

COMPASSION & RELIEF

SUMMER
2022

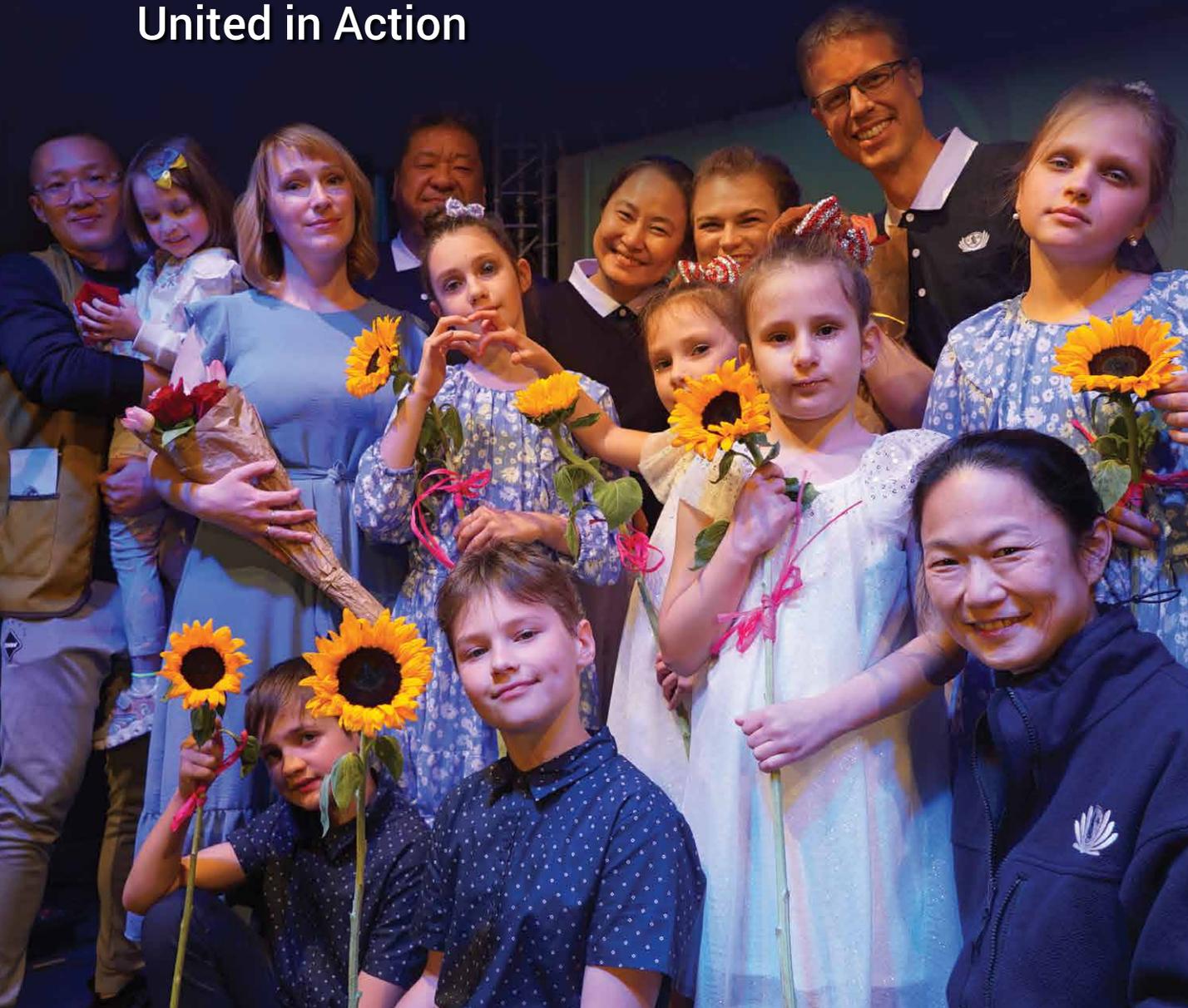
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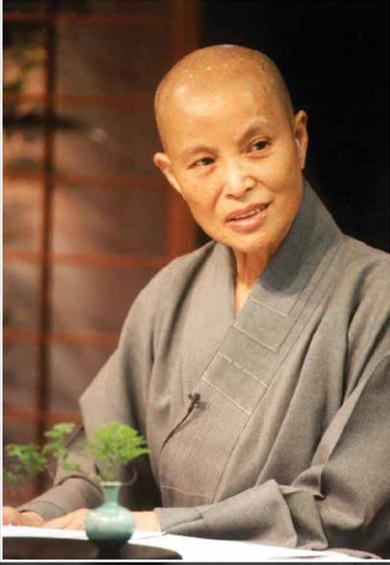
TZU CHI *USA Journal*

Care for Ukrainians Escaping War

Helping Camp Fire Survivors
Come Home

United in Action





CONTEMPLATIVE WISDOM

Thoughts for meditation, contemplation,
and reflection

Dharma Master Cheng Yen

Founder of the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation

Never underestimate the power of an individual,
and never look down on small sums of money.

By accumulating blessings,
we can bring relief to countless people in suffering;
through the planning and efforts of many,
we can smooth out turbulent paths with love.

From one, infinite blessings can rise,
and we can widely spread the seeds of goodness
to transform all beings.



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Cover: Tzu Chi volunteers share a touching moment with Ukrainian care recipients after the May 6, 2022, charity concert they offered as a gift in gratitude for Tzu Chi's aid.

Photo/Tzu Chi Team

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As you read the stories about the activities of our volunteers in each issue of the Tzu Chi USA Journal, do you feel a calling?

VOLUNTEERISM IS THE HEARTBEAT OF TZU CHI WORLDWIDE.

We welcome your interest!

The first step in your volunteer journey is simply to register at tzuchi.us/volunteer so we can best match your fields of interest with Tzu Chi's current needs in your area.

Discover the joy of volunteering with us!



The theme for the Summer 2022 Tzu Chi USA Journal Issue 65 is Responsiveness, a driving force of Tzu Chi's aid worldwide. In 1943, American psychologist Abraham Maslow published "A Theory of Human Motivation," a groundbreaking paper outlining a hierarchy of five core human needs: physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. The stories in this issue reveal how Tzu Chi's aid holistically responds to these needs.

To begin, our cover story "Care for Ukrainians Escaping War" brings us to Poland, where over half of the Ukrainians who fled their homeland since Russia invaded have ended up. Tzu Chi's swift response is answering physiological needs for food through supermarket shopping cards, while DA.AI eco-blankets and our volunteers' attentive care are helping create a sense of safety, love and belonging, and esteem for displaced Ukrainians at this most distressing of times.

"A Model Citizen: Ukrainian Fashion Star Evacuates War Zone" takes an in-depth look at one Ukrainian care recipient's story, that of Oksana Kononets, a wheelchair model who has found refuge in the United States. Aside from answering immediate needs, Tzu Chi's aid also leads to a chance to collaborate. Oksana is determined to help her fellow Ukrainians: A meaningful goal that fulfills her needs for esteem and self-actualization.

"Home, Sweet Home: Tzu Chi's Long-Term Camp Fire Recovery Continues" touches on how Tzu Chi's disaster aid encompasses emergency and long-term needs. This progression enables individuals to resume actualizing their dreams once

their lives finally stabilize. After a 2018 California wildfire, Tzu Chi distributed cash cards initially and set up a recovery center to provide resources and information. For some disaster survivors, the aid has now culminated in receiving mobile homes and the first legally sanctioned tiny home in Butte County.

"United in Action: Dialogue at Tzu Chi Center" introduces a new program at the Tzu Chi Center for Compassionate Relief in New York City. The show highlights topics related to the United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and how Tzu Chi's global missions and activities address them. The SDGs aim to protect the environment while creating equal opportunities

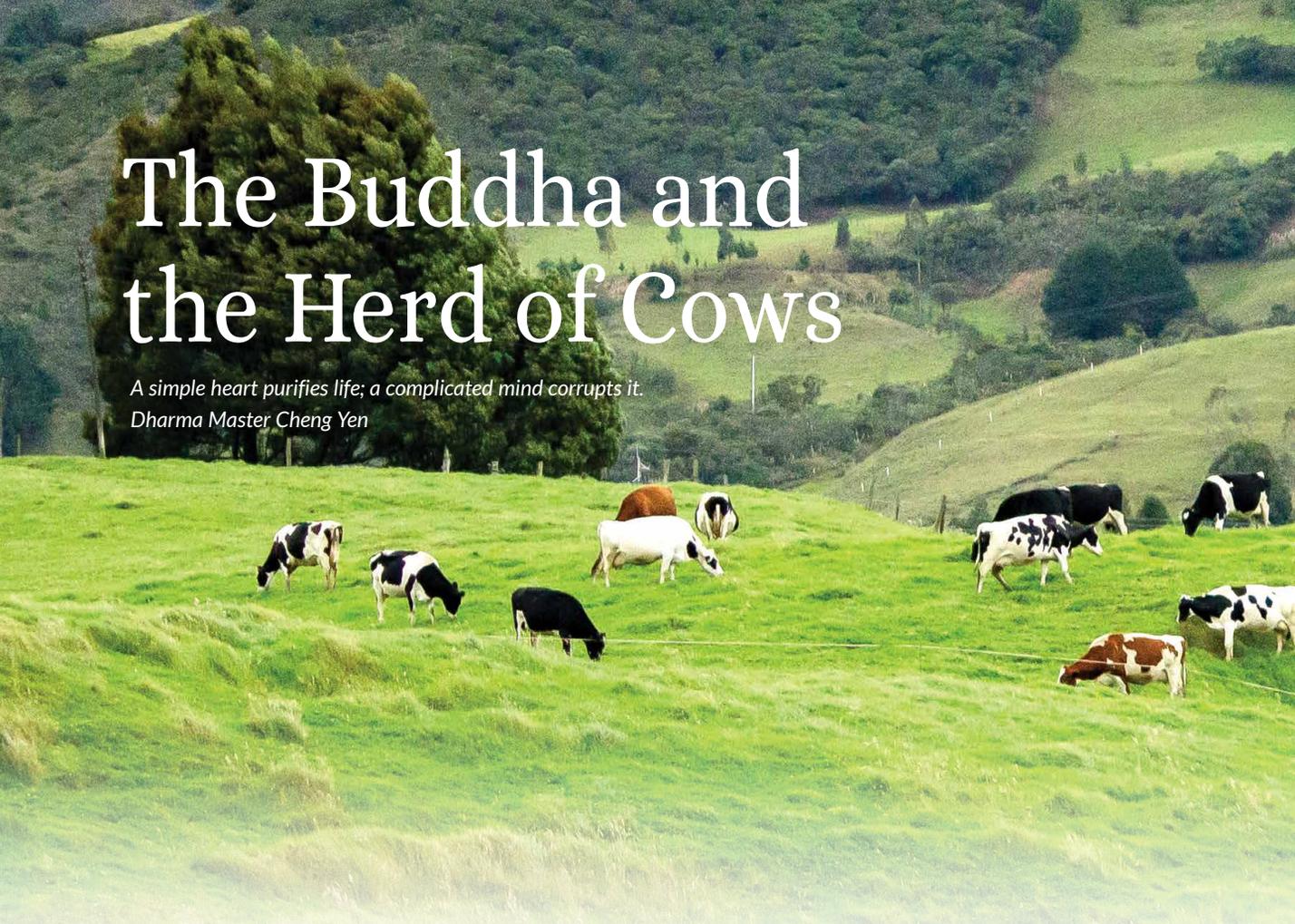
for humans to achieve their full potential by answering their urgent needs.

To conclude the issue, our feature "A Tradition as Relevant as Ever: Buddha Bathing and Interfaith Prayers of Gratitude" announces how in 2022, for the first time, Tzu Chi USA conducted its annual three-in-one celebration of Buddha or Vesak Day, Tzu Chi Day, and Mother's Day at its National Headquarters in California entirely in English, a milestone for collaboration between different faith traditions, especially regarding charity and other aid.

As psychologist Abraham Maslow proclaimed, human needs are universal, as faith traditions have always known. So we must start by attaining the basics to reach the pinnacle of meaning in our lives, and Tzu Chi is there to support our neighbors near and far in the spirit of one family.

by Anik Ghose





The Buddha and the Herd of Cows

A simple heart purifies life; a complicated mind corrupts it.
Dharma Master Cheng Yen

When we live in luxury and pleasure, our minds are easily deceived. This is because the more we seek, the more difficult it is to see the truth clearly, and the more afflicted we become. The Buddha lived a pure and austere life. Such a lifestyle can help people comprehend and realize principles. Therefore, they can see everything clearly and think through everything thoroughly.

The Buddha once took the bhiksus to receive offerings and then teach the Dharma to their benefactors. After completing their tasks, they set off to return to their abode. It was noon and scorching hot. On the way, they encountered a cow herder bringing home his herd. All the cows had eaten their fill. Some formed groups of three to five, and others walked along slowly. Then two cows

suddenly started fighting, and eventually, the entire herd was fighting.

At first, the herd appeared peaceful, but because the two cows were unsettled, it brought chaos to the whole herd! The Buddha observed this and shook his head and sighed, an expression of distress on his face. After they returned to the abode, the bhiksus washed their feet, arranged their clothes, and sat. Everyone was very quiet. At this time, Venerable Ananda said, "Venerable Buddha, why did you sigh on our way back?" Ananda cared greatly for the Buddha. He was not only an attendant, but also observed every word and action of the Buddha, every slight smile or sigh, down to the smallest detail. He knew that all the Buddha's actions had causes and conditions



behind them. This was why Ananda asked this question.

The Buddha said, “Did you see that herd of cows along the road?” Ananda replied, “Yes.” The Buddha went on. “That herd of cows was led by the cowherder to grassy fields first thing in the morning to graze and drink water. How free they were in the open fields! After they ate their fill and were on their way home, one cow became restless, and as a result, the entire herd ended up in disarray. People are just like that herd of cows. Everyone usually lives simply, in peace, but when their bodies are satisfied and energetic, they become restless.”

The Buddha also said, “Ananda, have you noticed that every day, that herd of thousands of cows goes out, yet there

are fewer when they come back? Why does a cowherder raise cows? To fatten them up so they can be sold and sent to slaughter! Yet, the herd is foolish and ignorant. Every day they take issue with each other and fight. Human lives are the same. In their ignorance, people do not fear impermanence, and they continuously create bad karma and take issue with each other. When their bellies are full and they have nothing to do, they fight over interpersonal differences. What is the difference between them and the cows?”

Whether we live a life of freedom or a life of vexation depends solely on us. It is all controlled by our own minds. Isn't it better to live a relaxed and simple life, a life that is truly meaningful? 🌿



Care for Ukrainians Escaping War

Written by Ida Eva Zielinska
Photos by Tzu Chi Team

On February 24, 2022, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of its neighbor, Ukraine, leading to a mass exodus of citizens fleeing their homeland. According to the UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, as of June 10, the number of Ukrainians who have left surpassed 7.3 million, with more than half arriving in Poland.

Observing the rapid escalation of the conflict and the ensuing humanitarian crisis, Dharma Master Cheng Yen highlighted the plight of those escaping when she addressed volunteers worldwide on February 28:

“Looking at them fleeing – some carrying young children on their backs, holding them in their hands, older ones holding smaller ones – large families are escaping in crowds. We don’t know what their destination is.”

The horrors of war result in trauma that can affect families into the next generation. And for those who escape, leaving everything behind, including loved ones, compounds the suffering caused by this human-manufactured disaster.



Ukrainian children who perform at a charity concert in Warsaw for Tzu Chi's aid hold sunflowers, their homeland's national flower, symbolizing "Resistance, Solidarity, Hope."

Love & Compassion for Ukraine

Unable to bear the suffering that has resulted from conflict in Ukraine, Tzu Chi founder Dharma Master Cheng Yen has called on the people of the world to harness their compassion and turn it into action. Tzu Chi volunteers are mobilizing humanitarian relief efforts that include critical supplies like medicine, eco-blankets, and more.

Ways to donate

- online: donate.tzuchi.us/ukraine
- by mobile app, **Tzu Chi Connect** tzuchi.us/app
- by check: made payable to "Tzu Chi" and mailed to the Tzu Chi chapter nearest you. See the full list at tzuchi.us/offices

YOU CAN HELP.

    @TzuChiUSA

Tzu Chi USA launches the "Love & Compassion for Ukraine" fundraising campaign on March 2, 2022.

Frankly speaking, the scariest moment was when I decided to flee the country and my parents refused to go with me, because they said that they prefer to die in comfort in their own house on the land of their ancestors than to become refugees. So, I was standing on the porch with my suitcase, looking at my parents crying, and I was paralyzed by fear that perhaps I will never see them alive again.



Nataliia Maidannyk
*Ukrainian Journalist
Tzu Chi Team Translator*

The Tzu Chi global community responded to the needs of Ukrainians arriving in Poland quickly. Just days after the invasion started, Tzu Chi USA announced its "Love & Compassion for Ukraine" fundraising campaign. In Europe, Tzu Chi volunteers contacted agencies and partners along the Polish-Ukrainian border.

Tzu Chi volunteers in Taiwan rushed to make eco-blankets, committing to ship 20,000 to Poland. Meanwhile Tzu Chi England immediately prepared 900 eco-blankets and 1,200 eco-scarves that they had in stock and sent them to Poland. Disaster relief materials from the United



In Taipei, Taiwan, volunteers prepare to cut DA.AI Technology fabric into Tzu Chi's signature eco-blankets.

Kingdom, France, and Germany were also being amassed in Hamburg, from where they were shipped to Poland.

Distributions Begin in Poznań, Szczecin, and Lublin

On the ground in Poland, Tzu Chi volunteers were purchasing food and other supplies. They began distributing the goods in the Poznań area as early as March 5.

On March 19, the volunteers visited Elizabeth Convent Church in Poznań, where the Catholic nuns were sheltering 29 Ukrainians. Since supplies were dwindling due to the convent's limited resources, the Tzu Chi team delivered food and daily necessities to support 40 individuals for two weeks.

Between March 26 and 28, Tzu Chi's aid reached government-designated sites in the



Tzu Chi volunteer Monica Chang and her husband Lukasz Baranowski prepare to distribute vital relief supplies in the Poznań area.

village of Skórzewo, in Poznań's suburbs. There, Polish volunteers and members of the Taiwanese community had purchased and packed relief supplies into 300 kits, thoughtfully in easy-to-carry bags since the care recipients would arrive mostly on foot.



The Tzu Chi team delivers supplies to the Elizabeth Convent Church in Poznań, helping the nuns support the needs of the Ukrainians they're housing.



The Tzu Chi team sorts and packs supplies for distribution in Poznań's suburbs beginning on March 26.

Simultaneously, Tzu Chi learned that hundreds of Ukrainians had reached as far west as Szczecin, along Poland's border with Germany. Volunteers contacted local agencies and began collaborating with a temporary shelter in the University of Szczecin stadium, distributing 1,260 sleeping bags there.

Since the start of the Russian invasion, the Polish city of Lublin has also been among the principal transit points for those fleeing from Ukraine. Officials are doing their best to accommodate them, yet

resources are limited. At one military shelter, while there were enough beds to house 400, the facility only has two bathrooms. To begin the relief mission in the city, Tzu Chi donated 1,500 sleeping bags to the Polish Red Cross.

Tzu Chi then partnered with Poland's Biedronka chain of supermarkets to obtain 15,000 gift shopping cards, aiming to distribute them all in different cities by the end of May. The first cards were given out in Lublin on April 2 and 3, benefiting 451 Ukrainians.



On March 29, 1,260 sleeping bags from Tzu Chi are distributed in Szczecin.



On April 1, Tzu Chi donates 1,500 sleeping bags to the Red Cross in Lublin.





At the beginning of April, 451 Ukrainians staying in Lublin shelters receive shopping cards and eco-blankets.



A shelter for Ukrainians arriving in Lublin.



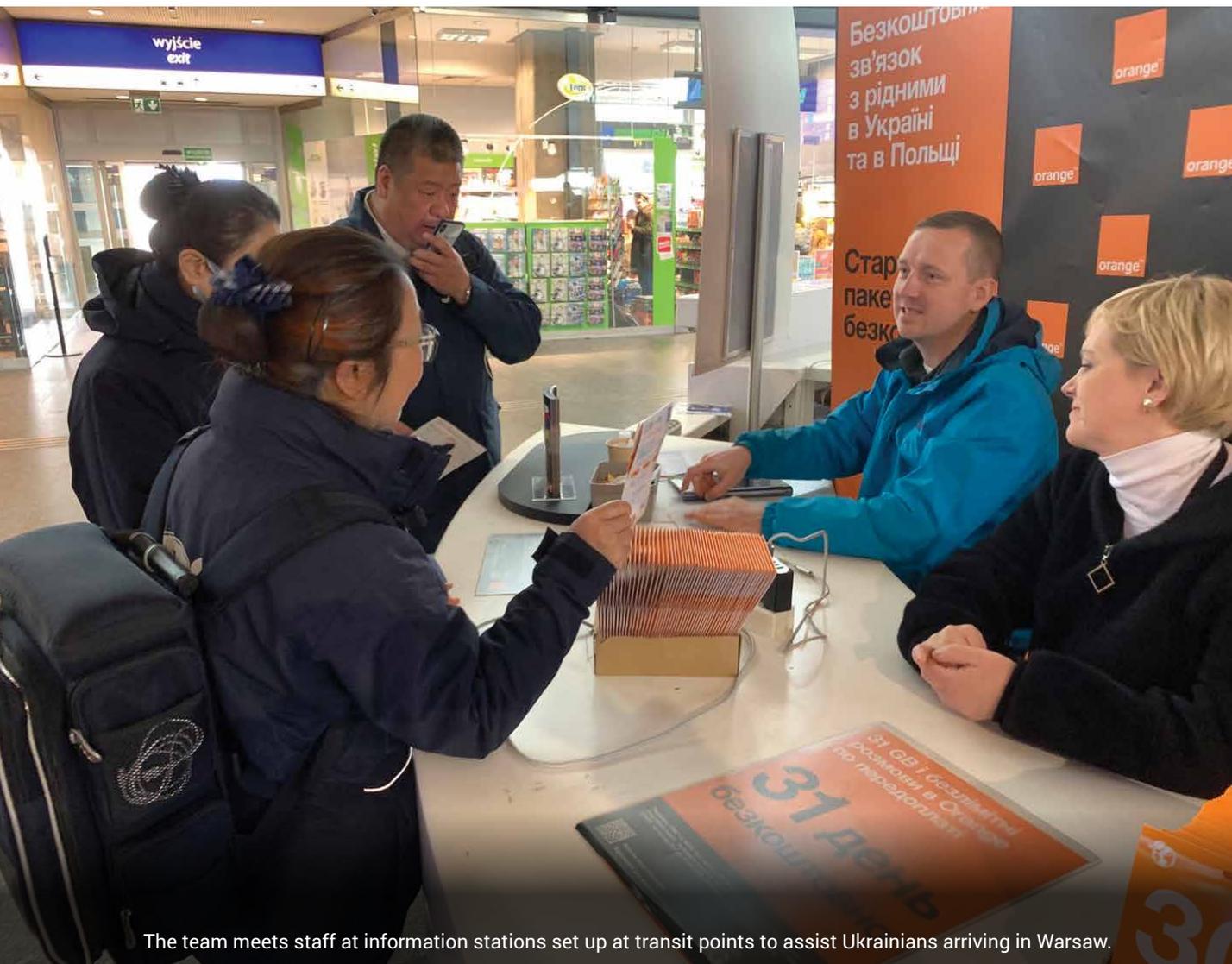
The Tzu Chi team meets with the Polish Red Cross in Warsaw to discuss collaboration.

An International Team Assembles in Warsaw

By April 21, an international Tzu Chi team had gathered in Warsaw. Flying in from Los Angeles was Debra Boudreaux, CEO of Tzu Chi USA; from New York, Ting Fan, Director of the Culture and Communication Department; and from Hawaii, Johan Alwall, Specialist with the Buddhist Tzu Chi Charity Foundation's Global Partnership Affairs Department. Husband and wife Faisal Hu and Nadya Chou, Tzu Chi Turkey volunteers, drove

three days through Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, and Slovakia to reach Poland.

The team's goal was to activate large-scale aid plans, activities that would involve assessing the scope of needs, determining distribution sites, and attending meetings to establish partnerships. They began by visiting the Polish Red Cross, where Arkadiusz Kus, its representative, confirmed, "We're really looking forward to the partnership with you. It'll be really nice to switch from the in-kind support that we mostly provide at the moment to cash assistance programs like this one."



The team meets staff at information stations set up at transit points to assist Ukrainians arriving in Warsaw.

After meeting with the Polish Red Cross, the heavy weight in our hearts was finally relieved. In fact, they already have information including details about the current situation for these families. As such, we could achieve more by working towards a common direction.

Faisal Hu

Tzu Chi Turkey Volunteer

The team also surveyed large-scale exhibition venues suitable for aid distributions and connected with the staff at information centers established for Ukrainians at transit points such as Warsaw Central Station. They saw firsthand the amount of care the Polish government and various organizations put into greeting the weary new arrivals from Ukraine, introducing available resources, offering phone cards, and helping with transportation costs. Some of these organizations could be potential partners too.

A Historic Moment

The day after the team assembled in Warsaw, April 22, marked an unprecedented agreement. In a virtual gathering via Zoom, the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation and UNICEF signed a Memorandum of Understanding to cooperate in aiding children affected by the war between Russia and Ukraine. As part of it, Tzu Chi made a historic ten-million-dollar contribution to UNICEF's Humanitarian Action for Children Appeal.

The Buddhist Tzu Chi Charity Foundation is deeply concerned by the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine and neighboring countries. Our Foundation is committed to supporting the health and well-being of children and families at this critical time. Therefore, the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation is proud to support UNICEF to provide necessary services to the most vulnerable children and families displaced by the Ukrainian crisis.

Po Wen Yen

*Chief Executive Officer
Buddhist Tzu Chi Charity Foundation*

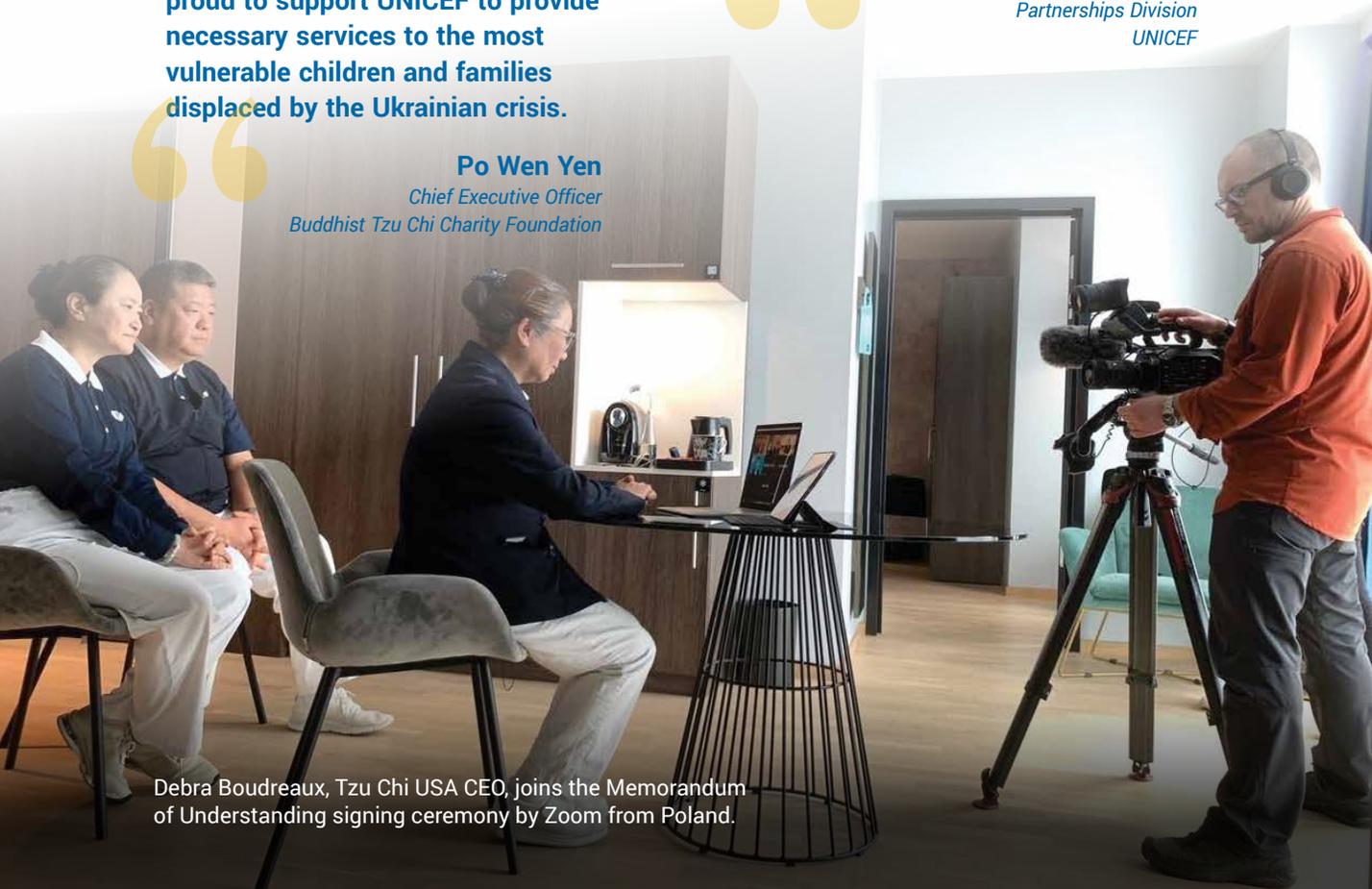
The agreement with UNICEF is vital for the relief effort as 90% of those leaving Ukraine are women and children. On February 25, the day after the Russian invasion started, the Ukraine State Border Guard Service had barred Ukrainian male citizens aged 18 to 60 from leaving the country.

The war in Ukraine is a child crisis. Every day more children are fleeing their homes, leaving everything they know behind in a desperate search for safety. As the humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate, the support from the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation will enable us to reach many more children and families who need our assistance.

Carla Haddad Mardini

*Director of Private Fundraising and
Partnerships Division
UNICEF*

Debra Boudreaux, Tzu Chi USA CEO, joins the Memorandum of Understanding signing ceremony by Zoom from Poland.





Tzu Chi team members Johan Alwall (right) and Debra Boudreaux (second right) meet representatives of the International Organization for Migration, part of the United Nations System, who have an information tent at the Medyka border crossing.

Forging Partnerships

The following two days took the team to visit NGOs in Lublin and then to the Medyka border crossing. Since the war, it has been one of the busiest entry points into Poland from Ukraine and the only pedestrian border crossing. Many NGOs are stationed there to receive Ukrainians and offer whatever type of help their organization can.

While the team came to witness the exodus from Ukraine and connect with potential aid partners, people's immediate needs at the border didn't go unnoticed. Given the long lines for those crossing by car, people often have to wait up to four days, sleeping in their vehicles, roused every 40 minutes or so as they advance to the checkpoint. Touched, the Tzu Chi team offered whatever snacks they had to people in the queue.

Back in Warsaw on April 25, the team cemented a collaboration with two NGOs, the Camillian Mission of Social Welfare (Kamilińska Misja Pomocy Społecznej) and Polish Women Can Foundation (Fundacja Polki Mogą Wszystko), each doing their part to support the arriving Ukrainians.



Debra Boudreaux offers snacks to Ukrainians waiting in line for days to cross the border.



Tzu Chi volunteer Johan Alwall, Specialist with the Buddhist Tzu Chi Charity Foundation's Global Partnership Affairs Department, explains the principle of giving with joy and gratitude for the opportunity to help others.

It's amazing the work they're doing; it's so aligned with what we do, the same spirit of gratitude, respect, and love. We know this is a very good place to put Tzu Chi's resources.

Johan Alwall

Specialist

*Global Partnership Affairs Department
Buddhist Tzu Chi Charity Foundation*



Since the outbreak of the war, the Camillian Mission of Social Welfare, which aids those experiencing homelessness or housing exclusion in Poland, has been tirelessly providing 10,000 hot meals daily at its Ukrainian refugee assistance post in Warsaw Central Station. Given their need for support, a partnership with Tzu Chi was precious.

We're working 24/7 and actually that's being done by just a handful of people. We'd like to have the means to employ people that will help us. Also, during the first days of the war a lot of Poles were helping and now we're seeing that supplies diminished and capacities weakened.

Adriana Porowska

President

Camillian Mission of Social Welfare



For the Polish Women Can Foundation, which focuses more on the needs of mothers and children, a collaboration was equally cherished.

We'll be able to realize a fantastic project to help those who came to us from Ukraine. The first part will be pediatric and gynecological help. And the second part will be psychological as well as [support] to learn a foreign language and activities for children and their moms. Thanks to this, women and children in Poland will be able to feel safe and regain control over their life.



Joanna Srebnicka
Specialist
Polish Women Can Foundation

Training Volunteers

With relief distributions in Warsaw scheduled for May 6, the next order of business was volunteer training, which took place on the first of the month. Sixteen Ukrainians came, eager to assist their people.

The training participants gained a deeper understanding of the Tzu Chi spirit of unconditional love in action. They also practiced the disaster relief protocol, based on equality between giver and receiver and respect.

I was astonished by the kindness of these people. I was touched by it. They do an extremely important thing. They teach how to love.



Irena Romaniv
Ukrainian Volunteer

Tzu Chi volunteers Faisal Hu and his wife Nadya Chou share about disaster relief in Turkey, which involves aid projects for Syrian refugees.



As part of the training, they learned the popular Tzu Chi song “One Family,” which succinctly expresses unity across all divisions, a core principle of Tzu Chi’s philosophy. Seeing how Tzu Chi has rallied to help them and how Poles have embraced them with open arms, despite a complex shared history between the two Slavic peoples, the Ukrainians wanted to express their thanks and found a unique way to do so.

I was moved and even cried when I heard them sing ‘One Family’ in Ukrainian, and I was told that they wanted to give us a surprise. I was very, very emotional and they sang beautifully with the feeling of love.

Faisal Hu

Tzu Chi Turkey Volunteer

Moreover, the gift of song would evolve, as Anastasia Malashenko, one of the trainees, is a singer, and she and other artists wanted to thank Tzu Chi for the aid even further and proposed a concert as part of the May 6 distributions. They rehearsed for two days in preparation for their charity performance.

Songs of Solidarity and the Gift of Hope

As the care recipients at the “Songs of Solidarity for Ukraine” charity concert on May 6 heard their native songs, many couldn’t hold back their tears, the pain and worry they have been experiencing since leaving home etched on their faces. It was especially heart-wrenching when the Oratorium Children’s Choir performed, as concern

about the future was a strong current in the room.

Surely, we expected emotions and that everybody will be happy to hear our songs, but what we saw, the tears and emotions on people’s faces, just exceeded all expectations.

Anastasia Malashenko

Ukrainian Volunteer

Care Recipient

Watching the Oratorium Children’s Choir sing “Ukraine Is Us” is particularly heartbreaking for many in the audience.





Many in the audience at the “Songs of Solidarity for Ukraine” charity concert can’t keep their tears at bay.



There was a chorus of tearful comments after the concert. “It was very emotional because it’s the first concert I’ve attended since the war started and I became a refugee,” and “When I heard these songs on stage, I felt the pain of the children who suffered and died because of the war in our beautiful Ukraine.”

Tzu Chi volunteers also felt their emotions surge, Faisal sharing, “Everybody cried,” his wife Nadya adding, “Although we couldn’t understand [the lyrics], we were all very moved. Music is the common language.”

Once the distributions began, several that day, care recipients were overwhelmed by the generosity in the shopping cards they received, one for each family member, and each loaded with zł 2,000 – the

equivalent of 500 USD. The sum can cover the cost of groceries per person for several months and accommodate some other living expenses as well. The care recipients’ voices echoed astonishment about the amount of aid.

“It’s such a huge sum of money just to share with someone for free. I still can’t believe that it’s happening to me!” one said. “First, I thought it was a misunderstanding or something. It was so unexpected and wonderful,” shared another. “It’s happiness to know that tomorrow we don’t have to starve,” was their root message.

My husband and I have eight children. When I heard each family member would get a card, I cried with joy. With this card, we’ll have a food supply for our family for half a year or more.

Natalila
Ukrainian Care Recipient



Anastasia Malashenko (third left) and the Oratorium Children’s Choir perform at the “Songs of Solidarity for Ukraine” charity concert in Warsaw on May 6, 2022.



The volunteers give gift shopping cards to their fellow Ukrainians with utmost respect and care.

One mother added another layer of gratitude, saying, “We received financial support, and it means a lot. But what is most important is that we received love and care. Everyone passed us a small part of their soul. Support from people from all over the world is priceless.”

I believe that Master Cheng Yen’s love has been conveyed to their hearts, and they’ve felt the love and care we all have for them.

Nadya Chou
Tzu Chi Turkey Volunteer

I think that these cards just gave everybody hope.

Tatiana Voytovich
Ukrainian Volunteer

Moreover, the distributions brought together different faiths for a common



cause. Polish clergy was part of the preparations alongside Tzu Chi volunteers, as the event took place at a Catholic church.

For two weeks at St. John Bosco Oratory in Warsaw, we were preparing for this great event. It was hard work but also a great joy. Today, the families who received gift cards were helped in coming back, you can say, to normalcy, because they can do the shopping themselves. We were very happy that we could offer a little space of freedom and normality and a sense of family.

“

Fr. Sławomir Szczodrowski
Head
St. John Bosco Oratory

During the charity concert, Pastor Edmund Modzelewski also delivered a message of solidarity and thanks, highlighting the universal aspiration for peace.

I'd like to warmly thank the organizers, who showed tremendous heart, came here from so far to be with you, with us, to jointly together with us, with their hearts, share what we feel, what we think about, and want to ask benevolent God for, which is peace in Ukraine, for the end of the war. Here, in Warsaw, we pray for peace for your country every day and that we can all live in a free country, and that nothing will threaten us. Jointly here, we want to raise a prayer on this stage...

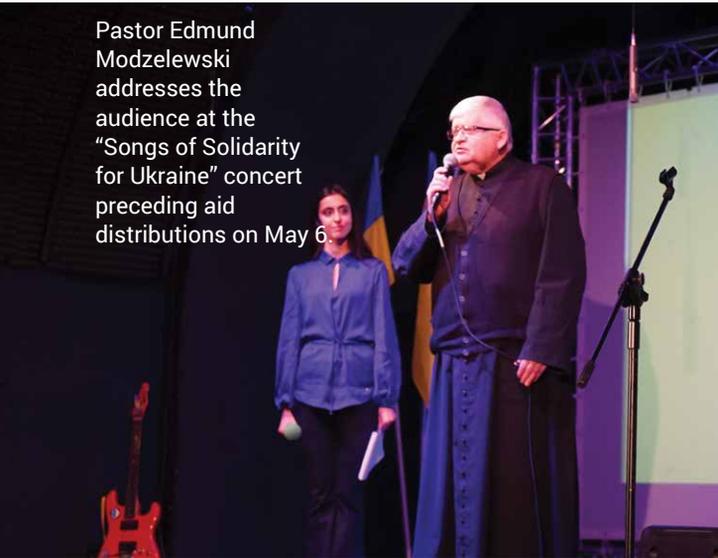
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Edmund Modzelewski
Pastor
Basilica of Sacred Heart of Jesus



With the assistance of 27 volunteers, the distributions on May 6 in Warsaw benefit 621 Ukrainians, comprising 254 households.

Pastor Edmund Modzelewski addresses the audience at the "Songs of Solidarity for Ukraine" concert preceding aid distributions on May 6.



Buddhists and Catholics prayed side by side, as many people around the world are doing, yearning for an end to this dangerous eruption of hostilities in Europe.

Apart from the distributions in Warsaw in the first week of May, others were held in Poznań and Lublin. Aid provision would persist in those cities in the weeks ahead. Yet sadly, the cause of the Ukrainian refugees' current state of displacement and suffering, the war in their homeland, rages on, so their futures remain uncertain.

Tzu Chi's Aid Is Only Beginning

Tzu Chi's disaster relief typically responds to natural catastrophes or accidents, which have a clear start and end. However, the impact of a human-manufactured disaster such as war can be a prolonged evolving tragedy.



Now, two months later, my parents and my cat who I had left with them are still in Kyiv, okay and relatively safe. But I have not seen them since and it breaks my heart.

“

Nataliia Maidannyk
Ukrainian Journalist
Tzu Chi Team Translator

While Nataliia found refuge in Poland for now, some of her friends chose to stay in Ukraine. Iryna Knyshnyk decided to take special training and become a combat medic, now rescuing military and civilian lives and even animals. She writes that something frightens her more than the actual scenes and experiences of warfare.

As long as [there exists] in people's minds the idea that war is normal, could be justified and somebody has the right to kill other people, this horror will be repeated again and again all over the world. And this is awful. War is the most horrible and disgusting thing in the world. I wish no one experienced it. No one in the whole world. Never again.

“

Iryna Knyshnyk
Ukrainian Combat Medic

While no one wants history to keep repeating itself, her wish demands that humanity relinquish its potential for anger, hatred, and violence, finally choosing a different path as so many world faiths guide.



Ukrainians wait outside the distribution site in Poznań, where they will receive zł 2,000 shopping cards on May 7.

Only when the heart is peaceful
can this man-made disaster
be quelled.

Dharma Master Cheng Yen

Unfortunately, this latest war has joined other ongoing conflicts worldwide. And while, as another journalist friend of Nataliia, Antonina Kucherenko, wrote, "I think each Ukrainian wants to live at home or return home," the time is not right for those who left to go back.

Tzu Chi volunteers will continue offering humanitarian assistance to Ukrainians who fled the war, helping resolve the families' food needs, to start.



Ukrainian journalist Nataliia Maidannyk (left front) helps the Tzu Chi team as a translator, assisting Ting Fan (right front), Director of Tzu Chi USA's Culture and Communication Department, in documenting this phase of the aid mission.



Food is the essentials, right? You can't continue life without food so it's a great gift, a very big support.

“

Victoria

Ukrainian Care Recipient

Once the last of the Biedronka supermarket cards are given out, Tzu Chi will provide prepaid debit cards that care recipients can use in any store. The blankets shipped from Taiwan also arrived and are now being distributed in several cities.

We weren't expecting that it would be that cold in the morning. It's very warm and my mom told me that it's made from plastic bottles, so it helps the environment too!

“

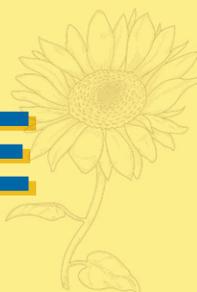
Kate

Ukrainian Care Recipient

In addition to Tzu Chi's other aid, may these eco-blankets help the displaced Ukrainian mothers keep their children warm and comfort them during the gravely stressful and unsettling times for these families. 🌱



A Ukrainian mother leaves the Lublin distribution site on May 16, beaming with gratitude for the shopping gift cards that will help her feed her children and the eco-blankets to keep them warm.



HOW WE ARE HELPING

Since February 2022, millions of people have fled Ukraine to seek refuge in neighboring countries, including Poland, Moldova, and Romania. Most have minimal items and resources to make a new life for themselves and their loved ones.

To help them get through this difficult period, Tzu Chi is hosting distributions to provide emergency financial support and emergency items. **As of June 10, 2022**, there have been:



169
distributions held



18,681
shopping cards
(used at Biedronka supermarket)



\$8,453,759
USD given in aid
(\$27,910,000 PLN, or Polish zloty)



46,789
people who have benefited



20,588
eco-blankets

YOU CAN HELP

Learn more about our efforts and make a donation to our fundraiser, "Love & Compassion for Ukraine."

tzuchi.us/ukraine





Home, Sweet Home

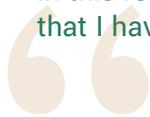
Tzu Chi's Long-Term Camp Fire Recovery Continues

Written by Christina Chang, Adriana DiBenedetto
Translated by H.B. Qin

Gazing up at their new home in Concow, a small community in the Sierra Nevada foothills of California, Teri and John Rubiolo expressed their heartfelt thanks to several organizations, including Tzu Chi USA, for their assistance during a three-year-long home replacement project.

After the Camp Fire, Tzu Chi Northwest, Tzu Chi Chico, and the Camp Fire Collaborative began organizing the funds and logistics for getting wildfire survivors manufactured homes. And, at the long-awaited dedication ceremony on March 25, 2022, Tzu Chi volunteers in Northern California, alongside more than 60 representatives from community and religious organizations, gathered in the remote area.

It's very important to be able to partner with other [groups and] agencies. There are so many great agencies that we didn't really know very much about in-depth in this recovery process before, but with this engagement, we are humbled as well. Partnership and collaboration are definitely something that's very crucial to helping survivors, and that's why we continue to explore that. [...] But we are very determined; we want to overcome the challenges, and to find the best way that Tzu Chi can help in this recovery process. And I appreciate that I have a great team.



Minjing Hsieh

Executive Director
Tzu Chi USA Northwest Region



Organizations work together to assist Camp Fire survivors in Concow and extend their best wishes at the dedication ceremony for the completed homes. *Photo/Rong Changming*



Tzu Chi volunteers in Northern California travel to Concow, CA, to offer housewarming gifts to Camp Fire survivors who now have a brand new place to call home. A framed Jing Si Aphorism reads, "A willing and giving heart has unlimited potential." *Photo/Changming Rong*

“In long-term recovery disaster casework for the Camp Fire, truly, we’re here for the long haul,” expressed Tzu Chi Disaster Case Manager Baba Kauna Mujamal. “But in the process of that, we have been doing distribution setups in regards to providing support to survivors, to truly deal with a lot of trauma. And, to connect them to resources that are available to them financially, as well as emotional support, along with support around rebuilding.”

The Camp Fire had ignited on Thursday, November 8, 2018, in Northern California, and Tzu Chi USA’s disaster response was swift. Upon seeing the scale of the disaster, Tzu Chi immediately launched its “Hope Heals” campaign, seeking to provide effective cash relief to affected families by raising donations from 10,000 people, and directly funding cash cards for 10,000 Camp Fire survivors before Christmas.

Tzu Chi volunteers have been aiding Camp Fire impacted communities ever since through our long-term relief, and by collaborating with local relief organizations as one fervent pulse until families could



Teri Rubiolo cooks meals in the converted kitchen every day to assist her neighbors. *Photo/Wanjie Lu*

rebuild their lives on the soil where their homes originally stood.

These three Concow homes for Camp Fire affected families had been built over three years, and all wished to be there for survivors as they toured the new homes featuring bedrooms, bathrooms, a full kitchen, and ample living space.

Each household also received special gifts from Tzu Chi USA Northwest Region Executive Director Hsieh and the Tzu Chi Disaster Case Management Team. The items included Jing Si multipurpose foldable beds, a wooden charm with the Chinese symbol for happiness, Jing Si multigrain powder, a Jing Si Aphorism book, a framed aphorism, eco-blankets, cherry tree saplings, and more.

Although only three families agreed to the donated houses this time, it is a very important milestone, and it’s completed with the cooperation of many units.



Minjhing Hsieh
Executive Director
Tzu Chi USA Northwest Region



During the reconstruction process in Concow, Tzu Chi volunteers provide material assistance and visit survivors to care for daily needs. *Photo/Wanjie Lu*

"I believe this is a new endeavor for many of us because it does require a very different effort than relief," explained Hsieh with regards to long-term recovery, and with a disaster of such scope. "Because we're dealing with the system, we're dealing with the process, and we're dealing with the very precious resources, and of course, a lot of very unique, different cases. That's why our team is called the Disaster Case Management Team." The team tends to every case, each with distinct challenges and situations, to advocate for everyone – connecting people to the system and to essential resources.

The Rubiolo's Gave It Their All

Teri and John Rubiolo lived in Concow after retirement. The 2018 Camp Fire had destroyed their belongings, but not their dedication to the community. After the wildfire, when they were able to return to the area, limited insurance claims were just enough to purchase a recreational vehicle as a temporary residence.

We looked at the funds we had because we had a little bit of insurance money, but not much. Not enough to rebuild, not enough to do anything. And we talked about it, and we said, 'we're just gonna put this into helping the community do what the community needs to help regroup and get back on their feet.'

Teri Rubiolo

They converted a used trailer into a kitchen, the open space out front offering a place to rest for families who were temporarily staying in tents and provided two free hot meals daily.

After the disaster, the couple's efforts counted on the support of charity organizations. When Tzu Chi volunteers learned about Teri's situation, they provided long-term post-disaster material assistance. Volunteers also visited frequently to care for Teri and the local community's needs.

At the end of 2019, Tzu Chi volunteers held a winter distribution in Concow. When Teri received the cash card and eco-blanket



In November of 2019, Tzu Chi volunteers hold a winter distribution in Concow, and Teri Rubiolo happily reunites with Tzu Chi volunteers. *Photo/Christina Chang*

offered by volunteers, she expressed, “Tzu Chi is a very special organization to me. The attitude of Tzu Chi volunteers made me feel comfortable.”

Applying for reconstruction permits had been a complicated process, as financial trouble arose without proof of income. “The biggest part of rebuilds has to do with paperwork,” Disaster Case Manager Baba Kauna Mujamal said. “It was about pulling receipts for those who still had receipts and pulling bank statements, all kinds of things. [...] That whole process, to me, was the foundation. And then, on top of that, there was some funding that came through Tzu Chi in regards to a family that was also feeding the community. And a suggestion that came from Tzu Chi was to help her get a much better storage system to help her process to go out a lot longer, and Tzu Chi was able to pull the funding resources towards that, along with meeting with Mennonite Disaster Relief, and going out to all the meetings to help get all three homes connected with the right resources to make sure that the process would be done.”

Then, new wildfires struck twice, forcing the evacuation of residents from the area again. Furthermore, during the most critical stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, lockdowns led to a pause in construction.

“No one was prepared for COVID amongst the process of dealing with the

issues that were at hand in regards to getting a home,” Baba explained. “So there were some major, major, major delays. And these families have been waiting, I mean, literally three years, and even during that time, we continued to maintain contact, and maintain our relationship, in the process, just to be there for them regardless.”

But, “Love reigns over everything,” Baba continued, “so throughout these entire three years, and despite all the challenges that were being presented, naturally by COVID-19, and delays, and people not being able to come to work because they had COVID-19, or prices went up, we were consistent throughout the entire time.”

With help, everyone gathered in front of the Rubiolos’ new home in the spring of 2022. The newly built house stands encircled by grass and trees, with forest-green exterior walls against crisp, white window frames.

The small trailer where Teri cooked for their neighbors is in the open space next to the house. In the past three years, Teri’s “I AM’s GARDEN” program provided free meals to nearly 300 households every month on average. The total number of meals provided is more than 10,000.

Behind the trailer is a small, green, metal storage space completed with the assistance of Tzu Chi volunteers, where Teri stores various donated materials, and



Located just behind the Rubiolos’ new home, a green storage space completed with the assistance of Tzu Chi functions as a simple distribution center for the community. *Photo/Christina Chang*



Tzu Chi USA's Northwest Region Executive Director Minjhing Hsieh (right), Tzu Chi Recovery Service Center's Disaster Recovery Administrator Suzanne Morrison (left), Bobbie Rae Jones (middle), and Disaster Case Manager Baba Kauna Mujamal (second right), give Cheryle Harrell (seated) a framed Jing Si Aphorism as a gift, reading, "Acts of kindness from each one of us are like the nectar of love that can enrich the hearts of many." Photo/Changming Rong

operates as a simple distribution center. When neighbors come to pick up meals, they can also bring back daily necessities. The new home and storage space gave Teri and John a place to settle down and bolstered their capacity to help the community with peace of mind.

John, who had chronic leg pain and still needed surgery at the time, rested near the front door of their new house and recalled the many meals the pair had served after the fire. In the beginning, he'd had neither a refrigerator to store perishable food nor a table, and ate the dinner cooked by his family with a group of neighbors he didn't know but who were also affected by the disaster. Now that they have a new home, John looked to his wife, Teri, and said, "Here we go again," his voice full of emotion.

When Teri spoke about her efforts to assist survivors in the community, she mentioned that while the free meal project may be limited, it's been a huge undertaking for the older couple who are both Camp Fire survivors themselves. Teri expressed her appreciation to the organizations present on the day of their official moving-

in, expressing how the help has made their efforts grow and expand. And with the resources provided, they hope every daily necessity in the community can be met. "God has brought me each and every one of the people we need to not just do what we're doing, but to grow in, and fill in, more and more for the community and to be accessible to them," said Teri.

Smiles filled the small community that day, and the spring sunshine, along with the soft and gentle breeze across the hilly landscape, sent relief into the hearts of everyone in attendance.

Cheryle Finds Her Light

In the Concow community, Cheryle Harrell is like a mother, with many who love and admire her strength of spirit. Tzu Chi volunteers and disaster case managers are indeed among those inspired by her.

Cheryle lived a calm and comfortable life in the Concow area of California, where 137 family members also resided – although she was the only one who owned real estate, and people often gathered at her home. In essence, Cheryle's a bit like



Cheryle Harrell (left) and Bobbie Rae Jones (right), who'd been a Tzu Chi Disaster Case Manager during Tzu Chi's Camp Fire relief mission, reveal joyful smiles at the dedication ceremony for Cheryle's new home. *Photo/Changming Rong*

the head of this big family that she guides through life.

Back in 2017, a stroke caused Cheryle to experience vision loss in one eye and an unsteady gait. In 2018, the Camp Fire burned the only property she ever owned to ashes. Her heart sank, at a loss for how to move onward after such a tragedy.

Cheryle left the wildfire shelter where she stayed temporarily and returned to Concow at the beginning of 2019, but the home she missed every day was no longer there.

"When that fire came through, I thought, 'well... it'll leave the property. I'll live in a tent, I'll live in a trailer, whatever,'" she reflected.

She purchased a small mobile home with the funds she had saved. The bedroom was filled with her belongings, so she slept on the sofa instead. The mobile home also needed a power generator to maintain operation, and the fuel cost of several hundred dollars per month added to the financial challenges post-disaster. During Tzu Chi's winter Camp Fire relief distribution at the end of 2019, Cheryle found that solar lanterns and solar chargers were among the environmentally-conscious supplies offered.

She thanked volunteers for the items, sharing how they would be useful for managing expenses, saying, "I'm really

grateful to Tzu Chi volunteers for their thoughtfulness."

In 2020, the area was impacted again by the Bear Fire, with the Dixie Fire causing further challenges in 2021 on the heels of a mounting global pandemic. Living on one's own in the Concow region post-disaster hadn't been easy either. Cheryle experienced a heart attack at the end of 2020 and received a life-saving stent procedure. After being discharged from the hospital, she prayed daily that she could someday rebuild her home, and have an indoor bathroom, washing machine, and a dryer, to better manage her personal health and hygiene. She also hoped to resume her previous work, creating and selling handicrafts.

With the collaborative assistance of case managers and organizations, Cheryle's wish was finally fulfilled. In March of 2022, Cheryle sat in front of the newly built home and shared her appreciation with people from participating organizations who came to congratulate her. "It's just wonderful, it really is," Cheryle said with a sigh. "I don't think I've ever felt so loved."

Now that the home has been rebuilt, Cheryle can finally settle down on a cozy chair at the front of the calming blue-gray house, or with loved ones, all while knowing in her heart that, "This is my home, this is my community, whatever I like or don't like in life, I can stay here and face everything in peace."

A House for Terri

Just a few months before the Camp Fire, Terri Wynne experienced one major upheaval in her life after another. Her parents both passed, and her long-time best friend also passed away due to cancer. While Terri was allowing herself time to mourn in the house left to her by her friend, the Camp Fire destroyed everything overnight,

with Terri quickly evacuating to the wildfire shelter.

The wildfire had impacted the homes of so many community members, and as a dedicated home care worker, Terri also lost work as a result of the disaster. She then rented a house for several months following the Camp Fire, and the high cost of rent was another challenge she had to face head-on.

When she was allowed to return to her residence, her home was gone, and Terri set up a tent in the open space for temporary shelter. The pandemic and the Northern Complex Fire that followed in 2020 complicated matters further, but fortunately, friends and community organizations were ready to assist.

When life was most challenging, Terri had only a bucket of cold water both for personal hygiene and laundry. Changming

Rong, a Tzu Chi volunteer who has been caring for survivors in Concow for quite some time, talked about his impression of Terri, saying, "Even in such a distressing situation, when there was outside help, Terri always asked that others who were in more urgent need be helped before her."

Three years had passed since the wildfire. Then, one day, when Terri drove the long, snaking road back from work, she saw the red and white structure sitting on her land from a distance.

"I came driving around this road," she said pointing down the hill, the flowers Tzu Chi had given her in hand, "and I said, 'holy cow, there's a house on the hill!'"

"There's a house there – is that mine?" she'd kept asking herself as she drove the way up. The past suddenly seemed like a dream as she thought about a stable house and a stable life, and about looking

Terri Wynne and representatives from various organizations stand in front of the new house with bright smiles. *Photo/Changming Rong*





Tzu Chi Northwest Region Executive Director Minjhing Hsieh, local partners, and community members attend a groundbreaking ceremony for the very First Butte County approved tiny home for a local Camp Fire survivor. Photo/Changming Rong

for a home care job again. She thought about life with peace of mind.

At the dedication, Terri and the group burst into song, her bright smile joining those of the individuals who came to celebrate the occasion. Together, their joy echoed through the valley – the sadness she'd felt swept away by the spring breeze. Terri was finally home.

Tiny Home, Sweet Home

May 19, 2022, was also a monumental day in California, where multiple agencies and community members attended a 'groundbreaking' ceremony for the very first Butte County approved tiny home for a Camp Fire survivor. The new home will play an important role in the pathway toward recovery, hope, and new beginnings with a sense of safety and security.

With the Tiny Pine Foundation, we have a platform to help. And we just feel like if we can help, then we have to.

Alyssa Nolan
*Founder
 Tiny Pine Foundation*

Over the past three years, Tzu Chi has worked with compassionate and innovative minds at the Tiny Pine Foundation to achieve alternative housing solutions that would help more wildfire survivors get a home. Now, a Camp Fire survivor and Tzu Chi care recipient named John Yates will be the first Camp Fire survivor to live in a tiny home. The tiny home construction will be funded by Tzu Chi USA's Northwest Region, with more partnered organizations sharing the cost of building materials, and the construction will be contracted by the Tiny Pine Foundation. This joint disaster recovery project aims to complete the first tiny home within the next four months, followed by a total of five tiny home in neighboring locations within a year.

The May sunshine warmed the hills on the day of the ceremony, offering a cheerful start to the next phase of this collaborative effort. It's hoped that in the near future, wildfire disaster survivors will return to these hills and find a home beneath that welcoming sun.

Never lose courage. Never lose faith. Nothing in this world is impossible when you are determined.

Jing Si Aphorism
by Dharma Master Cheng Yen



HAVE YOU HEARD ABOUT TZU CHI USA'S **VERY VEGGIE MOVEMENT** – VVM?

VVM aims to unite society around the causes of animal rights, environmental protection, and public health by boosting awareness for vegan and vegetarian lifestyle alternatives.

Check it out at veryveggie.com
and sign up today!

By protecting our planet, we protect each other and all sentient life. So let's take action together and generate a brighter, kinder tomorrow.

Very Veggie Movement



A Model Citizen:

Ukrainian Fashion Star Evacuates War Zone

Written by Maggie Morgan



Oksana Kononets, a well-known model and entrepreneur from Ukraine (front left), and her mother, Maryna Kononets (front right), visit Tzu Chi USA's Headquarters with best friend, Jonathan Chuang (back left) on March 19 and meet with Tzu Chi USA's CEO, Debra Boudreaux (second right). *Photo/Shu Li Lo*

The world has been in an unrelenting state of turmoil for the past two years. We've endured a global pandemic, facing microcosms of lonely struggles inside of the massive destruction the virus caused. We're collectively combating climate change, political unrest, food insecurity, gun violence, and unprecedented healthcare debates. In the midst of this ceaseless chaos, Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022; the war has led millions to flee, and has come with far-reaching consequences.

Russia's powerful role in global market commodities have heavily impacted poor and prosperous nations alike. However, none of these obstacles compare to the tragedies the Ukrainian people have been afflicted with. We cannot hear the stories of each of these displaced individuals, but Tzu Chi can hear their unified cries for help.

The Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation's volunteers have been fortunate enough to have heard about the Ukrainian plight through firsthand accounts of those who have fled their homeland. One such voice, that of Oksana Kononets, holds a story

that reflects the treacherous journey of countless Ukrainian people. This account, however, has another layer of strength through struggle wrapped inside of it; a tale of triumph and hope that offers itself to the resilience of the human spirit.

A Monumental Meeting

On March 19, 2022, volunteers and staff at Tzu Chi USA's Headquarters in California met displaced Ukrainians Oksana Kononets and her mother, Maryna, for the first time. The two were accompanied by Jonathan Chuang, Oksana's best friend, when they visited the San Dimas campus to speak with CEO Debra Boudreaux. The meeting was about a journey of overcoming countless obstacles and holding on to faith in the future. The discussion had no particular agenda, but the open conversation held invaluable lessons.

The meeting moved Debra Boudreaux, and she instantly contacted Tzu Chi Medical Foundation's CEO, Stephen Denq,



Jonathan Chuang and his grandmother, Jenny Su, accompany Oksana Kononets and her mother, Maryna, on a visit to Tzu Chi USA's Headquarters and introduce Tzu Chi's origins. Photo/Meizhen Qian



Dr. William Keh, Board Director of Tzu Chi Medical Foundation (fourth from left) and a few veteran volunteers came to care for Oksana Kononets and her mother Maryna. *Photo/ Meizhen Qian*

to make an appointment for an outpatient checkup. Tzu Chi also provided a \$600 emergency relief cash card, hoping to help Oksana and her mother obtain the necessities. The Kononets are starting over again, with no certain future in sight, and aid of any sort will allow them to begin to establish a foundation for a new life.

In the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation's 56 years of existence, our volunteers have met countless individuals, listening to their profound experiences and the wisdom they've gained from them. However, Oksana's story is unlike any we had heard before: After a 2012 accident, the 29-year-old has become the first Ukrainian wheelchair-bound model, and now she has evacuated her country and plans to work on behalf of other displaced citizens. She speaks with strength and dignity, and most importantly, hope. Oksana is not your typical young woman, in fact, she is extraordinary.

Living Life on Her Terms

Oksana uses a wheelchair as a result of a perilous fall ten years ago. Then only 19, Oksana fell from the fifth story of a building, paralyzing her from the neck down. Life would become entirely different for the Kyiv native, but she refused to allow it to become meaningless. Oksana suffered from amnesia following the accident, and said, "my life was divided into 'Before and After.'" The shock of it all hit Oksana hard and fast, and she even asked her mother if euthanasia was an option. Imagine waking up in a body that no longer felt like your own; the fear and frustration could have swallowed Oksana whole, but instead, she used it as fuel.

Traumatic, life-changing events like the one Oksana endured can pause life entirely; simply getting through the day would be enough of a challenge. However,

the 29-year-old refuses to let this event define her. Oksana proudly declares in her website's biography:

"I realized that, despite my disability, I am a complete and self-sufficient person, which gave me the strength to move on. My disability is not an obstacle to fulfilling my dreams."

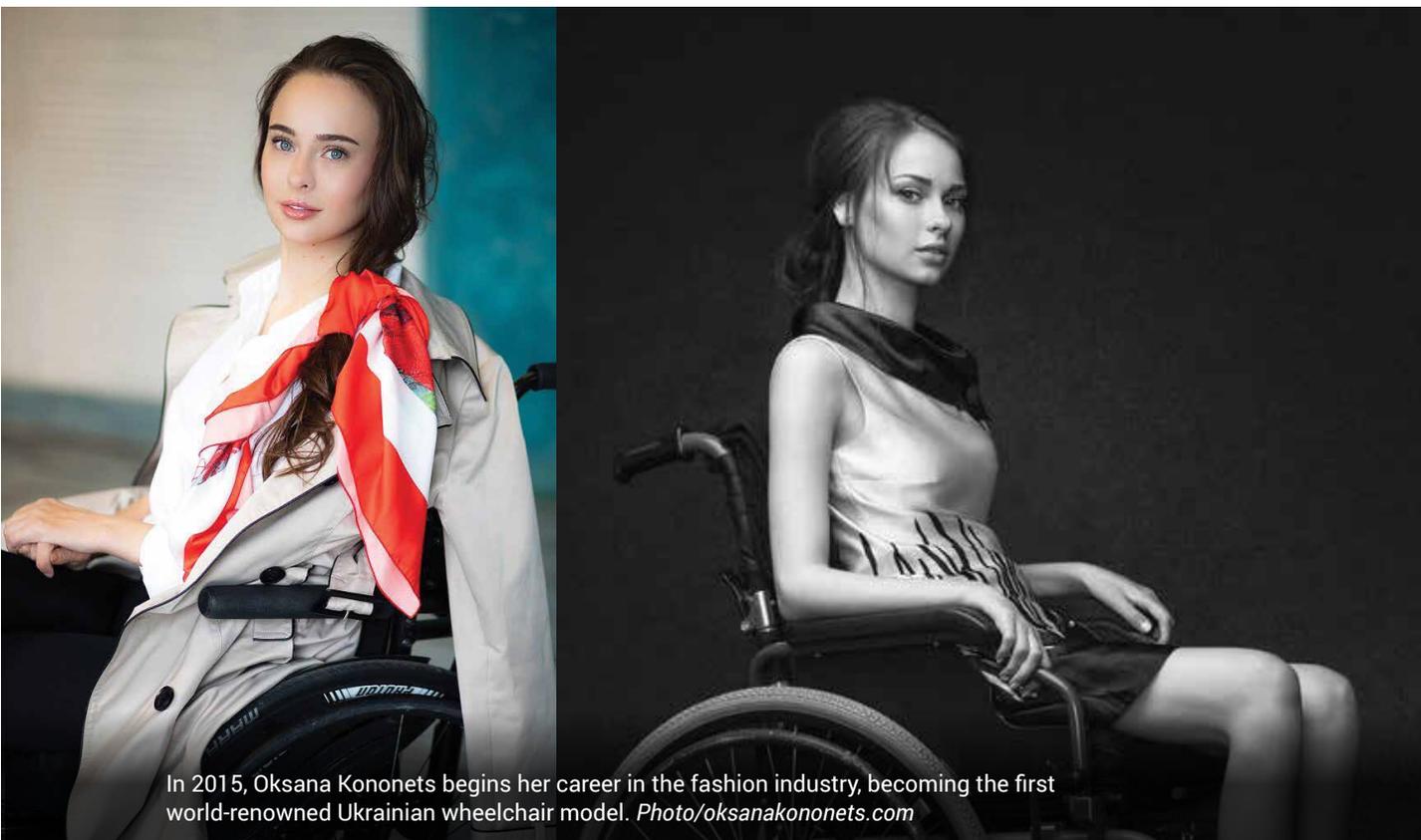
Oksana Kononets

After undergoing months of physical therapy and rehabilitation, Oksana went back to college, received her bachelor's degree in education and then a master's degree in social work. Previously a makeup artist, she had been told by photographers that the camera loved her. Following her injury, the young woman didn't think she'd have the same impact in a wheelchair, but she couldn't have been more wrong.

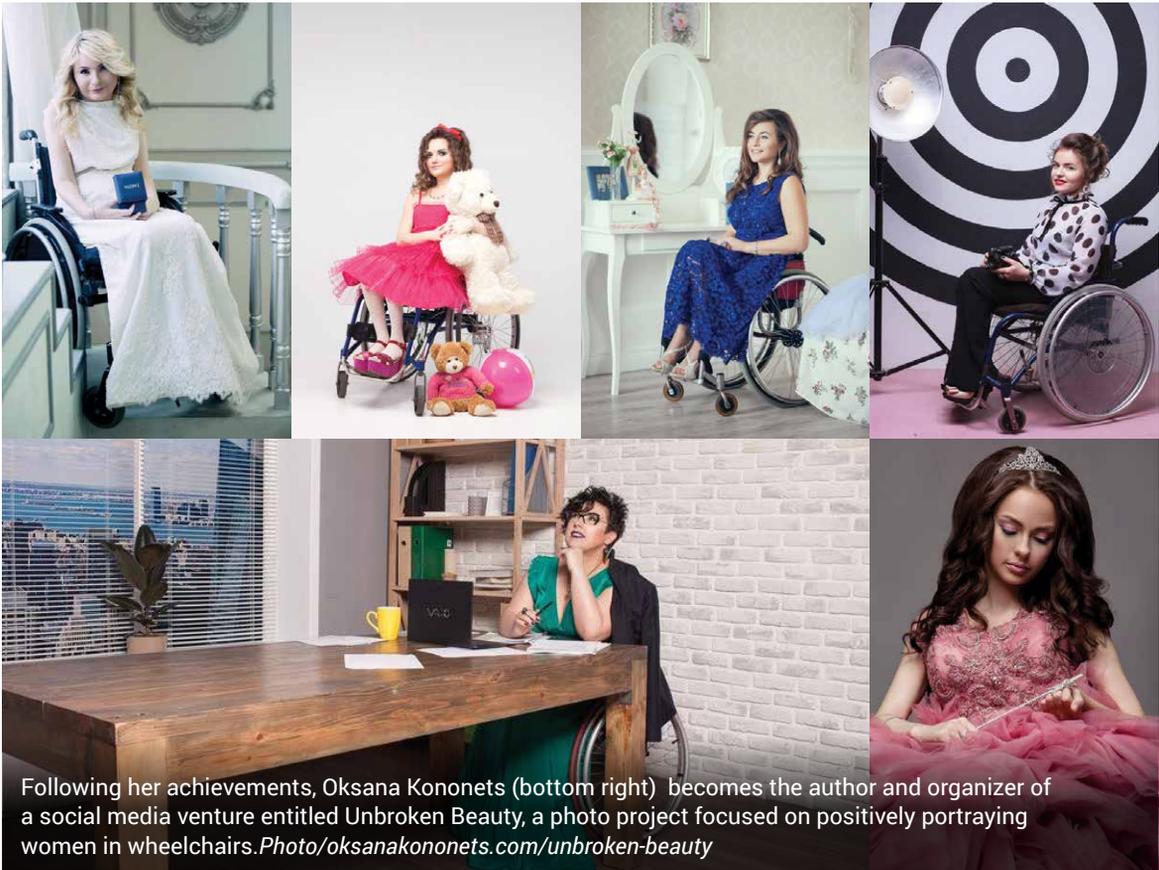
Shattering through her anxieties, in 2015, Oksana started an epic saga that would change the lives of other people with disabilities: She entered the fashion industry and flipped perspectives of what it is to be a model upside down.

The young woman has continuously made a name for herself, swooping up awards and titles as she goes along. Just one year after her start in 2015, Oksana won Miss Wheelchair Ukraine. The year after, she became the first spokesperson with a disability for a famous Ukrainian lingerie brand. A few months later, she was dubbed one of the 100 Most Successful Women of the Year by Ukrainian People magazine. While continuing to model in Paris, in 2019 she was crowned Woman of the Third Millennium.

Her resume speaks for itself, so it is no surprise that Oksana was contacted by the Runway of Dreams Foundation (RODF) to appear in their March fashion show



In 2015, Oksana Kononets begins her career in the fashion industry, becoming the first world-renowned Ukrainian wheelchair model. *Photo/oksanakononets.com*



in Los Angeles. The Foundation works to empower people with disabilities to express themselves through the art of fashion. RODF is transforming the industry and envisions a future where adaptive apparel is a seamless part of the clothing world. It makes sense that the Foundation wanted to work with an inclusion powerhouse like Oksana; the partnership is a natural fit.

The event was slated for March 5, 2022, just nine days after Russia had invaded Ukraine. The entire population was still living in the shock of their current reality, with no clear direction of what to do next. Oksana's family knew how important this event was to her, that it was much bigger than the model herself, and with that, they supported her in evacuating to the United States. With the same tenacity that brought her into the fashion industry, Oksana and

her mother prepared to make the trek to America.

The Winding Path to Los Angeles

The first stretch of their journey would be to safely flee Ukraine and cross the border into Poland. Oksana's district, Sviatoshynskyi, had been struck by missiles, and it was time to seek refuge as soon as possible. The trip is a risky feat for displaced individuals as they must brave the war zone to leave their country. For Oksana, the journey would be even more of a challenge as her wheelchair prevented her from getting there as quickly as possible.

On March 1, 2022, Oksana and her mother evacuated Ukraine to seek refuge, a decision she never thought she'd have to make. She poignantly details how foreign this concept felt:

War... this is a terrible word. Once at school, studying the history of World War II, I saw in the photo all the horror created by the Nazis in the occupied territories, but I could not imagine that 80 years will pass and [soldiers] will start a new war against a free and independent country... The killing of civilians, inhumane torture, the ruthless destruction of everything around them, the rape of children and women, and many other terrible things that do not fit in my head.

Oksana Kononets

Oksana spoke about the day she and her mother left Ukraine, saying, "In the morning we woke up and [my] mother says, 'come on... I [packed our] luggage and we'll go [to] the west of Ukraine' but we didn't know [to] which city we will go [or] when we will arrive." It was just six days after the war began, and as Oksana and her mother headed for the train, the home she had once known had been completely destroyed. "On the way to the station, I didn't recognize my hometown, where there were no people on the streets, only checkpoints with men in military uniform checking documents, broken trees, and gray skies overhead," Oksana recalled.

Her best friend, Jonathan Chuang, heard about a bomb strike on television. "I saw the news that [Oksana's] district, District Sviatoshynskyi, it's her address—it was hit by missiles," he said, remembering the moment clearly. Even without the fashion show quickly approaching, Oksana would have had to flee the country as quickly as possible. Her sister, Olena, told Tzu Chi in an interview that it was imperative for Oksana to evacuate.

[She] left during the first days of war because it was the most horrible... as she is a person with disabilities, she is in a wheelchair, she can't run to the bomb shelter and can't hide to be safe. We took a chance to send her away by the first train... we came to the railway station and we only could squeeze her into the third or fourth train, her wheelchair was set in a train tambour, there were so many people all around, so many women and children.

Olena Kononets

The trip went from Kyiv to Lviv, then Lviv to Warsaw, next Warsaw to Amsterdam, and finally Amsterdam to Los Angeles. In total, the pair would travel for a total of five days, some days not knowing where they'd sleep or how they'd reach their next destination. When they first reached the train station in Kyiv, Oksana and her mother didn't know where they'd end up; all they could be sure of is that it would be safer than staying home.

Because of the stampedes of people rushing to board any train they could, the Kononets waited on the platform until they had a chance to find space. The pair were able to board the third train, and stood by the front door as people clung to one another. In the midst of the chaos, Oksana's wheelchair was slightly damaged, but she was just grateful to be out of harm's way.

Instead of the usual six hours it takes to get from Kyiv to Lviv, the train ride lasted 11 hours. Oksana and her mother could barely move, not even having an opportunity to stretch or use the bathroom. The two didn't even know where they were headed until after the journey began; once



Jonathan Chuang (left) and Oksana Kononets (right) have been friends since they met in Paris five years ago. *Photo/Meizhen Qian*



Volunteer Sharon Chu (middle) introduces Oksana Kononets (right) to Tzu Chi USA CEO Debra Boudreaux (left). *Photo/Meizhen Qian*

they knew Lviv was their destination, they called volunteers to help them find a place to stay. That night, Oksana and her mother slept on a library floor, uncertain of what the next day had in store.

The following morning, Oksana immediately asked volunteers how to get into Poland, as she knew the border was packed with displaced individuals seeking asylum. It was then Oksana said a miracle occurred; two places opened up in the car convoy of Polish volunteers from Warsaw, who were arriving with the help of military cargo for the Ukrainian army.

Oksana spoke highly of the men who drove them to the border; the good samaritans paid for a hotel, gave the pair food, took them for a COVID-19 test, and then the next day brought them to the airport to fly to Amsterdam. It was from Amsterdam that Oksana and her mother would take their final step to get to Los Angeles.

It is clear that this journey is one the Kononets won't soon forget, not because of the obstacles, but because of the offerings. "Along the way, we felt the incredible support of others who saw our yellow and

blue ribbons and learned that we are from Ukraine. People [said], 'You are a miracle!'" Oksana exclaimed. "My physical condition was weak, the road was difficult, but I will remember the feeling of support from strangers forever and it supported me and didn't allow me to despair and lose heart."

As soon as Jonathan Chuang received word that the Kononets had evacuated safely, he immediately purchased their tickets to Los Angeles. Jonathan then asked his mother, Sharon Chu, to help find a family that could accommodate Oksana and her mother, who had thankfully obtained their visas to the U.S. before the conflict in preparation for the runway show.

The pair arrived safely in Los Angeles before the March 5 event and were able to attend as planned. During their stay in Los Angeles, Jonathan knew Oksana and her mother had much more on their mind than normal day-to-day affairs; he took care of the transportation arrangements and purchased supplies and clothing to ease their burden in any way he could. Jonathan helped the pair every step of the way, and noted the trip to Poland was "scary." Oksana echoed the same reflections once she finally hit American soil.

Jonathan's efforts were life-saving for the mother and daughter duo, but even more, he made a dream become a reality. Jonathan's mother, Sharon, contacted a friend who housed the Kononets for two and a half weeks. Jonathan then utilized ukrainetakeshelter.com in the interim, where he connected Oksana and her mother with a family who have extended their home to them until the war is over. The family also fundraised a few thousand dollars to purchase a new wheelchair for Oksana. Out of these many benevolent acts, the model seems to have found a special kind of safe haven in Jonathan.

"Throughout our trip, I felt the insane support of another person. This is my friend Jonathan Chuang, whom I have known for five years and who helps me with all matters in a foreign country. Some people have never found such a good friend and real man in their lives, but I was lucky in that," Oksana said.

Though they reached the U.S. safely and Oksana was able to participate in the fashion show, it is just the first leg of the inspiring woman's journey. Oksana plans to work with the Buddhist Tzu Chi

Foundation in their initiatives to support displaced Ukrainians, using her platform and bottomless well of strength to fight for her people. After receiving aid from Tzu Chi, coordinated by Jonathan and his mother, Oksana instantly felt the spirit of the Foundation's mission.

"It was thanks to [Jonathan] and his family that I personally met [Tzu Chi], its [CEO Debra Boudreaux], coordinator Rene and other incredible people who do so much good, especially at this difficult time for my country. I had long heard from Jonathan about the Foundation, its work, and finally, I was able to see the whole big family with my own eyes," the model expressed.

Jonathan furthered this idea when speaking of his friend, "She wants to help the Ukrainian people obviously to be safe and find homes and figure out their lives after the war, and she also wants to help people with disabilities because she knows how hard it is to live with a disability."

Oksana and Jonathan's friendship is one that literally knows no borders; their love and respect for one another are palpable, and the reciprocal nature of



Tzu Chi USA CEO Debra Boudreaux (left) explains how to use the emergency relief cash card to Oksana and her mother Maryna Kononets. *Photo/Meizhen Qian*

their dynamic is a source of inspiration. Jonathan said of his dear friend, “We have a very close friendship and we’ve always been supportive of each other. There’s no one I can trust more than her. She always pushes me to be better and to follow my dreams.”

Following Their Footsteps

As the war continued, with no end in sight, Oksana’s older sister, Olena, made the decision to evacuate Ukraine and reunite with her family. The driving motivation for Olena had her sister at the forefront; Oksana had left so suddenly, that she was without many necessities and proper clothing. The 33-year-old contacted Tzu Chi to make arrangements in getting Oksana a suitcase. When she made her first stop in Warsaw, she spoke more to Tzu Chi about how her life at home had turned into a devastating reality.

War goes on and blood of innocents is spilled. Children are dying... children, adults, women are dying. I came to Warsaw to [get] a visa for myself and go to Canada because it’s safer there. Somehow as [soon] as I start talking about war, I start crying immediately because it’s very scary and it’s very dangerous.

Olena Kononets

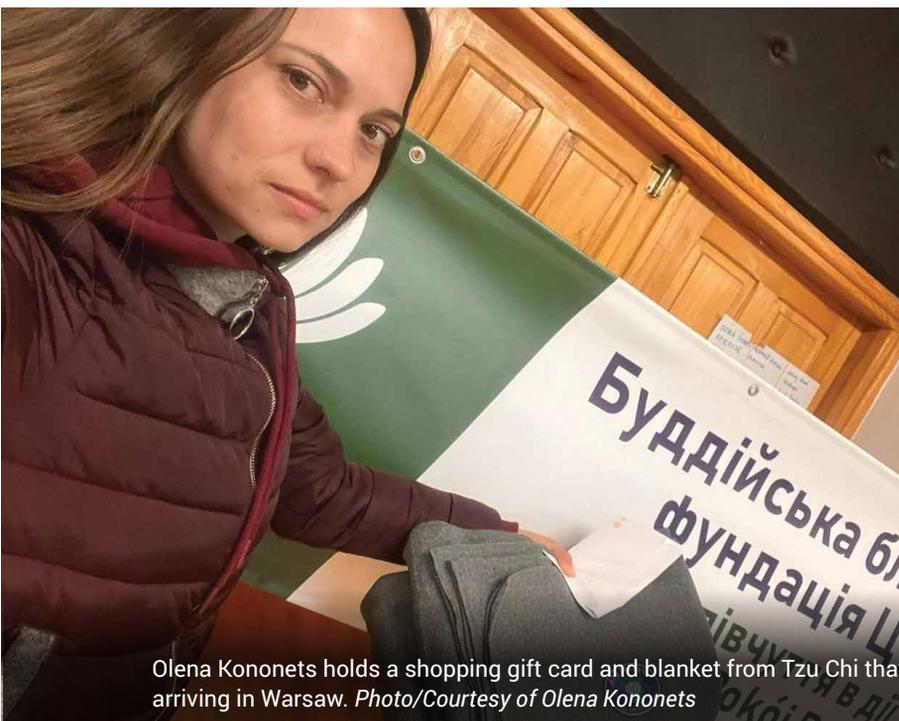
Even with the precarious journey ahead, Olena remembered to bring luggage for Oksana, and explained what she had planned next. “I brought things for my sister... this big suitcase is for her because at the beginning of the war she fled from the country, on the first days of war and they had only three hours to prepare. They

took only the [most] necessary things and they went to America... they didn’t expect that they [would] have to stay there for so long.”

Olena packed both summer and winter clothes for her sister, bringing only a small bag for herself. When Olena met up with Tzu Chi volunteers, she said she wasn’t sure how long she might stay in Warsaw, saying it will be as long as it takes to get a Canadian visa, which is easier to obtain than an American one. The team knew nothing was certain for the young woman, so they provided her with a shopping gift card and blanket to alleviate some of her burden while she waited in Poland.



Olena Kononets holds a small suitcase for herself and a large bag for her sister, Oksana, who left Ukraine with only three hours to prepare. *Photo/Ting Fan*



Olena Kononets holds a shopping gift card and blanket from Tzu Chi that she received upon arriving in Warsaw. Photo/Courtesy of Olena Kononets



After her mother and sister evacuated to the United States, Olena stayed with her father and boyfriend in Kyiv. She never imagined that the war would continue on, and now has gone two and half months without her mother and sister as her city is continually shelled by rockets. It was not a simple decision to flee Ukraine, and Olena was forced to leave behind everything she knew. For Olena, there was more to think about than all she would be saying goodbye to for the time being.

“I left behind so many things,” Olena said, “it was very difficult, but on the other hand I don’t want to be traumatized by this situation anymore. I miss my sister so much. And my mom, too... I miss them so much, it’s been two months. They are my blood, my loved ones, I dream to meet them as soon as possible, to hug them, and kiss them... I hope that I will see them very soon.”

Eventually, Olena hopes to join her sister and mother in America, but for now

she is focused on getting to Canada safely. When she arrives, she will begin the lengthy process of obtaining a U.S. visa, but will at least be on the same continent as her loved ones – one step closer to reuniting after the calamity of war.

Tzu Chi Presses on With Love and Compassion

The Kononets are just one representation of the millions of displaced Ukrainians fighting to survive. Unfortunately, their story chronicles an experience that is not unique, a deeply-penetrating trauma that many Ukrainians have still not escaped from. The more we share these all-too-real realities, the more action we can take. Being aware of this war is not enough, empathy alone is empty.



Oksana Kononets and her mother Maryna learn more about Tzu Chi. *Photo/Meizhen Qian*

All in all, everyone has the responsibility of taking care of people suffering in the world.

Dharma Master Cheng Yen

The Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation works to understand the personal struggles behind every mass crisis, to listen intently to those who are suffering, and then find solutions on an intricately individual level. Along the way, our volunteers make meaningful connections with our beneficiaries; one basic act of compassion extends infinitely outward with each person we speak to. We can save the majority simply by listening intently to the few who can share on their behalf.

Oksana Kononets is determined to use her story and her platform to help her fellow Ukrainians remain safe, supported, and hopeful in rebuilding their lives.

Leaving Ukraine, I also wanted to be useful to all who remained in it. And that's why I was very happy when [Tzu Chi] offered me cooperation. Thus, our common knowledge and contacts helped to organize successful work on humanitarian support for displaced Ukrainians in Poland. In the future, I am convinced that this is just the beginning of our cooperation and maybe I will also be able to volunteer and help organizations in other areas.

Oksana Kononets

The experiences of the Ukrainian people has taught the world the raw meaning of courage; they've given us new perspectives on gratitude and on hope. Through this terror, we've also remembered the fleeting nature of life, and have reconnected with our innate humanity to give ourselves to others in need.

Look at what is happening in our world. We all live on Earth, but in different countries. Within the same minute, people experience different events. People are alive this second, but will there be the next second? Will there be tomorrow?

Dharma Master Cheng Yen

Although tomorrow will always be uncertain, we can all do everything in our power to ensure today is better than yesterday. Oksana did, and today she has become an example to the world of determination, willpower, and ultimately triumph. 🌱



Oksana Kononets, accompanied by her mother Maryna and Jonathan Chuang, visit Tzu Chi USA's National Headquarters in San Dimas, CA. Photo/Meizhen Qian

A TRADITION AS RELEVANT AS EVER:

Buddha Bathing and Interfaith Prayers of Gratitude

by Dilber Shatarsun





Tzu Chi USA hosts its annual Buddha Bathing Ceremony in San Dimas, California, on May 7, 2022. Photo/Shuli Lo

This spring, people worldwide gathered for a time-honored annual tradition: the Buddha Bathing Ceremony. Hosted as a three-in-one celebration of Buddha or Vesak Day, Tzu Chi Day, and Mother's Day, this year, Tzu Chi USA conducted the service at its National Headquarters in California, for the first time entirely in English. At the same time, commemorations carried on in Haiti despite turmoil there, and a first-ever event took place in Poland, alongside families who'd fled from Ukraine.

The Buddha Bathing Ceremony is an important Buddhist ritual. Delicate flowers and baths of fragrant water often surround a statue of the Buddha. Taking turns, observers steadily begin their approach, bowing at the waist, dipping their hands in the water, or pouring it to 'bathe' the statue itself. Together, these traditions intend to clear the mind, purify the heart, and cleanse the spirit.

Held in tandem with a service happening in Taiwan, Tzu Chi USA hosted its Buddha Bathing Ceremony at National Headquarters in San Dimas, CA on May 7. Gifts were prepared for all guests, including flowers for mothers, and faith leaders from across Southern California were especially invited to attend. To one Dharma Master, taking steps to share this ancient tradition with others is essential to interfaith harmony:

The people who are coming here today, they come from different faiths, and they can see how we respect each other, and how we can live together in harmony and peace.

Dharma Master Chao Chu
Los Angeles Buddhist Union

Representatives from other faith traditions echoed this feeling. “Because our world is so divisive, any and every endeavor we can do together to diminish that divisiveness is worthwhile attending or participating in,” said Rt. Reverend Alexei

Smith of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. His words could not be more urgent or as universal in the face of true division and conflict around the world – including in Haiti.

In recent months, armed violence in the Caribbean nation has escalated to alarming levels. The UN Human Rights Council reported that from April 24 to May 16 alone, at least 188 people died from coordinated attacks in Port-au-Prince. Another 113 suffered injuries and 49 were kidnapped for ransom. Facing these extreme conditions, more than 200 people still put their faith in the Buddha Bathing Ceremony.

On May 15, volunteers safely gathered to begin preparations at Tzu Chi’s warehouse in Port-au-Prince from 8 AM. Tzu Chi volunteer Johnson Chang emphasized, “Haiti is experiencing unprecedented hardships,” including the ongoing pandemic, violence, and a tough economy. Because of this, he rationalized, “it’s easy for people to lose their way,” making the Ceremony even more timely:

Tzu Chi Haiti volunteer James Ocean leads a procession during the 2022 Buddha Bathing Ceremony in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. *Photo/Nesly Valcourt*





Local residents, including those who'd recently fled from Ukraine, partake in a Buddha Bathing Ceremony in Lublin, Poland.
Photo/Tzu Chi Team

Today, bathing the Buddha is an activity of prayer, piety, and good deeds. Although our hearts may be very frightened... we can find the greatest force to stabilize our restlessness, and we can move towards kindness, peace, compassion, and love.

Johnson Chang
Tzu Chi Haiti Volunteer

This was also why a Buddha Bathing Ceremony was held for the first time in Lublin, Poland on May 8. During Tzu Chi's humanitarian relief efforts there for those who'd fled from neighboring Ukraine, volunteers, including from Tzu Chi Germany, took the opportunity to host the Ceremony on the street. With curious eyes, warm smiles, and palms in prayer, many participated, showcasing solidarity for a more peaceful world.

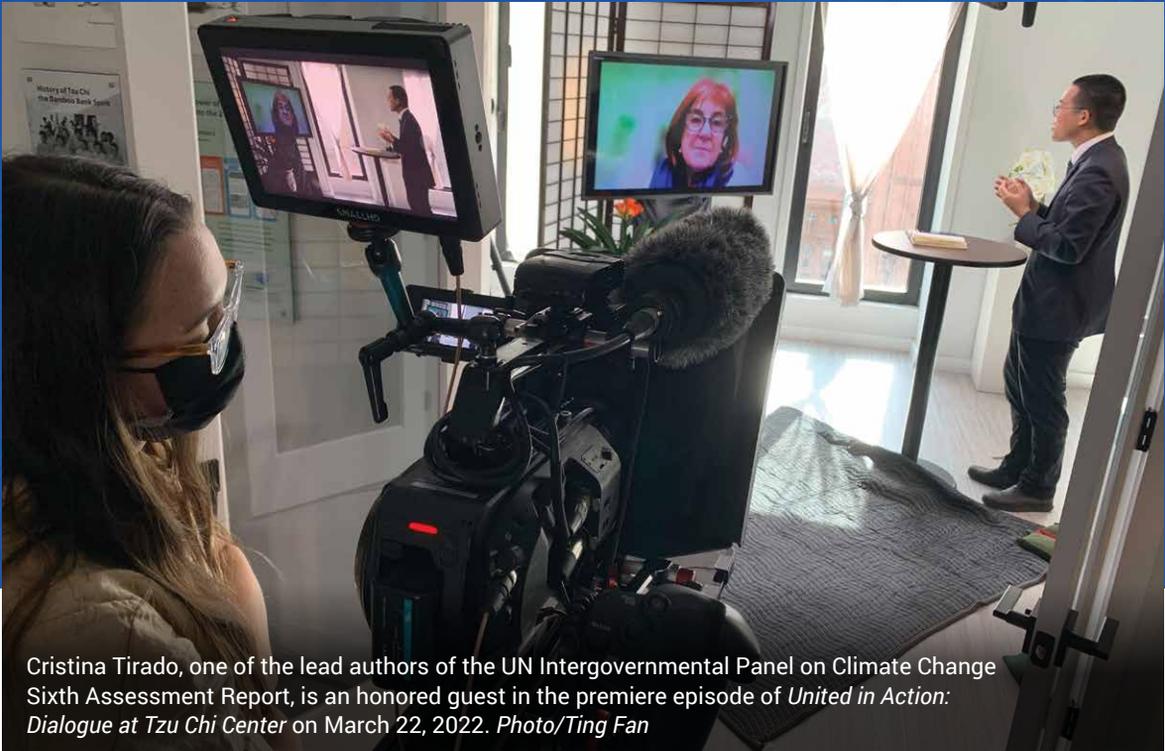


In this way, the values behind the Buddha Bathing Ceremony are universal; doing away with the negative to make fresh space for the positive. Of the Ceremony back in San Dimas, CA, Reverend Dr. George Okusi eloquently observed, "one thing that I'm learning is that I belong to a larger community – not only the Christian community – but I belong to the world religion." 🌿

UNITED IN ACTION

DIALOGUE AT TZU CHI CENTER

Written by Ida Eva Zielinska



Cristina Tirado, one of the lead authors of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Sixth Assessment Report, is an honored guest in the premiere episode of *United in Action: Dialogue at Tzu Chi Center* on March 22, 2022. Photo/Ting Fan

On a crisp Manhattan morning in March 2022, inside a sleek white five-story building on New York's Upper East Side, a video production team pointed its cameras at the host of a program about to be launched and started recording.



*"Hello, everyone. My name is Steve Chiu. Welcome to **United in Action**, a brand-new program streaming from the Tzu Chi Center for Compassionate Relief. We're coming to you from the heart of New York City, right next to the United Nations."*

United in Action: Dialogue at Tzu Chi Center is the latest offering of the global Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation's public exhibition space in the United States, which presents the organization's history, missions, and activities worldwide, and serves as a hub to engage with partner UN-accredited non-governmental organizations and representatives of civil society, creating opportunities for dialogue.

This latest Tzu Chi Center program, which premiered on March 22, 2022, sheds light on the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDG):

1. No poverty
2. Zero hunger
3. Good health and wellbeing
4. Quality education
5. Gender equality
6. Clean water and sanitation
7. Affordable and clean energy
8. Decent work and economic growth
9. Industry innovation and infrastructure
10. Reduced inequalities
11. Sustainable cities and communities
12. Responsible consumption and production
13. Climate action
14. Life below water
15. Life on land
16. Peace, justice, and strong institutions
17. Partnerships for the goals

At the same time, *United in Action* features Tzu Chi's global and local action towards those goals and creates opportunities for deeper dialogue with the United Nations community.

The Tzu Chi Global Affairs Team is central to Tzu Chi's engagement at the international level. The team represents the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation, officially an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (UN ECOSOC), and advocates for the Sustainable Development Goals while sharing Tzu Chi's projects that address them.

The *United in Action* program host, Steve Chiu, is a member of the team and agreed to answer a few questions for this story.

Q: Steve, when and why did you join the Tzu Chi Global Affairs Team?

My first exposure to the United Nations (UN), in 2012, came through a program Tzu Chi used to host every summer, where we would send small delegations of college students to the UN to learn about global issues and the innovative ways youth around the world were solving these challenges. I was struck by how closely aligned Tzu Chi's four missions and eight footprints were to the UN's goals, and ended up coordinating subsequent delegations' engagement with the UN, inspired by the exposure to this global platform where such a wealth of expertise, wisdom, and kinship was gathering.

Upon graduating from college in 2014, I felt called to continue to help Tzu Chi grow at a local and international level and joined Tzu Chi New York's staff. In 2015, I then proceeded to join the Global Affairs Team to represent Tzu Chi at the UN. Advocating at the UN is a journey and I'm so grateful to be able to walk this path with peers I love and respect deeply.

The Tzu Chi Global Affairs Team's goals are "Empowering lives. Creating change. Relieving the suffering of the most vulnerable in society through humanitarian assistance and education, empowering individuals and communities to become self-sustainable."



Steve Chiu and Andrew Schwartz, Director of Sustainability and Global Affairs at the Center for Earth Ethics, are ready for dialogue as the Tzu Chi production team prepares to film the *United in Action* April 2022 episode. Image/Screenshot from Show



Saphira Rameshfhar, representative of the Baha'i International Community to the UN, is in conversation with Steve Chiu during the premiere of *United in Action*. *Image/Screenshot from Show*

Q: Please share a bit about how the team addresses these goals.

Tzu Chi's Global Affairs Team works at both a global and local level, and in doing so, we find ourselves with opportunities to directly create programs that touch the lives of those in need, providing them with the resources and insights that they need. Empowerment towards self-sustainability must come through consent, which is why our team's projects are first and foremost community-led, to ensure that the needs of the community are prioritized and addressed as we design our humanitarian assistance projects. Whether this happens at a local level, with partners, or at a global level, through consultations that generate advocacy points to influence policymakers, the input of frontline communities lies at the heart of our team's work.

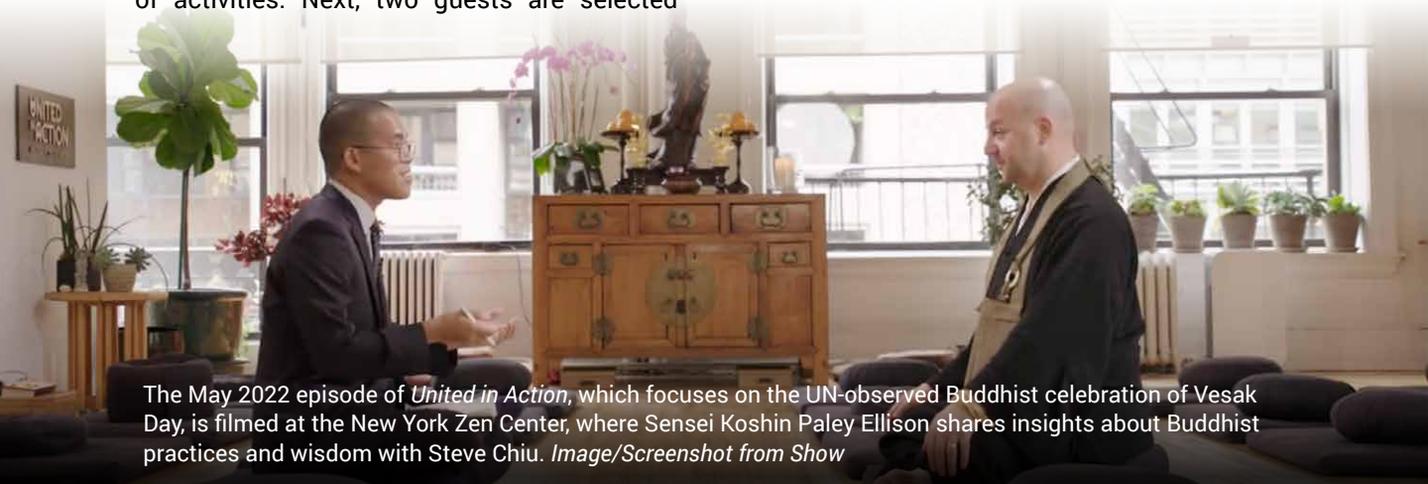
The creative group behind this monthly show narrows in on a theme for each episode that ideally corresponds with the UN's calendar of activities. Next, two guests are selected

and invited. Then, Tzu Chi projects that best relate to the theme are identified: This can be challenging given the broad range of Tzu Chi's global missions and footprints, encompassing charity, medicine, education, humanistic culture, international relief, bone marrow registry, environmental protection, and volunteerism.

Q: Please tell us about the challenges – and joys – of the creative process behind the show.

The question of how do we frame Tzu Chi volunteers' global footprints in a way that captures the breadth and depth of impact, has been one of our team's ongoing guiding questions, and biggest challenges. I don't know if there is a quick answer, but the question is one we're always grappling with and finding new ways to address within the context of engaging at the UN and sharing Tzu Chi's work.

Filming *United in Action: Dialogue at Tzu Chi Center* has been a deeply fulfilling process because we're able to bring together partners that we cherish, and shine a light, through dialogue, on their wisdom, values, and insights that align deeply with Tzu Chi's existing body of work. In doing so, we can make sure that these relationships and partnerships that we have at the Global Affairs Team don't just live in the realm of the International Community, but can also permeate into our local Tzu Chi communities' consciousness.



The May 2022 episode of *United in Action*, which focuses on the UN-observed Buddhist celebration of Vesak Day, is filmed at the New York Zen Center, where Sensei Koshin Paley Ellison shares insights about Buddhist practices and wisdom with Steve Chiu. *Image/Screenshot from Show*

Q: As a Tzu Chi Global Affairs Team representative, please share the team's aspirations for this latest Tzu Chi Center for Compassionate Relief program. What is the audience you aim to attract to these dialogues? What kind of impact do you hope to have?

I really believe *United in Action: Dialogue at Tzu Chi Center* can serve as a beautiful bridge between our Tzu Chi community, and our network of partners, colleagues, and peers at the UN. Finding ways to articulate what is happening at both a global level and what individuals can be doing, for themselves, and with their communities, at a local level, has always brought me a lot of joy, and I'm so happy to be able to be utilizing this format to share actions, values, and wisdom that is being generated in pursuit of creating a better world: for people, planet, and prosperity. The hope truly is that audience members can leave the program knowing more about the good that is happening at an international level, understand how they can act at a local level, and feel a little less alone in this journey towards a better tomorrow.

The *United in Action: Dialogue at Tzu Chi Center* program runs once a month, generally in the third week. The premiere episode, on March 22, focused on the critical global issue of climate change and ways to uplift women as they face its impact. The honored guests were Cristina Tirado, one of the lead authors of the 2022 IPCC AR6 (UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Sixth Assessment Report),

and Saphira Rameshfar, representative of the Baha'i International Community to the UN.

The next episode, on April 19, ran a few days in advance of Earth Day, whose 2022 theme is "Invest in Our Planet." Through dialogue with guests Evan Raskin, EARTHDAY.ORG's USA National Campaign Manager, and Andrew Schwartz, Director of Sustainability and Global Affairs at the Center for Earth Ethics, the show examined climate change, featuring how faith-based values and actions can transform our food systems and relationship with the planet.

The May 24 episode honored the Buddhist celebration of Vesak Day, observed by the UN internationally. *United in Action* brought the dialogue to the New York Zen Center, where Sensei Koshin Paley Ellison shared insights about Buddhist practices and wisdom and their relevance today. Jasmine Huang, the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation's Dharma As Water Team Project Manager, joined virtually and explained how Tzu Chi celebrates Vesak Day and why the 2022 celebration in the United States, entirely in English for the first time, was a milestone for interfaith collaboration.

The themes of upcoming shows will most certainly circle in on critical issues our world faces today. Each program also features two informative and engaging videos that further illuminate the topics of the dialogue. The Tzu Chi Global Affairs team and the production team behind the show and videos hope you will tune in for the next episode in June. In the meantime, you can watch the March-May shows on the Tzu Chi Center for Compassionate Relief website. 🌱



The production team, director Hannah Whisenant, in discussion with Steve Chiu (both right), producer Jamie Puenta (left), and director of photography Garson Ormiston (second left), set up for the filming of the premiere episode of *United in Action*. Photo/Hyo Jin An

USING LOVE TO PROTECT PEACE IN THIS WORLD

Life is filled with pain and suffering, but also with hope and love.

Master Cheng Yen's Teachings | Translated and Compiled by the Dharma as Water Team

In this current age, we are facing climate change, the ongoing pandemic, and man-made calamities and conflicts. The four elements are out of balance, and so is the human mind. At this time, there is truly much suffering in the world. Recently, we have seen the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. This unthinkable war is due to a single thought that went astray. All of this is due to greed. Now, the situation has put many people at risk, forcing thousands to become refugees.

These refugees are unable to bring anything with them. All they hope for is for their families to be safe. They flee to neighboring countries, walking for hundreds of kilometers, and traveling in large, packed groups. Some carry their babies, and others hold children who are able to walk, with the elderly following behind. Each family follows the crowd. Filled with fear and shock, they do not know what lies ahead. Every minute and second, they fear for their lives and do not dare stop for even a moment. Even if a loved one collapses, they have to continue forward. It is unbearable to imagine a state of mind filled with so much suffering.

For those who are blessed, it can seem that time is quickly passing, but for those living amid war and conflict, every single moment is difficult. At this moment, in our world, how many people are suffering and waiting for us to lend a helping hand? We must have compassion and empathy, and be willing to take on the responsibility of providing for others' needs. We must inspire love in people and spread that love even wider, extending the love of bodhisattvas even further. We cannot take even the smallest bit of love lightly, for even a glimmer of light can bring direction and hope to those who are suffering. We

must also awaken love in people's hearts. In this way, more and more people will be willing to dedicate themselves to doing good deeds. There will be more ears to hear people crying for help in all corners of the world, and more eyes to see where people are suffering, and we can extend our arms and lift them up. Furthermore, we must always be vigilant, to prevent any more conflicts in this world. Let us use the love we have in our hearts to protect peace so that such tragedies will never happen again.

As we care for people and this earth every day, we broaden our knowledge and perspective. To shut ourselves out is like closing a window, leaving us unable to see the light outside, unable to experience the passing of time. When we close our minds, our wisdom also slowly disappears.

I hope we can reflect on whether our minds are broad enough to encompass everything in this world, and that we can ensure we have not deviated in our actions. As we cultivate ourselves, we must also dedicate our energy to people and lead by example. Creating a harmonious atmosphere can lead people to follow the majority in doing good deeds. Naturally, evil thoughts will diminish, and virtuous thoughts will increase.

The Bodhisattva Path is not far from us. It is just below our feet, and we walk upon it whenever we have a single thought of kindness and take action to do a good deed. It is as simple as that. We must be true to our teachings and do good together for this world. When we each lead by example and inspire one another, we will not be alone on this path, and we can let love spread from our circle to beyond. 🙏



Illuminations

Dharma Master Cheng Yen responds to questions and comments from visitors, volunteers, staff, and disciples.

WISDOM LIFE LASTS FOREVER

Question: *“Master, what is your view on life?”*

Answer: *“Human life is insignificant, but there is one thing that can be heavier than Mt. Tai, and that thing is our wisdom life. Our wisdom life can continue on incessantly, allowing people who come after us to follow our footsteps as they move forward.”*

FORM GOOD AFFINITIES

Question: *“How can we live a meaningful life?”*

Answer: *“When we are physically well, we must create more blessings. When our conditions allow, we must form more good affinities, and never waste our time.”*

RECOGNIZE THE VALUE OF LIFE

Question: *“How can we inspire the mindset of saving others?”*

Answer: *“We must first awaken to the meaning of life and understand what is most valuable. After thinking about this, I have come to believe that there is nothing more valuable than life itself. If we can fully recognize the value of life, we will naturally respect life. With the sentiment of respecting life, we will be awakened sentient beings, and we will be able to love and protect all lives equally and universally.”*

Excerpts from
Illuminations: Words
of Insight from
Dharma Master
Cheng Yen, Volume 1
compiled by the Jing
Si Sangha Editorial
Team (Jing Si
Publications, 2022).



Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation Global Relief Efforts

by Sophie X. Song, Ida Eva Zielinska



Brazil

The Brazil Service Center holds an opening ceremony for its Chinese language class on March 19, hoping to attract local residents to volunteer with Tzu Chi through learning Chinese.

Photo/Shouyong Chen

Ecuador

Due to torrential rain, many rivers flood at the end of January in Ecuador's Cotopaxi Province, damaging roads and displacing residents in Pujilí County. Tzu Chi volunteers travel to the area to assess the disaster immediately after roads reopen on March 15. *Photo/Tzu Chi Ecuador*



Dominican Republic

The Catholic Archdiocese of Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic received 4,000 bags of rice from Tzu Chi Taiwan. Tzu Chi Dominican Republic Service Center volunteers launch an event on March 4 to provide rice to charitable organizations and families in need so that people won't go hungry.

Photo/Tzu Chi Dominican Republic



Indonesia

On February 25, an earthquake hit Pasaman Barat. Tzu Chi Indonesia volunteers from Padang go to the disaster area on February 26, 27, and March 3 to help those affected. When they distribute bread and milk to children who have been living in a temporary shelter for five days, they see immediate smiles and receive thanks from parents. *Photo/Tzu Chi Indonesia*





The Philippines

Tzu Chi volunteers in the Philippines go to one of The Sisters of Mary Girlstown Schools and then Boystown Schools on March 26 and March 31, respectively, to donate 2,400 kilograms of rice. *Photo/Tzu Chi Philippines*

South Africa

Heavy rain fell along the southeastern coast of South Africa, causing severe flooding and landslides in Durban and surrounding areas on April 11, displacing tens of thousands of people and claiming more than 400 lives. The day after the disaster, Tzu Chi volunteers visit Nhlungwane Hall, which is housing many survivors. Since there is a Tzu Chi food distribution center nearby, they supply the shelter with food. *Photo/Tzu Chi South Africa*



Mozambique

On April 12, Tzu Chi holds a ground-breaking ceremony for the third Tzu Chi village in Mozambique, the Metuchira Great Love Village. Local government officials and developers attend and watch a dramatic performance recounting the differing stories of two families that previously received a house from Tzu Chi. One family was content, worked diligently, and took good care of the home, so they lived happily; the other family lazed about so that even though they now had a house, their lives remained destitute. *Photo/Tzu Chi Mozambique*

Turkey

When the Veli Aga Mosque in Istanbul, near the El Menahil International School that Tzu Chi helped establish, runs out of funding for construction and asks for assistance, the Tzu Chi Turkey Service Center hosts a fundraising campaign to help. *Photo/Abdullah Khtib* 





Tzu Chi USA Relief Efforts

by Sophie X. Song, Ida Eva Zielinska

Providing Disaster Relief



1 On March 1, volunteers from Tzu Chi USA Northwest Region's Fresno Service Center prepare to distribute supplies to Afghan families who have fled their war-torn homeland, helping them settle into a new life in the United States with peace of mind. *Photo/Kelly Liu*

2 On March 3, a gas explosion occurs in a four-story apartment in Silver Spring, Maryland, destroying the building and impacting more than 300 residents. More than a week after the disaster, many remain homeless. In cooperation with the Montgomery County government, Tzu Chi USA Greater Washington D.C. Region volunteers distribute cash cards and blankets on March 9 to help the affected households get through this difficult period. *Photo/Kelly Liu*

3 On March 19, the Tzu Chi USA Southern Region office in Texas holds its second food distribution that month, benefiting 233 families. With the war in Ukraine displacing many, volunteers also fundraise to pass on the care recipients' love to those suffering in that distant land. *Photo/Jean Hsu*

4 On March 21, multiple central and northern Texas counties are hit by thunderstorms and tornadoes, injuring several people and killing one. The storms also damage many homes and businesses and leave more than 40,000 people without power. On March 25 and 26, Tzu Chi USA Southern Region's Austin Service Center volunteers distribute cash cards and blankets at the United Heritage Center in Round Rock to help those affected. *Photo/Fangwen Huang*

5 On March 21, a tornado hits Williamson County in Texas at night, causing damage in several cities, including Round Rock, Hutto, and Taylor. Tzu Chi USA Southern Region volunteers help disaster-stricken households get back on their feet in collaboration with other local relief organizations. Tzu Chi holds several distributions of emergency supplies by the end of March, which include giving each household a \$1,000 cash card. *Photo/Tzu-Pei Hsieh*

Promoting Vegetarianism



6



7



8



9

6 On March 4, Tzu Chi Education Foundation holds an event to promote vegetarianism among teachers and students of the Great Love Preschool in Walnut, California. The students get a delicious vegetarian lunch, developing greater compassion for all living creatures by not eating meat or fish. *Photo/Shuli Lo*

7 After two years of isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic, children who are part of the Northern California Tzu Chi Youth Group finally return to their classroom in San Jose, on March 12 to cook vegetarian buns as their first in-person lesson. *Photo/Mimi Chin*

8 As the pandemic in the U.S. shows signs of abating and mask mandates drop, the Tzu Chi USA Headquarters team that promotes vegetarianism can finally visit the YMCA in Alhambra, California, on March 28. They showcase and let the kids there try vegetarian food. Over the past year, students could only watch vegetarian cooking online, so now that they can taste the food in person, they're thrilled. *Photo/Shuli Lo*

9 Volunteers at the Tzu Chi USA Central Region Office in Texas restart their vegetarian cooking class on April 3 to let everyone know that preparing delicious and healthy vegetarian food isn't difficult. In this their first class since the start of the pandemic, the team makes a vegetable vermicelli stew, a recipe that is easy for everyone to learn. *Photo/Shuli Lo*

Offering Medical Services



10



11

10 On March 27, Tzu Chi USA Northwest Region volunteers in California hold a one-day free clinic for low-income residents in Cupertino. Fifty-six medical professionals and service volunteers participate in the clinic to serve 30 people who made an appointment in advance. The free clinic provides services in dentistry, ophthalmology, general medicine, traditional Chinese medicine, and chiropractic care. *Photo/Andy Chiang*

11 On April 8, the Tzu Chi Medical Foundation and Tzu Chi USA Headquarters' Medical Development Office hold a free clinic for Tzu Chi volunteers at the South El Monte Health Center. The free clinic offers general medicine, traditional Chinese medicine, dentistry, and ophthalmology. *Photo/Shuli Lo* 🌿

State	Tzu Chi USA Offices	Address	Tel / Fax	State	Tzu Chi USA Offices	Address	Tel / Fax	
AZ	Phoenix Service Center	2145 W. Elliot Rd. Chandler, AZ 85224	480-838-6556 F: 480-777-7665	KS	Kansas Office	9508 Shannon Way Circle Wichita, KS 67206	316-323-5798	
S. CA	Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation, US Headquarters Area	1100 S. Valley Center Ave. San Dimas, CA 91773	909-447-7799 F: 909-447-7948	LA	New Orleans Office	52 Driftwood Blvd. Kenner, LA 70065	504-782-5168 F: 504-832-2022	
	Jing Si Books & Café, San Dimas		909-447-7799 x 6569	MD	Montgomery County Service Center		703-707-8606 F: 301-339-8872	
	Tzu Chi Academy, San Dimas		909-447-7799 x 6551 F: 909-447-7944	MA	Boston Service Center Tzu Chi Academy, Boston	15 Summer St. Newton, MA 02464	617-762-0569 617-431-4844 F: 617-431-4484	
	Buddhist Tzu Chi Medical Foundation	1008 S. Garfield Ave. Alhambra, CA 91801	626-427-9598 F: 626-788-2321	MI	Lansing Office	3511 West Hiawatha Dr. Okemos, MI 48864	517-505-3388	
	Tzu Chi Medical Center, Alhambra		626-281-3383 F: 626-281-5303		Detroit Service Center	6825 Textile Road Ypsilanti, MI 48197	586-795-3491 F: 586-795-3491	
	Tzu Chi Community Clinic, South El Monte	10414 Vacco St. South El Monte, CA 91733	626-636-8706 F: 626-671-8778	MN	Minneapolis Office	1485 Arden View Dr. Arden Hills, MN 55112	617-939-6965	
	Buddhist Tzu Chi Education Foundation	1920 S. Brea Canyon Cutoff Rd. Walnut, CA 91789	909-895-2125 F: 909-345-7025	MO	St. Louis Service Center	8515 Olive Blvd. St. Louis, MO 63132	314-994-1999 F: 314-994-1999	
	Tzu Chi Great Love Preschool & Kindergarten, Walnut		909-895-2126 F: 909-927-8336	NV	Reno Office	903 West Moana Lane Reno, NV 89509	775-827-6333 F: 775-770-1148	
	Tzu Chi Elementary, Walnut		909-895-2125 x 3200 F: 909-345-7025		Las Vegas Service Center/ Academy	2590 Lindell Rd. Las Vegas, NV 89146	702-880-5552 F: 702-880-5552	
	Tzu Chi Academy, Walnut		909-895-2280	NJ	Mid-Atlantic Region/Jing Si Books & Café	150 Commerce Rd. Cedar Grove, NJ 07009	973-857-8666 F: 973-857-9555	
	Tzu Chi Great Love Preschool & Kindergarten, Monrovia	206 E. Palm Ave. Monrovia, CA 91016	626-305-1188 F: 626-599-8098		Tzu Chi Academy, Northern New Jersey			
	Tzu Chi Academy, Monrovia	220 E. Palm Ave. Monrovia, CA 91016	626-775-3675 F: 626-359-8199	Tzu Chi Academy, Central New Jersey	50 Woodrow Wilson Dr., Edison, NJ 08820		973-857-8666	
	West Los Angeles Service Center	11701 Wilshire Blvd. #15A Los Angeles, CA 90025	310-473-5188 F: 310-477-9518	Central New Jersey Service Center			908-420-5218	
	Torrance Service Center	1355 Broad Ave. Wilmington, CA 90744	310-684-4465 F: 310-684-4460	NY	Northeast Region/Academy	137-77 Northern Blvd. Flushing, NY 11354	718-888-0866 F: 718-460-2068 718-799-3000	
	Tzu Chi Community Clinic, Wilmington		310-684-4466 F: 855-651-1717		Jing Si Books & Café, New York			
	Orange County Service Center	22911 Mill Creek Dr. Laguna Hills, CA 92653	949-916-4488 F: 949-916-5933		Brooklyn Service Center	5721 6Th Ave. Brooklyn, NY 11220		917-909-0682
	Tzu Chi Academy, Irvine	4321 Walnut Ave. Irvine, CA 92604	714-624-3026 F: 949-916-5933		Long Island Branch/Academy	60 E Williston Ave. East Williston, NY 11596		516-873-6888 F: 516-746-0626
	Cerritos Service Center	14618&14620 Carmenita Rd. Norwalk, CA 90650	562-926-6609 F: 562-926-1603		Manhattan Service Center	101 Lafayette Street, 4/F, New York, NY 10013		212-965-1151 F: 212-965-1152
	Northridge Service Center	8963 Reseda Blvd. Northridge, CA 91324	818-727-7689 F: 818-727-9272		East Long Island Office	4 Milburn Rd. S. Setauket, NY 11720		631-964-3393
	San Gabriel Valley Service Center	9620 Flair Dr. El Monte, CA 91731	626-416-4527 Warehouse: 626-416-4529		Tzu Chi Center, New York	229 E. 60th St. New York, NY 10022		212-660-9229 F: 646-864-0086
Jing Si Books & Café, El Monte		626-448-1362	Raleigh Service Center				919-322-8389	
San Diego Service Center	5754 Pacific Center Blvd. #202 San Diego, CA 92121	858-546-0578 F: 858-546-0573	NC		Charlotte Office	4527 Dwight Evans Rd. Charlotte, NC 28217	704-281-8060 F: 704-943-1031	
N. CA	Northwest Region	2355 Oakland Rd. San Jose, CA 95131	408-457-6969 F: 408-943-8420		OH	Cincinnati Office	11228 Brookbridge Dr. Cincinnati, OH 45249	513-469-2161 F: 513-469-2161
	Tzu Chi Academy, Tri-Valley		925-785-7413	Columbus Service Center		2200 Henderson Rd. Columbus, OH 43220	614-457-9215 F: 614-457-9217	
	Jing Si Books & Café, San Jose		408-457-6981	Dayton Service Center	1459 E Dorothy Lane Dayton, OH 45429	937-701-7111		
	San Francisco Branch	2901 Irving St. San Francisco, CA 94122	415-682-0566 F: 415-682-0567	Cleveland Service Center	1076 Ford Rd. Highland Heights, OH 44143	440-646-9292 F: 440-646-9292		
	Tzu Chi Academy, San Mateo	2675 Ralston Ave., Belmont, CA 94002	650-888-1582	OR	Portland Service Center	3800 SW Cedar Hills Blvd #194 Beaverton, OR 97005	503-643-2130 F: 503-643-2130	
	Tzu Chi Academy, San Francisco	350 Girard St. San Francisco, CA 94134	415-680-5225 F: 415-682-0567		Tzu Chi Academy, Portland	12250 SW Conestoga Dr. Beaverton, OR 97008	503-841-7776	
	Modesto Service Center	1100 Carver Rd. #J Modesto, CA 95350	209-529-2625 F: 209-529-2625	PA	Philadelphia Office	107 North 9th St. Philadelphia, PA 19107	215-627-1915 F: 215-627-1916	
	Stockton Office	1212 W Robinhood Dr. #3D Stockton, CA 95207	209-957-7800 F: 209-957-7800		Pittsburgh Service Center/ Academy	1333 Banksville Rd. #201 Pittsburgh, PA 15216	412-531-8343 F: 412-531-8341	
	Tzu Chi Academy, Cupertino	1280 Johnson Ave. San Jose, CA 95129	408-823-8799	TX	Southern Region/Academy	6200 Corporate Dr. Houston, TX 77036	713-270-9988 F: 713-981-9008	
	Santa Rosa Office	1615 Cleveland Ave. Santa Rosa, CA 95401	707-546-1945		Jing Si Books & Café, Houston		713-981-8966	
	Sacramento Service Center	1820 Tribute Rd. # J Sacramento, CA 95815	916-568-5800	Tzu Chi Great Love Preschool & Kindergarten, Houston		713-395-0303 F: 713-395-0305		
	Ukiah Office	527 S State St. #B Ukiah, CA 95482	707-462-2911 F: 707-462-2911	Austin Service Center	7221 Northeast Dr. Austin, TX 78723	512-491-0358 F: 512-926-1373		
	Oakland Service Center	620 International Blvd. Oakland, CA 94606	510-879-0971 F: 510-879-0971	San Antonio Office	19179 Blanco Rd. #109-2 San Antonio, TX 78258	909-576-2387 F: 210-566-3970		
	Tzu Chi Academy, San Jose	625 Educational Park Dr. San Jose, CA 95133	408-457-6970	Central Region/Academy/ Jing Si Books & Café	534 W. Belt Line Rd. Richardson, TX 75080	972-680-8869 F: 972-680-7732		
Fresno Service Center	7421 N Maple Ave. Fresno, CA 93720	559-298-4894 F: 559-298-4894	Tzu Chi Great Love Preschool & Kindergarten, Dallas		214-446-1776 F: 214-446-1772			
FL	Orlando Service Center	5401 Alhambra Dr. #A Orlando, FL 32808	407-292-1146 F: 407-292-1146	VA	Greater Washington D.C. Region/ Academy	1516 Moorings Dr. Reston, VA 20190	703-707-8606 F: 703-707-8607	
	Miami Service Center	8070 Pasadena Blvd. Pembroke Pines, FL 33024	954-538-1172 F: 317-645-9907		Richmond Service Center	1318 Tomahawk Creek Rd. Midlothian, VA 23114	804-306-6037 F: 804-378-3520	
GA	Atlanta Branch	3120 Medlock Bridge Rd, Building E Peachtree Corners, GA 30071	770-458-1000	WA	Seattle Branch/Academy	15800 SE Newport Way Bellevue WA 98006	425-643-9104	
	Tzu Chi Academy, Atlanta	2000 Clearview Ave. #100 Atlanta, GA 30340	770-986-8669	WI	Milwaukee Office	5356 W. Silverleaf Ln. Brown Deer, WI 53223	414-357-8427	
HI	Pacific Islands Region/Academy	1238 Wilhelmina Rise Honolulu, HI 96816	808-737-8885		Madison Service Center	1019 Starlight Ln. Cottage Grove, WI 53527	608-960-1962	
IL	Midwest Region/Academy/ Jing Si Books & Café	1430 Plainfield Rd. Darien, IL 60561	630-963-6601 F: 630-960-9360					
	Chicago Chinatown Service Center	215 W 23rd St. Chicago, IL 60616						
IN	Indianapolis Service Center	2929 E. 96th St. #E Indianapolis, IN 46240	317-580-0979					



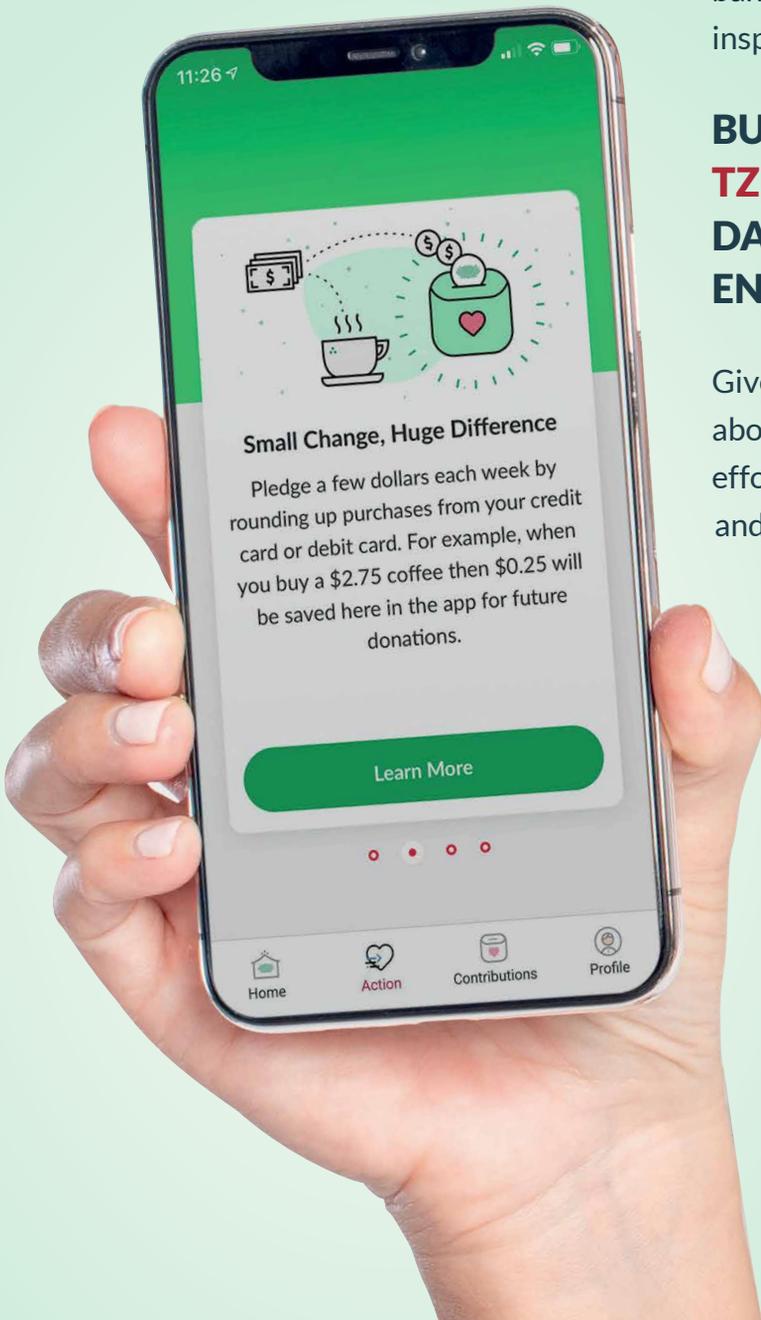
Tzu Chi Connect

Tzu Chi was founded on the principle of daily giving, where the loving intention to help others is even more important than the amount donated.

In the beginning, Dharma Master Cheng Yen's followers collected funds to donate in coin banks made of actual bamboo. Tzu Chi volunteers continue to offer updated "bamboo banks" to one and all, hoping to inspire regular giving with love.

**BUT NOW, WITH THE
TZU CHI CONNECT APP,
DAILY GIVING HAS
ENTERED A NEW ERA!**

Give instantly to causes you care about, round up spare change effortlessly right on your phone, and connect with a like-minded community that wants to make the world a better place for all.



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The 2022 Buddha Bathing event commemorating Buddha Day (Vesak), Mother's Day, and world Tzu Chi Day set a milestone for Tzu Chi USA. It was the first time the ceremony was conducted entirely in English, cultivating deeper interfaith communication in the United States. *Photo/Victor Rocha*