly in a pan, then add light seasoning and a bit of sesame oil. Dish this onto one side of a large plate.
5. Slice the wheat gluten. In a pan, sauté wheat gluten slices in oil until golden brown.
6. Mix 1 tsp potato starch and 1 tbsp water in a small bowl. Slowly add to the dark seasoning.
7. Add dark seasoning to the wheat gluten. Sprinkle in peas and carrots, then cook until the sauce thickens. Dish this onto the other side of the plate.
8. Add sliced oranges or other fresh fruit between the two dishes for a colorful flair.



Photo: Kevin Chiang

Gratitude *from* Silverado

Leslie Paskus

{ Tzu Chi came to Silverado as volunteers and left as friends. }

My name is Leslie Paskus. I live in a bucolic rural community in Orange County, California, named Silverado Canyon. My husband, teenage son, and I are committed to being active community volunteers and activists. Our passion is saving the local wildlands from greedy developers, promoting conservation and eco-friendly life choices, and working to promote protection of endangered species.

In December 2010, our little community was devastated by floods and mudslides caused by a series of storms. As a community volunteer and board member of the Inter-Canyon League, our local nonprofit, my role as volunteer coordinator was to bring desperately needed assistance to the canyon to help dig out homes buried under tons of mud and debris. I received a phone call from Tzu Chi with incredible offers of help: volunteers to help dig out homes, pallettes of supplies, and financial assistance for families displaced from their homes. This kind of help was unprecedented.

Meeting Tzu Chi volunteers Martin and Ivan for the first time was a revelation. I felt such incredible warmth, peace, caring, and acceptance in their presence. Others felt this as well from the many Tzu Chi volunteers who became regular fixtures in the canyon in the ensuing months. When I suffered a debilitating spine injury, Tzu Chi volunteers came to my home and helped clean and organize my home. Tzu Chi came to Silverado as volunteers and left as friends.

Since that initial meeting, our family has had the absolute pleasure and honor of being invited to several Tzu Chi gatherings. We attended a Lunar New Year Celebration and Mother's Day Celebration at the local office in Orange County and, most recently, we attended the March 2012

concert featuring David D'Or.

This concert was our first visit to the national headquarters in San Dimas. As my husband and I drove past a suburban neighborhood, as if by magic, we crossed a threshold into a sylvan glade. We

drove along a gently twisting road surrounded by a multitude of trees and natural vegetation. Following the directions of volunteers pointing the way with flashlights winking like fireflies, we felt the cares and concerns of the day slip away. As peace and serenity engulfed us in a warm caress, we gave in to the wonderful feeling.

At the auditorium, we enjoyed a cup of fragrant tea and greeted many of our Tzu Chi friends. Once again we became entranced by the beauty and simplicity of Master Cheng Yen's message. The absolute selflessness of the millions of Tzu Chi volunteers worldwide and their acts of charity and grace all reflect the best of what mankind can and must be if we are to heal our planet and bring about world peace.

David D'Or's voice is a gift from the heavens. His range and control is extraordinary. We could have listened to him for hours. The juxtapositions of Master Cheng Yen's words and David's musical compositions are truly exquisite. The songs moved me, and I felt surrounded by goodness and love.

I have been greatly moved by all that the Tzu Chi Foundation represents. My family and other canyon residents will pay forward the help we received in our time of need by volunteering with Tzu Chi. 🌱



The author and her family enjoy their new David D'Or DVD and CD. Photo: Emily Chu



Tzu Chi volunteers dig out a Silverado home buried in mud in January 2010. Photo: Emily Chu

Love *and* Care to Tornado Survivors

Midwest Tzu Chi Volunteers | Compiled by Shirley Tseng | Translated by Colin Legerton

Tornadoes struck early and often in spring 2012. Beginning with the “Leap Day Tornado Outbreak” of late February, more than one hundred tornadoes devastated the states of Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Ohio, and Texas. By mid-April, tornadoes had caused more than sixty deaths and property damage valued at \$1.5 billion. Wherever and whenever storms hit, Tzu Chi volunteers in the region immediately hurried to the aid of those in greatest need.

In Harrisburg, Illinois, volunteers witnessed the aftermath of a devastating tornado that flattened homes, overturned cars, and scattered debris. In Kenton County, Kentucky, they met a man who had been driving an eighteen-wheeler when the storm struck: as the sky suddenly turned black, his truck began to rock as though it had been rear-ended. Though the trailer was blown into the divider and the windshield was cracked, thankfully, the driver remained unharmed.

In the hard-hit Indiana towns of Henryville and Marysville, volunteers witnessed the incredible and devastating strength of nature: fifteen-month-old Angel was flung more than ten miles from her home by the tornado that killed her parents and siblings. Though she clung to life for several days, sadly there was no miracle recovery. Indianapolis Tzu Chi volunteers and the Red Cross visited Angel’s surviving relatives to help as they could.

In Moscow, Ohio, volunteers saw homes protected from wind and rain by nothing but plastic sheets stretched across gaping holes in the walls and roofs. In West Liberty, Kentucky, they found a forty-mile-long, half-mile-wide path of devastation. Kentucky Supreme Court Justice Will T. Scott stated that the level of destruction was something he had not seen since his military service in Vietnam.

Kansas Tzu Chi volunteers visited the hard-hit town of Harleyville twice to assess damage, returning a third time on March 27 to present blankets and cash cards to those in need. As tornado survivors lined up to fill out forms, volunteers introduced Tzu Chi, explaining that

the relief blankets were made from seventy plastic bottles and the emergency cash cards were filled with loving donations from people all around the world. Moved, many care recipients immediately took out coins to place into bamboo banks. A local teacher asked to take a bamboo bank to introduce the story of Tzu Chi’s bamboo bank spirit to her students.

The same day, a group of St. Louis volunteers distributed blankets and cash cards in Harrisburg,



Volunteers speak with care recipients in Henryville, Indiana. Photo: Yuling Xu

Illinois. One woman drove two hours to receive relief supplies on her brother’s behalf, as his house had been destroyed in the tornado and he was still in the hospital recovering from serious injuries.

On March 24, Tzu Ching college volunteers from the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Chicago joined Indianapolis and Chicago Tzu Chi volunteers to travel to Henryville, Illinois, where they held a relief distribution in a local church that had been providing survivors with necessary supplies and three meals a day ever since the tornado.

Survivors started streaming in at two o’clock in the afternoon. Many either lacked homeowners insurance entirely or had insufficient insurance to cover needed repairs. Jennifer McConahay, a

{ A city is not made up solely of its buildings. The people are the heart of the city. }

local resident and volunteer with the church, saw that many of her friends suffered more damage than she did, so she decided not to apply for Tzu Chi's emergency cash. Instead, she helped comfort other survivors.

Jennifer recalled that media and delivery trucks had arrived daily as the disaster unfolded, but after a week the media was all gone. After two weeks, the trucks were gone too. Just when the locals began to feel that no one cared anymore, Tzu Chi arrived to give emergency cash debit cards that allowed survivors to purchase what they needed most.

During Tzu Chi's post-tornado assessment, Mayor Rose Wolfe of Jackson, Kentucky, arranged for two four-wheel-drive vehicles to carry Tzu Chi volunteers into hard-hit neighboring West Liberty. At the same time, Mayor Wolfe presented Tzu Chi Foundation with a key to the city of Jackson in recognition of the service Tzu Chi provided to Jackson after flooding in 2009, and for returning to help disaster survivors yet again.

On March 31, seventy Tzu Chi volunteers from several states returned to hold a disaster relief distribution for West Liberty, a small town where nearly thirty percent of the population lives beneath the poverty line. With the help of local Red Cross volunteers and partners from neighboring Jackson, eighty-two families were provided with emergency cash cards, blankets, hygiene kits, and bamboo banks. Though their buildings were reduced to rubble, the people of West Liberty vowed to stand up together. As a



Together, Tzu Chi and the Red Cross bring love and care to a disaster survivor in Harrisburg, Illinois. Photo: Chong Hsieh

survivor remarked, "A city is not made up solely of its buildings. The people are the heart of the city."

As Tzu Chi volunteers were carrying out relief distributions throughout the Midwest, a tornado to their south struck the small city of Lancaster, Texas, on April 3. The Tzu Chi Southern Regional Office in Dallas immediately arranged to send blankets to a Lancaster shelter that same night, and later held a relief distribution on April 6 with support from Texas Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD). Tzu Chi volunteers offered blankets to all, and emergency cash cards to those who had been injured or whose homes were destroyed.

Between March 17 and April 11, 2012, more than two hundred fifty Tzu Chi volunteers from the South and Midwest personally delivered nine hundred eco-friendly blankets and more than \$170,000 in emergency cash cards to nearly one thousand tornado survivors. Working together to relieve the suffering of others, they will continue to pray for a world free from disasters. 🌿

(From reports by Dongchang Xue, Kuocheng Lin, Cishao Cai, Liyun Chen, Bornain Chiu, Chao Ma, Meizi Cai, Lili Zheng, Citong Wang)

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

Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen



In the wake of massive destruction, the assistance of Tzu Chi volunteers helps tornado survivors rebuild and move forward. Photo: Kuocheng Lin (back), Rebecca Chen (front)

Harrisburg Tornado Relief Effort

Nicholas Lo




*The author gives careful instructions to care recipients.
Photo: Rebecca Chen*

During the early morning hours of February 29, 2012, a major EF4 tornado devastated Harrisburg, Illinois. It was the strongest of the many tornados that touched down in the Midwest during the 2012 Leap Day tornado outbreak. In addition to damaging hundreds of buildings, the Harrisburg tornado killed seven people, and injured more than one hundred others.

Since the city was founded in the mid-1800s, Harrisburg has suffered from many floods and

tornados. Many tornado victims I met during the relief distribution had also endured the severe flooding of Harrisburg in 2008. This time, the tornado devastated numerous homes, leaving many without shelter. In the wake of such destruction, I was thankful for the opportunity to participate in this disaster relief effort.

After hearing the different stories of the victims, I was deeply moved. While the disaster was undoubtedly unfortunate, many victims chose instead to recall their good luck. One victim told me that he called his wife as soon as he heard there was the possibility of a tornado, and then rushed home. Shortly after he arrived, he and his family took shelter in the basement. Surveying the damage after the tornado, he noticed a brick lying in his son's playpen. If his family had not decided to move to the basement, they could have lost much more than just their home. Another family was saved by their pet parakeets. The birds awakened the family just minutes before the tornado reached their home. They had just enough time to avoid being crushed by a collapsing wall.



Though the tornado turned much of Harrisburg to rubble, the author is struck by the resilience and positive outlook of the disaster survivors he meets. Photo: Chong Hsieh

The ability to smile, even in the face of such loss, is truly amazing.

Like many of the survivors I talked to, Kim said she was thankful just to be alive. Her trailer home was one of the first to be hit by the tornado as it touched down. Kim recalled being awakened by her dog moments before the tornado threw them both through the wall of her trailer home. She showed me a photograph of the debris, noting where her neighbor rescued her from the wreckage.

I am glad that I was able to be a part of this disaster relief effort and to interact with people like Kim who lost everything to the tornado. I really hope what Tzu Chi has done in Harrisburg will help the survivors through these tough times. On a deeper level, I think that Kim and the other survivors have a lot to teach us. Despite all the misfortunes in Kim's life, including a long struggle with cancer, she remains in surprisingly good spirits. She was constantly joking about her injuries and laughing with her neighbors who were seated on either side of her. If I had not heard her story, I would never have guessed she was a tornado victim.

Survivors like Kim show us the true strength of the human spirit. The ability to smile, even in the face of such loss, is truly amazing. You could see this strength of spirit in everyone who



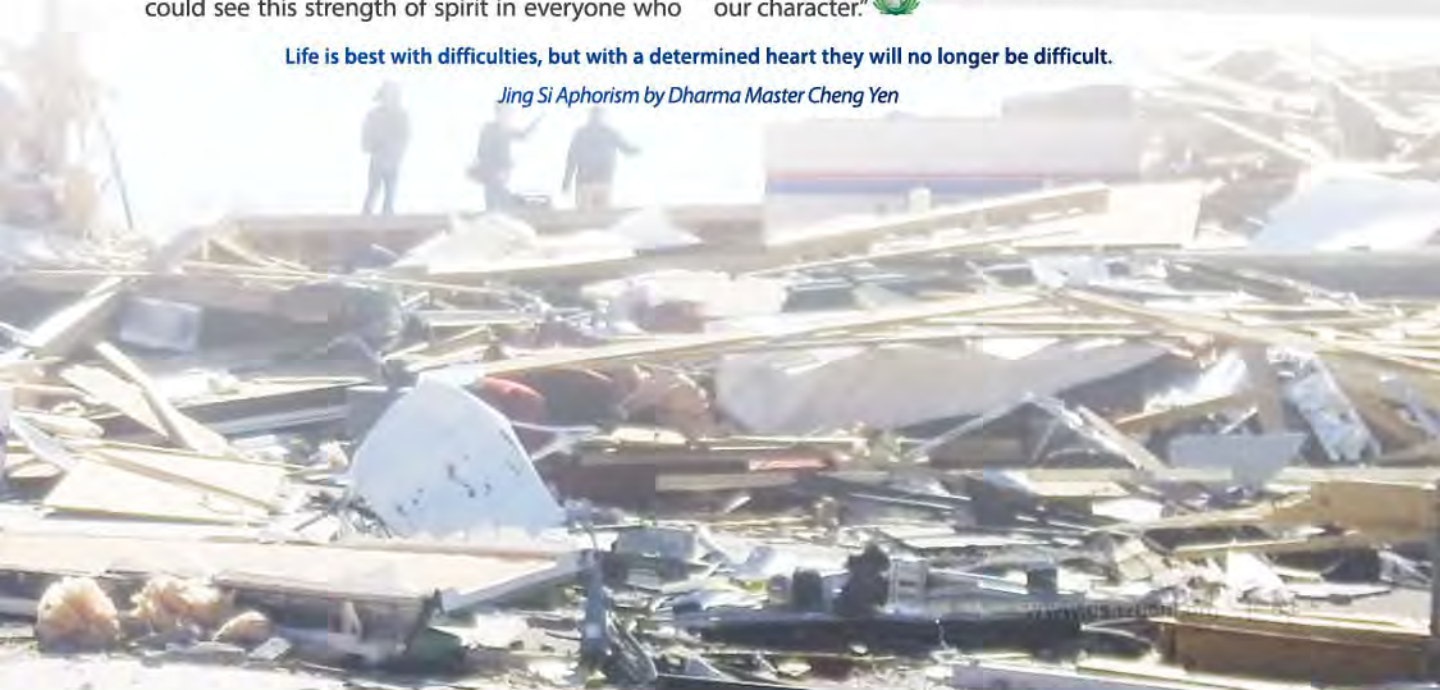
*The author hangs a banner prior to a disaster relief distribution.
Photo: Rebecca Chen*

stopped by. As I wished one gentleman the best of luck as he was leaving, he simply turned, smiled, and said, "I've been through worse. Things will work out." Another person reminded me that when you have hit rock bottom, the only way to go is up.

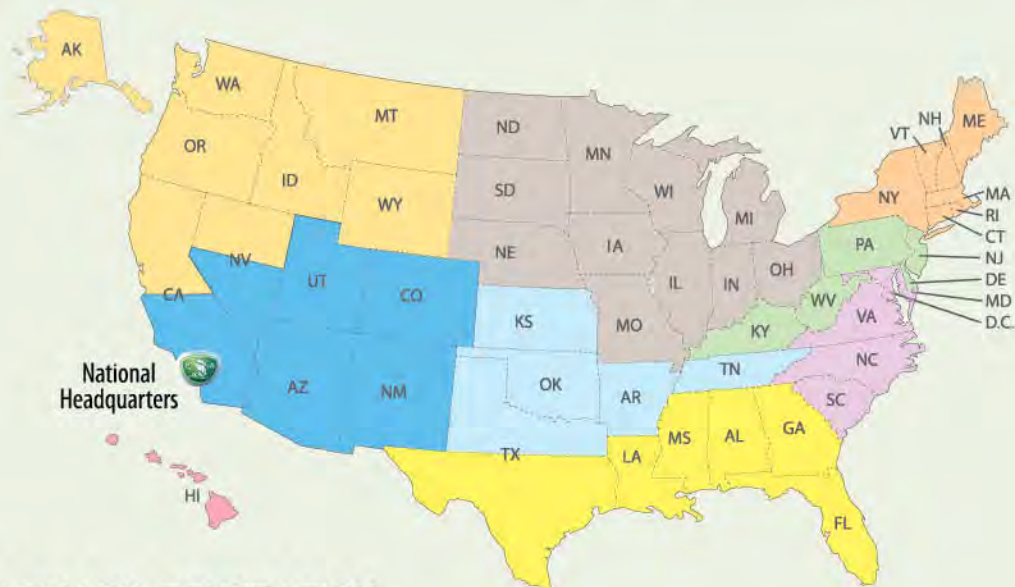
Having borne witness to the strength of the survivors in Harrisburg, I believe I have glimpsed a part of what it means to have a strong character. The people I met during this relief effort truly embody Dharma Master Cheng Yen's Jing Si Aphorism: "Continue even when it is hard to go on. Release even when it is hard to let go. Endure even when it is hard to bear. This is how we build our character." 🌿

Life is best with difficulties, but with a determined heart they will no longer be difficult.

Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen











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A BRIEF HISTORY...

On April 14, 1966, Venerable Master Cheng Yen founded the Tzu Chi Merits Society in Hualien with the support of 30 housewives who each put aside 50 NT cents (about two US cents) of their grocery money every day to establish a charity fund. Their objective was to provide assistance for the poor.

During the first five years, they helped a total of 31 elderly, ill, or poor people from 15 families. As word spread, more people participated and the program gathered strength. It spread beyond Hualien across the island.

Today, Tzu Chi Foundation is a non-profit organization with nearly 10 million members worldwide. The international headquarters remains in Hualien. The United States headquarters in San Dimas, California, oversees nine Tzu Chi regional chapters with more than 80 offices across the country. In keeping with its goal of inspiring volunteers to heal the world, foundation members and a network of medical providers can be found assisting in relief work all over the world, providing assistance to victims of both man-made and natural calamities.

The foundation hopes to instill in each of its members a heart filled with kindness, compassion, joy, and unconditional giving. For 46 years, Tzu Chi has concentrated on its missions of charity, medicine, education, and humanistic culture. Over the decades, the foundation has also expanded its activities to include international disaster relief, bone marrow donation, community volunteerism, and environmental conservation.

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