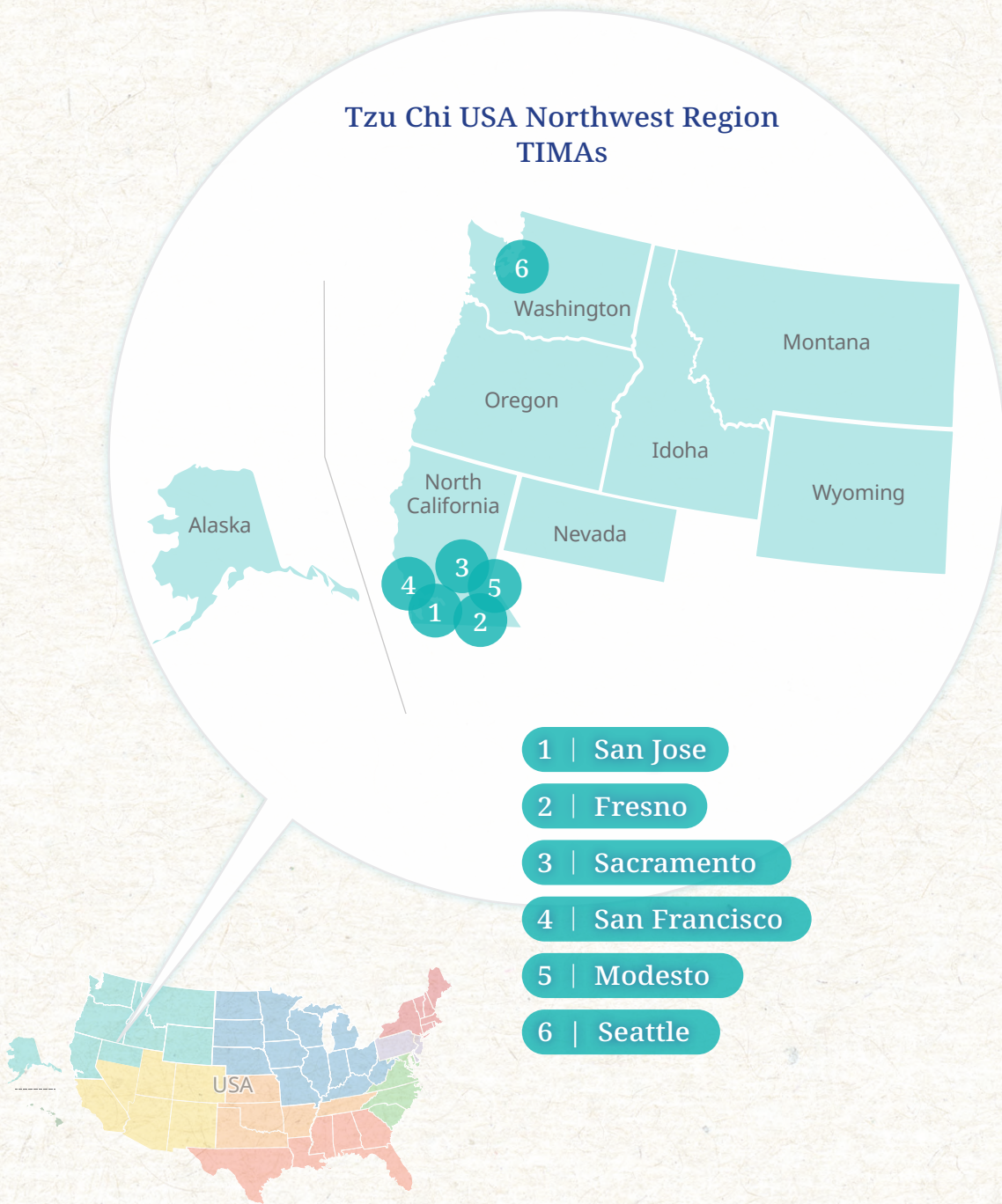


# TIMA USA Northwest Region

Written by Vivian Chang, Jennifer Chien, Karen Hsiang, Janet Li, Jessie Lin, Renee Liu, Kitty Lu, and Sherry Shih  
Edited by Yingying Lee





Volunteer Suching Chung (seated, right), Silicon Valley Grandma Shiauchin Wang Lin (seated, left), and volunteer Mike Liaw (left) pose for a photo in September 1996 at Tzu Chi USA's Northwest Region Three Hearts Charity Sale, a blood testing event for bone marrow donation. *Photo/Tzu Chi USA Northwest Region*

One's first thoughts of California's Silicon Valley are often of a high-tech-oriented, high-income area where innovation abounds. Yet, a more seldom explored side of this community is home to many low-income and medically uninsured families. However, at the Tzu Chi free clinics and outreach events, patients can receive equal and respectful medical services with peace of mind, regardless of their income.

## Bone Marrow Matching

Tzu Chi USA Northwest Region's medical mission commenced on November 15, 1992. At that time, Tzu Chi members sought to assist Wenling Wen, an international student at the University of Iowa who had been diagnosed with leukemia. Wen needed help finding a bone marrow match. For the first time, the Tzu Chi San Jose Service Center invited the public to complete blood tests for potential bone marrow donors.

In 1995, upon discovering Evan Chen, an international student at Stanford University, also had leukemia, Tzu Chi volunteers held blood tests again and successfully found a match. Deeply moved and inspired, the volunteers were determined to make a difference for more people. In that same year, the San Jose Service Center established a team to promote bone marrow donation headed by volunteer Suching Chung, and began holding a yearly blood testing event.

In 1996, the Northwest Region held the Three Hearts Charity Sale where the bone marrow donation team promoted human leukocyte antigen (HLA) testing for bone marrow donation on-site, and successfully added blood samples from 80 more caring people to Tzu Chi USA's Bone Marrow Donor Registry.

When finding a matching bone marrow donor or cord blood unit, a person's ethnic background can be an important factor. This is





On April 5, 1996, the San Jose medical outreach team conducts a free medical event in the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas near Ukiah, California, taking a historic group photo in remembrance.  
Photo/Tzu Chi USA Northwest Region



because HLA markers used in matching are inherited, and some ethnic groups have differing tissue types from others. Usually, this means a person's most promising chance of finding a donor might be with someone of the same ethnic background.

However, despite a substantial number of potential donors in the U.S., registries worldwide continue to face challenges in identifying matched donors for some patients of certain ethnicities. According to Be The Match®, a patient's chance of having a matched, available donor on the Be The Match Registry® ranges from 29% to 79% depending on the patient's ethnic background. At the time of these initial endeavors made by Tzu Chi, the matching success rate for Asian patients had been relatively low. Equipped with this knowledge and the urgency of saving lives, Tzu Chi's bone marrow donation team volunteers often participate in community charity activities, set up stalls, and promote bone marrow donation registration.

**It's unbelievably precious to find that one in one hundred thousand chance of a bone marrow match and save a life.**

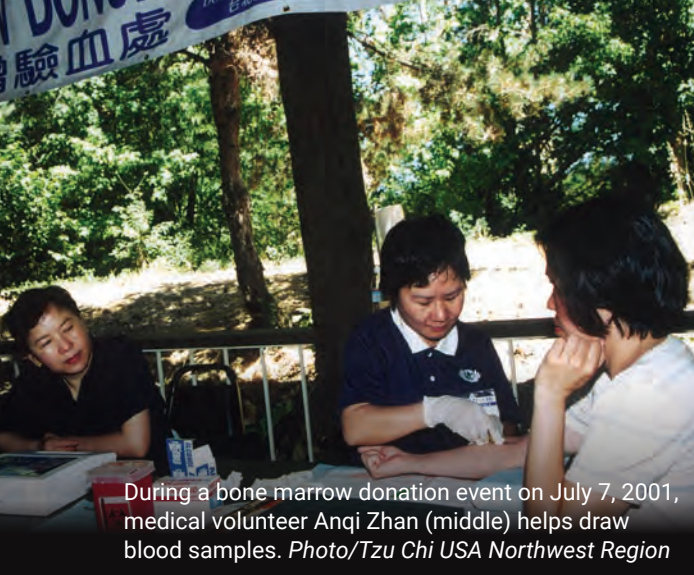
**Yuting Gao**  
Tzu Chi Volunteer



Promising advances in blood and marrow transplantation, as well as testing, have since been made. Volunteer Sandra Hung shared her personal experience, saying, "it's like donating blood. Through stem cell extraction technology, the blood is transfused back into the body. The donation process is not complicated, there is no pain, and there is a chance to save a life."

## Establishing a Medical Outreach Team

Health talks were the first service provided by the Northwest Region's medical mission. At the suggestion of Shiauchin Wang Lin, founder of Tzu Chi USA's San Jose Service Center, volunteer Sherry Shih began to invite medical professionals to give lectures at the office from time to time. And in 1993, her efforts expanded beyond San Jose to hold a health care talk at the Cupertino Library, hosted by Dr. George Yeh. In October of the same year, Dr. George Yeh hosted the "Mind, Body, and Spirit Health Talk," featuring the renowned Dr. Chiunan Lai, who spoke on causes and treatments for chronic illnesses, which was well-received by the community. The seminar helped to equip the audience with pertinent information to promote healthy living for individuals and families, and to prevent illnesses from occurring. The Northwest Region still



During a bone marrow donation event on July 7, 2001, medical volunteer Anqi Zhan (middle) helps draw blood samples. *Photo/Tzu Chi USA Northwest Region*

organizes in-person or online preventive lectures on various specific diseases, striving for the benefit of public health.

On October 21, 1995, the San Jose Service Center hosted its first medical outreach team workshop, which provided an initial understanding of the work and commitment expectations for the medical volunteers. The San Jose medical outreach team was formed on October 29, 1995, and operated until 1997 with assistance from the Buddhist Tzu Chi Free Clinic in Alhambra, California. The current medical team has been serving the community since 1998. The team, composed of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) doctors, Western medicine doctors, dentists, nurses, and medical volunteers from both Northern and Southern California, visited the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas near Ukiah to conduct a free clinic. A total of 160 resident monks and Buddhist laypeople were treated. The trip marked the Northwest Region volunteers' first large-scale community free clinic activity.

Dr. Mike Liaw was one of the founders of the medical outreach team and its first leader. He was an engineer in Silicon Valley at the time. During his off-hours, he was responsible for coordinating and planning related activities, organizing medical volunteer workshops, and establishing a complete process for free clinics; he later transitioned to medicine and became a TCM doctor.



Dr. Wendy Chuang, a chiropractor, moderates a health talk on body posture at Tzu Chi Academy in Cupertino, California, in September 2023. *Photo/Andy Chiang*



Guests get active and stretch together at a November 2005 Community Health Day lecture. *Photo/Bryan Yeh*

With the experience of this large-scale free clinic, the San Jose Service Center stepped up its efforts in organizing medical volunteer workshops to attract more medical professional and general volunteers to join Tzu Chi. From 1996, the San Jose medical outreach team was visiting the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas four to five times per year. Due to the lengthy distance between the two locations — a six-hour round trip — each medical event was held for two days. The volunteers gathered and left at dawn. Only after the drive there and the first day of service, which lasted until after 10:00 PM, would they go to the lodgings paid for by themselves and rest. They would then return to the clinic site again the next morning, staying for two consecutive days to assist the local monks who do not have medical insurance. Most medical outreach team volunteers worked in high-tech industries in California's Silicon Valley and had high-stress work schedules. The medical outreach event kept them engaged for an entire weekend, after which they went to work on Mondays as usual. Yet, they were enthusiastic to do it all, with compassion and appreciation.



## Gaining Momentum Together

In 1998, Tzu Chi USA's San Jose Service Center was transformed into the Tzu Chi USA Northwest Region Office, with expanded functions. The medical services were consolidated, and a medical team with all-around operational capabilities was established. The team collaborated with other non-profit healthcare organizations to provide various regular health examinations for low-income families, in addition to bone marrow donation registrations, health lectures, and free flu shots. The medical team also appeared at various large-scale community activities organized by the Northwest Region Office, providing free health consultations to the public, checking hearing and vision, and measuring blood pressure, blood sugar, and cholesterol.

On October 24, 1999, a large-scale Health Day event was held for the first time at the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in San Francisco, providing several free medical consultation services to people in the Bay Area. Many people queued up to receive flu shots long before the event started. Blood tests for bone marrow donation, oral health care, vision examinations, organ donation advocacy, Traditional Chinese and Western medicine consultation, and drug knowledge consultation were also conducted on-site. Health talks, as well as question and answer sessions on hepatitis, year-round health and diet therapy, periodontal disease, and drug knowledge, were provided by professional doctors and professors.

This event was the pilot for a large-scale free clinic. Due to the enthusiastic response from the participants, Austin Tsao, then Executive Director of the Northwest Region, resolved that it would be held every year in the future.

Since then, the community Health Day event has been held regularly two to three times a year. While federal and state regulations limit the services provided and Tzu Chi can't offer actual medical diagnosis and treatment, the event helps many people who generally can't afford to see a doctor learn more about their health conditions and have their concerns explained. Additionally, seeking regular medical consultations could prevent minor conditions from evolving into more serious illnesses.

**The goal of the Health Day is preventive medicine oriented. We hope that through careful consultation between doctors and patients, everyone can get healthcare education information on how to take care of themselves.**

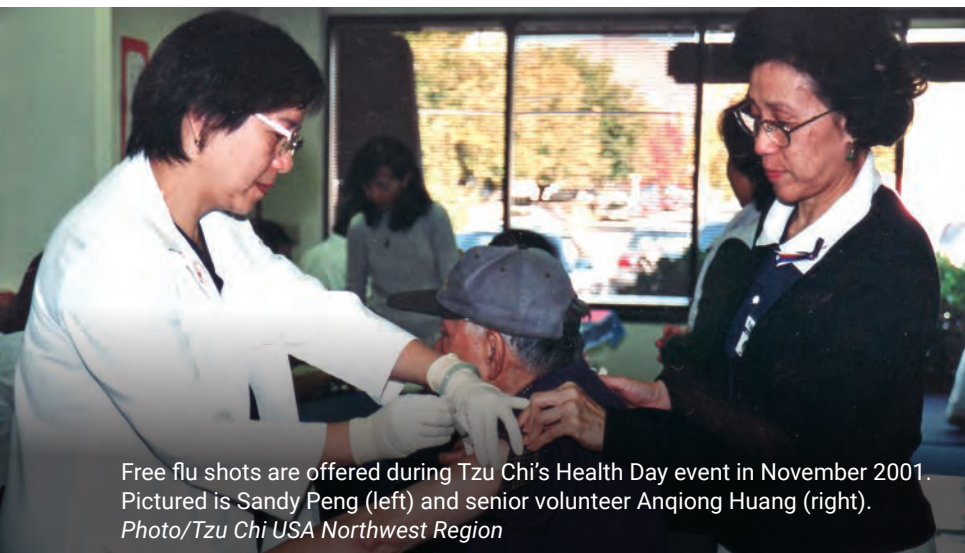


**Yuaner Wu**  
TIMA Nurse

And it's not just the patients who gain something meaningful from these events. "What I am most grateful for is that through the free clinic service, more medical staff had been attracted to join the volunteering initiative," recalled volunteer Sherry Shih. Through this, the community gathers more love and energy to carry forth more good deeds for others.

On October 17, 1999, Tzu Chi's medical team provides free flu shots to the community. Photo/Tzu Chi USA Northwest Region





Free flu shots are offered during Tzu Chi's Health Day event in November 2001. Pictured is Sandy Peng (left) and senior volunteer Anqiong Huang (right). Photo/Tzu Chi USA Northwest Region

On March 23, 2002, the Northwest Region holds a TIMA promotion tea gathering and invites William Keh, then director of the Buddhist Tzu Chi Free Clinic in Alhambra to come and share. Photo/Tzu Chi USA Northwest Region



In March 2002, TIMA held a promotional tea gathering in San Jose and recruited medical volunteers on the spot. William Keh, then director of the Tzu Chi Free Clinic in Alhambra, California, and the convener of TIMA in the United States, personally came to host and called for more professional medical workers to join the TIMA San Jose chapter that was emerging. The medical team, composed mainly of Tzu Chi volunteers and TIMA members who complement each other, had a bright future ahead, indeed. Free medical outreach activities and the scope of service have only continued to expand with the Northwest Region's pace of charity and relief, entering low-income communities and school campuses to serve more underrepresented individuals and families.

Jean So, who had a pre-med background and volunteer experience in various hospitals in the Bay Area, was originally in charge of the Tzu Chi Youth Group here. After stepping down in 2008, she joined the medical team at Chijen Huang's invitation and worked as a volunteer, becoming an indispensable new force for the Northwest Region's TIMA chapters.



Tzu Chi USA's Northwest Region holds a one-day free clinic event for people with low incomes in California's Silicon Valley. Pictured are medical volunteers Jean So and Chijen Huang. Photo/Andy Chiang

She was responsible for all the complex medical affairs of the Northwest Region — including monthly medical meetings, hosting medical activities, planning external activities, training and management of medical volunteers, and coordinating free outreach activities for Tzu Chi's mission and the Northwest Region and its local offices — and has always been on the frontline. She also proactively and successfully obtained grants for community medical activities, allowing the medical team to have more medical resources with which more services could be provided.





In June 2018, Traditional Chinese Medicine doctor Susan Wang takes a patient's pulse at a summer community free clinic in San Jose. *Photo/Eric Lin*

In September 2002, Wendy Chuang, a chiropractic neurologist with TIMA, returned to Taiwan to participate in the TIMA Global Forum and was deeply moved. After returning to the United States, she led several students from medical schools to participate in free clinics. At the same time, Northwest Region volunteers were active in introducing and recruiting family physicians and other specialists they know to join TIMA.

Susan Wang, a Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) doctor, first participated in Tzu Chi's free medical outreach activities in 1998, when she and other members of the United California Practitioners of Chinese Medicine volunteered at a free clinic, during which she felt lucky to be able to serve patients with her peers. In August 2007, when TIMA San Jose and the Kaiser Permanente Medical Office in Stockton held a Health Day event, Wang suggested providing TCM acupuncture treatment and called on five TCM practitioners to participate. In August 2008, ten TCM practitioners served in the grand event. Since 2007, she has been the general coordinator of 15 free clinics, rallying the involvement of many doctors

and medical volunteers from various specialties and introducing Tzu Chi to other collaborative agencies and organizations in the community.

Dr. William Keh visited San Jose from time to time to care for the development of TIMA, and has successively established several TIMAs in Tzu Chi USA's Northwest Region, including San Francisco, Seattle, Fresno, and Sacramento. He also encouraged the Northwest Region to obtain a Dental Mobile Clinic, paving the way for fundraising efforts by the Region's volunteers to purchase one.



Healthy Fresno, a community health plan, launches in 2013 to provide free clinic services to local residents. Pictured is preparatory work for a March 15, 2013 event. *Photo/Nancy Ku*

## From Barren to Bountiful

The Northwest Region's free clinic team assembles doctors with diversified backgrounds. In addition to doctors affiliated with TIMA chapters in Northern California, there are TIMA members from other regions as well as caring doctors from local communities. Patients can choose the corresponding department to register and seek medical treatment based on their own needs and conditions.

In 2008, the Northwest Region raised funds to purchase a Dental Mobile Clinic. With its sophisticated equipment, Tzu Chi's free dental services could effectively reach out to more distant communities where local residents may experience barriers in transportation. Since then, the Northwest Region's medical mission has embarked on a new journey. The Mobile Clinic can not only travel far, but also provide important free clinic services.

In 2011 and 2012, the Northwest Region participated in large-scale free clinic activities sponsored by Remote Area Medical (RAM) in Oakland and Sacramento

for four days each, providing medical services to thousands of patients. These were the most extensive free clinic events that the medical team had joined up to then. After two years of participation in such large-scale free clinic events, the volunteers were confident in independently organizing a large-scale free clinic.

**This work is very meaningful. I feel that helping others when I have the ability to do so is the realization of a grateful heart. People live a happy and rich life when they learn to be grateful to each other and help each other!**

**Jean So**

*Tzu Chi Volunteer*

Dr. Kevin Hwang participated in the free clinic co-organized by RAM and Tzu Chi in Oakland, and was deeply impressed by it. Seeing people braving the cold weather and queuing up in the middle of the night for medical treatment, he felt that the mission was so important that he had to invest all his efforts into it. A phone call inviting Hwang to participate in a Tzu Chi free clinic event in the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas



On the third day of Remote Area Medical's free clinic in Sacramento in April 2012, doctors and volunteers continue to focus on the patients. Photo/Wenhsien Sun





Traditional Chinese Medicine practitioners take the opportunity to pose for a group photo at a Remote Area Medical free clinic event. *Photo/Wenhsien Sun*

in 1998 was the impetus that initially drove him to join TIMA activities. He was so excited to participate in a free clinic for the first time that, with the accompaniment and support of Tzu Chi volunteers, he insisted on seeing all the patients in the queue. After the free clinic, the volunteers' encouragement touched him deeply, and this original intention has stayed with him to this day.

**Because I studied medicine, I want to dedicate myself to helping society, to solving the problem of pain for patients all over the body, and most importantly, to let them recover their health.**



**Kevin Hwang**  
TIMA Physician

Since April 2008, TIMA San Jose has been participating in and providing dental care at the Healthy Living Health Fair, an annual event organized by several religious organizations, and its participation continues to date. On May 19, 2013, the Tzu Chi campus in Milpitas also launched a bi-weekly designated free dental clinic,



Dr. Kevin Hwang explains the causes of spinal nerve pain. *Photo/Bai Binyi*



Dr. Chinghsin Wong conducts dental services for patients at the Healthy Living Health Fair in April 2015. *Photo/Wenhsien Sun*

providing oral hygiene education, scaling, filling, and extraction services for low-income households without dental insurance.

On January 9, 2017, a Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) outpatient service was added to the designated free clinic. Here, “designated” means that it is no longer just a one-time visit for the patient, who can return to this office for regular follow-up and planned resolution of ailments. Since then, internal medicine, chiropractic, and other services have also been added, and it is hoped that more people will benefit through the expanded designated free clinic. The designated free dental clinic in Milpitas paused its service in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and reopened to the public on July 12, 2021, after the lockdown lifted in California.

Since June 25, 2023, the Northwest Region began offering free community clinic services at its Office in San Jose to provide low-income residents with Western medicine, TCM, dentistry, ophthalmology, chiropractic care, and other specialty services. While people who went to the bi-weekly designated free clinic in Milpitas had to provide a Medi-Cal card or proof of low income, the free community clinic at the Northwest Region Office in San Jose — held

three times a year (spring, summer, and fall) — was open to anyone seeking treatment.

Hangsheng Ni, a patient from the designated free dental clinic in Milpitas, is a community resident with a low income who holds a green card. He recalled initially going to the clinic with mixed feelings because he didn’t know how the volunteers would view him. “But then, when I saw the volunteers treated the people at the clinic in a warm and friendly way, my concern was relieved,” he said. “And I was at ease after Dr. Stephanie Wang explained the condition of my teeth.” After stepping out of the clinic, he saw a piece of empty land on campus. Thinking of the enthusiasm and patience of the medical staff and volunteers just moments ago, he made a wish to use this piece of land to plant vegetables for the free clinic’s medical staff and volunteers. Later, this empty land became a bountiful vegetable garden for all.

The designated free dental clinic in Milpitas was relocated to the Northwest Region Office in San Jose in October 2023, and continues to provide quality medical care to low-income families in need.



In June 2023, the medical team and volunteers take a group photo at a community free clinic in San Jose after a busy day. Photo/Kitty Lu





In May 2012, volunteers Nancy Ku and her husband Robert Ku bring a cake to the hospital for Puisham Wong and his wife Min Lu after a kidney transplant surgery. *Photo/Nancy Ku*

## Renal Support Groups

Tzu Chi Northwest Region volunteers in the San Jose area had discovered from free clinics and health talks that many long-term dialysis patients of Chinese descent needed help. In 2005, they established a Renal Support Group to fill the lack of dialysis medical information available in Chinese. The Group is dedicated to providing free services in Chinese, including medical information, home care, diet and nutrition guidance, and social resources, with the goal of alleviating the suffering of patients and their families, and improving their quality of life.

In the early days, there was only one dialysis nurse and a few support group members. Later, the healthcare team increased year by year, and now there are kidney specialists, dialysis center nurses, dietitians, dermatologists, pharmacists, and others involved, and they have served hundreds of support group members, among whom more than 100 patients have had successful kidney transplants.

The success of Tzu Chi USA Northwest Region's first Renal Support Group would inspire the establishment of others. On October 19, 2014, the Sacramento Service Center started one to meet the community's need for kidney health information. Participants in the Group include patients and family members who share their caregiving and kidney transplant experiences.

The Northwest Region's team of healthcare professionals and volunteers regularly invites nephrologists to Tzu Chi Renal Support Groups to share medical knowledge, case experiences, dietary health guidelines, and precautions to take before and after kidney transplantation. They also set up care cases for patients in need of help, accompanying them through the uneasiness of undergoing dialysis and the journey of successful kidney transplantation.

Patient Puisham Wong came into contact with a Renal Support Group in 2006 due to a kidney problem. During the five years when he waited for the kidney transplant, he

experienced both physical and mental anguish. Despite receiving a kidney transplant in 2012, many unforeseen conditions occurred. The Renal Support Group volunteers accompanied Wong and his wife Min Lu along the way, helping the couple navigate life's hurdles one after another. Lu said she lost count of the number of Tzu Chi volunteers who had helped them and was deeply grateful.

**My husband's rebirth was made possible by Tzu Chi. Without Tzu Chi, he would not be here today. Those unforgettable days are still fresh in my memory and will be remembered forever. Our family is really grateful!**

**Min Lu**

*Renal Support Group Member*

Lu is grateful to Tzu Chi for its care for more than a decade through the hardships of her husband's dialysis and kidney transplantation. She was so moved that she became a Tzu Chi volunteer, vowing to spread the love Tzu Chi has given them. Every day, she cares for local seniors, some of whom have been on dialysis for a long time, and some have terminal cancer. With love and patience, Lu accompanies them and their families through difficult times. "I'm grateful to Tzu Chi, and to volunteers Sherry Shih and Steve Shih, who are my husband's saviors," she said.



Min Lu (right), who was moved to become a Tzu Chi volunteer in 2023, poses with Renal Support Group volunteer Sherry Shih. Photo/ Kitty Lu



Tzu Chi organizes free kidney function screenings in collaboration with the National Kidney Foundation. Photo/Tzu Chi USA Northwest Region

Patient Rucheng Lin started dialysis when he was 55 years old due to kidney failure. In 2009, he joined the Tzu Chi Renal Support Group, where many doctors, nurses, and dietitians regularly provided him with the most up-to-date information, which helped him become more confident. Seven years later, he successfully completed kidney transplant surgery in 2016. "After the surgery, Tzu Chi volunteers came to visit me, which made me feel warm, and I am very grateful for the selfless love of Tzu Chi volunteers," said Lin. "I hope to continue to make progress in the future, and will fully support Tzu Chi's activities."



Renal Support Group volunteers accompany patients through life's hurdles one after another. Photo/Chris Fung





Combining the efforts of Tzu Chi volunteers from Northern, Central, and Southern California, Tzu Chi USA holds its first free medical event in Fresno in 2001, while providing free haircutting and second-hand clothing donations. *Photo/Tzu Chi USA*



While TIMA Fresno was officially established on April 26, 2003, it had been providing free medical resources to local farmworker families long before that.

Tzu Chi's free medical activities in Central California started in Fresno and then expanded to include other agricultural towns. Over the past 20 years, it has encountered many remarkable stories during medical and charitable relief since 1994.

### Lighting the Way Onward

When Yuanling Cho returned to Taiwan to visit her father, who had received a Japanese education and had a strong character, she saw him in tears as he read an article about Dharma Master Cheng Yen. And so, she read the article out of curiosity. Deeply moved, Cho vowed to become "Fresno's first seed of Tzu Chi."

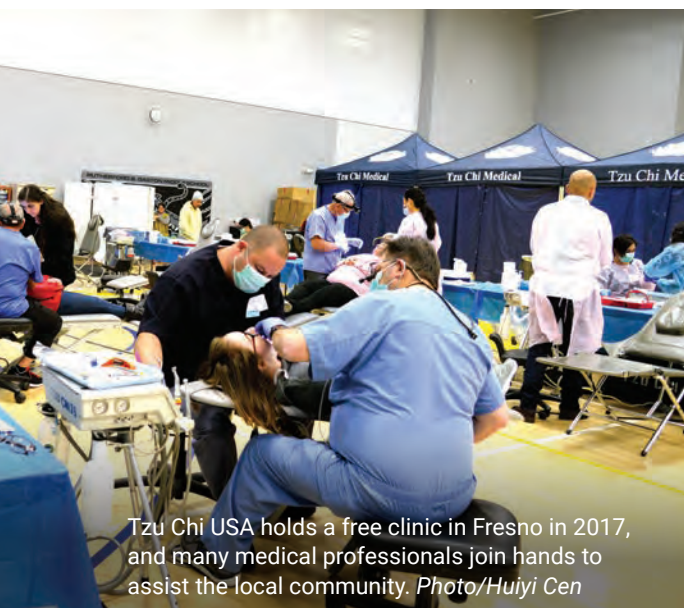
On January 15, 1994, Cho, the first director of Tzu Chi USA's Fresno Service Center, hosted an inaugural tea gathering to promote Tzu Chi's missions in Central

California's agricultural communities. In 2000, Cho and Grace Yang, the then director of the Fresno Service Center, traveled to Bakersfield to participate in Tzu Chi's free medical activities three times to observe the process. They actively sought support from the Tzu Chi USA Chapter (now Tzu Chi USA National Headquarters) to start a free clinic program in Fresno.

Finally, the city of Fresno held its first large-scale free clinic, serving 1,000 patients on-site on August 19, 2001.



Tzu Chi USA holds a free clinic in Fresno in 2014, and volunteers work together to carry the medical equipment off the vehicle. *Photo/Robert Ku*



Tzu Chi USA holds a free clinic in Fresno in 2017, and many medical professionals join hands to assist the local community. *Photo/Huiyi Cen*

Grace Yang recalled the origins of the free clinic activities, saying, “I knew of a lot of doctors because of my work, so I started the first free clinic in 2001, which is the year after I joined Tzu Chi. I’m very thankful that all the volunteers from Northern and Southern California came to support the program, and more than 300 people came on that day.”

The Fresno volunteer team set up the first Tzu Chi office on November 2, 2002, and actively carried out the free clinic program, gaining the support of many local doctors.



Olivia Chung (middle), Tzu Chi USA’s Mobile Health Care Manager and the Manager of TIMA Fresno, has been continuously involved in Tzu Chi’s free clinic program in Central California for two decades. *Photo/Jiehyun Liu*

With this first-time experience under their belts, Fresno volunteers organized a large-scale free clinic in May 2002 in collaboration with the Tzu Chi free clinic in Alhambra, California, and the Kerman Health Center, serving more than 1,000 people. With the sponsorship of Kaiser Permanente, another free medical event was held in August 2002, serving more than 1,000 people.

“This collaboration had a far-reaching impact. Kaiser Permanente recognized the enthusiasm and efficiency of the Tzu Chi team and has since become one of the key partners in Tzu Chi’s free clinic activities. During the free clinic, we also met Maika Yang and Gold Yang, sisters from the Hmong community, and Maika Yang offered advice to the then budding medical service program,” recalled Yuenling Cho.

Maika Yang was working for Stone Soup Fresno, a nonprofit organization that assists refugee children and families, as well as other families in need of support in Fresno County. Thus, she had a deep connection with the community and related experience. When she learned that the Fresno team wanted to expand the free clinic but was worried about funding, she suggested they apply for sponsorship from organizations such as Kaiser Permanente, like a candle showing the way forward. Later, both sisters became Tzu Chi volunteers.

“We started from scratch, and many volunteers offered valuable advice. Kaiser Permanente knew that the Tzu Chi team was capable of organizing free clinics and could make greater use of its limited budget, so it has been supporting Fresno’s free clinic activities,” Olivia Chung, who has been in charge of the Fresno medical team since 2003 and is currently the Manager of TIMA Fresno, explained. While the volunteer team started from scratch, with diligence, effort, and partner collaboration, it actualized Tzu Chi USA’s goal of focusing on medical services in Fresno.



## 925 TIMA Members

After the official launch of TIMA Fresno in April 2003, it began supporting Tzu Chi's large free clinics throughout the Central California region.

"Due to geographic proximity, volunteers from Fresno and its neighboring cities of Merced, Modesto, Stockton, and Sacramento have upheld an excellent relationship with each other and support each other," Olivia Chung said. "Due to security concerns, all volunteers who assist the Fresno free clinic are required to fill out a TIMA form," Chung explained, summarizing that "As of 2023, there are 925 volunteers listed, of which 332 are healthcare professionals, and 60 are active healthcare professionals who are in regular contact and willing to come to the clinic to serve."

**The high percentage of active professional healthcare volunteers in Fresno is not only due to the high number of free clinic activities, but also means that the healthcare professionals recognize the efforts of the Tzu Chi team.**

**Olivia Chung**  
Manager  
TIMA Fresno



Nurse Siwelin Wong, who continues to participate in Tzu Chi's free clinic activities, receives a commendation. Photo/Nancy Ku



The late Dr. Minfu Chiang devoted himself to Tzu Chi's free clinic activities for more than a decade after retirement. Photo/Nancy Ku



The Tzu Chi Medical Center, where the Tzu Chi Fresno Mobile Health Care's office is located, officially opens on April 7, 2012. Photo/Linmei Xue



Tzu Chi volunteers organize a free clinic for low-income students, giving small gifts to parents and students. *Photo/Huiyi Cen*

Central California is an important agricultural area in the state where many early Chinese immigrants worked as farmers. At the time, Stockton was the third largest California town populated by Chinese immigrants, after San Francisco and Sacramento. Initially, Chinese farmers were working hard to cultivate and improve the production of the oranges that originated in China here in this new land. However, by the time Tzu Chi volunteers came here, many Chinese immigrant families had moved elsewhere, and most agricultural workers thereafter were Hispanic. Many had no fixed abode or legal status, and their health was affected by the long hours of labor and chemical fertilizers, yet most didn't have medical insurance and couldn't afford to see a doctor. Tzu Chi's free clinic activities have become their beacon of hope for healing.

"Although there aren't that many Tzu Chi volunteers in Fresno, we have many TIMA volunteers, and they're very active. Most of them are from hospitals or clinics, or they are college students," Olivia Chung said. "An appraisal is required for nurses in hospitals such as Kaiser Permanente's Fresno Medical Center every once in a while, and the appraisal includes the number of hours of community service. As such, many of them

would come to Tzu Chi's free clinic activities on their own initiative, dedicating their expertise and time," she explained. Chung is thankful for the participation of professional volunteers, and tries her best to work with them when organizing free clinics. "For example, we started the Healthy Fresno program in 2013, which was originally a large-scale free clinic activity held once a year for two consecutive days. But according to the volunteers, it is difficult for them to come out for two days in a row. So, we changed the program to every six months and chose a Saturday to make it easier for healthcare volunteers to participate, thus achieving the goal of mutual cooperation," she reported.

The medical care at free clinics also led to charity care initiatives in some cases. After patients received consultations, the volunteers would introduce Tzu Chi and its missions, and through these interactions, they could identify families in need of charity care support.

Chung recalled several such cases: "Nasaria Olivera, a single mother, was abandoned by her husband and raised nine children on her own. Julia Flores is another; she is a farmworker with seven children. Both of them came to know Tzu Chi through the free clinic."



Tzu Chi Fresno volunteers invite Sara (left), an Afghan refugee and care recipient, to participate in a distribution in 2022. *Photo/Yuanling Cho*





Tzu Chi volunteers have cared for Nasaria Olivera's family for a long time, and are grateful to have been by their side as hope was slowly restored. Photo/US Tzu Chi 360 Video Screenshot

## Nasaria Olivera and Julia Flores

Nasaria Olivera immigrated to the U.S. in 2004, and her husband had been missing for a long time. Without a job, she struggled to raise her nine children. At one point, when she was unable to respond to school notices to provide doctor's reports for vaccinations or paperwork for food pickups, the school notified the Social Services Department, and she was deemed as an irresponsible parent, which resulted in the children being placed into foster care by the Department. "In 2018, when she brought her four children to the school, a Tzu Chi free vision care event for check-ups and prescription glasses was going on, and I saw that she had tears in her eyes. I took the initiative to go over and talk to her, realizing that she and her children were in great need of help. After I inquired with the school to find out more about the situation, the family was referred to the charity team as a family in need of care," Olivia Chung reflected.

Fresno volunteers began by cleaning Nasaria Olivera's small mobile home, and then arranged for a pediatrician and a family doctor to visit the family during monthly home visits to check on the family's health, confirm vaccinations, and arrange for them to see a dentist. "We continued to accompany



Fresno volunteers pose for a group photo with Julia Flores (middle) after helping her move. Photo/Jaime Puerta

Nasaria until her two older children had jobs. She also found a job, and the family settled before stopping the financial and material support," shared Chung. Looking back, she smiled, saying, "Nasaria also brought her children to Tzu Chi this year for eyeglasses and dental appointments, and when her family is in need, she thinks of Tzu Chi."

Julia Flores came to Tzu Chi's free clinic in 2017 with her family. Volunteers noticed this hardworking mom with multiple children, and with her and her husband's permission,



the Tzu Chi USA video team documented the family's experiences on film. After the documentary was edited, the volunteers happily contacted them through the local church so they could come and watch the film. The nuns replied that Julia's husband had suffered a stroke and passed away, and the landlord asked that she and her children move out of their trailer home, making their lives very difficult.

"Tzu Chi volunteers immediately started a charity care program to help them find a new rental home, subsidized the rent, and assisted them in moving and obtaining used furniture until the family was stabilized," Chung recounted. "Julia found a new job with staff accommodation in May 2020, and her eldest son has grown to an adult and found a job to support his family. The family's financial situation has improved a lot. So, when we went to assist her with her move, she smiled and told us that she no longer needed the family subsidy," Chung said, smiling once more as she shared the hopeful outcome of the story, and her joy for the family was unmistakable.

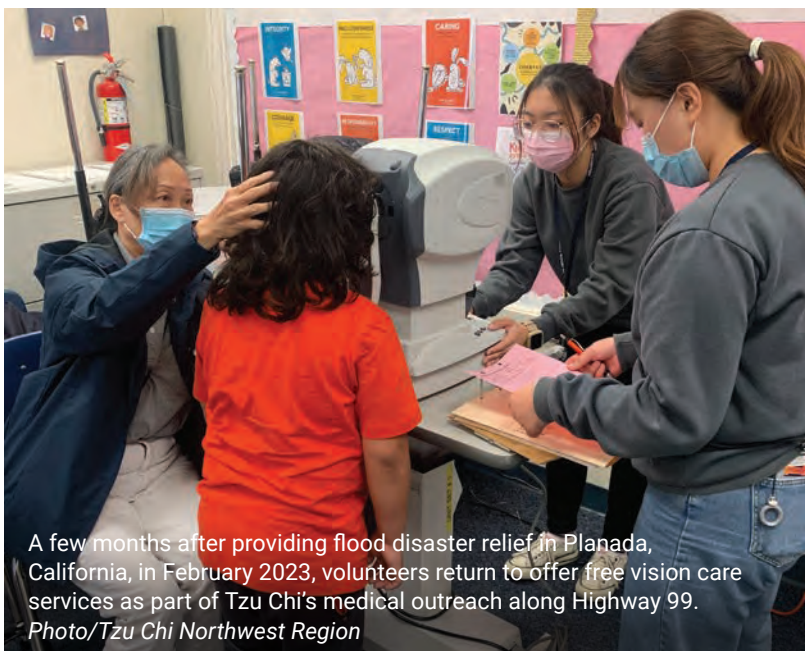
The Julia Flores case also gave the volunteers more food for thought. "Julia's husband didn't come to the free clinic for a medical check-up and later died of a cerebral hemorrhage. Learning from this experience, we have since paid extra attention to the physical condition of the whole family in care recipient cases, and have taken the initiative to arrange for doctors to make home visits to help parents continue to take care of their families," said Steven Voon, Deputy CEO of the Buddhist Tzu Chi Medical Foundation.



Fresno volunteers help translate the medical records of patients at a free medical outreach event on a cold day in 2013. Photo/Nancy Ku



Tzu Chi partners with Healthy Fresno and provides a platform, equipment, and workforce. Pictured is a free clinic event in 2013. Photo/Steven Voon



A few months after providing flood disaster relief in Planada, California, in February 2023, volunteers return to offer free vision care services as part of Tzu Chi's medical outreach along Highway 99. Photo/Tzu Chi Northwest Region



## TIMA Sacramento

Tzu Chi USA's Sacramento Service Center was established in 2002. Three years later, TIMA Sacramento was officially established in August 2005 amidst many blessings and boundless joy.

Right after its establishment, TIMA Sacramento was mainly engaged in two aspects of medical activities under the leadership of Joyce Lee, the convener. Local volunteers worked tirelessly to support the free clinic activities in other districts long before the establishment of TIMA, such as in the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas near Ukiah and in Fresno. What's more, medical lectures on various topics were held to popularize medical knowledge for the local community.

With their accumulation of medical service experience and a growing team, the time was ripe for TIMA Sacramento's first free clinic event, which was held in Woodland, 15 miles northwest of Sacramento, on September 27, 2009. The TIMA chapters of neighboring cities supported the activity, and the TIMA

Fresno team provided all the free clinic equipment. On the day of the event, there was a huge crowd of people waiting outside the free clinic venue, even before the sun came up.

The free clinic primarily served low-income families, providing a variety of medical services such as dentistry, Western medicine, Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), and acupuncture. During the long wait for dental services, volunteers offered haircuts with the help of a local professional stylist. After coming out of the free clinic, the patients felt healthier and more refreshed.

In 2011 and 2012, the Northwest Region and Remote Area Medical worked together for two consecutive years and organized a free clinic in Sacramento, which was a four-day activity benefiting over 1,000 people at Cal Expo in Sacramento.

On its own, TIMA Sacramento has held a large-scale free clinic almost every year since the first one in 2009. However, 2017 saw a change in the free clinic's focus. As the California government extended its arms to accept international refugees on

On September 27, 2009, people line up in an orderly fashion to enter the TIMA Sacramento free clinic in Woodland.

*Photo/Nancy Ku*







On September 27, 2009, TIMA Sacramento holds its first free clinic with a U.S.-Mexico Binational Health Week. Pictured is Dr. Richard Russ tending to patients. *Photo/Nancy Ku*

humanitarian grounds, a large number of refugees from Pakistan, Afghanistan, Russia, and Ukraine arrived in the United States. In response to the influx of newly arrived families in Sacramento, TIMA partnered with Yolo County Children's Alliance, Holy Cross, and the Highlands Community Charter and Technical School to conduct free clinics in

2017, 2019, and 2022 to serve local refugees with dental, vision, Western medicine, and TCM services. Highlands Community Charter and Technical School additionally provided translators to facilitate the communication of patients who speak different languages.



On September 27, 2009, the dental clinic event requires the mobilization of many volunteers and a lot of dentistry equipment. *Photo/Nancy Ku*



## A Joyful Ticket

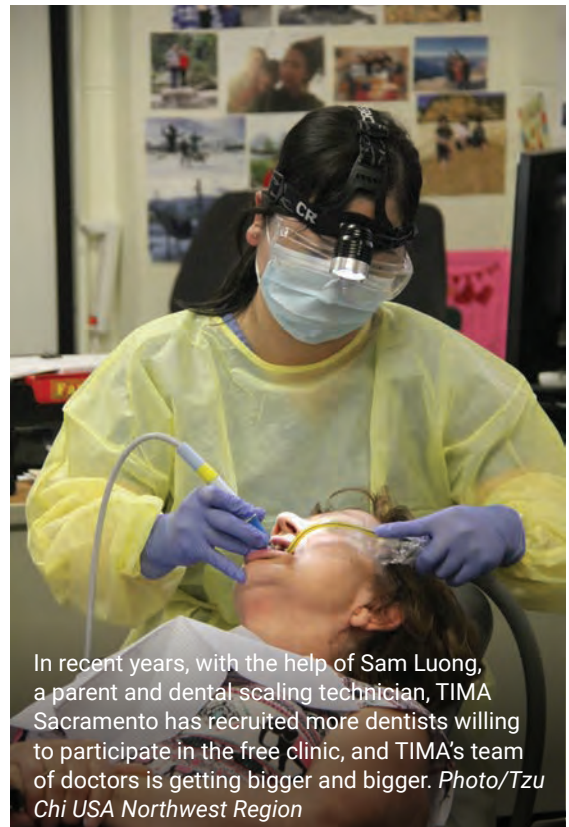
Although TIMA Sacramento did not hold large-scale free medical service events during the COVID-19 pandemic, doctors and volunteers were not idle, and even now, continue providing Personal Protective Equipment to many hospitals in the community, such as Sutter Medical Center, UC Davis Medical Center, Kaiser Permanente, Mercy Hospital of Folsom, the Sacramento VA Medical Center, skilled nursing facilities, and the general public.

TIMA Sacramento resumed its large-scale free clinic in 2022. As the pandemic had not yet wholly dissipated, everyone entering the free clinic had their temperature measured and was required to take a COVID-19 test to protect patients and volunteers. Also, unlike at previous large-scale events, the free clinic served patients on a first-come, first-serve basis. TIMA Sacramento's large-scale free clinic events since 2022 have shifted to appointment-based ones because more and more patients were waiting to be seen after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Organizing free clinics can involve many challenges, with one of the biggest being finding doctors willing to participate. When inviting local doctors to partake in volunteer-driven events like these, TIMA Sacramento volunteers would search through Yellow Pages phone books or the internet to find out what hospitals were near the address where they wanted to hold the event, and then go directly to visit them. Of course, rejection was not uncommon.

There was one experience, however, that Nancy Ku knew would be unforgettable: "One day, I walked into a dentist's office to recruit doctors. The receptionist was very

kind when hearing that I wanted to invite doctors to participate in community service. The doctor came out just as he had finished his consultation, so I asked him if he was willing to participate in the free clinic, and he said yes, which was amazing! Unbelievably, I went to visit another dentist in the community on the same day, and he also said yes! I was even happier! It was a great day. I was so happy that I missed the building for the third dentist's clinic and was stopped by a police officer at an intersection when I was trying to take a U-turn. 'Didn't you see that you're not allowed to take a U-turn here?' the officer asked. The ticket was my first in over 30 years driving in the U.S. but I wasn't upset at all, because I was really that happy."



In recent years, with the help of Sam Luong, a parent and dental scaling technician, TIMA Sacramento has recruited more dentists willing to participate in the free clinic, and TIMA's team of doctors is getting bigger and bigger. Photo/Tzu Chi USA Northwest Region

## TIMA San Francisco

Tzu Chi has a profound connection with the people of San Francisco's Chinatown. On December 13, 1994, Tzu Chi volunteers organized the inaugural ceremony of the San Francisco Service Center at the Holiday Inn in Chinatown. The first office of the Service Center was also located on Powell Street in Chinatown. Over the past 29 years, Tzu Chi volunteers have reached out to the Chinatown community, distributing food on a weekly basis for 12 years, and the total food distributed has amounted to 3.5 million pounds of food, benefiting nearly 100,000 families.

### Serving Low Income Communities

TIMA San Francisco began when William Keh, then director of the Tzu Chi Free Clinic in Alhambra, California, came to the Northwest Region to promote TIMA. Seeing the establishment of TIMA San Jose, Shirley Chen, then Director of the San Francisco Branch, was very excited, and encouraged San Francisco volunteers to further the medical mission.

Taking the encouragement to heart, in 2004, San Francisco Branch and professional



On November 11, 2000, San Francisco Service Center organized the Tzu Chi Health Fair in Oakland. Photo/Courtesy of TIMA San Francisco

medical volunteers established the 17th TIMA chapter in the United States.

However, the medical mission in San Francisco was already active, as the volunteer team had organized a Tzu Chi Health Fair in the city long before TIMA San Francisco came into being. Before Thanksgiving in 2000, the Northwest Region and the San Francisco Service Center held the Tzu Chi Health Fair for the first time in San Francisco's Chinatown and in Oakland on November 11 and November 19, providing free health consultations to the community. Tzu Chi volunteers held a fundraising walk in Golden Gate Park on October 14 to raise money for these



TIMA San Francisco is officially established on July 16th, 2004, with Yuaner Wu, a Clinical Nurse Specialist, as the coordinator since then. Photo/Tzu Chi USA Northwest Region





two events, which many organizations and doctors supported.

The free clinic in San Francisco was set up in the sports field and gym of the Gordon J. Lau Elementary School, the largest elementary school in San Francisco's Chinatown. This vibrant community is also home to families living in Single Room Occupancy (SRO) residences. The SRO units are ten or even 20 small rooms separated from a floor's living spaces. Each unit is less than 40 square feet in size, and the rent is one-fifth to one-tenth of the average rent. There are many students from SRO families at Gordon J. Lau Elementary School. Tzu Chi USA's San Francisco Branch has been conducting weekly food distributions at the elementary school for a long time.

Other sponsors of health counseling services include the Chinese Community Health Care Association (CCHCA) and Chinese Hospital. CCHCA provided Tzu Chi's clinic with valuable osteoporosis testing equipment and invited its cardiologists, obstetricians, gynecologists, and podiatrists to participate in the event, thus expanding the range of medical services.

At the Tzu Chi Health Fair in Oakland, the Head Start Program – a U.S. government program that helps low-income families and parents of young children by providing early learning, health, and nutritional services, and has a three-year philanthropic partnership with the San Francisco Service Center – participated in the event. The organization also invited other local social service organizations, and provided more than a dozen medical-related booths at the venue. TCM doctor Lichun Ou's services had the highest community interest, with a four-page waiting list for consultation and massage.

Although the Tzu Chi Health Fair was paused in 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it continued to provide flu shots as needed. The Health Fair resumed in 2022 in the Alice Griffith community in San Francisco's Bayview area and in Chinatown in 2023. Over the years, TIMA has often been invited by other organizations to participate in large-scale community events, providing free medical consultations and dental services at the venue.



On February 18, 2023, the Tzu Chi San Francisco Branch and the Chinese Culture Center co-sponsor a Tzu Chi Health Fair event for the first time, featuring family medicine, TCM, spinal rehab, and blood glucose screening. Pictured is a TCM doctor consulting with the public in a Tzu Chi eco-tent. Photo/Lulu Yin

## Free Clinic Activities Meet the Happy Campus Program

In the beginning, TIMA San Francisco was primarily engaged in offering medical lectures in its office. As more people came for consultation, activities involving medical services were initiated, mobilizing more doctors and related professionals to come and support, or to provide medical-related information. Dentist Ronald Eng's wife works in the San Francisco Public Health Department. Through her, TIMA began collaborating with the City and County of San Francisco to provide dental and family medicine counseling to residents.

When TIMA held a dental consultation at Tzu Chi Academy in San Francisco, the school's 200–300 students received dental screenings, and community residents brought their children for help.

**We mainly serve new immigrants who don't have medical insurance and have language barriers. When they bring their children for counseling, we teach them Jing Si Aphorisms, help them as translators, and teach Chinese-speaking children English and English-speaking children Chinese. In fact, we started with teaching Jing Si Aphorisms, and then we got involved in medical services.**

**Yuener Wu**

*Clinical Nurse Specialist*



Helping a child is helping a family. In addition to dental counseling activities in Tzu Chi Academy, TIMA San Francisco also provided medical care at schools through Tzu Chi's Happy Campus Program.



On January 24, 2016, TIMA San Francisco partners with the UCSF Department of Dentistry to provide free dental services and dental health education to Tzu Chi Academy students in San Francisco. TIMA dentist David Lee is pictured second left. Photo/Yuener Wu



The Bayview–Hunters Point community is one of the most economically disadvantaged areas of San Francisco, with crime rates 161% higher compared to the national average as of 2018. Many schoolchildren come from low-income families, while others live without a fixed living space with their parents.

Beginning in 2006, Tzu Chi volunteers rolled out the Happy Campus Program in Bayview–Hunters Point to help students from underprivileged households. The first time the volunteers went to John Muir Elementary School to distribute groceries, they were shocked and saddened to see children who were so hungry that they grabbed uncooked rice and ate it on the spot. An eight-year-old told the volunteers that his future ambition was to be a “robber” so that he could buy

toys for his sister and a car to take his family to the doctor.

During the Happy Campus Program’s distributions, the San Francisco Branch saw that children also needed medical help, especially from the dental clinic. Therefore, the program was expanded, and medical volunteers went to the Alice Griffith Community to provide free dental services to local low-income families. Dentists would see the children and teach them oral hygiene, helping them maintain healthy teeth.

TIMA San Francisco and the University of California’s San Francisco Parnassus Campus School of Dentistry jointly held a dental care event on January 24, 2016, providing free dental services and dental



On August 9, 2014, TIMA San Francisco sets up at the Hunter’s Point Community Center to provide free dental services to local low-income families. *Photo/Deyang Chen*



UCSF Dentistry students use educational dental puppets to teach children how to properly brush their teeth on April 30, 2016. Pictured is Sara Pi (left), a dentistry student. *Photo/Huiyi Cen*



TIMA volunteers help increase access to essential dental health services for Hunter's Point families through Dental Mobile Clinic outreach on August 11, 2018. *Photo/Huiyi Cen*

health education to Tzu Chi Academy students in San Francisco. On April 30, the Happy Campus Program team planned dental checkups and fluoride treatments at Belle Haven Elementary School in East Palo Alto for students from low-income families and parents without dental insurance. TIMA San Jose and TIMA San Francisco worked with UCSF School of Dentistry students to make this dental service possible.

These dental services were paused when the COVID-19 pandemic swept across the United States.





On October 20, 2003, TIMA Modesto offers free flu shots to the public at the Modesto Service Center with Yingli Yang (second left), then head of the Service Center, coordinating the activity. Photo/Ray Walton

TIMA Modesto was formally established in June 2007 to help serve low-income community members without health insurance. Its services include acupuncture, Western medicine, dentistry, ophthalmology, and more. There are currently eight professional healthcare workers and ten Tzu Chi volunteers who participate in the Modesto chapter's activities regularly.

Modesto is located in Stanislaus County along Highway 99 in Northern California's Central Valley, about a two-hour drive from the well-known tourist destination of Yosemite National Park.

"TIMA Modesto does not have a Mobile Clinic or a designated clinic," explained Yingli Yang, a veteran volunteer. "For nearly 20 years, the team has worked with the Modesto city government and Merced County to provide free medical services in low-income communities," he said.

### The Farmer Who Sows Seeds of Healing

Yingli Yang is the former director of the Modesto Service Center. In describing his role, Yang said he was a farmer with little to do with medical care. "In 1996, there was a flood here, and San Jose volunteers, Silicon Valley Grandma Shiauchin Wang Lin and Austin Tsao, led a team and came over to



Dr. Chorngjen Hwang (right) sees a patient on July 18, 2010. Photo/Nancy Ku

provide relief. And I was able to connect with Tzu Chi. In the following year, 1997, I set up the Tzu Chi Modesto Service Center here,” he recounted.

“We promoted Tzu Chi in the community. It was not until 1999 that we tried our first medical activity, providing flu shots in our office at the beginning by inviting licensed doctors and nurses to come and support us. Since it was the first time we conducted medical activities, everyone was very excited. It was also the first time that the local people were introduced to Tzu Chi’s free medical services,” Yang said, outlining how the medical mission began.

“In 2001, we participated in the free clinic activity at the Fresno Service Center, which further enhanced Modesto’s determination to carry out more medical care, because there are many farmworkers in our Central Valley area, and 90% of them are Hispanic and many do not have legal status or medical insurance. They are also afraid to go out to seek medical treatment and, therefore, need medical care more urgently,” he continued, revealing the situation in this service area.

Modesto is located in the San Joaquin Valley, one of California’s most productive agricultural areas, and is known for its dairy products, nuts, and melons. Yet the hardships of

farmworkers are little known. Many people are undocumented with poor-quality housing, low pay, lack of legal protection, and no medical insurance.

On July 28, 2002, Tzu Chi held its first free clinic event in Modesto, providing Traditional Chinese Medicine and Western medicine, ophthalmology, dentistry, and pediatric services, as well as blood pressure, glucose, hemoglobin, and cholesterol measurements and tests. The event mobilized 130 health-care professionals and volunteers from Tzu Chi USA’s Northwest Region. The team from the Tzu Chi Free Clinic in Alhambra was also there to support the activity. The event aimed to focus on farmworkers and low-income families, and 465 people were served.



On July 26, 2009, acupuncturist Sucheng Yu thoughtfully examines a patient. *Photo/Nancy Ku*



An X-ray technician prepares to take an oral X-ray of a patient’s teeth. *Photo/Nancy Ku*





On July 18, 2010, TIMA and the City of Modesto Parks, Recreation & Neighborhoods Department collaborate to hold a free clinic, where volunteers dispense medication according to doctors' prescriptions. Photo/Nancy Ku

The inaugural free clinic event showed Modesto volunteers the urgent needs of local farmworkers, as well as their happiness when attending, which further bolstered Yingli Yang's and the volunteers' desire to offer such free medical services. A blueprint for Tzu Chi's medical activities was constantly being developed in Yang's mind. Several years later, his wish was finally realized. One of the reasons for this is that Tzu Chi is very mindful of starting free clinic activities. Before a new TIMA chapter can conduct free clinic activities, its members must go to other regions for "internship and observation," where members of the more developed TIMAs can coach them for a certain period.

In 2007, Dr. Chornghjen Hwang moved from Ohio to Modesto and became the TIMA convenor. "Later, we went to Los Angeles. With the help of the then Buddhist Tzu Chi Medical Foundation manager Debra Bourdeaux, who is the current CEO of Tzu Chi USA, and volunteer Huiping Wang, TIMA Modesto was finally officially established," said Yang.

## Treating a Full Mouth of Teeth in Three Years

Due to its small workforce, each time TIMA Modesto conducted free clinics in the early days, support from other teams was required for the activity to be successful. Medical professionals and volunteers from Stockton, Tracey, and Fresno would come to help. There was also support from as far away as Sacramento and San Jose. All teams helped to make the free clinics thrive.



A doctor treats a patient's teeth on July 22, 2012. Photo/Nancy Ku

Many Modesto residents rely on Tzu Chi for free medical care, especially dental care, as the scope of need is often not covered by medical insurance.

There was once a patient who had a very severe dental condition. He didn't have medical insurance and had to look to Tzu Chi's free dental activities to address his condition. Yingli Yang expressed feeling somewhat helpless when mentioning this case: "We had a rule that patients could only have one tooth treated at a time and could only choose one of the services: Scaling, extraction, and filling. This patient could not solve all his dental problems at once, so he came to see us year after year, pursuing our free clinics for three years before he could have his dental problems completely treated."

## Winter Flooding

Led by Yingli Yang, in 2022, TIMA Modesto volunteers participated in the Care 4 Highway 99 vision care program run by Fresno's mobile clinic team. For TIMA Modesto, this medical outreach service, developed during the COVID-19 pandemic, could motivate its volunteers to come out and get involved, while the Fresno mobile clinic team remained in charge of discussion, evaluation, planning, and execution of

the program. Modesto is located halfway between Stockton, Sacramento, and Fresno, and due to the Fresno team's plan of conducting at least 14–20 free medical events per year, it would be more convenient and practical to set off from Modesto. For this reason, TIMA Fresno temporarily stored ophthalmic equipment in Yang's home, who was more than happy to lead the Modesto team in carrying out this extended program.

**We were able to do the optometry part, and TIMA Fresno is well-equipped to work on the lenses. So, our partnership with them could allow people to get new eyeglasses within 48 hours.**

**Yingli Yang**

*Tzu Chi Volunteer*



At the end of December 2022, Northern California continued to experience heavy rains, resulting in sharply rising water levels. The heavy rain caused flooding in many areas and flooded streets. President Biden declared a state of emergency in California on January 9, 2023. Floods caused severe damage in Merced County, including the Planada community just a short distance away. Many residents lost their homes and everything they owned, including their eyeglasses. The Fresno mobile clinic team contacted the local school district superintendent through TIMA Modesto. Upon reaching an agreement, two free vision care events were held at Planada Elementary School and two at Cesar E. Chavez Middle School, where children received vision exams and prescription eyeglasses if needed.



Volunteer Tony Ma gives free haircuts to patients who came to a free dental care event on July 22, 2012. Photo/Nancy Ku



## Partnering with the City

In July 2003, the Modesto Service Center accepted the invitation of the City of Modesto Parks, Recreation & Neighborhoods Department to conduct a free medical service event for the local community at César E. Chávez Park. The volunteers were happy to receive this invitation and immediately met to discuss related matters. They finally decided to form a free clinic team of two Western medicine doctors, two Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) doctors, three dentists, five nurses, and 75 Tzu Chi volunteers. Among them, 39 were local volunteers from Modesto, while the other 36 came from San Jose, Fresno, Sacramento, and Stockton.

Bilingual volunteers were everywhere at the scene, asking questions and caring for the patients, ensuring their forms were filled out so their consultation would go smoothly. Many people from the Central Valley who came to the event were agricultural workers who did not speak English as their first language, so there was a great need for volunteer translators who not only understood and

spoke fluent Spanish and English, but also understood the cultural background of the patients who came to the clinic.

After the free medical outreach event concluded, the City of Modesto Parks, Recreation & Neighborhoods Department staff mentioned that there were many low-income families and people experiencing homelessness in the area, who all shared their hope that Tzu Chi could organize free clinics more times per year, and the City would do its best to provide venues and related equipment. Since then, Modesto and the City of Modesto Parks, Recreation & Neighborhoods Department have worked together to hold the clinic event every July, pausing only for three years during the COVID-19 pandemic.

From 2010 to 2023, TIMA Modesto partnered with Merced County to hold a free clinic at Tenaya Middle School on the first Sunday of November each year; the services included TCM, Western medicine, and dentistry. Despite these efforts, Tzu Chi's team always hoped to do more for the communities they serve. Yingli Yang lamented, "The



On July 21, 2013, people line up in an orderly manner to enter the free clinic venue at the park.  
Photo/Nancy Ku



Dentist Stephanie Wang (left) and dental assistant Manju Lin treat a patient on July 21, 2013. Photo/Wenhsien Sun



A Traditional Chinese Medicine doctor happily chats with a child visiting the clinic on July 21, 2013. Photo/Wenhsien Sun



The Tzu Chi Mobile Clinic arrives to support the free clinic on July 21, 2013. Photo/Wenhsien Sun

demand for the dental free clinic was particularly strong, with more than 100 people lining up early in the morning. Due to equipment and the number of doctors, the clinic was only able to take about 70 patients at a time, which was quite regrettable."

Another challenge was related to facilitating the event's mission in the long term. "We have no problems with our medical hardware and equipment, professional medical staff, and enthusiastic volunteers. However, many of the people who come to the free clinic leave without providing complete info due to lack of a fixed residence, making it impossible to follow up on individual cases," Yang said.

The medical volunteers, including Yang, all share this concern regarding relieving patients' pain, because a single meeting may not be enough to truly help those in need of support. This dedication is the most essential feature of Tzu Chi's medical mission. Even though there are many hurdles, the volunteers will not give up easily. There is still a long way to go in the future, but in this vast region, Tzu Chi's love is even more expansive than the land.



## TIMA Seattle

"TIMA Seattle was established in Seattle's Chinatown on June 26, 2004, which happened to be the opening day of the Tzu Chi Seattle Chinatown Service Center," said Angela Wan, a first-generation Seattle volunteer who has followed Tzu Chi for 30 years.

TIMA Seattle has conducted medical consultations and lectures at the Tzu Chi Chinatown Service Center and the Chinatown Community Center since 2004.

TIMA Seattle has also provided free flu shots to students in low-income school districts. In 2012, it began a partnership with Walgreens Pharmacy. "Luckily, we knew a pharmacist at Walgreens Pharmacy, and we've been providing free flu shots and medical counseling to the community at the Chinatown Community Center," said Wan.



On April 1, 2017, Dr. Peter Chuang of TIMA Seattle provides medical consultations to the public. Photo/Edward Lin



On July 14, 2012, a Traditional Chinese Medicine doctor from TIMA Seattle provides medical consultations at the Chinatown Sea Fair. Photo/Edward Lin



TIMA Seattle nurse Lichien Chou (left) checks blood glucose and measures blood pressure at a health fair on October 17, 2017, at a senior assisted living facility. Photo/Angela Wan



On October 20, 2021, TIMA offers free COVID-19 vaccinations to Seattle residents. Photo/Angela Wan

In addition, TIMA Seattle has regularly participated in four large-scale neighborhood events each year: Seattle Chinatown Seafair, Washington State Fair, Chinese Information and Service Center Annual

Senior Resource Fair, and Living Well Health Fair. At the event booths, TIMA provided residents with blood sugar and blood pressure measurement, medical consultations, and other services. Besides large-scale events, TIMA doctors periodically worked with volunteers to provide home care, offering free acupuncture and rehab consultations for individual care recipients.

Between 2021 and 2022, as the COVID-19 pandemic gripped the nation, TIMA provided free COVID-19 vaccinations to Seattle residents eight times, garnering an unprecedented response.

**The secret to 30 years of relentless perseverance is the courageous heart of a lion, the pure heart of a child, and the patience of a camel. Listen to the words of Master Cheng Yen, do the right thing when the thing is right!**

**Angela Wan**

Tzu Chi Volunteer 🌿



TIMA Seattle offers free blood sugar and blood pressure measurement, as well as medical consultations on March 30, 2019. Photo/Angela Wan

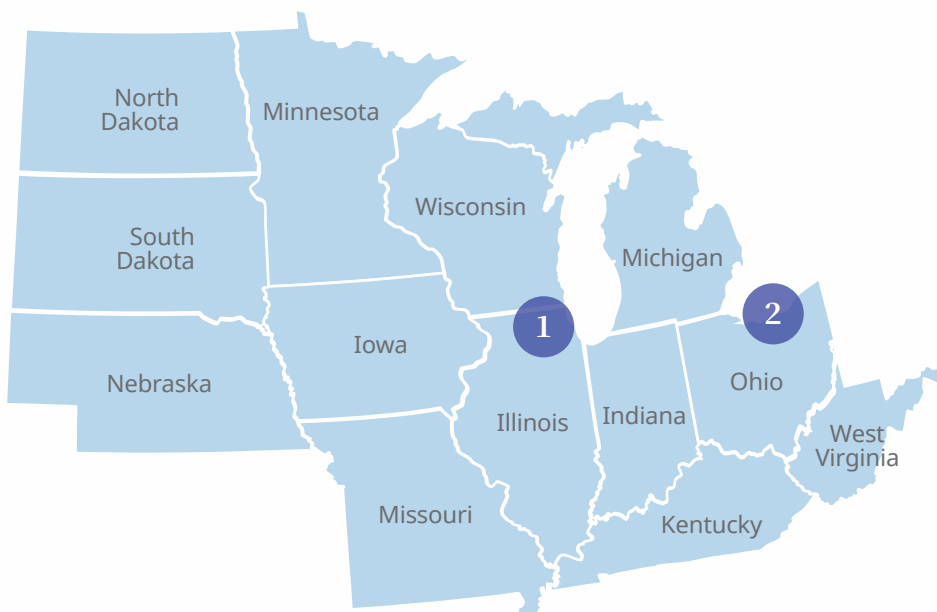


## TIMA USA Midwest Region

Written by Monica Chen, Yahmei Hsieh, and Yingying Lee

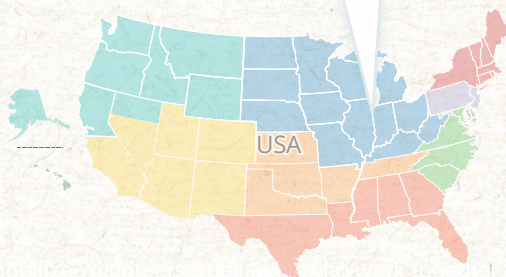
Translated by H.B Qin

### Tzu Chi USA Midwest Region TIMAs



1 | Chicago

2 | Cleveland



Tzu Chi's free clinic services mobilize volunteers and medical professionals to guard people's health in New York with love. Featured here is the free clinic opened in October 2019 for family members of the Chi USA Long Island Branch's 100th volunteers' birthday luncheon event.



Dr. Yung Cheng (middle) and his daughter Cher Cheng (left) participate in a TIMA Chicago community free clinic on August 20, 2006. Photo/Taisheng Chang

In TIMA USA Midwest Region's more than 20 years of free clinic activities, dentist Yung Cheng and his wife, Lipeng Cheng, alongside their son, Michael Cheng, and daughter, Cher Cheng, who are also dentists, have been a constant presence everyone notices. The whole family's participation in free clinics paints a warm and moving backdrop to the Midwest Region's free clinic activities.

In the early days, Dr. Yung Cheng's family connected with Tzu Chi because of their Buddhist studies. Lipeng Cheng recalled that the Tzu Chi USA Midwest Region office was on the second floor of a shopping mall in downtown Westmont, a suburb of Chicago, Illinois. Even though the family lived in Indiana, Cheng would use her free time on weekends to go to the Tzu Chi office in Illinois. However, there were fewer volunteers back then, and no one was there on weekends. Although she didn't get to meet any Tzu Chi volunteers, she didn't give up on this.

Once, she read in the newspaper that Stephen Huang, Executive Director of the Tzu Chi USA chapter (now Tzu Chi USA National Headquarters), was coming to Chicago to give a speech, and she drove there from Indiana to attend. After the event, she went to visit the Tzu Chi USA Midwest Region office in Westmont, and was greeted at the door by a volunteer, Tzuyueh Tong; it was through Tong that the Cheng family became Tzu Chi volunteers, and forged a connection with the Tzu Chi USA Midwest Region.

After the TIMA Chicago chapter came into being, Dr. Yung Cheng, who had practiced dentistry in Indiana for many years, was invited to join the free clinic team. He followed his and his wife's philosophy of "If there's a need there, let's go and help," and they did. Later, the couple's son and daughter, who became dentists around the same time, also participated in free clinic activities.



## Bone Marrow Donation

Located in Illinois and on the shore of Lake Michigan, Chicago is the third largest metropolitan area in the U.S. after New York and Los Angeles. Tzu Chi volunteers established an office here in March 1993, and in 1994, it was upgraded to a Branch and later to a Region. The Midwest Region volunteers' community-oriented medical activities began with Tzu Chi USA's nationwide charitable bone marrow donation initiative. The goal was to gather more data on Asian volunteers to provide more chances of living to patients waiting for marrow.

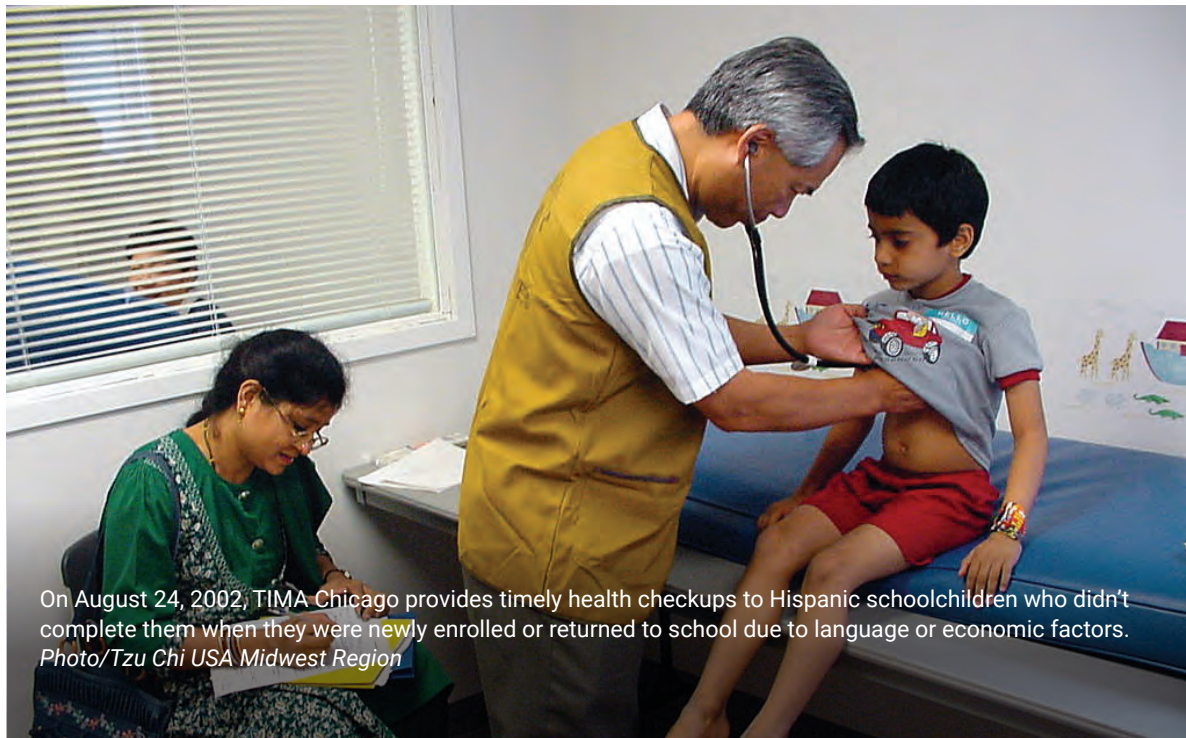
The Chicago Branch held its first blood test for bone marrow donation in Chicago's Chinese community in October 1994. In June 1995, the Branch participated in a garden party organized by the Chinese community and maintained the cleanliness of the venue while selling Tzu Chi books. In addition, medical team volunteers called on doctors to provide free clinics for families, with the scope of services covering general family health care, pediatrics, internal medicine, dentistry, obstetrics, and gynecology. The doctors offered attendees free checkups and health

consultation services and conducted blood tests for bone marrow donation on-site.

On July 20, 1997, the Chicago medical team cooperated with the Buddhist Tzu Chi Free Clinic in Alhambra, California. The group conducted blood testing for bone marrow donation, aiming to identify a bone marrow match for a 33-year-old Chinese youth surnamed Kuo, who had had myeloid leukemia for a long time. The activity received an enthusiastic response from the Chinese public. In the following years, the medical team held annual blood tests to recruit bone marrow donors for donor registry centers in the U.S. and Taiwan.

## From Consultation to Free Clinics

The TIMA Chicago chapter was established in 2002 by restructuring the Midwest Region's medical team. During the school year, TIMA Chicago collaborated with Warrenville Youth and Family Services to provide free health checkups at the Immanuel Presbyterian Church in Warrenville, in Chicago's Western Suburbs, for low-income children in the community, mainly composed of Hispanic families.



On August 24, 2002, TIMA Chicago provides timely health checkups to Hispanic schoolchildren who didn't complete them when they were newly enrolled or returned to school due to language or economic factors.  
Photo/Tzu Chi USA Midwest Region

Due to language or economic factors, these children couldn't complete their health checkups when they were newly enrolled or returned to school. TIMA provided timely medical services so the students could attend school as usual. Led by volunteers, they received measurements of weight, height, and blood pressure, as well as vision and hearing tests, dental checkups, vaccinations, and sports physical checkups. Since most of the schoolchildren came from Hispanic families, in addition to Tzu Chi volunteers, the church provided volunteer interpreter support, assisting parents in seizing the opportunity for face-to-face consultation with doctors.

**Many families had not been in the U.S. for a long time, and there were gaps between their health education level and that in the U.S. – they had not been to the doctor and had no record of vaccinations. In addition to checking their health, we also provided health education.**

**Steve Sun Kuang**  
*TIMA Physician*

In addition to routine health checkups upon new enrollment or returning to school, some parents took advantage of the free checkups to address any concerns hanging over their minds. A worried mother once brought her seven-year-old son to the doctor and told him that the boy had a tumor on his private part. After examination, the doctor found that it was only an abnormal object due to uncleanness and performed a simple procedure to remove it. The doctor instructed the mother to pay more attention to her child's hygiene in the future. She was finally relieved, thanked the doctor, and left with peace of mind.

Since the TIMA Chicago chapter began, Dr. Yung Cheng and his family have been the "Tzu Chi family" at the free clinic, with Lipeng Cheng acting as her husband's assistant and their daughter helping to fill out forms and organize paperwork. Later, both son and daughter became dentists, and one would see father-daughter or father-son teams at free dental clinics. Dr. Yung Cheng said, "Many children had never seen a dentist, and some didn't like to brush their teeth or even



A group picture of TIMA Chicago, Tzu Chi, and community volunteers commemorates the free clinic on August 20, 2006. Photo/Tony Cheng





Yahmei Hsieh (right), then Executive Director of the Tzu Chi USA Midwest Region, attends to free clinic patients at Truman College on August 19, 2007. Photo/Taisheng Chang



know how. There were many symptoms of tooth decay. Since prevention is better than a cure, we taught them oral hygiene and offered healthcare information". The family provided free dental care kits as gifts for children to encourage them to care for their oral health.

In the early days, since U.S. regulations limited free clinics, they focused on consultation. On July 4, 2003, Tzu Chi volunteer Yahmei Hsieh came to Chicago from Cleveland to take over as Executive Director of the Tzu Chi USA Midwest Region. As she reached out into communities, she witnessed the pain of poverty and illness and the difficulty of not being able to afford health insurance.

**I'm grateful for the full support of Dr. Jeng Su, the convener of TIMA. The Midwest Region has begun substantive free clinics and acquired equipment such as X-rays and sterilizers to provide dental services such as scaling, extractions, fillings, and consultation.**

**Yahmei Hsieh**

*Then Executive Director  
Tzu Chi USA Midwest Region*



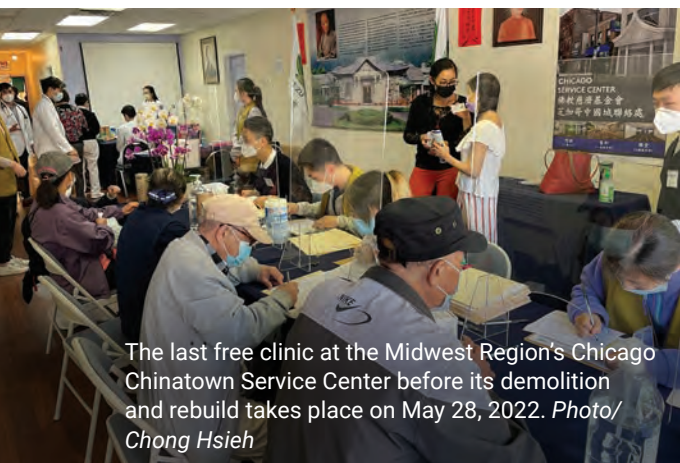
On September 5, 2011, Tzu Chi volunteers hold a blood test free clinic at the Midwest Region's Chicago Chinatown Service Center. Photo/Yahmei Hsieh

## Relieving Suffering in Chicago's Chinatown

Beginning in 2016, the Midwest Region and TIMA partnered with the First Ladies Health Initiative, a grassroots faith-based non-profit organization, holding a joint free clinic – First Lady Health Fair – every year. In addition to TIMA and Tzu Chi volunteers participating in the event, medical students from the University of Illinois at Chicago, Northwestern University, and Midwestern University were also present and



Traditional Chinese Medicine doctor Benchuan Gong (second left) consults patients at the free clinic held at the Chicago Chinatown Service Center's new office, while volunteer Cuizhu Yu (second right) helps to interpret Cantonese, making it easier for the doctor to ask questions. *Photo/Yahmei Hsieh*



The last free clinic at the Midwest Region's Chicago Chinatown Service Center before its demolition and rebuild takes place on May 28, 2022. *Photo/Chong Hsieh*

conducted health checkups for the public. The large-scale community free clinic provided healthcare consultation for Chicago's low-income residents. The event offered services in dentistry, Traditional Chinese Medicine, family medicine, internal medicine, dermatology, gynecology, pediatrics, and rehabilitation at the site. TIMA doctors of eight specialties participated in the free clinic to guard public health while reminding people to pay attention to their physical fitness and maintain a healthy lifestyle to prevent diseases.

The Midwest Region's Chicago Chinatown Service Center regularly organized free clinics and flu shots for uninsured, low-income, and older individuals who can't go to the hospital due to a lack of health insurance or a language barrier. Tzu Chi volunteers and TIMA provided free clinic health consultations, while medical students from Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine also came to help with the medical checkups.

The Chicago Chinatown Service Center is currently undergoing redevelopment, which everyone expects will be completed in August 2024. According to the plan, there will be a free clinic space on the fourth floor to provide free medical services in the future. "We hope to recruit more doctors and medical students to join us," said volunteer Hueyshann Sue, "We also hope to inform the public about the services that we will provide here in the future."

When the Midwest Region engaged in charity work, TIMA doctors would provide collaborative free medical services, including consultation to people experiencing homelessness during distributions for them. Once a year, the Region held a large-scale free clinic at Truman College for low-income families or people who can't afford healthcare premiums, where TIMA doctors provided medical services to residents of various heritage, including Indian, Chinese, Hispanic, and others. Language interpreter volunteers were on site so that each person with a language barrier could communicate with the doctor.

**Tzu Chi has done a great job! In addition to free services, there are also volunteers who assist in taking care of the patients, which is very touching!**



*Free Clinic Patient*





The Midwest Region joins the First Ladies Health Initiative's Health Fair for the third time. In addition to the participation of Tzu Chi and TIMA volunteers, 31 students from the medical schools of the University of Illinois at Chicago and Northwestern University help with basic health checkups and medical records, serving 109 people. *Photo/Scully Chen*

## Adapting to State Regulatory Restrictions

Tzu Chi USA Midwest Region's 13 local offices span more than a dozen states in the American Midwest, home to not only extreme weather but also some of the country's most impoverished towns and communities. It's been a known fact that hundreds of tornadoes ravage the Midwest each year, besides floods, fires, blizzards, and other calamities. Midwest Region volunteers must travel over 100 miles to reach and help those affected. While Tzu Chi volunteers conduct damage assessments and provide disaster relief distributions, TIMA volunteers offer free clinic services.

In June 2008, heavy rainfall for more than a month caused many Mississippi River tributaries to rise and flood, leaving tens of thousands of people homeless and forcing 25,000 to evacuate in ten Midwest states. In Iowa, 83 of its 99 counties incurred flooding, and Cedar Rapids, the second largest city in the state, was hardest hit, with more than 100 inundated streets.

From July 3 to 6, Tzu Chi volunteers held distributions and free clinics in Cedar Rapids, with TIMA volunteers from all over the U.S. coming to participate in the events. The doctors who took part in this trip were Dr. Minglong Shen, Dr. Amy Huang, Dr. Hiro Huang, Dr. Jeng Su, Dr. Yihsung Huang, and Dr. Quanmin Wang. Concurrently, TIMA Chicago doctors naturally took this medical mission upon themselves.

Since Iowa regulations don't allow out-of-state licensed practitioners to engage in direct contact medical practices, the volunteers began to seek support from local practitioners. Fortunately, Dr. Yihsung Huang urgently inquired about local dentists with Michele Lewis, a local dental material supplier, and then contacted Dr. Jerry Walker and his son, Dr. Todd Walker, who joined the clinic as a father-son team.

Many older residents had lost their dentures in the flood and were in great need of help. Dr. Huang contacted a local denture company, personally visited, and introduced Tzu Chi's intent to assist. However, those in charge

had reservations and couldn't decide whether they would be willing to help. Nonetheless, the day after Dr. Huang returned to Chicago, he received a phone call from the company offering free dentures. It turned out that a newspaper article about Tzu Chi made them change their mind. When they read that an organization founded by Master Cheng Yen, a Buddhist nun, was distributing dentures in Palo, Iowa, they decided to assist.

Tzu Chi's disaster relief efforts in the Midwest received considerable attention during this mission, with reporters from two local TV stations coming to the disaster relief service center for interviews on the first day of distributions and a reporter from the local TV Channel 9 asking questions about Tzu Chi's aid in Parkersburg and Palo, Iowa. Moreover, to this day, Tzu Chi is remembered in Cedar Rapids after leaving a lasting impression on the city's residents.

Dr. Quanmin Wang, who is not licensed to practice in Iowa, assisted in checking the information of care recipients during the distributions. Dr. Hiro Huang, Dr. Jeng Su, and Dr. Amy Huang also helped during the distributions because they weren't allowed to see patients either. Dr. Amy Huang from

Chicago, who had been busy working day and night since she became a resident, was eager to participate, entirely devoting herself to the disaster relief effort.

Dr. Su, who couldn't immediately apply for a provisional license to practice medicine in Iowa, assumed different roles. In addition to accompanying and introducing new doctors and seizing the opportunity to let them know more about Tzu Chi, Dr. Su and Dr. Wang cleaned up the distribution and clinic site and took care of the recycling.

Even though Dr. Yihsiong Huang couldn't assume a medical role because of his license, he still had no time to spare, busy organizing hundreds of dental instruments from morning to night. He handled every task meticulously to provide the most professional environment for the volunteer doctors and their patients, from determining the site's layout and setting up the chairs and instruments to prepping the medical tools. After tidying up the clinic, Dr. Huang also carefully reminded each dental assistant of the place and usage of the devices and insisted on providing the most heartfelt medical services, even in a temporary clinic in a department store.



A local TV reporter interviews Tzu Chi volunteer Chong Hsieh on July 5, 2008, when Midwest Region volunteers were in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, distributing disaster relief and providing a free clinic. Photo/Zhanqiang Yang



## Serving Without Pause Through the Years

TIMA Chicago has a strong lineup of doctors who, for over a decade or even decades, had been showing up at free clinic events whenever Tzu Chi called on them, devoutly providing free medical services to the public. Some of them also took on TIMA work outside of free clinics. From the images recording the history of Tzu Chi USA Midwest Region's free clinics, one can see their unswerving perseverance, even as their hair turned gray with time.

Dr. May C. Kuo, the current convenor of TIMA Chicago, began his connection with Tzu Chi in 2009. Over the past 14 years, one could see him at almost every Tzu Chi free clinic activity, large or small, as he applied his medical expertise with a diligent smile, soothing the minds and bodies of those who sought treatment.

Before participating in Tzu Chi free clinics, Dr. Kuo and his medical school classmates had been providing free clinics at the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association of Chicago for more than a decade. As his children started their own families, he accompanied his grandchildren to the Tzu Chi Academy in Chicago on Sunday afternoons, where he came into contact with Tzu Chi and began to participate in Tzu Chi's free clinic activities, as well as taking on the job of school nurse at the

Academy. With Dr. Kuo at the Tzu Chi Academy, students and parents rested assured, as he not only brought new medical knowledge to everyone but also became the person to consult for general medical information.

From Chinatown to the African-American community in Chicago's South Side, Dr. Kuo, now over 80 years old, has long supported Tzu Chi's free clinic efforts. "When you participate in free clinic activities, everyone is a volunteer, and you're always on call," he shares. Kuo would be present and provide medical consultation to those in need in different places with a phone call. He even gave his phone number for patient follow-up. It is thus not surprising that Kuo's most recent patient meeting was at a supermarket. He helps everyone who asks and makes it as convenient as possible, highly considerate of difficulties some have in transportation or other aspects.



Dr. May C. Kuo (left) of TIMA's Family Medicine Department explains medical conditions to the patients he consults. Photo/Dennis Lee



On September 7, 2019, when Tzu Chi USA Midwest Region and TIMA volunteers join the First Ladies Health Initiative for the First Lady Health Fair, providing a free clinic for low-income individuals without health insurance, the team takes a group photo. Photo/Dennis Lee



Gynecologist Dr. Senlian Yang offers a medical consultation. Photo/Dennis Lee

Obstetrician and gynecologist Dr. Senlian Yang is a well-known infertility specialist who has supported Chicago's free clinic initiative for more than 20 years. One can witness his dedication to Master Cheng Yen and Tzu Chi when he participates in sign language, drumming, and Sutra of Infinite Meanings interpretation performances at Tzu Chi events.

Dr. Jeng Su introduced Dr. Yang to participate in Tzu Chi's free clinics. Since medical regulations in the United States are complicated, doctors can't write prescriptions or examine patients at free clinics. Dr. Su mainly consulted with patients, explained their conditions, and told them what tests they should get, plus how to handle their conditions properly, thereby putting their minds at ease. Despite regulatory limitations on free clinics, it is still helpful to patients to receive a doctor's analysis and explanation.

Dr. Yang has a dazzling and rich academic experience. He was an associate professor at the University of Chicago Medical Center and a professor at Advocate Christ Medical Center, where he taught courses on the female reproductive system, reproductive immunobiology, and others. He continued to teach students until 2020.

According to Yang, faith brings him great strength. "Many years ago, I performed a C-section on a pregnant woman who had high blood pressure and diabetes. During the operation, amniotic fluid entered the bloodstream, causing the blood to be unable to coagulate," he recalled. "The bleeding continued, and her heart stopped beating. They rushed to perform first aid and did CPR three times. I started to recite the Amitabha Buddha prayer. The nurse who believed in Christianity also prayed at the same time. This patient gradually regained signs of life later," Yang recounted.

**I almost lost a patient. Some people might not believe that, but my faith did increase my confidence and gave me the strength to calm down.**



**Senlian Yang**  
TIMA Physician

Yang, now 85, loves practicing medicine and helping people. His two sons and daughters-in-law are all doctors, making it five physicians in the family. "Being a doctor is not about making money, and it's not a lucrative profession; it's a way to help people and



relieve their pain,” Dr. Senlian Yang believes, and he certainly takes joy in it.

Dr. Quanmin Wang has been participating in TIMA’s overseas free clinics since 2000. He has traveled to El Salvador several times, as well as the Dominican Republic and Bolivia. Dr. Wang has also contributed his expertise during TIMA Chicago’s free clinic activities.

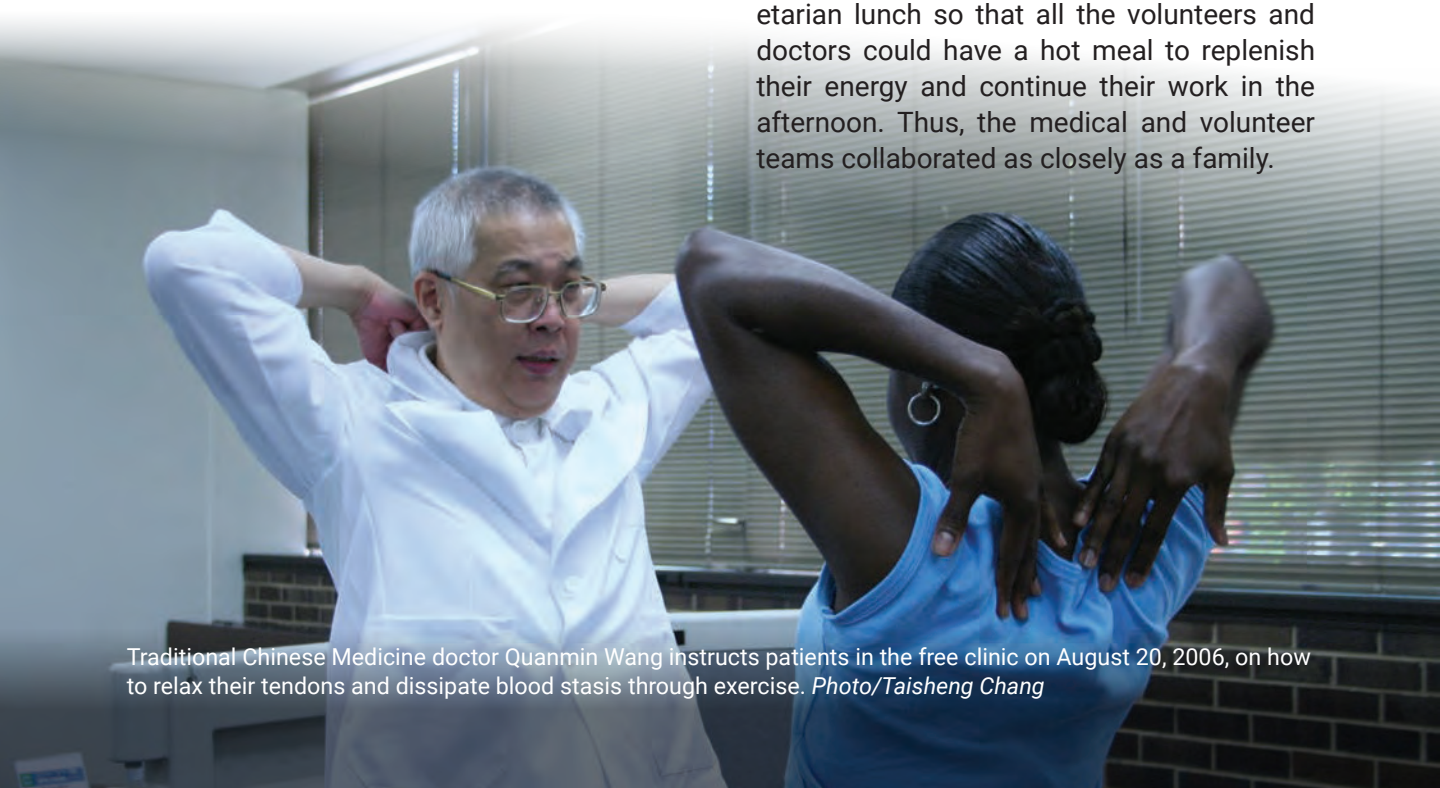
To everyone’s amazement, Wang mainly uses acupuncture on the hands and legs. For instance, he applies needles to the calves instead of the abdomen for stomach pains. Therefore, his patients can receive acupuncture while sitting in the free clinic, even if there is no treatment room or bed. The patients don’t need to lie down, lie on a bed, or take off their clothes for acupuncture while on their backs, making it more convenient and faster in the free clinics.

Destiny made the arrangements for Dr. Quanmin Wang to join the pathway of Tzu Chi’s free clinics. Serving in the clinics has allowed him to visit places he wouldn’t have otherwise, where he helped many people.

## Volunteers Make Free Clinics Possible

In addition to doctors providing consultation, the preparations for every free clinic activity beforehand, the setup of the site, the services during the patient visits, and the post-clinic work are all time-consuming and laborious, and all rely on the selfless dedication of many volunteers who are united in their efforts. The dental, medical, and other related equipment is rather heavy; the volunteers handle and place this equipment, while the medical volunteers do the sterilization and other professional tasks, making it possible for free clinics to proceed smoothly.

Chong Hsieh, Executive Director of the Tzu Chi USA Midwest Region, and his wife, Yahmei Hsieh, were the conveners and important facilitators of free clinic activities. All the big and small tasks, from the invitation of doctors and venue arrangements to staffing and meals, were arranged and planned by them with the volunteer team. In addition, when a free clinic was in progress, volunteers from the Midwest Region’s catering team would quietly prepare meals for the free clinic team. Yahmei Hsieh, a good cook, would also go to the kitchen to help prepare a sumptuous vegetarian lunch so that all the volunteers and doctors could have a hot meal to replenish their energy and continue their work in the afternoon. Thus, the medical and volunteer teams collaborated as closely as a family.



Traditional Chinese Medicine doctor Quanmin Wang instructs patients in the free clinic on August 20, 2006, on how to relax their tendons and dissipate blood stasis through exercise. *Photo/Taisheng Chang*



Dr. Ihuei Lin, the Cleveland medical team leader and the first TIMA Cleveland convenor, explains the team's activity plan at the Cleveland Service Center in 1998. Photo/Yahmei Hsieh

Among the 13 local Tzu Chi USA Midwest Region offices, the Cleveland Service Center in Ohio established a TIMA chapter earlier than the Midwest Region Office in Chicago, Illinois.

The Cleveland Service Center was established on June 29, 1997. Due to the area residents' lack of medical knowledge, the high cost of medical insurance, the need for assistance for the underprivileged and sick, and the presence of many doctors from Taiwan, Tzu Chi volunteer Yahmei Hsieh proposed establishing a medical team. With all the conditions in place, a medical team was formed, with Dr. Ihuei Lin taking the lead and actively participating in community medical services.

On September 5, 1998, the Cleveland medical team held its first blood testing event for bone marrow donation at Asia Plaza. The volunteers encouraged the public to show

their love by taking a blood test to match and save lives without causing any damage to themselves. More such events followed, with over 80 people participating each time.

From 1998 to 2002, every September, under the leadership of Dr. Lin, the team held lectures that covered a wide range of medical knowledge about topics such as headaches, back pain, cancer prevention, bone marrow donation, health insurance, menopause, and breast cancer prevention. Dr. Sue Huang, Dr. Weiyu Hsu, Dr. Chengnan Huang, Dr. Jeffery Chen, Dr. Shu Huang, Dr. Bangxiong Huang, Dr. Peter Chen, and Dr. Shujane Kuo were all part of the lecturing team.

During the same period, the medical team led by Lin would provide flu shots every fall before the arrival of the influenza peak; the service targeted individuals over 50 years



of age and those who were chronically ill or immunocompromised. Since prevention is better than needing a cure, the community highly praised, recognized and supported the activity.

The medical team also worked with Dr. Kate Ku, head of the Cleveland Chinese Senior Citizens Association, and the medical staff

of St. Vincent Charity Community Health Center to organize community health check-ups. The service included blood tests (for cholesterol and diabetes); vascular, prostate cancer, and breast cancer screenings; checks of vision, blood pressure, foot health, and other tests; as well as health consultation and nutritional and dietary education. Beginning in 1998, these free clinics took place every April, with more than 100 people attending each time.

In March 2001, the TIMA Cleveland chapter came into being with the encouragement of William Keh, then director of the Buddhist Tzu Chi Free Clinic in Alhambra, California. TIMA Cleveland has many doctors caring for and identifying with Tzu Chi's medical mission and services in the area, and local doctors have supported this initiative. The first convener of TIMA Cleveland, Dr. Ihuei Lin, is a pediatrician, and under his leadership, TIMA Cleveland has been like the sun at high noon.



Two of the TIMA Cleveland's convenors, Dr. Shujane Kuo (left) and Dr. Peter Chen (back), serve together in a free clinic in 2012. Photo/Chaohsu Yao



The second convenor was Dr. Shujane Kuo, who was in her thirties when she took over the position. She continued to carry on TIMA's legacy by organizing regular medical lectures and consultations with great dedication and enthusiasm. The third convenor was Dr. Peter Chen before he moved to Southern California. These doctors helped make TIMA Cleveland's services a source of relief from suffering and joy.

In 2009, the Cleveland Service Center purchased a new office. The improved site attracted more Chinese and other visitors. During this time, renowned Traditional Chinese Medicine doctors Hanchao Lu and Yuepang Mok joined Tzu Chi's service community. Yahmei Hsieh, who has accompanied local volunteers in their Tzu Chi medical mission journey, admired the determination of Cleveland area doctors. "Even with free consultations, pulse feeling, and acupuncture treatments for the public one weekend a month, it's commendable that they took extra time out of their busy schedules to provide free clinics for people," she said.

The Cleveland medical team holds a blood testing event for bone marrow donation on September 5, 1998, a service well received and supported by the community. *Photos/Yahmei Hsieh*



## The St. Louis Service Center's Free Clinics

Although the St. Louis Service Center in Missouri, another local office of the Tzu Chi USA Midwest Region, did not establish a TIMA chapter, it provided a healthcare activity in the local University City Public Library once a month, targeting uninsured or low-income residents, who could come to receive free health checks. Many older residents would come on foot because of its proximity to a senior living apartment.

For the convenience of Chinese attendees who didn't speak English, St. Louis Service Center volunteers translated the screening programs and medical manuals into Chinese and provided interpretation services on-site. This healthcare activity was well received by the community. There were times when the number of people coming was unexpectedly large, and soon after the checkups started, the quota was full. Beajia Laschober, Director of the St. Louis Service Center, and the volunteers would try their best to make arrangements so people would not leave disappointed.

Even though Tzu Chi USA Midwest Region's medical mission is active in only three states in the broad area it serves, the volunteers believe that no matter where they are, love exists; compassionate medical care is just an undiscovered seed ready to sprout in many locations across this vast terrain. 🌱



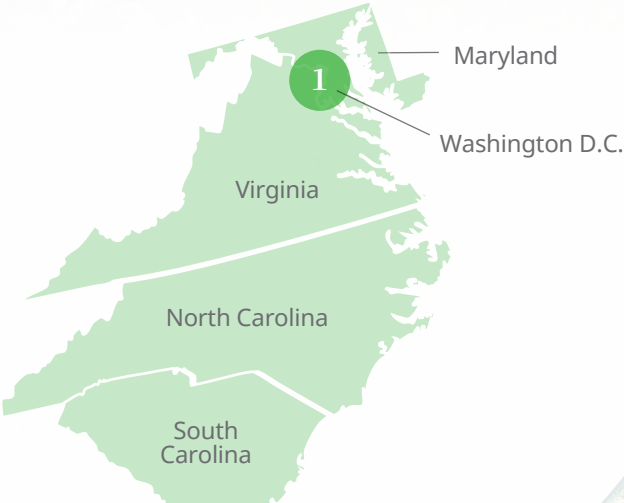
# TIMA USA Greater Washington D.C. Region

Written by Chen Chen, Akey Hung, Yingying Lee, and Wendy Tsai  
Translated by H.B. Qin

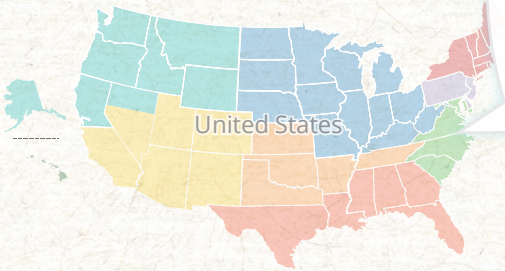


TIMA Greater Washington D.C. chapter's Dr. Hiro Huang and Dr. Joan Huang work in unison to administer vaccines to the public. Photo/Kevin Chung

## Tzu Chi USA Greater Washington D.C. Region TIMAs



1 | TIMA Greater Washington D.C.





A group of ethnically diverse but like-minded doctors, dietitians, nurses, and volunteers have always supported Tzu Chi USA Greater Washington D.C. Region's medical mission. To more effectively implement community care and a sustainable cycle, the doctors reorganized the original medical team into the TIMA Greater Washington D.C. chapter. Sixteen years have passed since its establishment in 2007. Looking back, TIMA Greater Washington D.C.'s volunteers have opened up a new way of thinking and practicing medical care and oriented the medical mission to a more practical and broader way of making good connections.

## Launching Hospice Care and Cancer Support Groups

A blood test for bone marrow donation event held in the fall of 1995 was the Greater Washington D.C. Region's first activity promoting the medical mission. At that time, the Greater Washington D.C. Service Center (now the Greater Washington D.C. Region Office) had only been recently established and was understaffed. Thus, all the volunteers

came to the Service Center for a lecture to review the entire blood test event procedure several times. One of the volunteers even had a nightmare because of nervousness the night before the event! After that, the event was held at least once a year for seven years, with more than ten events in that period, and the location expanded to events held in the community and schools.

The blood tests for bone marrow donation events allowed volunteers to come into contact with many patients and understand their pain and needs and those of their families. On May 9, 1998, Tzu Chi volunteers



At the inaugural tea party for the TIMA Greater Washington D.C. chapter on April 15, 2007, Dr. Hiro Huang emphasizes that the gathering serves as an announcement calling on people who share the same vision to join Tzu Chi's medical mission. *Photo/Mark Tsai*



On April 15, 2007, Dr. Mingchang Hsu (left), Dr. Howard Pung (right), and Dr. Hsinchun Li (middle) eagerly share their experiences and discuss ideas and plans for medical consultation activities after the TIMA Greater Washington D.C. chapter's inaugural tea party. *Photo/Fujyh Luo*



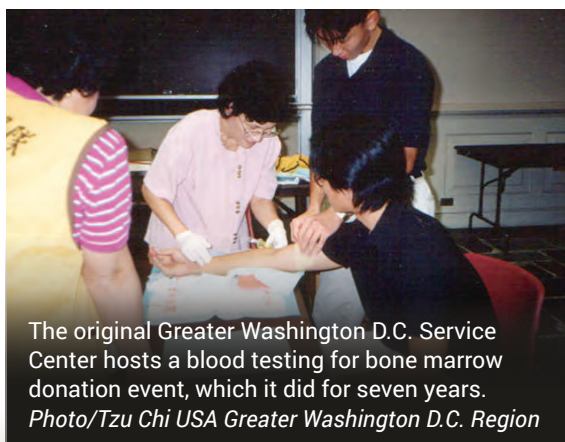
established the Hospice Care Group and held a six-session workshop for volunteers. With the increasing interaction with patients and their families and a growing amount of relevant information, the volunteers expanded the workshop to 13 sessions in January 2004. Tzu Chi volunteers traveled to many hospitals to accompany patients and their families on this challenging and heartbreaking journey.

In 1998, Greater Washington D.C. Region volunteers took a big step forward in the medical mission. Learning that Chinese patients were unable to obtain or read professional information about their illnesses due to language barriers, and neither they nor their family members knew much about the medical conditions, the volunteers

set up a Cancer Support Group on August 29, aiming to provide more care for cancer patients. The Group met at the Service Center monthly to help the patients and their families fight cancer together. Meanwhile, in response to their needs, Chinese experts were invited occasionally to give lectures on topics such as medical care, insurance, and social welfare to assist low-income or uninsured cancer patients in applying for medical subsidies and solving legal issues related to medical insurance.

## Love and Patience Are Priceless

The Greater Washington D.C. Region's care for the community's low-income and uninsured residents predates free clinics. Since 1999, the Region's volunteers have been providing free flu shots for the community at the turn of autumn and winter every year. In addition, they participated in an annual free medical consultation event hosted by caring Greater Washington D.C. area doctors in Montgomery County. The volunteers came out in full force and passionately supported the large-scale activity that included internal medicine, pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, allergy, orthopedics, gastroenterology, otorhinolaryngology, urology, and Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). Doctors of various



The original Greater Washington D.C. Service Center hosts a blood testing for bone marrow donation event, which it did for seven years.  
*Photo/Tzu Chi USA Greater Washington D.C. Region*



On November 19, 2011, Greater Washington D.C. Region volunteers visit Tzu Chi charity care cases undergoing treatment at the Reston Hospital Center in Virginia. *Photo/Mark Tsai*



At the Greater Washington D.C. Region's Community Health Day on August 21, 2010, residents get blood tests to confirm their hemoglobin, blood sugar, and cholesterol status, which doctors then use as a basis for medical consultation. *Photo/Mark Tsai*

specialties were on site to answer medical questions (with no diagnosis or treatment given), plus provide free blood pressure, glucose, cholesterol, anemia, and urine tests, measurements, or screenings.

Greater Washington D.C. Region volunteers also offered a free medical consultation service each year at Julius West Middle School in Rockville, Maryland, outreach that continued through 2004. "I come here and see several doctors in one visit, and the doctors are more thorough and patient than the ones I usually see. It's amazing!" said Mrs. Huang, who came to the clinic.

To encourage non-Chinese low-income families to participate in the event, the volunteers placed announcements in several English and Spanish newspapers, attracting several Hispanic residents. The consultations on August 10, 2002, which lasted three hours, served more than 150 people.

Hiro Huang from the Greater Washington D.C. Service Center's medical team called on twelve professional doctors to form a consultation group covering internal medicine, pediatrics, gynecology, orthopedics, allergy, gastroenterology, urology, otolaryngology, and TCM. The consultation team provided free blood glucose testing, anemia screening, urine testing, and blood pressure

measurement on-site. There were long queues for each service. "This was the result of the volunteers' hard work in publicizing the program, and we hoped that in the future, we would be able to go to impoverished areas to provide free clinics," Huang said.

To make it easier for Hispanics to communicate with the doctors, the Service Center found nurses fluent in Spanish to help with translations. Nursing staff member Irene remarked, "This kind of counseling was beneficial for patients who have questions but can't afford to pay for a consultation." She also suggested that the volunteers make signs in Spanish for the benefit of Hispanic patients.

On November 16, 2002, the Greater Washington D.C. Service Center held its first community free clinic event with Dr. Hsinchun Li, Dr. Yingchuan Hung, Dr. Meiyun Huang, and Dr. Hiro Huang, serving low-income residents. The free clinic was held twice a year after that, at Eastern Middle School and Silver Spring International Middle School. Eight doctors took turns hosting each event, providing free medical consultations and flu shots to 40 to 50 patients and 100 low-income or uninsured residents screened and recommended by the two schools' social workers.





Dr. Daya Li of Johns Hopkins Hospital sees patients at the Greater Washington D.C. Region Office on August 16, 2015. *Photo/Mark Tsai*



In March 2004, Greater Washington D.C. Region volunteers started the Medical English Conversation Class to help Chinese people who didn't speak English overcome difficulties in communication over medical issues. The volunteers organized the class in small groups, only accepting 12 students to give each participant a chance to practice.

## Prioritizing Daily Health Care and Prevention

Based on established personal connections and service locations, Greater Washington D.C. Region volunteers have collaborated with the government and various public welfare organizations. They also expanded their service area to Maryland and Virginia and disadvantaged communities so that the people who need medical services the most can have priority access to resources. At the same time, the services provided prioritized routine daily health care and the prevention of diseases.

The Greater Washington D.C. Region has partnered with the American Red Cross, Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, state and county emergency agencies, and communities and schools. In

addition to regular medical consultations and health checkups in the spring and fall, the Region's volunteers also received referrals from social workers for individual case care and financial assistance.

## Offering Highly Effective Fitness Classes

In 2008, Greater Washington D.C. Region volunteers launched a pilot program combining charity and medical care in Maryland's second most impoverished district, a five-mile area centered around Broad Acres Elementary School (later renamed JoAnn Leleck Elementary School) in Silver Spring, Montgomery County. Tzu Chi Maryland



TIMA Greater Washington D.C. chapter volunteers care for fire survivors at the American Red Cross emergency shelter in Bethesda, Maryland, on January 11, 2015. *Photo/Mark Tsai*



Volunteers test patients' cholesterol at the Fall Health Check in Rockville on November 13, 2014.  
Photo/Mark Tsai

volunteers had already been distributing food supplies to this impoverished community regularly every month since 2006. TIMA doctors then began providing healthcare consultation to Hispanic residents in the area, many of whom didn't have medical insurance, lacked regular health check-ups, and commonly suffered from obesity, high blood pressure, high blood glucose, high cholesterol, and other problems. This additional service was hugely beneficial to the Hispanic community, especially since most of the care recipients were women and mothers, who typically take care of shopping and cooking in their homes and thus are highly influential as their choices affect the health of their families.

The TIMA Greater Washington D.C. chapter partnered with JoAnn Leleck Elementary School to run a 13-week fitness and exercise program, taking participants through regular aerobic exercises every week. Dr. Hiro Huang and Dr. Joan Huang, among others, would also give practical lectures on nutrition weekly. They would bring newspapers and explain to participants that certain advertised foods on sale may increase weight and are not good for one's health.

Twenty-three participants enrolled in the first session, all of whom were obese. TIMA volunteers checked the participants at

the beginning and after the program, and the results were encouraging. Their weight dropped dramatically, and their Body Mass Index (BMI) improved significantly; thus, the program helped effectively control obesity, high blood pressure, and cholesterol levels. The people who participated in the healthcare program could not believe the changes in themselves and were delighted with their new health check results. They brought their experiences home, influencing family members and friends, and shared the results with their neighbors and coworkers, positively influencing the exercise habits of others.

**We're really seeing progress. Improvements in health take time; at least they're no longer gaining weight and are starting to pay attention to their blood glucose, cholesterol, and blood pressure.**

“

**Hiro Huang**  
TIMA Physician

The first trial of this better-prevention-than-treatment community healthcare program satisfied the volunteers, who determined that the approach was feasible and worth continuing. The school's social workers were also delighted when telling the story, while other schools have been inquiring with the volunteers, hoping that the Greater Washington D.C. Region could offer the same program to low-income families in their schools.

## **Forging Sustainable Love and Goodness**

The Greater Washington D.C. Region volunteers were confident they could go one step further with the experience they had gained in JoAnn Leleck Elementary School



in Silver Spring, Maryland. After an evaluation by the medical mission team, the volunteers decided to take advantage of the trend. They subsequently brought the number of communities in which Tzu Chi provides comprehensive care to four by including the Southgate Community Center in Reston, Virginia, the school district of Rosa L. Parks Elementary School in Hyattsville, Maryland, and Summit Hall Elementary School in Gaithersburg, Maryland.

The Region's volunteers then shifted from running a regular monthly community healthcare program to providing charity and medical care to complex case families without medical insurance and in dire need of medical and spiritual help. The parents in these families, while not concerned about their own health, were worried about that of their children and filled with sadness and despair, not knowing what to do.

Therefore, when there was a complex case, Tzu Chi and TIMA volunteers would work together to provide long-term support, giving financial, spiritual, and professional care and accompanying those involved as they endured the pain of illness or the low point

when their loved ones passed away. From the past to the present, many such long-term care recipients have become benefactors who have concretely implemented Tzu Chi's philosophy of advancing the cycle of love and goodness in society.

TIMA Greater Washington D.C. needs more young doctors to join its volunteer team. Dr. Hiro Huang and Dr. Joan Huang, who are still serving in their positions, said that the doctors who founded this TIMA chapter in the past have mostly retired or are getting older. They need younger generations to join in so the Greater Washington D.C. chapter can grow strong anew.

## Following the Dharma Path

"Learning by doing, realizing by learning," this comprehensive Dharma approach to community care inevitably led Tzu Chi USA Washington D.C. Region volunteers to encounter unique or complex cases. One of these cases, which took place in Northern Virginia, gave them a powerful opportunity to practice this maxim.



At the healthcare consultation activity in the Rockville community of Montgomery County on May 3, 2015, Tzu Chi volunteers also demonstrate and advocate environmental protection, which is as essential as protecting human health. Photo/Mark Tsai



The TIMA Greater Washington D.C. chapter holds a nutrition talk on March 16, 2011, at Silver Spring's JoAnn Leleck Elementary School, showing the public how to identify healthy foods and avoid junk food. *Photo/Mark Tsai*

The case of care recipient Yu began with a simple hernia issue, and the volunteers provided help with transportation to and from where he was receiving medical treatment. However, subsequently, this care recipient accidentally learned he had end-stage lung cancer. In shock and despair, the patient once lost the will to live. With the flick of a finger, an ordinary case became complex and challenging.

Greater Washington D.C. Region volunteers took up this challenge and guided the care recipient patiently and earnestly. He finally came to a clear mind and turned to Buddhism, constantly reciting the Buddha's name while conscious. It was a difficult journey, and the volunteers were heart-broken when keeping him company while unable to relieve his physical pain. And yet, the care recipient showed and taught the volunteers that "if taking things easy is a kind of ability, letting go is wisdom." At the time of his death, he entrusted all his affairs to the volunteers and was at ease, laughing and smiling. The volunteers donated all of



Volunteers conduct hearing checkups while offering health consultation services at Summit Hall Elementary School in Gaithersburg, Maryland, on October 10, 2016. *Photo/Mark Tsai*

his properties to Tzu Chi USA, leaving his love for the world. Through this case, they realized that the Dharma path of Tzu Chi volunteers contains ample opportunities to cultivate wisdom.

Master Cheng Yen has said, "The universe is all-encompassing, and we can learn anything. Anyone who wants to learn can do so, regardless of age or grade. We need to 'learn by doing and realize by learning.'" Tzu Chi Greater Washington D.C. Region volunteers have embraced this teaching, as is evident in their attitude and activities.

TIMA Greater Washington D.C. chapter volunteers also rely on Tzu Chi Buddhist Dharma as, in addition to treating the sick with their medical expertise, they strive to heal the hearts of those suffering due to health issues. Their comprehensive medical care treats the illness and heals the heart. In this way, both those receiving and providing care are on a mission to relieve suffering and find fulfillment in life. 🌱

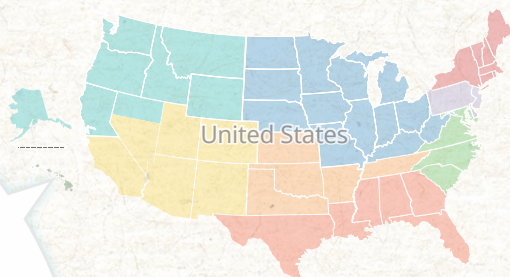
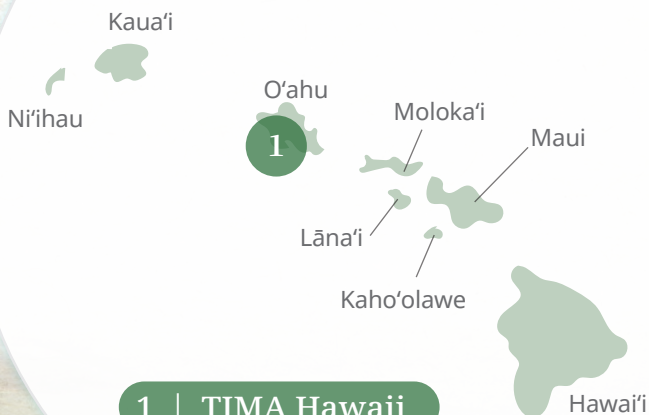


SECTION 6—

# TIMA USA Pacific Islands Region

*Written by Pheel Wang; Translated by Ariel Chan*

## Tzu Chi USA Pacific Islands Region TIMAs



Micronesia lacks medical care. When a hurricane strikes in 2002, the health of South Pacific Islanders is a concern. Tzu Chi Hawaii volunteers brave the waves, taking fast boats to reach those impacted to distribute 850 family first-aid kits and 2,000 lbs of medicines. *Photo/Tzu Chi USA Pacific Islands Region*





Hawaii is known for its perennial allure, a jewel among global destinations. Here, gentle breezes dance through swaying coconut palms, and pristine waves cradle nesting turtles along the shore. Its vibrant restaurants and bars teem with visitors, creating a lively tapestry of experiences. Bolstered by a thriving tourism industry, the median annual household income surged past \$91,000 in 2022, securing Hawaii's position as one of the nation's top-earning states. Residents enjoy ample income and comprehensive health coverage, making it one of the healthiest states compared to other places.

However, this beautiful picture doesn't belong to all islanders.

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, Western colonialism made a forceful entry into the Hawaiian Islands, disrupting the millennia-old way of life of the Indigenous people. Their customary wholesome plant-based diet and self-reliance on agriculture crumbled. The introduction of Western processed foods, rich in calories but lacking

in nutrition, along with the influx of meat, marked a significant shift.

Coupled with the challenges of grappling with Western languages and legal systems, Indigenous communities found themselves compelled to relinquish their ancestral lands. Western entrepreneurs swiftly transformed these lands into plantations, focused on sugarcane or specific cash crops destined for the global market. The once vital skills of harmonizing with nature – from farming to craftsmanship and even celestial navigation predictions – became obsolete in the face of land loss and technological intrusion.

Striving to seek new means of livelihood, yet constrained by language barriers, Indigenous communities found themselves marginalized on their own soil, grappling with an inability to be self-reliant and forced to lean on more affordable processed foods. With a diminishing agricultural labor force, owing to the loss of their land, a host of issues, from cardiovascular ailments and diabetes to obesity and even mental health challenges, as well as alcoholism, have



permeated through the generations, persisting until the present day.

**More than 15% of Hawaii's Indigenous people don't have health insurance, which is three times the national average. Over half of Hawaii residents are at risk of diabetes, while adolescents with mental disorders often can't get the help they need.**



*2019 CHANGE Reports  
Hawaii Business Magazine*

## Origins

Including Dr. Jerome Fan, Dr. Chang D. Lai, and others, many Chinese doctors and their families started a Tzu Chi base in Honolulu, O'ahu, Hawaii, in 1996. They adopted a beautiful name, "Heart Lotus Ohana" (Ohana means "family" in Hawaiian), to start serving low-income and uninsured island residents. In May 1997, they officially founded the Tzu

Chi USA Pacific Islands Region chapter and established the Tzu Chi Free Clinic Center at its office.

"We have clinic hours from five to seven every Monday to Friday. Everyone knows that free clinics are a very good activity. When we see patients recover, we feel very happy and feel it's worth it," explained Dr. Fan, Executive Director of the Tzu Chi USA Pacific Islands Region at the time. He had not yet retired and performed kidney and organ transplant surgeries in the hospital



Dr. Jerome Fan provides health consultations to the public. Photo/Weixin Guo



TIMA USA Pacific Islands Region doctors administer flu shots in 2012. Photo/Tzu Chi USA Pacific Islands Region

during the day. Among the patients who came to his clinic were former Philippine presidents. But apart from work, Fan was busy with Tzu Chi affairs. "Going to free clinics was a way to relieve stress. Sometimes, I received thank-you cards from patients," he recalled.

As soon as the Clinic opened, it covered various departments, including internal medicine, surgery, gynecology, pediatrics, cardiology, and allergy. It provided free medical treatment, medication, patient referrals, and counseling services regarding medical and insurance matters. The Clinic also regularly administered free flu shots for those in need.

On April 4, 1998, medical volunteers from various countries gathered in the Pacific Islands Region to discuss how to create a global medical network centered around the principle of compassion. In the same year, Tzu Chi International Medical Association (TIMA) was officially established, and the TIMA USA Pacific Islands Region chapter was born.

## Small Teams Achieve Great Feats

The TIMA USA Pacific Islands Region chapter later began to engage in free clinic activities on several small islands in the Pacific from time to time. "When a tsunami hit (American) Samoa, Dr. Jerome Fan packed his bags and went. We went to Samoa three times," recounted Tzu Chi Hawaii volunteer Stephanie Fan.

As American Samoa is a U.S. territory and doesn't require visas or other procedures, in August 1998, Hawaii medical volunteers left the Big Island to extend their free clinic services to Samoa, a nearly six-hour flight away, for the first time, aiming to take care of the Indigenous peoples' health. Five doctors and ten volunteers held Tzu Chi's first clinic in Samoa on August 8 to 9, benefiting more than 700 people. The most common diseases there were high blood pressure, diabetes, and lymphatic filariasis, a tropical island disease also known as elephantiasis. This parasitic disease causes swelling, severe deformity, pain, and even disability in the affected areas.



Tzu Chi volunteers assess damages following the 8.1-magnitude earthquake off the coast of American Samoa in 2009, which caused a 72-foot-high tsunami that pushed boats on shore. Photo/Tzu Chi USA Pacific Islands Region





Dr. Jerome Fan and Tzu Chi Hawaii volunteers go to the tsunami disaster area in Samoa to care for the survivors.  
Photo/Jiasen Ye

In August 2003, a second free clinic service mobilized five doctors, two nurses, and 13 volunteers to provide outreach at the Lyndon B. Johnson Tropical Medical Center, Pago Pago in Tutuila. The team departed on the 1st and started a two-and-a-half-day clinic event on the 2nd, serving 1,000 people. In 2005, 16 people, including six doctors and ten volunteers, conducted a free clinic service from August 11 to 14.

Later, due to various circumstances, the team suspended follow-up clinic arrangements for Samoa. It wasn't until September 29, 2009, when an 8.1-magnitude earthquake triggered a tsunami, causing nearly 200 deaths and destroying hundreds of houses, that they returned. Tzu Chi USA Pacific Islands Region volunteers set foot in Samoa again on October 3 to conduct a disaster assessment, bringing medicines and distributing cash card aid to 481 households, benefiting 1,968 people.

Whenever a large-scale disaster occurs, doctors from the TIMA USA Pacific Islands Region will mobilize and cross the sea to provide clinics in other places, such as



Dr. Chang D. Lai (middle) and Dr. Jerome Fan (right) take charge of four large-scale Maui wildfire relief distributions in August and September 2023, providing medical consultations and necessary medication. Photo/Lisa Huang

Micronesia, Sri Lanka, and the Hurricane Harvey disaster area on the U.S. mainland. But they are also always on alert to serve in their region.



On August 8, 2023, the island of Maui in Hawaii experienced the deadliest wildfire to hit the U.S. in more than a century. Tzu Chi volunteers were on-site caring for the survivors through aid to soothe their material and emotional needs. At the same time, TIMA doctors were busy during the large-scale wildfire disaster relief distributions held in August and September 2023, bringing medicine and their services to help those affected physically and mentally.

**Many survivors' respiratory tracts were affected by the smoke, showing symptoms of asthma, so we gave them asthma medications. Many people's blood pressure was high, also due to the impact of the disaster and emotions. We hoped we could reduce their mental pain, alleviate their tension, and, with medication, provide them with the best help.**

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*Chang D. Lai*  
TIMA Physician

## From Passive to Proactive

In 2010, then-U.S. President Barack Obama signed the Affordable Care Act into law, lowering the percentage of uninsured in Hawaii. Therefore, the Tzu Chi Free Clinic Center



Tzu Chi USA's 2023 Maui wildfire disaster relief mission is in full force after the catastrophe.  
Photo/Dan Ferrara



The public attends a Community Wellness Program preventive healthcare lecture. Photo/Tzu Chi USA 360 Video Screenshot

closed on January 31, 2016. However, the Tzu Chi USA Pacific Islands Region chapter remained active. Its volunteers even turned from passive to proactive, shifting from waiting for patients to come for treatment to actively promoting preventive medicine, helping vulnerable groups maintain physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. Through such efforts, they precisely responded to the loud call of former Hawaii Department of Health Director Dr. Virginia Presseler.

**The biggest harm to Hawaiians is cigarettes, e-cigarettes, lack of exercise, excessive consumption of fast food and sugary drinks, which can lead to addiction, kidney disease, dialysis, cancer, and heart disease.**

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*Dr. Virginia Presseler*  
Former Director  
Hawaii Department of Health

The Community Wellness Program the Tzu Chi USA Pacific Islands Region created provides preventive healthcare lectures and free exercise courses to soothe the body and mind. It also collaborates with local media to regularly release vegetarian recipes, hoping that these preventive efforts, which are better than treatment, can gradually reconnect the traditions of coexistence with and nurturance of nature on these islands, revitalizing the holistic health that is all Pacific Islanders' birthright. 🌿



SECTION 7—

## TIMA USA Southern Region

Written by Shioubih Yang; Edited by Chenglin Li

### Tzu Chi USA Southern Region TIMAs



1 | TIMA Houston

2 | TIMA Atlanta



On November 27, 2003, Tzu Chi USA's Southern Region holds a free community clinic event for the first time in Houston to celebrate Thanksgiving festivities. Photo/Tzu Chi USA Southern Region





On March 3, 2002, Shioubih Yang (back row, first right) interacts with Tzu Chi care recipients during a discussion at the Cancer Support Group. Photo/Tzu Chi USA Southern Region

“**S**hioubih!” Tzu Chi volunteer Mei Yang, accompanied by several other Tzu Chi team members, exclaimed, “You study nursing and are more qualified than anyone else in the center without a medical background to participate in this bone marrow donation camp.” And so, with these brief words of encouragement, Shioubih Yang traveled to Tzu Chi USA’s National Headquarters in San Dimas, California, to participate in the bone marrow donation camp.

Yang was the leader of Tzu Chi USA’s Southern Region medical team at the time, and didn’t yet have hands-on experience with bone marrow donation, aside from some information she had found while researching — which she eagerly read on the flight over. The Region’s medical team is composed of both healthcare professionals and non-professional volunteers.

“I learned about bone marrow donation, the selfless contributions, and the gratitude of patients, bit by bit, through tears,” Yang recalled. “Bone marrow donation became a cause I was determined to promote and participate in, without any hesitation.”

After the camp, Yang brought abundant resources on bone marrow donation from Tzu Chi USA National Headquarters to her Tzu Chi Houston family in Texas. Together, they actively planned more bone marrow donation and blood testing events. A strong and lasting commitment to community medical services was key to everyone in Houston from then on. The medical team provided activities such as flu vaccinations, health clinics, hepatitis B screenings, medical lectures, and beyond, to help families without medical insurance and people with low incomes maintain their own good health as well as their family’s, and prevent illness.





On March 3, 2002, Dr. Samuel Chen, the convener of Houston's TIMA, serves as a speaker at the Cancer Support Group health seminar. *Photo/Tzu Chi USA Southern Region*

As volunteers for the Tzu Chi USA Southern Region Office in Houston, they took on the responsibilities of medical volunteers seriously, and invited professional healthcare personnel to provide job training for the medical volunteers. This was to ensure that every volunteer could make good use of their abilities at the clinics, and assist doctors in managing a large number of patients and consultations.

## Establishing Patient Support Groups

In the process of reaching out within the community, volunteers met several people who were battling cancer. They learned of their health challenges and their journey while undergoing treatment, and empathized with these most difficult moments of their lives. Whether it was the patients themselves or their families, the path of cancer treatment can be heart-wrenchingly demanding to traverse. If there were people who had been through the same and were willing to come out and help, it would provide more support for a cancer patient's psychological and mental wellness.

On March 25, 2001, Tzu Chi USA's Southern Region established a Cancer Support Group, which continued its work until 2009. Here, people living with cancer gathered monthly to exchange experiences, comfort one another, and help each other while walking their treatment path together, providing a little less uncertainty and a little more warmth. For family members of patients, they could temporarily let go of their need to be strong. When they wanted to cry, they had a shoulder to lean on.

Dr. Mingtong He, who worked at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, introduced the Cancer Support Group to his colleagues. It received support and assistance from many doctors. Different cancer lectures were held every month. With this, patients and their families could access the latest medical information and treatment techniques, saving them from unnecessary detours on the road to remission. In addition, the American Cancer Society also sent specialists to support and guide others, providing applicable information for patients and their families.

Under the same philosophy, TIMA in Tzu Chi USA's Southern Region established the Kidney Support Group on November 10, 2002, holding monthly meetings to formally initiate services for kidney patients and their families. This helped kidney patients undergoing dialysis, providing them with a group they could rely on and confide in during the long process. Every month, experts from different fields, including medical care, pharmacy, nutrition, and social welfare, were invited to share professional knowledge and relevant information.

Volunteers participating in the service originally intended to contribute their efforts to benefit patients. Unexpectedly, they gained valuable medical knowledge in the process of the activities. Hope Huang, who did not have a medical background, was involved in medical volunteer work for twenty years. She assisted in various tasks such as administrative work, activities like medical lectures, and the Kidney Support Group, where she helped with video recording and setting up tables and chairs. "I have learned a lot of medical knowledge from experts in various lectures," Huang said, adding, "This knowledge has been useful when caring for elderly family members at home."

In the monthly group gatherings, volunteers formed connections with patients and learned more about the needs of the community. Volunteer Annie Wang was in charge of coordinating the Renal Support Group. She still remembers a patient who became blind due to diabetes and received dialysis three times a week: "He worked hard in a restaurant to support his family and had no idea he had diabetes. When he found out, his vision was already impaired, and he eventually went completely blind. The continuous and arduous process of dialysis was even harder." The patient and his wife, who was also suffering from a long-term illness, had no children to care for and assist them. However, Tzu Chi volunteers understood the hardship intertwined with poverty and illness deeply, and the groups further deepened their motivation to aid others with love and accompany them through those difficult days.

**They are an unforgettable part of my memory. I am very grateful for the opportunity to meet them, to walk a short distance with them, and I am grateful for their teachings to me.**



**Annie Wang**  
*Tzu Chi Volunteer*



On November 10, 2002, TIMA Houston members share information within their Kidney Support Group. Photo/Tzu Chi USA Southern Region





On March 17, 2002, the first TIMA chapter in Tzu Chi USA's Southern Region is established. Pictured from the fourth left to right are Dr. Samuel Chen, the convener; Shioubih Yang, the medical team leader; Dr. William Keh, then Director of the Buddhist Tzu Chi Free Clinic; and then Tzu Chi USA Southern Region Executive Director, Simon Shyong. *Photo/Tzu Chi USA Southern Region*

On March 17, 2002, the Houston chapter of the Tzu Chi International Medical Association (TIMA) was established to increase access to medical care locally. This day also marked the 11th anniversary of Tzu Chi USA's Southern Region. Dr. William Keh, Board Director of the Tzu Chi Medical Foundation at the time, introduced the services TIMA had previously provided at free clinic events in California and discussed the prospects of the medical industry in the United States during the inauguration tea ceremony. Dr. Jiying Zeng shared information about Tzu Chi's international disaster relief efforts, while Simon Shyong, Executive Director of Tzu Chi USA's Southern Region, introduced TIMA USA Southern Region's preparatory committee members: Dr. Samuel Chen as the convener, Dr. Mingtong He as the vice convener, Shioubih Yang as the general secretary, and Dr. Juimin Su as the deputy general secretary.

Dr. Chen explained to everyone that, according to the inaugural five-year plan, they would gradually expand their work in the community. The plan included establishing a free clinic, acquiring a mobile medical unit, and promoting health education and the concept of preventive medical examinations. He stated that this was a daunting task, but volunteers guided by the Tzu Chi spirit would ultimately realize it to serve patients who lacked medical insurance and urgently needed treatment.



On March 16, 2002, the Tzu Chi USA Southern Region celebrates the 11th anniversary of its founding with a free clinic event. *Photo/Tzu Chi USA Southern Region*

TIMA Houston gathered professionals from various medical fields as well as other specialists, including several Western medicine disciplines, Traditional Chinese Medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, and nursing staff. They all wanted to contribute their efforts to medical volunteer work. In addition, many volunteers without medical backgrounds joined to assist in organizing administrative tasks and event preparation.

## Discovering Specific Needs

Tzu Chi USA's Southern Region serves a diverse community where there is great need, and unfortunately, many neighbors lack medical insurance and are unaware of the importance of disease prevention. TIMA Houston and the medical team at the Southern Region Office in Houston decided to start providing free clinics. They began with the statistically underserved schools in the city, as judged by the participation rate of students in the free and reduced-price lunch program offered to students from low-income families. They chose Smith Elementary School, which also happened to be located near the Southern Region Office. The school has a very diverse student body, with many immigrant students and many from low-income families. Dr. Mingtong He,

the vice convener, and Shioubih Yang, the general secretary, negotiated with Principal Helen Welk after they decided to hold the free clinic. Notices were sent home with students a month in advance, and a reminder was sent a week before, so community residents arrived early to line up for care.

On January 25, 2003, the Tzu Chi USA Southern Region and TIMA Houston held a second free clinic at Smith Elementary School. Based on the information provided by the school and the needs of the community residents, the clinical consultations included family medicine, internal medicine, pediatrics, dentistry, ophthalmology, and Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), as well as consultations on blood pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol, and various health-related topics. Whether it was in the registration area, the form-filling area, or the waiting area, volunteers were present to guide and accompany. Principal Welk remarked, "I've never seen so many volunteers come to serve, and the smiles of the volunteers make people feel warm." On that day, 140 volunteers and healthcare workers were mobilized, and over 380 people came for consultations. Twenty-six healthcare workers were so busy they had no time to rest. Two Chinese medicine doctors were particularly surprised since Americans from all walks of life were interested in TCM treatments.



On January 25, 2003, Tzu Chi USA's Southern Region and TIMA hold their second free clinic event at Smith Elementary School. Photo/Tzu Chi USA Southern Region

The Southern Region's TIMA members initially planned to join hands with several schools to host large-scale free clinical consultations in the autumn after accumulating experience from these two clinics. However, volunteers observed a phenomenon during the process: Over half of the children were not brought by their parents. After inquiring, it was understood that this was because the parents needed to go to work, and almost



all the parents who couldn't bring their children were single parents. Shioubih Yang recalled her feelings at the time: "This made me realize that while we are doing this free clinic and the doctors can only provide consultations without prescriptions, how much help does it really provide to the patients who come for treatment? If I were a single mother, what would my choice be between work and this free clinic?" After discussions among TIMA USA Southern Region members, they unanimously decided to pause this free clinic project.

The Southern Region and TIMA gained valuable experience and unexpected outcomes from these two free clinics. Volunteers saw that many low-income families in the community did not have medical insurance. Some of them had not seen a doctor for several years, or even over a decade, and were unaware that their bodies were already or soon to be ill. Although the free clinics only provided medical consultations without prescriptions, they helped these individuals seek medical attention early and raised awareness of disease prevention.

## Thanksgiving Free Clinics

On November 27, 2003, the Southern Region's TIMA Houston members hosted their first Thanksgiving Free Clinic event. Every Thanksgiving, the Citywide Club of America in the Houston area holds a Thanksgiving turkey dinner celebration at the George Brown Convention Center in downtown Houston, providing support for unhoused and low-income residents. Starting as early as November 27, 1997, the Southern Region has participated in this large-scale Thanksgiving event, which feeds nearly 1,000 participants each year. After the formation of TIMA Houston, the chapter's volunteers decided to invite the Southern Region's medical team to provide free healthcare services at the event to ensure that those partaking in the Thanksgiving feast could also receive medical care.

TIMA USA Southern Region members brought together various medical specialties, including pediatrics, internal medicine, cardiology, ophthalmology, dentistry, and TCM to provide free check-ups for children and adults. TIMA also offered dental care, vision checks, blood pressure, blood sugar and lipid



On November 13, 2004, healthcare workers administer flu vaccines to the public. As early as 1997, when the Tzu Chi USA Southern Region was still a support group, it organized free flu vaccine injections, health checks, and consultations for the community. Photo/Tzu Chi USA Southern Region



On November 23, 2003, Tzu Chi USA Southern Region volunteers are busy with pre-event preparations for the Thanksgiving Free Clinic. They listen attentively as Shioubih Yang, the medical team coordinator, gives detailed instructions. *Photo/Tzu Chi USA Southern Region*

profile tests, electrocardiograms, and influenza vaccinations, among other services, to all participants of the free clinic. Health education was also provided during the clinic, aimed at helping people experiencing homelessness and low-income residents access healthier lifestyles to prevent illnesses. For patients who needed follow-up or emergency care, TIMA offered additional support.

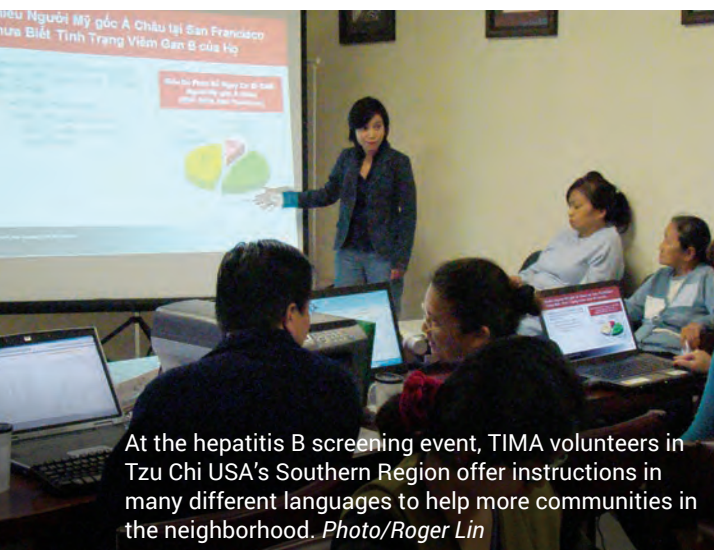
Thanksgiving is a major national holiday beloved by many families, and a special day for Americans around the world to reunite and share in their gratitude for one another. And so, every Thanksgiving in Houston, there is a parade, and local TV stations are sure to cover it. Tzu Chi USA Southern Region's participation in this event on this special day helps more people learn about Tzu Chi's work in the community, and perhaps even sign up to be a part of the effort to serve their neighbors in need. Beginning in 2003, TIMA conducted clinics at the George Brown Convention Center until October 2014, when the new Jing Si Hall at the Southern Region Office in Houston was built, providing enough space to hold biennial health consultations and administer flu vaccines. The Southern Region TIMA then

began providing services to low-income families in the vicinity of Jing Si Hall. Despite a temporary suspension due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as the threat of influenza and COVID-19 grew significantly in the fall of 2021, volunteers carefully planned the space for proper air circulation, and organized free flu and COVID-19 vaccine administration services, safeguarding the health of local uninsured residents. In 2023, the volunteers resumed biannual free medical services.

## Hepatitis-B Screening

On August 4, 2004, the Tzu Chi USA Southern Region and TIMA Houston chapter joined forces to organize a hepatitis B awareness and screening event at the Southern Region Office. Prior to this event, TIMA Houston had participated in the annual All-Community Health Day, organized by Houston-area Chinese community organizations and institutions as an invited guest. Dr. Samuel Chen, the convener of TIMA Houston, used research funds obtained from these events to provide more hepatitis B virus infection screenings for the Chinese-American community.





At the hepatitis B screening event, TIMA volunteers in Tzu Chi USA's Southern Region offer instructions in many different languages to help more communities in the neighborhood. *Photo/Roger Lin*

The Southern Region also collaborated with the Houston Department of Health to assist the local Asian-American community with hepatitis B screenings. They visited Vietnamese churches, temples, and other locations to carry out health screening activities and events.

The hepatitis B awareness and screening event helped many people living with the virus detect liver function abnormalities early, enabling them to better protect themselves from the potential of developing liver cirrhosis and liver cancer. In 2019, the Southern Region hosted a free community health event that included hepatitis B screenings. Subsequently, Dr. Samuel Chen gave a health lecture on "Hepatitis-B and Its Relationship with Me and My Family" and offered individual consultations regarding blood test results.

On that day, a local neighbor, Ms. Wang, attended the lecture after reading about it in the newspaper. She was already a liver cancer patient who missed the previous hepatitis B screening event because she wasn't aware of it. Upon learning of her situation, Shioubih Yang asked Dr. Chen for help with



An ophthalmologist conducts eye exams on May 30, 2015, when the Tzu Chi Southern Region holds its first community medical outreach in the Jing Si Hall at the Region's office in Houston. *Photo/Penchi Liu*

blood tests, and Tzu Chi provided partial financial assistance. Chen referred Wang to The University of Texas Anderson Cancer Center for treatment. Volunteer Meiling Yen, responsible for health lectures, approached a Tzu Chi family member who had successfully undergone a liver transplant and introduced them. The family member's attending physician accepted Wang's case, providing her with the opportunity for a liver transplant and a chance to regain her health.

Tzu Chi USA's Southern Region holds health lectures every three months at the regional office, with supplementary lectures when possible. They feature speakers from various fields of both Western and traditional Chinese medicine. This event has greatly benefited the community and helped countless individuals. Volunteers Emily Ho and Meiling Yen were responsible for organizing these activities. Ho, a cancer survivor herself, shared her personal experience battling cancer, undergoing surgery, and receiving 20 rounds of radiation therapy. She is an optimistic and cheerful volunteer who has visited the community tirelessly to seek out medical experts and doctors in both Western and traditional Chinese medicine for over a decade.

The final chapter of an illness is not necessarily one of grief. And yet, the Southern Region observed the need for comfort and introduced the Love and Companionship: End-of-Life Care Reading Group program. This program offers spiritual care and companionship to patients, walking with them during their journey.

## Seeing a Doctor at Home

In 2015, the newly refurbished, spacious, and convenient facilities of the Jing Si Hall at the Southern Region Office in Houston became the new location for free community clinics, and events previously held elsewhere now took place here twice yearly. Tzu Chi volunteers and the community praised the new clinic space because of its ease of access and warm atmosphere. Moreover, Tzu Chi USA Southern Region and TIMA volunteers had matured over the previous decade, gradually refining the medical outreach activity in terms of specialties available, the number of doctors volunteering, and the scale of the community clinic events.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic swept across the United States, compelling Tzu Chi USA's Southern Region and TIMA to suspend all community medical activities until they could gradually resume in 2022.

TIMA in Texas is a versatile medical organization that can mobilize for free clinic events and provide professional volunteer training. Dentists Dr. Wender Jiang, Dr. Jiumin Su, and Dr. Anna Chen collaborated to offer courses, helping train Tzu Chi USA Southern Region volunteers interested in becoming dental assistants, thus enabling them to assist during dental clinics.

**Because of my involvement in Tzu Chi medical activities, my life has become much richer. I have learned and grown amidst busy days. I have always had a slow learning curve, and it was indeed through the process of involvement that I met many good mentors. The experiences I went through became the most colorful chapter in my life.**

“

**Shioubih Yang**  
*Medical Team Leader*

Since establishing Tzu Chi USA's Southern Region TIMA chapter in Houston, many past and present volunteers have contributed to the growth of activities and accumulation of experience and expertise. Everyone involved is immensely grateful for the people they met and the events and lectures they attended, participated in, and enjoyed through the years. Together, through this shared action for the betterment of humanity, the team members have had the opportunity to become good mentors and friends, always hoping to do more.



On May 30, 2015, healthcare personnel measure blood sugar levels during a Tzu Chi free clinic event.  
*Photo/Penchi Liu*





Dr. Raymond C. Ho establishes TIMA Atlanta in 2002, holding monthly medical consultations for the next two and a half years (2002–2004). *Photo/Xiuyue Lin*

Paving the way for monthly medical consultation activities in Atlanta, Georgia, Tzu Chi USA's Atlanta Branch Office established TIMA Atlanta on July 1, 2002, with Dr. Raymond C. Ho as Director General and the chapter's first convenor.

### Understanding Georgia State Laws & Regulations

On August 17, 2003, TIMA Atlanta held a free medical consultation event at the Atlanta Branch Office, with services encompassing internal medicine, cardiology, psychiatry, pediatrics, chiropractic, acupuncture, family medicine, and allergy management. Blood pressure, blood sugar, and cholesterol measurement services were also readily available. The event was organized with low-income and uninsured neighbors in mind. Additionally, it provided \$15 tetanus booster shots to adults who had gone without a tetanus booster for over ten years. To ensure all needs could be addressed effectively,

Chinese, English, and Spanish volunteer translators were available on-site on the day of the free clinic event.

The state of Georgia does not authorize doctors to provide diagnoses or prescribe medication for patients at free clinic events such as these, and patients are required to sign



Dr. William Keh shares his personal experience at the inaugural TIMA Atlanta tea gathering, hoping to encourage more doctors to dedicate themselves to practicing compassionate medicine. *Photo/Guomin Luo*

a waiver form that prevents filing a medical lawsuit. Due to treatment limitations, community members hesitated to attend a medical event that couldn't provide more substantive care. In light of the circumstances, TIMA Atlanta decided to suspend its medical consultation services on July 1, 2004, and focus its efforts on organizing health talks to help the public access information regarding daily fitness, health care, prevention, and early detection of diseases.


## Reinstating the Initial Vision

On September 21, 2014, TIMA held a Happy Life seminar for community healthcare professionals to facilitate the continuance of TIMA Atlanta's operations, revitalizing its initial vision. More than a dozen doctors were invited to participate in the seminar, hoping that the organization of future free clinic events could empower healthcare professionals and encourage the participation of more volunteers.

Prior Chief Executive Officer of the Tzu Chi Medical Foundation and former Board Director, Dr. William Keh, and his wife, Mary Keh, were the minds behind the tea gathering. Dr. Keh was set to go to Georgia for a mobile clinic endowment to Tzu Chi

by an organization in Savannah, Georgia. When Mary Keh suggested holding a tea gathering at the office, the pair had yet to realize the hours-long distance by car between Savannah and Atlanta. Yet, a truly memorable event was organized because of this beautiful little misunderstanding. During the gathering, community healthcare professionals shared their personal experiences with Tzu Chi and their advice on how to better serve the community together in the future.

Attending the tea gathering were Tzu Chi volunteers, doctors and their significant others, and Tzu Chi Collegiate Association members (also known as Tzu Ching), with members of the congregation totaling more than 80 people, many of whom were visiting the Atlanta Branch Office for the first time. Seeing so many new faces was rare, and to those in attendance, it indicated a world of possibilities for the future. After the tea gathering, Dr. Max Kuo assumed the convenor role for TIMA Atlanta, while volunteer Charlie Sun agreed to become the chapter's director on October 1 of the same year. Tzu Chi USA Atlanta Branch volunteers and TIMA Atlanta medical staff then began to reorient the content and format of free clinic activities in conformity with Georgia's state laws and regulations.



During Tzu Chi's Health Day event on April 12, 2015, Dr. Grace Chai (back row, second right) explains the various types of vaccinations for adults according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines, including those for influenza, shingles, meningitis, and tetanus. *Photo/Xiuyue Lin*





Dietitian Yingjie Huang (back row, left) shares how the body needs nutrients from healthy foods to grow. *Photo/Xiuyue Lin*



On April 12, 2015, TIMA Atlanta launched a brand new Health Day event, with volunteers carefully designing both indoor and outdoor venues, including six health education stations indoors and three activity stations outdoors, which encompassed Pediatrics by Dr. Max Kuo, Dentistry by Dr. C.J. Lin, Family Medicine by Dr. Grace Chai, Ophthalmology by Dr. Teresa Hsu, Pharmacology by Pharmacist Corey Tse, and Dietetics by Dietitian Jieying Huang. Dr. Raymond C. Ho and Dr. Chung Yi Niu were also present to answer local attendees' diverse questions and concerns.

On October 15, 2015, TIMA Atlanta presented a dental health seminar. As part of Tzu Chi Atlanta's Happy Campus program bringing Tzu Chi's charitable, medical, and educational services to schools in low-income school districts, TIMA Atlanta dentist, Dr. C.J. Lin, held an oral hygiene lecture at Cary Reynolds Elementary School (CRES), a public elementary school in Doraville, Georgia. The first session was for 4th and 5th graders, with 350 people attending, including teachers, counselors, and admin personnel.



Pharmacist Corey Tse (left) teaches young attendees how to identify what is safe and unsafe to drink and reminds parents to be careful about where they keep medication and cleaning products at home. *Photo/Xiuyue Lin*

During the lecture, students learned about the need to reduce the amount and frequency of sugary desserts and sweet drinks they consume, brush their teeth two to three times a day, and floss their teeth before bed. The informative lecture saw many students raise their hands to ask questions during the Q&A session. More than 300 people attended each lecture.

On May 5, 2019, Dr. Willie Chen assumed the role of convenor for TIMA Atlanta, and volunteer Charlie Sun renewed his role as the



On November 12, 2015, a dental care lecture is held for second and third-graders, teachers, counselors, and administrative personnel, an audience totaling 350 people. Photo/Liangyun Luo



On April 12, 2015, dentist Dr. C.J. Lin demonstrates how to care for one's dental health. Photo/Xiuyue Lin

chapter's director general. During the year, TIMA Atlanta was committed to medical outreach services in Mexico, with ophthalmologist Dr. Willie Chen, volunteer Jiajun Hsu, TCM practitioner Dr. Alex Chen, Dr. Luqiu Wang, nurse Xiaoqian Zhang, and volunteer Yuci Xu, traveling to Mexico to support Tzu Chi USA's August and November free clinics. Beginning in the aftermath of the 2017 earthquake in Mexico, TIMA USA had been organizing teams that regularly traveled to many Mexican cities to offer free medical outreach clinics, an activity that would continue until the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic swept across the United States, all public activities were suspended. Seeing the severe shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) and other supplies, TIMA chapters nationwide dedicated all their efforts to supporting those on the front lines, raising funds, and distributing crucial PPE.

As of 2023, with vaccines and test kits available, the effects of the pandemic gradually became more manageable. The Atlanta



On June 10, 2023, Dr. Willie Chen (left), a speaker at the healthcare lecture and the convener of TIMA Atlanta, and Charlie Sun (right), TIMA Atlanta Director, accelerate the promotion of TIMA's services and inspire more volunteers to get involved. Photo/Qiong Yue

Branch thus hosted a medical care and humanities lecture at its office on June 10, inviting Dr. Bozhi Hsu, attending doctor of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery at Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital, who happened to be furthering his education at Emory University Hospital, as the speaker.

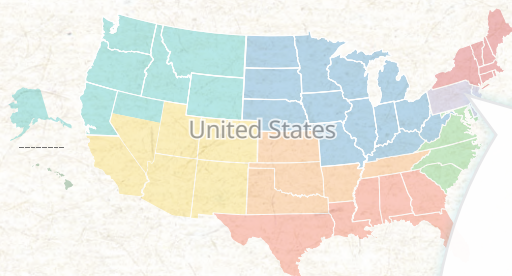
TIMA Atlanta took the opportunity this lecture presented to gather caring healthcare professionals who had temporarily left due to the pandemic, facilitating a warm-up for the re-launch of the community healthcare program in Atlanta. 🌱



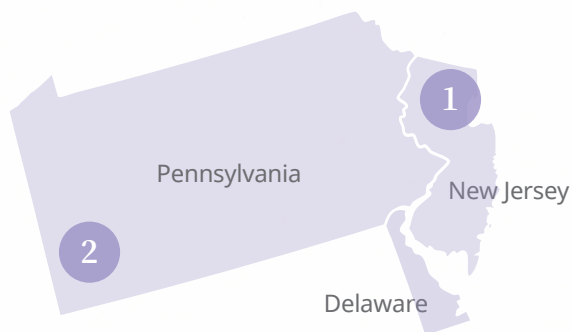
SECTION 8—

## TIMA USA Mid-Atlantic Region

Written by Jenny Sun; Translated by H.B. Qin



### Tzu Chi USA Mid-Atlantic Region TIMAs



1 | TIMA New Jersey

2 | TIMA Pittsburgh

靜思堂  
台灣佛教慈濟基金會新澤西分會  
Taiwan Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation, U.S.A. New Jersey

With the dedication and support of TIMA New Jersey, medical students and future doctors set their passion for promoting community health and wellness in motion. *Photo/Jay Lee*





Dr. Debbie Chen (second left), then Executive Director of Tzu Chi USA's Mid-Atlantic Region chapter, lays the foundation for TIMA New Jersey. Dr. Michael Chen (left) is the first TIMA New Jersey leader. Photo/Tzu Chi USA Mid-Atlantic Region

**T**zu Chi USA's Mid-Atlantic Region strives to not only heal sickness, but mend the heart while inspiring greater care for all, and empowering future medical professionals as a cornerstone of Tzu Chi's local medical legacy.

Debbie Chen, former Executive Director of Tzu Chi's Mid-Atlantic Region, invited New Jersey's compassionate physicians to a free clinic event in the Dominican Republic in 2002. It was ultimately through this occasion that TIMA New Jersey was formed in July of the same year.

### A Fantastic Lineup

"In the beginning, there were only two doctors. Four months later, the number had increased to 25. Five years later, there were already more than 30 doctors," Suesue Yang, the then secretary of TIMA New Jersey, recalled. TIMA New Jersey has recruited passionate and caring doctors in a wide range of specialties, forming a fantastic and powerful lineup, indeed.

Dr. Michael Chen, a cardiologist who served as TIMA New Jersey's leader and convener, described how the medical services held in the years past had shifted to consultations only in the United States due to insurance and regulation limitations, making it challenging for doctors participating in the free clinic events to perform their function to the best of their ability.

**As doctors, we all hope to do more for our patients, but the insurance and regulation limitations only allowed us to provide consultation.**



**Michael Chen**  
TIMA Physician

After three years of preparation, Tzu Chi USA's Mid-Atlantic Region gathered 19 departments and 27 doctors to establish the Jersey Medical Advisory Care Center on March 18, 2007. Here, doctors of various specialties provided services to the community on the second floor of the center,



including personal medical consultation, flu shots, medical seminars, spiritual development seminars, hospice feeding in the medical room, blood donation, as well as bone marrow testing and donation. The doctors utilized weekends or after-work hours to provide these personal consultation services to patients, giving of themselves fully to the spirit of love with the support of selfless medical volunteers, all in the hopes of helping patients achieve physical and mental well-being. However, even with a diamond team, the circumstances still created a barrier to providing truly substantive patient treatment.

## A Critical Step Forward

Combining strengths, learning from experience, and set on benefiting the community, TIMA New Jersey took a step forward in 2014 after 12 years of trials and tribulations. Joan Yu, TIMA's manager and team leader at the time, recalled the breakthrough that took place that year, saying, "The first time we did a blood test for a family care program, the blood test had to be sent to a

testing center in California, and I was so nervous about tracking the time of delivery that I didn't dare go to sleep in the middle of the night." The cost of long-distance shipping, insurance, and the timeliness of the test worried Yu, but fortunately, it arrived at the testing center safely and smoothly. Soon after, Cooperman Barnabas Medical Center (CBMC), formerly Saint Barnabas Medical Center, in New Jersey collaborated with TIMA and began assisting with blood testing services, solving many of the concerns surrounding the transportation of blood test specimens across state lines.

**The significance of this partnership was not only in regards to the time and cost-saving in transporting blood tests, but also the opening of a new model of partnership between TIMA and medical institutions.**

**Joan Yu**

*TIMA New Jersey Manager*



TIMA New Jersey and volunteers from the regional office began their collaborative efforts alongside CBMC, later joining hands



TIMA's collaboration with Cooperman Barnabas Medical Center (CBMC) opens up a new partnership model for medical services in New Jersey. On April 2, 2016, the Mid-Atlantic Region team participates in a health fair for the Chinese community. Pictured are Mid-Atlantic Region Executive Director Jackson Chen (left), Dr. Su H. Wang of CBMC (second left), and Alfred Anthony (second right), Mayor of Livingston. Photo/Tzu Chi USA Mid-Atlantic Region



with Holy Name Medical Center, and soon Robert Wood Johnson Medical Center, too. Since then, there have been many opportunities for collaboration.

“At first, volunteers from the chapter went to the medical centers to serve at their events and helped them set up their volunteer system. Later, they, in turn, assisted the Tzu Chi Mid-Atlantic Region chapter with community medical consultation and family care,” shared Joan Yu, the joint effort allowing them to benefit even more people.

## Meaningful Care Without the Cost

Interacting with and learning from major medical organizations ushered in a time of change for the medical services that were originally limited to consultation. Tzu Chi USA’s Mid-Atlantic Region followed the practices of Tzu Chi USA National

Headquarters in San Dimas, California, studying medical insurance laws and regulations, and launching free dental care events that attracted support from various parties. TIMA New Jersey also received support from Tzu Chi New York and Long Island, elevating its dentistry assistant training, as well as its search for licensed local dentists and scalers in New Jersey, and forming a team of volunteers for the free dentistry clinics.

The day everyone was waiting for finally arrived in 2016, when in May, Tzu Chi USA’s Mid-Atlantic Region held its first free clinic event. Dentist Catherine Lei Kuo led the TIMA New Jersey team, supported by TIMA New York and Tzu Chi Long Island dentists Kenneth Liao and Richard Yang, who accompanied her during the entire free clinic process. Irene Wang, a dental scaling technician, assisted with the training of the dental assistants.



After many years, the volunteers still fondly recall their first free dentistry event. The chapter's volunteers exchanged hundreds of phone calls, back and forth, to confirm and take people's appointments. Some volunteers still remember the skepticism of the people on the other end of the line when inquiring about the free services, how their hearts seemed to fill with hope as they learned more, and ultimately ensured their names were on the appointment list.

The experience shared by Tzu Chi USA's Northeast Regional medical team and the dedication of medical volunteers in New Jersey touched the doctors and medical staff who came to participate. And so, they have been happy and willing to accept Tzu Chi's invitation time and time again, so long as their schedules allow. Some would even refer other doctors, or bring their family members who are also doctors or medical staff from their clinics to participate together.



Irene Wang, a TIMA New York dental scaling technician, shares her experiences and provides advice on the free clinic process as Tzu Chi's Mid-Atlantic Region conducts its first dental clinic event. *Photo/Jay Lee*

TIMA New York's dental team additionally assisted Tzu Chi Mid-Atlantic Region's medical team in organizing the Dental Volunteer Training Program, from training to lending equipment, and inviting more doctors on board to provide the best services possible to more patients.



Tzu Chi USA's Mid-Atlantic Region holds its first free clinic event in 2016, with dentist Catherine Lei Kuo leading the TIMA New Jersey team, and support from TIMA New York and Tzu Chi Long Island dentists. *Photo/Jay Lee*



Steven Voon (right), Deputy CEO of Tzu Chi Medical Foundation, travels to New Jersey to train vision care volunteers. Photo/Jay Lee

## The World Is Different

Medical activities are different from general volunteer services – in addition to the passion to help people, professional medical training is also very important. Tzu Chi USA's Mid-Atlantic Region and TIMA provided specialized training to volunteers, including programs for dental assistants and Mobile Clinic volunteers. For them to learn and gain experience in these two medical spheres, a complete course program and team were required.

As Tzu Chi's Vision Mobile Clinic traveled from New York to support the Community Health Day event, Steven Voon, Executive Vice President of the Buddhist Tzu Chi Medical Foundation, and his wife, Olivia Ming Chung, Fresno Mobile Clinic Manager, traveled from the West Coast to the East Coast to New Jersey to conduct their first-ever

vision care volunteer training course and hands-on training for interested medical volunteers. On August 24, 2023, the Tzu Chi Mid-Atlantic Region provided free vision care services to the community for the first time, with the assistance of Tzu Chi's vision care team from New York.

**Some people have corneal disease, some people have retinal disease, and, it's possible that if these patients didn't come here, they wouldn't even know that they have these diseases with their eyes. It helps a lot for them to come here and get checked.**

“

**Tina Xiu**  
TIMA Physician





## Rising Stars Shine Bright

In recent years, a group of medical students has frequently appeared at Tzu Chi's annual free community clinic event in New Jersey, and their number has been rising year after year. They are from Rutgers New Jersey Medical School's campus in New Brunswick, New Jersey, and were called upon by Dr. Karen Lin, a professor in the school's Department of Family Medicine and Community Health. They give up their holidays to provide their services at the event. Recently, medical students from Rutgers New Jersey Medical School in Newark have also joined the free clinic activities.

"Medical students will have the opportunity to participate in Tzu Chi's free clinic activities in New Jersey, and to observe the

on-site medical team's work and consultations," said Dr. Lin, the event offering a valuable opportunity for future doctors to gain experience in their field.

Students from Bergen County Community College's Dental Hygiene program and Fortis Institute's Dental Assistant program have also participated in the free dental clinics. Through Tzu Chi's medical outreach events, these future doctors and medical professionals can glimpse the skills and ethics of dedicated medical professionals with a firm belief in the power of human compassion. Dr. Cynthia Smith, a medical intern living near the Mid-Atlantic Region Office, told the volunteers she was very glad to have met Tzu Chi, and experienced this philosophy firsthand.



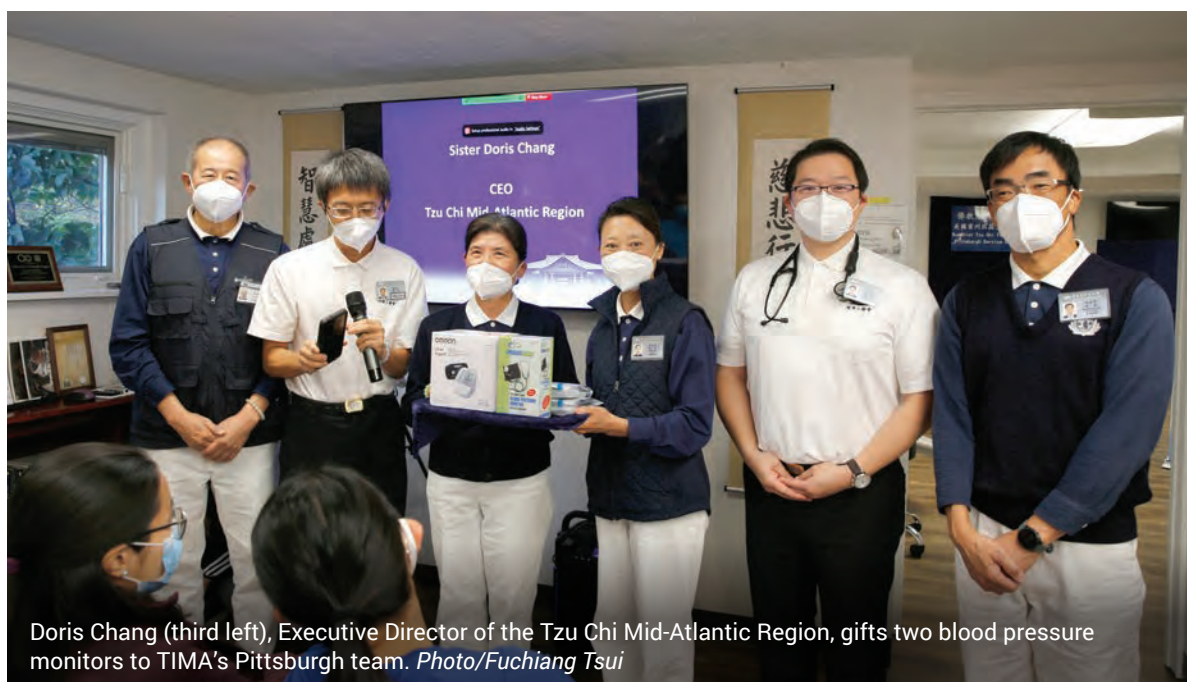
Professor Karen Lin (front) guides and encourages medical students to join charitable medical care service activities. *Photo/Birdy Wu*

Cultivating future doctors with compassionate hearts and skills is not only the teaching policy of the medical school but also an opportunity for medical volunteer organizations to provide education. One such professional, the late Dr. Hueiju Lin, a dentist, is remembered as a deeply passionate individual, devoted to training an up-and-coming generation of medical professionals. Thinking back on their joint effort to facilitate an exchange program for medical students from China and the United States, Dr. Karen Lin shared how working with Dr. Hueiju Lin allowed her vision to come true: "She was meticulous and insisted on perfection, never gave up until the goal was achieved. Because of her perseverance, the student exchange program between medical students from Robert Wood Johnson Medical School and Tzu Chi University Medical School was finally realized." Although Dr. Hueiju Lin has passed on, her spirit lives in all those she moved and inspired to do more for others.



At a blood donation event, Dr. Hueiju Lin (middle) treats patients as family. *Photo/Wankang Wang*





Doris Chang (third left), Executive Director of the Tzu Chi Mid-Atlantic Region, gifts two blood pressure monitors to TIMA's Pittsburgh team. *Photo/Fuchiang Tsui*

Tzu Chi USA Mid-Atlantic Region's Pittsburgh Service Center in Pennsylvania was established in 1993. There has been significant growth in the team's charitable works and educational initiatives over three decades. However, the team wished to make their medical mission more robust, as their only related activity in those early days had been their participation in organizing blood testing for bone marrow donation to support Tzu Chi's Bone Marrow Donor Registry.

Once known as "the Steel City," Pittsburgh has experienced a marked transformation from manufacturing to medicine and healthcare innovation. Outstanding medical institutions, such as the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center and the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, make the medical care sector an essential pillar of the city. In such an influential sphere, with

so many medical professionals willing to help others, the Pittsburgh Service Center resolved to establish a local TIMA chapter to fulfill Tzu Chi's medical mission. On October 8, 2023, TIMA in Pittsburgh was born with assistance from the Tzu Chi Mid-Atlantic Region chapter.

On that day, the Pittsburgh Service Center held its first free dental clinic event and provided flu shots. Due to the shortage of available medical equipment, Doris Chang, Tzu Chi Mid-Atlantic Region's Executive Director, Sam Chou, its Vice Executive Director, and nine volunteers drove six and a half hours, leaving in the morning the day before the free clinic to support the event. They brought four sets of chairs, scaling machines, and the necessary equipment — a full truckload.



Tzu Chi Mid-Atlantic Region's medical team leader, Shihchuan Fen (left), oversees the free dentistry clinic event. *Photo/Doris P. Chen*

Before the free clinic began, an inauguration ceremony was held. During this momentous occasion, Dr. Shihchuan Fen, the vice-convenor of TIMA Pittsburgh, announced the official establishment of the chapter, representing the dawn of Tzu Chi USA's medical mission in the city. Tzu Chi USA CEO Debra Boudreaux sent heartfelt congratulations, and Tzu Chi Mid-Atlantic Region Executive Director, Doris Chang, gifted two blood pressure monitors for use at future health events.

TIMA Pittsburgh is supported by many outstanding dentists, including Dr. Ang Li-Miller, Dr. Tao Jiang, Dr. Vera Liu, and devoted dentistry students inspired to attend by Dr. Shengyan Hsu, this TIMA chapter's convenor. Dr. Hsu continues to demonstrate the spirit and culture of Tzu Chi and the mission of Tzu Chi's TIMA chapters in the hope that, through the establishment of TIMA and the activities of the free clinic, local medical professionals will be encouraged to continue planting beautiful seeds within the communities they serve, helping to cultivate a bright, flourishing future.



A Tzu Chi dentist examines a patient. *Photo/Fuchiang Tsui*

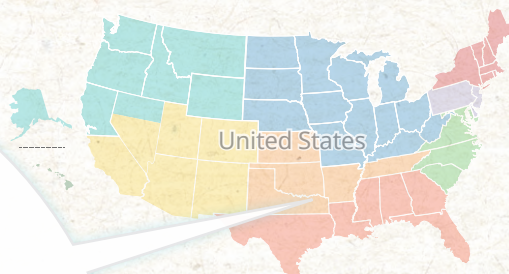
Demonstrating sincerity and steadfastness from the very start, volunteers from TIMA New Jersey and TIMA Pittsburgh continue to support one another, developing with determination. And, the journey is ever-enduring. 🌱



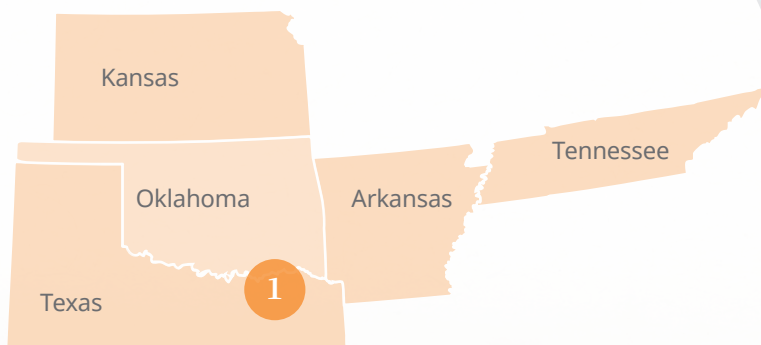
SECTION 9—

# TIMA USA Central Region

*Written by Chenglin Li and Minday Wang*



## Tzu Chi USA Central Region TIMAs



1 | TIMA Dallas





On July 26, 2003, Tzu Chi USA's Central Region was established, introducing the 14th Tzu Chi International Medical Association (TIMA) chapter within the United States. On the day of its founding, Dr. William Keh, then in charge of the Buddhist Tzu Chi Medical Foundation, and Dr. Steven Fang, head of the Dental Department, traveled from Los Angeles specifically to share their invaluable experience in establishing and promoting Tzu Chi USA's Central Region TIMA chapter.

Dr. Eric Yun, the convener of the TIMA USA Central Region chapter, recalled that when he first committed to Tzu Chi free clinic activities during the chapter's inaugural tea gathering, it was with an experimental mindset. However, after participating in a flu vaccine event for low-income students at the Buckner Elementary School, he felt the meaning and importance of medical volunteerism on an even more profound level.



On November 9, 2003, Tzu Chi USA's Central Region TIMA volunteers provide flu vaccines, free health screenings, and health education for low-income students and parents at Buckner Elementary School. *Photo/Shihsiung Lee*

From then on, he wholeheartedly devoted himself to becoming a valuable figure in the eyes of Tzu Chi USA Central Region volunteers and the community. He even outlined the vision of the Central Region TIMA. "We will regularly hold health lectures and provide free consultation services, establish a Cancer Support Group to enhance interaction between doctors and patients, and through various channels, encourage more healthcare professionals to join TIMA, strengthening the Central Region healthcare service lineup," Dr. Yun explained.



On October 18, 2015, during the TIMA USA Central Region's Autumn Clinic, volunteer medical professionals help safeguard the health of the public. *Photo/Pengfei Wu*





Current Executive Director of Tzu Chi USA's Central Region, Yuanliang Ling (second row right) and volunteer Rosa Miao (front row second left) pose with Bhutanese refugees who received medical care on April 18, 2010.  
*Photo/Minday Wang*

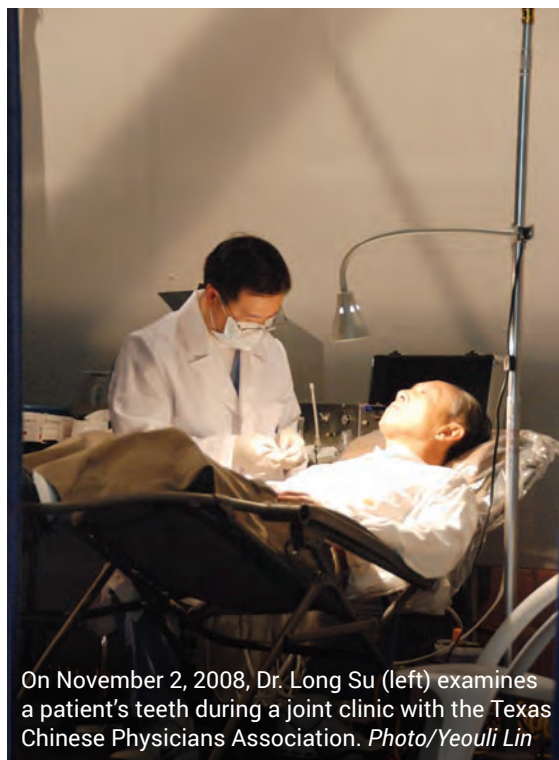
## A Strong Team

Today, Dr. Eric Yun's vision for the TIMA USA Central Region chapter has been fully realized. The collaboration between TIMA and Central Region Office volunteers has formed a robust medical team. Every community clinic event organized by Central Region TIMA can call upon specialized physicians from various departments in the local area. The Texas Chinese Physicians Association (TCPA) is one of the collaborating organizations critical to TIMA's regular community clinics. Since the first joint community clinic on November 2, 2008, they have been holding spring and autumn clinics together each year. Those who have participated in these events, whether healthcare professionals, volunteers, or community members, remember and cherish all the meaningful moments shared with the Central Region TIMA.

Immediately after this TIMA chapter was established, its members, alongside Tzu Chi USA Central Region volunteers, took action on November 8–9, 2003. They went into the community, providing flu vaccinations at Buckner and Maynard Jackson Elementary Schools, which had a higher number of low-income students. This activity at the two schools continued until, eventually, the team was able to care for more schools, providing medical consultation services to low-income households and refugees resettled in Dallas. Tzu Chi USA's Central Region Office also serves as a beautiful and warm space to gather, and an effective venue for the clinic. Dental services, including cleanings, are among the most popular services offered.



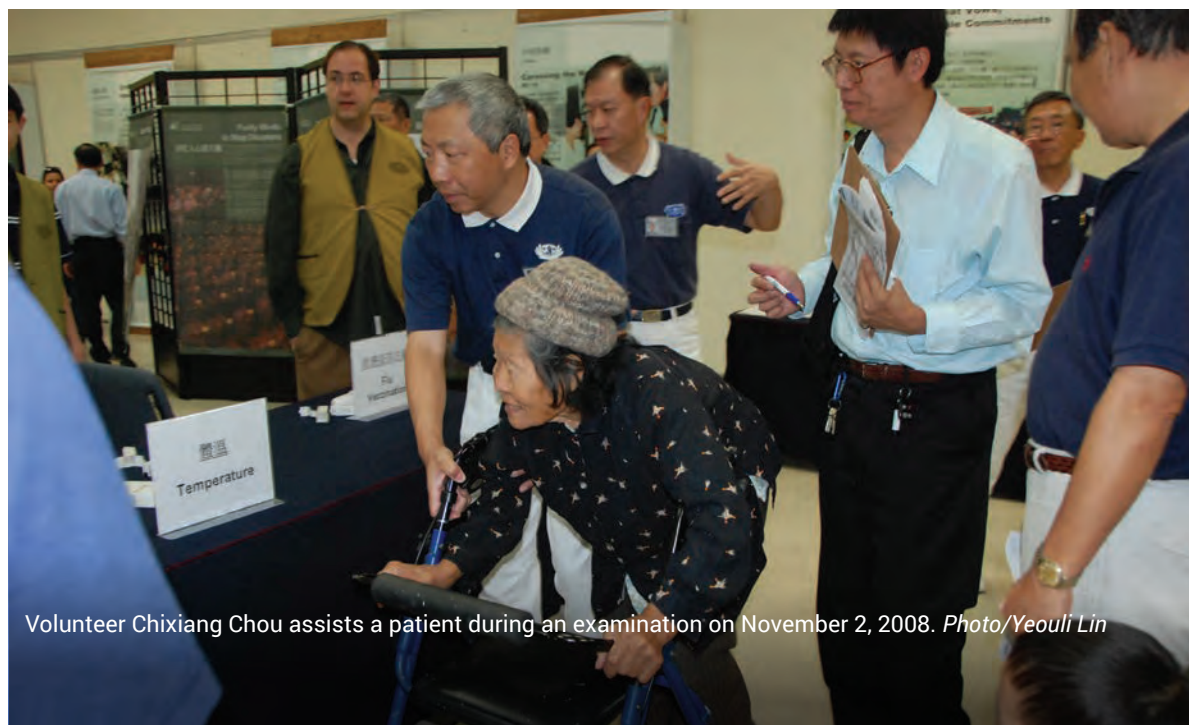
On April 18, 2010, Dalrai, a Bhutanese refugee receiving dental care, accepts two bamboo banks. The spirit of the bamboo bank encourages individuals to save their spare change to donate one day, aiding someone else in need. *Photo/ Minday Wang*



On November 2, 2008, Dr. Long Su (left) examines a patient's teeth during a joint clinic with the Texas Chinese Physicians Association. *Photo/Yeouli Lin*

During the medical events, Central Region TIMA volunteers provided attentive and caring service, their dedication deeply moving Dr. Yan Li, President of the TCPA, who was responsible for clinic missions for the first time. He was especially impressed by the synergy between Central Region volunteers and the TIMA team, which made the clinic

activities run smoothly and efficiently. He praised Central Region TIMA for not only providing medical services but also bringing together healthcare professionals in the community, uniting more compassionate hearts, and jointly providing better services to the community.



Volunteer Chixiang Chou assists a patient during an examination on November 2, 2008. *Photo/Yeouli Lin*



## Legal Limitations

The regular clinics organized by the Central Region TIMA mobilize a team of physicians from various specialties, akin to assembling a small hospital. Despite the high standards and large scale of this team, it resembled a ship that had yet to embark on its long journey due to certain federal and state medical regulations in the United States. Each participating physician in these clinics temporarily lost some of their professional capacity, as they were unable to diagnose patients or prescribe medications.

**Every clinic involved around 50 to 60 doctors from the TCPA and the Central Region TIMA, each representing various medical specialties. However, the clinics could only offer free health consultations due to the licensing for this service center. Physicians were unable to diagnose patients or prescribe medications. This not only left the eager physicians who are dedicated to serving the community feeling frustrated, but also dampened the enthusiasm of the public to participate in these clinics.**

*Meihua Wu  
Tzu Chi Volunteer*

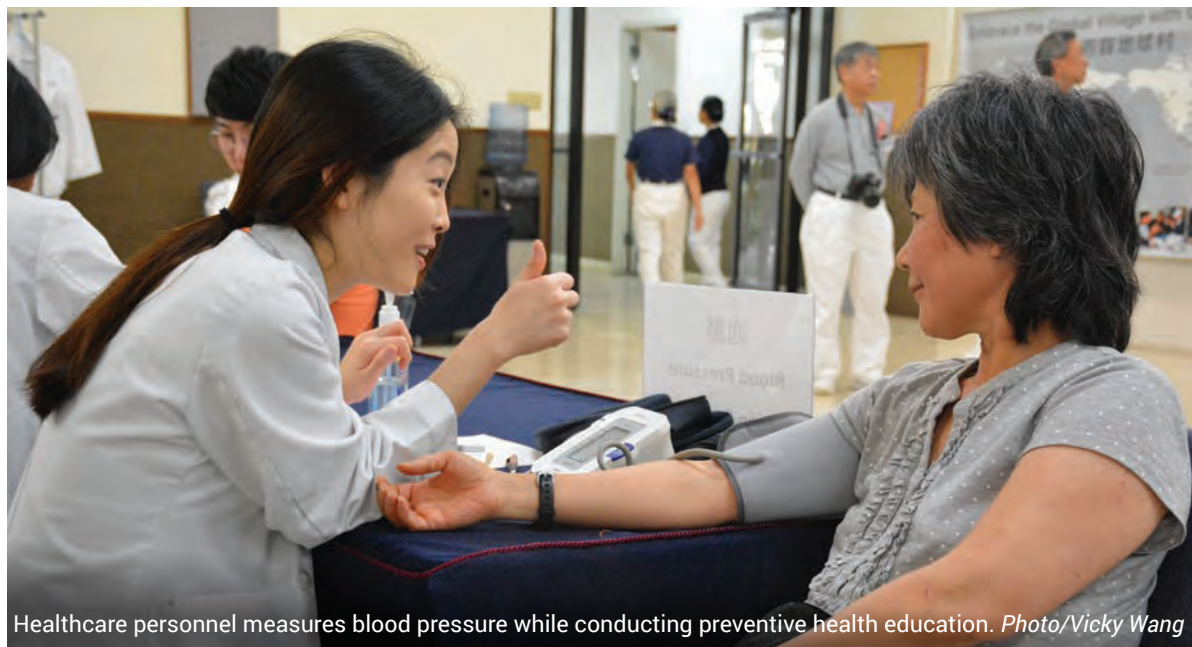
Years later, as Meihua Wu recalled this experience, she still felt regret. Every year, there were more physicians than patients at these clinics. After two to three years, Tzu Chi USA's Central Region carefully evaluated the situation. Given that it would be the doctors' only day of rest each week, they reluctantly decided to suspend the community clinics.

Every clinic required a substantial workforce and resources. Each staff member, each piece of equipment, and even each sheet of paper represented an accumulation of resources. If the desired outcome wasn't achieved, it resulted in a waste of resources. Volunteer Amy Ho still vividly remembers that on October 22, 2017, the last autumn clinic took place. On that day, everyone felt a deep sense of sadness and reluctance.

Before the establishment of the Central Region TIMA, the medical volunteers at Tzu Chi's service center in this region had already organized activities such as dental clinics, health seminars, influenza vaccinations, bone marrow donation blood tests, and blood donations. Meihua Wu explained: "In the early years, the bone marrow donation and blood testing process was far more complicated than it is now. The blood donation vehicle would come to the venue, and

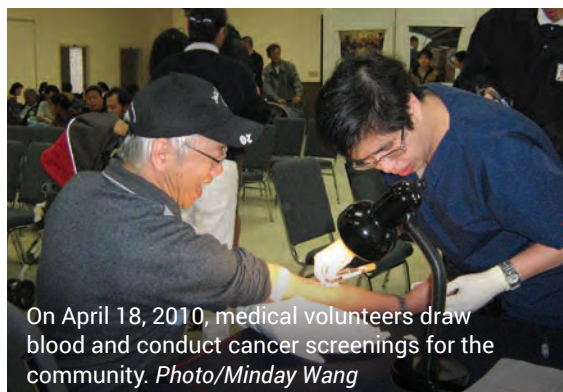


On April 29, 2012, during the Central Region TIMA spring clinic, Dr. Frank Lieu carefully tends to patients.  
Photo/Pengfei Wu



Healthcare personnel measures blood pressure while conducting preventive health education. *Photo/Vicky Wang*

blood tests would accompany blood donation. This was all thanks to the enthusiastic response of the community, as well as the strong dedication of the volunteers and medical team."



On April 18, 2010, medical volunteers draw blood and conduct cancer screenings for the community. *Photo/Minday Wang*

Looking back at the suspended community clinics, volunteers Meihua Wu and Amy Ho expressed the volunteers' collective hopes. Tzu Chi members believe that all difficulties can eventually be overcome. On a day when all conditions are right, the Tzu Chi USA Central Region Office and TIMA chapter will surely overcome the relevant regulations. Thus, everyone would be able to return and provide more effective community clinic services, and doctors will be able to offer more substantial medical assistance to patients.

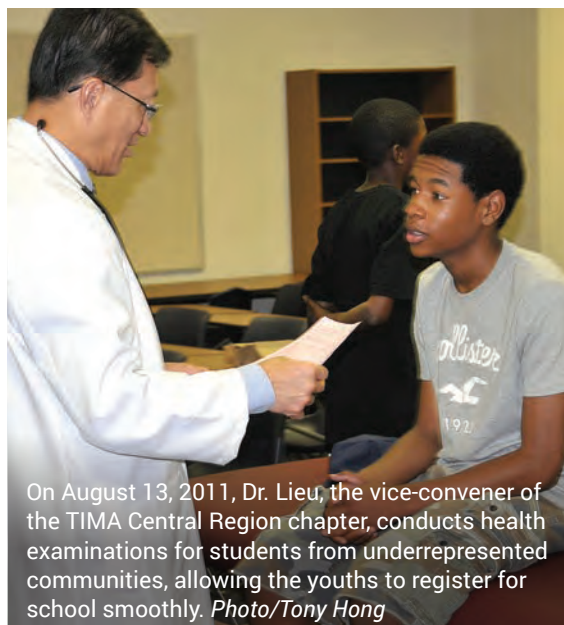
## Helping Children Fulfill Their Dreams

Since the establishment of Tzu Chi USA's Central Region TIMA chapter, in addition to regular community medical outreach activities, its members have also collaborated with regional volunteers to provide special services for specific groups. Starting from August 13, 2011, Dr. Frank Lieu, the vice-convenor of this TIMA chapter, alongside Central Region volunteers, would visit the Barack Obama Male Leadership Academy to conduct health examinations for low-income students.



Dr. Olivia Sun measures a patient's pulse during the autumn clinic organized by Tzu Chi USA's Central Region TIMA team. *Photo/Shirley Wu*





On August 13, 2011, Dr. Lieu, the vice-convenor of the TIMA Central Region chapter, conducts health examinations for students from underrepresented communities, allowing the youths to register for school smoothly. *Photo/Tony Hong*

**The health examination fee for children is about \$80. For low-income families, this is still a considerable amount. Dr. Lieu is a pediatrician, and he took us to the school to conduct the entrance health examinations.**



**Meihua Wu**  
*Tzu Chi Volunteer*

The Barack Obama Male Leadership Academy (BOMLA) is the only public boys' school in Dallas, with over 70% of students coming from low- to middle-income families. BOMLA's founding principal, Nakia Douglas, became acquainted with Tzu Chi when he served as the principal of an elementary school back in 2002. Since 2011, Tzu Chi USA's Central Region has been promoting Jing Si Aphorism teachings at BOMLA. Tzu Chi is also a member of the school's Board of Trustees.

On September 22, 2012, the Central Region TIMA and regional volunteers returned to



Tzu Chi volunteer Meihau Wu explains the purpose of a bamboo bank to a student who is curious about how the small tube can help make a big difference. *Photo/Tony Hong*

BOMLA to conduct health examinations for students from low-income, single-parent families. This also fulfilled many students' wishes to participate in various sports activities. Before students could join in any sports, they needed a health examination certificate as proof of their physical health. Just a few days before the health examination, suddenly, Dr. Lieu fell ill. It was not easy to find a substitute pediatrician at such short notice. Fortunately, Dr. Jianzhen Guan, a pediatrician from the TCPA who had recently retired, took the initiative to contact volunteer Steve Wang. With all problems solved, 22 students completed their health examinations.

In addition to medical outreach activities, students at BOMLA also participate in Tzu Chi's character education courses on a monthly basis, sowing seeds of kindness that can grow and flourish even outside the school's walls. After completing his health examination, one student named David looked at the volunteers with sincerity and said, "I want to fill a bamboo bank to help those in need."



On November 16, 2013, when Tzu Chi USA's Central Region launches a street fundraiser, Dr. Eric Yun (left), the chief convener of the TIMA Central Region chapter, contributes with love. *Photo/Shirley Wu*

## In Loving Memory of the Respected Chief Convener

Looking back at the founding of the Central Region TIMA, senior volunteers from the branch always remember the young convener from over 20 years ago, Dr. Eric Yun, and his admirable demeanor. Due to the affinity that blossomed between his mother and Tzu Chi, he became a Tzu Chi medical team volunteer. Dr. Yun's mother was a certified Tzu Chi volunteer and a Dallas True Compassion Group lecturer, with an all-in-all elegant and compassionate air. Inspired by both Dharma Master Cheng Yen and his mother, Yun vigorously promoted the establishment of the Central Region TIMA. At the invitation of Yuanliang Ling, Executive Director of Tzu Chi USA's Central Region, he took on the heavy responsibility of being the TIMA USA Central Region chapter's chief convener. He invited doctors from various specialties to participate in clinics, and welcomed nurses from their own clinics to help with tasks like administering injections, measuring blood pressure, and checking blood sugar levels.



Dr. Eric Yun (second right) translates for people aged 65 and above, helping them understand information related to the registration of Federal Health Insurance. *Photo/Hank Tzeng*

In those years, during every clinic event held in Dallas, one could see Dr. Yun's busy figure. However, in 2016, after falling ill, Tzu Chi's beloved Dr. Yun passed away peacefully in his sleep on August 21, 2022. The vision that he illustrated during the tea gathering to celebrate TIMA's establishment here all came to fruition. And, more local medical staff have been encouraged to join TIMA, using their compassion and empathy to build upon Dr. Eric Yun's original mission, while continuing to spread love in Dallas. 🌿



State	Tzu Chi USA Offices	Address	Tel / Fax	State	Tzu Chi USA Offices	Address	Tel / Fax
<b>AZ</b>	Phoenix Service Center	2145 W. Elliot Rd. Chandler, AZ 85224	480-838-6556 F: 480-777-7665	<b>IN</b>	Indianapolis Service Center	2929 E. 96th St. #E Indianapolis, IN 46240	317-580-0979
<b>S. CA</b>	Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation, US Headquarters Area	1100 S. Valley Center Ave. San Dimas, CA 91773	909-447-7799 F: 909-447-7948	<b>KS</b>	Kansas Office	9508 Shannon Way Circle Wichita, KS 67206	316-323-5798
	Jing Si Books & Café, San Dimas		909-447-7799 x 6569	<b>LA</b>	New Orleans Office	52 Driftwood Blvd. Kenner, LA 70065	504-782-5168 F: 504-832-2022
	Tzu Chi Academy, San Dimas		909-447-7799 x 6551 F: 909-447-7944	<b>MD</b>	Montgomery County Service Center		703-707-8606 F: 301-339-8872
	Buddhist Tzu Chi Medical Foundation	1008 S. Garfield Ave. Alhambra, CA 91801	626-427-9598 F: 626-788-2321	<b>MA</b>	Boston Service Center Tzu Chi Academy, Boston	15 Summer St. Newton, MA 02464	617-762-0569 617-431-4844 F: 617-431-4484
	Tzu Chi Medical Center, Alhambra		626-281-3383 F: 626-281-5303	<b>MI</b>	Lansing Office	3511 West Hiawatha Dr., Okemos, MI 48864	517-505-3388
	Tzu Chi Community Clinic, South El Monte	10414 Vacco St. South El Monte, CA 91733	626-636-8706 F: 626-671-8778		Detroit Service Center	2207 Dryden Rd. Troy, MI 48085	586-795-3491 F: 586-795-3491
	Buddhist Tzu Chi Education Foundation	1920 S. Brea Canyon Cutoff Rd. Walnut, CA 91789	909-895-2125 F: 909-345-7025	<b>MN</b>	Minneapolis Office	1485 Arden View Dr. Arden Hills, MN 55112	617-939-6965
	Tzu Chi Great Love Preschool & Kindergarten, Walnut		909-895-2126 F: 909-927-8336	<b>MO</b>	St. Louis Service Center	8515 Olive Blvd. St. Louis, MO 63132	314-994-1999 F: 314-994-1999
	Tzu Chi Elementary, Walnut		909-895-2125 x 3200 F: 909-345-7025	<b>NV</b>	Reno Office	903 West Moana Lane Reno, NV 89509	775-827-6333 F: 775-770-1148
	Tzu Chi Academy, Walnut		909-895-2280		Las Vegas Service Center/ Academy	2590 Lindell Rd. Las Vegas, NV 89146	702-880-5552 F: 702-880-5552
	Tzu Chi Great Love Preschool & Kindergarten, Monrovia	206 E. Palm Ave. Monrovia, CA 91016	626-305-1188 F: 626-599-8098	<b>NJ</b>	Mid-Atlantic Region/Jing Si Books & Café	150 Commerce Rd. Cedar Grove, NJ 07009	973-857-8666 F: 973-857-9555
	Tzu Chi Academy, Monrovia	220 E. Palm Ave. Monrovia, CA 91016	626-775-3675 F: 626-359-8199		Tzu Chi Academy, Northern New Jersey		
	West Los Angeles Service Center	11701 Wilshire Blvd. #15A Los Angeles, CA 90025	310-473-5188 F: 310-477-9518		Tzu Chi Academy, Central New Jersey	50 Woodrow Wilson Dr., Edison, NJ 08820	973-857-8666
	Torrance Service Center	1355 Broad Ave. Wilmington, CA 90744	310-684-4465 F: 310-684-4460		Central New Jersey Service Center		908-420-5218
	Tzu Chi Community Clinic, Wilmington		310-684-4466 F: 855-651-1717	<b>NY</b>	Northeast Region/Academy	137-77 Northern Blvd. Flushing, NY 11354	718-888-0866 F: 718-460-2068 718-799-3000
	Orange County Service Center	22911 Mill Creek Dr. Laguna Hills, CA 92653	949-916-4488 F: 949-916-5933		Jing Si Books & Café, New York		
	Tzu Chi Academy, Irvine	4321 Walnut Ave., Irvine, CA 92604	714-624-3026 F: 949-916-5933		Brooklyn Service Center	513 57th Street Brooklyn, NY 11220	917-909-0682
	Cerritos Service Center	14618&14620 Carmenita Rd. Norwalk, CA 90650	562-926-6609 F: 562-926-1603		Long Island Branch/Academy	60 E Williston Ave. East Williston, NY 11596	516-873-6888 F: 516-746-0626
	Northridge Service Center	8963 Reseda Blvd. Northridge, CA 91324	818-727-7689 F: 818-727-9272		Manhattan Service Center	63 Canal Street New York, NY 10002	212-965-1151 F: 212-965-1152
	San Gabriel Valley Service Center	9620 Flair Dr. El Monte, CA 91731	626-416-4527 Warehouse: 626-416-4529		East Long Island Office	4 Milburn Rd. S. Setauket, NY 11720	631-964-3393
	Jing Si Books & Café, El Monte		626-448-1362		Tzu Chi Center, New York	229 E. 60th St. New York, NY 10022	212-660-9229 F: 646-864-0086
	San Diego Service Center	5754 Pacific Center Blvd. #202 San Diego, CA 92121	858-546-0578 F: 858-546-0573				
<b>N. CA</b>	Northwest Region	2355 Oakland Rd. San Jose, CA 95131	408-457-6969 F: 408-943-8420	<b>NC</b>	Raleigh Service Center		919-322-8389
	Tzu Chi Academy, Tri-Valley		925-785-7413	<b>OH</b>	Charlotte Office	4527 Dwight Evans Rd. Charlotte, NC 28217	704-281-8060 F: 704-943-1031
	Jing Si Books & Café, San Jose		408-457-6981		Cincinnati Office	11228 Brookbridge Dr. Cincinnati, OH 45249	513-469-2161 F: 513-469-2161
	San Francisco Branch	2901 Irving St. San Francisco, CA 94122	415-682-0566 F: 415-682-0567		Columbus Service Center	2200 Henderson Rd. Columbus, OH 43220	614-457-9215 F: 614-457-9217
	Tzu Chi Academy, San Mateo	2675 Ralston Ave., Belmont, CA 94002	650-888-1582		Dayton Service Center	1459 E Dorothy Lane Dayton, OH 45429	937-701-7111
	Tzu Chi Academy, San Francisco	350 Girard St. San Francisco, CA 94134	415-680-5225 F: 415-682-0567	<b>OR</b>	Cleveland Service Center	1076 Ford Rd. Highland Heights, OH 44143	440-646-9292 F: 440-646-9292
	Modesto Service Center	1100 Carver Rd. #J Modesto, CA 95350	209-529-2625 F: 209-529-2625		Portland Service Center	3800 SW Cedar Hills Blvd #194 Beaverton, OR 97005	503-643-2130 F: 503-643-2130
	Stockton Office	1212 W Robinhood Dr. #3D Stockton, CA 95207	209-957-7800 F: 209-957-7800	<b>PA</b>	Tzu Chi Academy, Portland	3500 SW 104th Ave. Beaverton, OR 97005	503-643-2130
	Tzu Chi Academy, Cupertino	1280 Johnson Ave San Jose, CA 95129	408-823-8799		Philadelphia Office	107 North 9th Street Philadelphia, PA 19107	215-627-1915 F: 215-627-1916
	Santa Rosa Office	2435 Professional Drive, Suite D Santa Rosa, CA 95403	707-546-1945	<b>TX</b>	Pittsburgh Service Center/ Academy	1333 Banksville Rd. #201 Pittsburgh, PA 15216	412-531-8343 F: 412-531-8341
	Sacramento Service Center	1820 Tribute Rd. # J Sacramento, CA 95815	916-568-5800		Southern Region/Academy	6200 Corporate Dr. Houston, TX 77036	713-270-9988 F: 713-981-9008
	Ukiah Office	527 S State St. #B Ukiah, CA 95482	707-462-2911		Jing Si Books & Café, Houston		713-981-8966
	Oakland Service Center	620 International Blvd. Oakland, CA 94606	510-879-0971 F: 510-879-0971		Tzu Chi Great Love Preschool & Kindergarten, Houston		713-395-0303 F: 713-395-0305
	Tzu Chi Academy, San Jose	625 Educational Park Dr. San Jose, CA 95133	408-457-6970		Austin Service Center	7221 Northeast Dr. Austin, TX 78723	512-491-0358 F: 512-926-1373
	Fresno Service Center	7421 N Maple Ave. Fresno, CA 93720	559-298-4894 F: 559-298-4894		San Antonio Office	19179 Blanco Rd. #109-2 San Antonio, TX 78258	909-576-2387 F: 210-566-3970
	Chico Recovery Center	1001 Willow St, Suite C Chico, CA 95928	530-801-6335		Central Region/Academy/ Jing Si Books & Café	534 W. Belt Line Rd. Richardson, TX 75080	972-680-8869 F: 972-680-7732
					Tzu Chi Great Love Preschool & Kindergarten, Dallas		214-446-1776 F: 214-446-1772
<b>FL</b>	Orlando Service Center	5401 Alhambra Dr. #A Orlando, FL 32808	407-292-1146 F: 407-292-1146	<b>VA</b>	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
<b>GA</b>	Atlanta Branch/ Tzu Chi Academy, Atlanta	3120 Medlock Bridge Rd. Building E Peachtree Corners, GA 30071	770-458-1000	<b>WA</b>	Seattle Branch/Academy	15800 SE Newport Way Bellevue WA 98006	425-643-9104
<b>HI</b>	Pacific Islands Region/Academy	1238 Wilhelmina Rise Honolulu, HI 96816	808-737-8885	<b>WI</b>	Milwaukee Office	5356 W. Silverleaf Ln, Brown Deer, WI 53223	414-357-8427
<b>IL</b>	Midwest Region/Academy/ Jing Si Books & Café	1430 Plainfield Rd. Darien, IL 60561	630-963-6601 F: 630-960-9360		Madison Office	1019 Starlight Ln, Cottage Grove, WI 53527	608-960-1962
	Chicago Chinatown Service Center	215 W 23rd St., Chicago, IL 60616		<a href="http://www.tzuchi.us">www.tzuchi.us</a> <a href="http://www.tzuchimedical.us">www.tzuchimedical.us</a> <a href="http://www.tzuchieducation.us">www.tzuchieducation.us</a> <a href="http://www.jingsi.shop">www.jingsi.shop</a>			



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?**

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Tzu Chi's medical mission travels across the ocean from Taiwan to the United States to address healthcare coverage gaps. On November 1, 1993, the Buddhist Tzu Chi Free Clinic opens in Alhambra, California, providing free medical care to underserved patients. *Photo/Jinyi Huang*

