

COMPASSION & RELIEF

FALL  
2024

ISSUE  
**74**

# TZUCHI USA Journal

## Wildfire Relief in Butte County

Gathering Love in Greenfield

Facilitating Higher Education







# CONTEMPLATIVE WISDOM

Thoughts for meditation, contemplation,  
and reflection

**Dharma Master Cheng Yen**

*Founder of the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation*

True charity relief work  
is about removing ignorance in sentient beings' hearts  
and allowing their love to shine through.



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**Cover:** During their Park Fire disaster assessment in Cohasset, a census-designated place in Butte County, California, Tzu Chi volunteers meet Patti Colin, whose home burned to the ground.  
*Photo/Judy Liao*

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Welcome to Issue 74 of the Tzu Chi USA Journal, the theme of which is *purpose*. As we will see in the articles here, a strong sense of purposeful dedication drives Tzu Chi volunteers worldwide.

Our cover story, “The Apache and Park Fire Missions: Another Round of Disaster Relief in Northern California’s Butte County,” highlights our continued efforts to provide timely disaster relief after recurring wildfires. Whether the blaze has a more limited impact, as in the case of the Apache Fire, or it grows to become the fourth-largest wildfire in California state history, Tzu Chi volunteers’ commitment to delivering emotional and financial support is the same.

The impetus to assist those in need extends to the educational arena, as Tzu Chi wants to empower youth to follow their college dreams and find their life’s purpose. Our first feature story, “Facilitating Higher Education While Fostering Community Service,” showcases our yearly efforts to provide need-based scholarships to outstanding college-bound high school graduates who demonstrate a community spirit to help them embark on their educational journey.

Our second feature story, “Gathering Love in Greenfield: Tzu Chi USA’s Midwestern Tornado Relief,” reveals another disaster relief mission by Tzu Chi volunteers, who readily take on whatever demands it might require. In this case, 24 Tzu Chi USA Midwest volunteers undertook a six-hour drive from Chicago to the aid distribution venue on a Sunday, driving back that night as most had work or school on Monday.

Our first two portrait stories in this issue add further nuance to the meaning of purpose. “The Future Blossoms for Tijuana’s Youths” explores Tzu Chi’s efforts to uplift the dreams and voices of children near and far while empowering youths to discover the world of difference they can make through their actions as protectors of this planet we all share.

“Coming Home to Tzu Chi Through Starbucks” unveils that Starbucks employees have been coming to volunteer at Tzu Chi New York’s food pantries thanks to the initiative of a long-time Tzu Chi volunteer’s daughter. After college, she had drifted away from a childhood spent volunteering with her mother, only to rediscover her community service calling during the COVID-19 pandemic. Inspired, she introduced Tzu Chi’s food pantries to Starbucks during its yearly Global Month of Good, during which the coffee company encourages volunteerism.

Our final portrait celebrates *Till Echoes Can Be Heard: Tzu Chi in New York*, an exhibition that was on display from August 8 to 31, 2024, at the High Line Nine Galleries in Chelsea, Manhattan. It featured documentary photographs and videos demonstrating Tzu Chi’s involvement in the New York area across decades: a testament to purpose, indeed.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as we did creating it. Moreover, may you contemplate your purpose and discover the joy in fulfilling it. 🌿

# Untie the Knot of Animosity

*"We must regularly train our minds to cultivate a proper view on life. If we can subdue our afflictions, then we will be able to shun worldly desires; we will not become attached to gains or distressed by losses. This is how we begin to attain liberation."  
Dharma Master Cheng Yen*

**T**here is a simple story about a man who lived next to a large pig pen that belonged to his neighbor. In the pen was a newly born piglet. Every time the man passed by, the piglet would look at him with an angry expression, as if ready to attack him. This would always frighten the man, so he would run past. But since the pig pen was on the path he had to take every day, he always checked to see if the pig was sleeping when he went out, for fear of seeing the angry expression on the pig's face.

One day, the man thought to himself, "Exactly what kind of animosity is there between this pig and me? Every time I pass by, it is always so unfriendly and

stops me in my tracks." An evil thought arose in his mind: "Fine! I'll buy this pig and have it slaughtered so that I can enjoy a big meal!"

Indeed, he spent a lot of money and bought this pig. However, once he made the purchase, his mindset changed. "The Buddha Dharma talks about cause and effect. Every thought that we give rise to creates karma. The Buddha said, 'As are the causes and conditions, so are the effects and retributions.' Perhaps I formed a negative affinity with this pig in the past, which is why our relationship is so poor now. Animosity should be resolved instead of formed. I guess I should set it free instead!"





With that, he sent the pig to live in a sanctuary at a nearby temple. After a few months, the man went to the sanctuary to see the hog. The pig treated the man as his savior, circling him all around to express its gratitude! The old man was very touched and said, "Thank goodness I was able to eliminate my evil thought of hatred and vengeance and give rise to a virtuous thought instead. This enabled us to untie the knot of animosity."

This story is very easy to understand, but it is full of deep principles. If an afflicted person can readily give rise to a mindset of understanding and acceptance, thus transforming evil into goodness, then they are creating blessings! There are so many

things in this world that result in regrets due to temporary deviations in our minds. We must not accumulate afflictions within our minds; they should also disappear with each passing day. This is called "eliminating afflictions."

If we allow time to idly pass us by, yet continue to accumulate afflictions, they will become karmic obstacles. If we remain upset whenever we encounter adverse conditions, that is simply a waste of time! Time passes by so easily, yet spiritual cultivation takes time to accomplish. If we want things to always go as we wish, the only method is to seize our time by improving ourselves and giving of ourselves readily. Only then can we advance ever further! 🌿





# *The Apache and Park Fire Missions:* **Another Round of Disaster Relief in Northern California's Butte County**

*Written by Christina Chang and Ida Eva Zielinska*





A Tzu Chi USA Northwest Region volunteer stands before the daunting devastation caused by the Park Fire that ignited on July 24, 2024, and escalated into the latest large-scale wildfire disaster in Northern California's Butte County, knowing how much love and care the survivors will need. *Photo/Judy Liao*

**I got a phone call about a grass fire in the backyard. By the time I got home, the houses were completely on fire.**

“

**Tyler Dayton**  
*Butte County Resident*

Seeing his home ablaze was just the start of Tyler Dayton's trauma, as his and other houses would be quickly reduced to rubble and ash by the flames – consumed by what the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) named the Apache Fire. The wildfire started at 7:00 PM on June 24, 2024, at Apache Hill Road and Crestmont Avenue near the small town of Palermo in Butte County, Northern California, and burned 691 acres,





During Tzu Chi's Apache Fire disaster assessment conducted alongside American Red Cross volunteers, Tzu Chi Chico volunteer Suzanne Morrison is grateful she met survivor Daulton McCalla and noted his precarious living situation so Tzu Chi could help. *Photo/Minjhing Hsieh*

destroying 14 structures and damaging two before it was fully contained five days later, on June 29.

Once CAL FIRE re-opened the wildfire-impacted regions that day, a Tzu Chi USA team drove to remote mountainous areas to assess the situation and plan relief efforts. The team comprised Baba Kauna Mujamal, Suzanne Morrison, and Jessica Morrison, volunteers from Tzu Chi USA's Chico Recovery Center in Chico – the most populous city in Butte County – and Minjhing Hsieh, Executive Director of Tzu Chi USA's Northwest Region who came from San Jose to join them. What they saw was heartbreaking, to say the least: homes incinerated, gone forever, families gravely displaced.

**I have a large family, a family of ten,  
and my whole 12 acres burned down  
We don't know where to go or what to  
do to find help.**



**Sadhana Unaria**  
*Butte County Resident*

After her home burned down overnight, Sadhana Unaria desperately needed assistance. When Tzu Chi volunteers came to this outlying locale and met her, since she had not heard of the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation before, she assumed they were just there to look at the damages, hardly expecting to receive direct aid soon after.

Another Apache Fire survivor the team met, Daulton McCalla, was also in a dire situation after the wildfire destroyed his residence. Four individuals, including himself, were now sheltering in his small vehicle. In late June, a heat wave hit California, with daytime temperatures exceeding 110 degrees Fahrenheit, making their living conditions seem unimaginable.

Tzu Chi provided a disaster relief distribution for Apache Fire survivors on July 14 at the African American Family & Cultural Center in Oroville, a venue secured thanks to the American Red Cross, a long-term Tzu Chi USA partner. Seven families came to receive cash cards, Tzu Chi eco-blankets, and supplies.



**You are the only organization that helped us. You gave us food, clothes, even a tent, everything. We really appreciate you guys.**



**Daulton McCalla**  
*Butte County Resident*

McCalla was unaware that even more aid was coming. Tzu Chi volunteer Baba Kauna Mujamal had taken McCalla's housing problem to heart, and a friend, touched by Tzu Chi's dedication to helping the survivors, donated a trailer for use as a shelter. On July 19, Stephen Murray, himself a wildfire disaster survivor, made the one-hour trip to deliver it. Receiving the unexpected gift, McCalla was immensely grateful and in awe. "You guys are doing so much good," he said, "You must be a very big organization to be able to help me so much, which means you must be doing a lot for the whole world."

Looking back at the mission, Tzu Chi USA Northwest Region Executive Director Minjhing Hsieh remarked, "The Apache Fire distribution was small yet cozy, allowing the survivors to pour out their feelings about the disaster and speak out about the support they need. It also gave them a deeper understanding of Tzu Chi."

Many in Butte County already know Tzu Chi, as this is hardly its first disaster relief mission here, nor will it be the last. Unfortunately, a record-setting wildfire disaster was just around the corner, and Tzu Chi USA's disaster relief team in Northern California would leap into action anew.



Tzu Chi USA Northwest Region Executive Director Minjhing Hsieh is on the sidelines as Tzu Chi Chico volunteer Suzanne Morrison prepares a cash card for Apache Fire survivor Tyler Dayton. Photo/C.M. Yung



Tzu Chi volunteers deliver a donated trailer to Daulton McCalla on July 19, 2024. Photo/Minjhing Hsieh

## Butte County's Wildfire Woes

"Located in Northern California, where the fertile valley floor meets the recreation-rich Sierra Nevada and Cascade mountain ranges, Butte County exemplifies how seemingly contrasting characteristics – valleys and mountains, rural communities and urban centers, farms, and cities – come together perfectly," states Explore Butte County, a non-profit organization that champions tourism in the region, on its website. And yet, this hidden gem has suffered extensive losses due to wildfires.

According to "'Just Crummy': Why California's Butte County Keeps Getting Hit by Big Wildfires," a San Francisco Chronicle article dated August 4, 2024, "Fire has scorched about 40% of Butte County since 2000. Since 2020, three of the 15 largest wildfires in state history have ignited in Butte County and then burned across vast swaths of the Sierra and southern Cascades, collectively scorching nearly 1.7 million acres."

In its August 15, 2024, article, "Half Their Land Burned in a Decade: The California Counties Constantly on Fire," The New York Times lists those three historic catastrophes that impacted Butte County: the 2018 Camp Fire that "razed the town of Paradise and killed 85 people, becoming the state's deadliest fire to date," the 2020 North Complex Fires, that "destroyed more than 2,300 structures and killed more than a dozen people," and the 2021 Dixie Fire, which "grew so large that it became the first fire to leap over the Sierra Nevada mountains."

And then, on July 24, 2024, just outside Chico, and around 15 miles from the town of Paradise, tragically destroyed in the deadly 2018 Camp Fire, another historic blaze, which CAL



Tzu Chi Chico volunteers Baba Kauna Mujamal and Jessica Morrison take in the heart-breaking sights of houses burnt to the ground when they visit the Cohasset community, a Park Fire disaster area CAL FIRE reopened on August 1.  
Photo/Minjhing Hsieh

FIRE named the Park Fire, ignited and quickly grew to become the fourth-largest wildfire in California state history. Tzu Chi USA's Northwest Region volunteers were ready to mount relief quickly, as, in response to the Camp Fire, Tzu Chi had established the Chico Recovery Center to facilitate mid-to-long-term recovery services to individuals and families impacted by that calamity, which, beyond the fatalities it caused, destroyed over 18,000 structures, leaving households struggling to recover for years afterward. While the Recovery Center offers disaster case management, housing support, medical outreach, educational programs, humanistic cultural events, spiritual and emotional support, and resource referrals, its volunteers are poised to respond quickly to new disasters, which they did when these latest wildfire incidents erupted.





Patti Colin appreciates the companionship of Tzu Chi volunteers who visit the remains of her home and offer moral support, aiming to instill hope despite the dire reality she is facing. *Photo/Judy Liao*

## Assessing Needs and Registering Survivors as the Park Fire Rages On

When CAL FIRE reopened some Park Fire-impacted areas, the Tzu Chi Chico team set out to visit survivors in Cohasset, a census-designated place in Butte County, at the sites of their former homes, the structures reduced to ash by the wildfire. There, they heard many heart-wrenching stories.

Patti Colin returned home after the Park Fire to find only rubble and ashes. She recalled that the afternoon the wildfire hit, thick smoke quickly engulfed the community. As Colin was not home, her husband hurriedly packed a few bags and escaped. It would be more than a week before the disaster area lockdown lifted. When she returned, the previously green forest was

charred black, and the wind still carried acrid smoke. As for the couple's home, it was gone.

**Even if everything went perfectly, it would be years before we could rebuild. And I'm 72, so I don't know.**



**Patti Colin**  
*Butte County Resident*

The thought of trying to rebuild the couple's home saddened Colin as she considered the many procedures and official permits it would require. She looked at the Tzu Chi volunteers who had come to visit and inquire about her needs and said, with emotions rising, "We're very grateful for your help." She hopes that in the future, rain will moisten the earth again, and time will fade the flame's scars on nature, restoring greenery and faith in the future and life.

On August 5, while the Park Fire was barely 34% contained and impacting Butte, Plumas, Shasta, and Tehama counties, Butte County, where the blaze originated, established a Local Assistance Center (LAC) in Chico. Various relief organizations assembled to provide emergency assistance, including a Tzu Chi USA Northwest Region volunteer team that set up a service station to register survivors and assess their needs. Sadly, several had lived through previous disasters here.

Julia White Sanchez originally lived in Santa Cruz, south of the Bay Area. She experienced the August 2020 lightning wildfires in California and a landslide disaster caused by heavy rain in 2023. Both times, she received care and assistance

from Tzu Chi. For her two daughters to have a safe living environment and complete their high school education, Sanchez moved to Chico in May 2024. And then, just two months later, the Park Fire struck without warning and forced her to evacuate immediately. She couldn't return yet and still didn't know the condition of her home. In less than five years, Sanchez had encountered three natural disasters. Sitting before the volunteers and recalling everything, she cried, "I'm so tired."

Then Sanchez wiped away her tears as she thanked the Tzu Chi volunteers for always appearing by her side when disaster strikes and giving their heartfelt care to her family, which has sadly experienced many trials and tribulations due to these catastrophes.



Receiving Tzu Chi eco blankets always makes Julia White Sanchez – a survivor of consecutive natural disasters who has received Tzu Chi's care in the past – smile as she feels comforted. *Photo/Judy Liao*





David Opperman begins to relax as Tzu Chi USA Northwest Region Executive Director Minjhing Hsieh encourages him to embrace the challenges intrinsic to life's unpredictability with courage. *Photo/ Judy Liao*

Another Park Fire survivor who came to register for Tzu Chi's aid was highly distraught for multiple reasons. "I went through a divorce, lost my business and job, and now I'm hit by a wildfire," David Opperman shared. His life's savings were already gone due to these occurrences, and then the Park Fire burned his home and all his possessions. Understandably, Opperman struggled to hold back his tears as overwhelming feelings of helplessness and despair welled up. Although he managed to remain composed, his eyes couldn't hide his profound sadness.

While empathizing with his emotions and assuring him that Tzu Chi would help him through this challenging period, Tzu Chi USA Northwest Region Executive Director Minjhing Hsieh introduced ancient Buddhist wisdom about impermanence as intrinsic to life, encouraging Opperman to stay strong. That's a message all Tzu Chi volunteers aim to deliver since a positive outlook is essential to surviving life's travails.

Tzu Chi received over 100 applications for assistance at the LAC that day, and its disaster relief distributions would follow soon after.



Brandy and Peter Grout leave the distribution site smiling, feeling their worries about meeting critical needs since the wildfire reduced. *Photo/Andy Chiang*

## Disaster Relief Distributions Begin

The Tzu Chi USA Northwest Region held its first round of Park Fire disaster relief distributions in Chico on the weekend of August 10 to 11. On Saturday, the team stationed at the LAC and, on Sunday, at Tzu Chi's Chico Recovery Center, distributing cash cards to relieve the immediate needs of Butte County's impacted residents. The volunteers also offered attentive moral support as they listened to the survivors share their stories, doing their utmost to lift spirits.

Brandy and Peter Grout live in the Cohasset community with their family. The couple's parents reside nearby, so they care for each other, especially Brandy's ailing father, who is bedridden. When the Park Fire erupted,

the couple first had to ensure their parents could reach safely in the limited 20-minute evacuation time. After that, they could only grab a few items as they had to evacuate quickly. When the couple could return home after the evacuation order was lifted, they discovered that the wildfire had burned their house, which was uninsured, to the ground. As they look ahead, reconstruction is unlikely due to their financial situation, and only a tiny home seems viable. The cash card from Tzu Chi will help purchase a power generator to run a life-support oxygen machine that Brandy's father now requires 24-7, the family's most urgent need.

**We're very grateful. All the Tzu Chi volunteers are very kind and generous. We're very lucky.**



**Brandy Groot**  
Butte County Resident





Daisy Emerson wears a t-shirt made by a neighbor to encourage Park Fire survivors in her community on the road to recovery after the disaster. *Photo/Andy Chiang*

Another Butte County resident impacted by the ongoing Park Fire, Daisy Emerson, arrived at the distribution site wearing a t-shirt with the slogan, “Cohasset Girls Will Survive,” a photo of a firefighting helicopter taken by residents before they left the fire scene, and the date the fire started below. Emerson shared that while more than half of the houses in this community are gone, these t-shirts symbolize moving forward with courage and solidarity. Since the fire, Emerson, her daughter, and granddaughter have lived at a friend’s house. Receiving a cash card, she shared her plans for spending it: “We can buy some daily kitchen and bathroom supplies first, and then we want to buy a small trailer house for the three of us to live in temporarily.”

Each survivor recounted different yet equally challenging circumstances since the Park Fire turned their life upside down.

Austin Petersen and his wife had separated three months ago, and he had been living in the Cohasset community with his young daughter. The wildfire took away his house and burned all his means of livelihood. When he temporarily lived in his parent’s house, he often had fights with them, his mind frequently consumed by negative emotions given his current situation.

When Petersen came to the LAC, he felt that, finally, someone listened as he expressed his trauma and worries. His mood lifted as he spoke, and he could then focus on a positive development, as only the day before, a friend offered him a small trailer to live in for free with his daughter. Reflecting on his experience of talking to Tzu Chi volunteers, he realized, “I’ve gained a lot of positive energy and encouragement.” Tzu Chi’s spirit of giving back also inspired him, and once he gets out of his current predicament, he plans to donate the trailer to someone else in need.



Listening to a volunteer elaborate on Tzu Chi’s message of compassion, Austin Peterson’s outlook opens to positivity amid arduous life circumstances. *Photo/Andy Chiang*



Kenneth Baker, his wife Silvia beside him, is moved as he reads Master Cheng Yen's letter of condolences to Park Fire survivors about their suffering. *Photo/Andy Chiang*

During the distribution, the volunteers also presented each survivor with a letter from Dharma Master Cheng Yen expressing her heartfelt condolences about their suffering; her words and wisdom touched their hearts deeply. The Camp Fire of 2018 burned Kenneth and Silvia Baker's home, and here they were again, revisiting the same trauma, yet also feeling the love and compassion that Tzu Chi volunteers aim to deliver worldwide. "I've never seen such humble and selfless volunteers like Tzu Chi volunteers," Kenneth Baker said. He also acknowledged the respect he was always offered while in a position of need: "We don't feel like we're begging."

Tzu Chi volunteers also discovered kindred spirits, people who described how they have gone above and beyond in the past

to help others. Alas, this disaster struck a blow hard to recover from, as Stephanie Ingraham questioned, "Why me?" Stephanie and Orlan Ingraham had opened their home as a temporary shelter when the Oroville Dam collapsed in 2017, hosting more than 50 families. Then, the Park Fire destroyed their home in Cohasset this year. Stephanie bemoaned what happened, breaking down in tears, "The voice in my heart kept asking, 'I'm a good person, so why did such a thing happen to me?'" At the same time, she knew she was on the right path despite this setback: "I must be strong to take care of my son with special needs and my family." Tzu Chi volunteers hugged her as she wept, empathizing and reminding her that these were material losses. Most importantly, her family was safe, things would improve, and her humanitarian spirit would survive since she understood the meaning of compassion.





Tzu Chi volunteers find a kindred spirit in Stephanie Ingraham and do their best to help her make peace with the existential questions in her heart since the Park Fire destroyed her home. *Photo/ Andy Chiang*

**The most important thing is to keep the survivors confident and hopeful. Tzu Chi will not give up on them, and we will continue to accompany them until full recovery.**



***Suzanne Morrison***  
*Tzu Chi Chico Volunteer*

The Tzu Chi USA Northwest Region held a second round of disaster relief distribution in Chico on August 17, and a final one on August 24, exactly one month after the Park Fire started. In total, Tzu Chi USA provided \$104,500 in cash cards, benefiting 158 families impacted by this calamity.

On August 24, the Park Fire was still active, although 71% contained. It had impacted 429,603 acres, destroyed 709 structures, and damaged 54, with no further structures threatened. However, the California wildfire season, which typically extends from May to October, may bring additional catastrophes in 2024. Tzu Chi volunteers are ready. As always, their motto is to be among the first to arrive and ensure that no one is left behind when needing care and aid. 🌿



# *Gathering Love in Greenfield:* **Tzu Chi USA's Midwestern Tornado Relief**

*Written by Adriana DiBenedetto*



After a twister careens through the town of Greenfield, Iowa, Tzu Chi USA's Midwest Region volunteers hold a disaster relief distribution that eases hearts and strengthens the resolve of affected locals. Photo/Tony Cheng



“So, right in this area,” Adair and Guthrie County’s Emergency Management Coordinator, Jeremy Cooper, gestured to an empty expanse, “there were probably about twenty homes. I’d never seen anything like it. It was scary. It was a multi-vortex tornado. At one point in time, outside of town here, it was a half-mile wide.”



Tzu Chi USA Midwest Region volunteers visit Greenfield community members impacted by a powerful tornado that formed in southwestern Iowa on May 21, 2024. Photo/Kevin Lin



From May 19–27, 2024, the U.S. Midwest was struck by devastating storms – the National Weather Service confirming 875 tornadoes as of May 28. Among these, one of the strongest and most destructive weather events was a powerful twister that formed in southwestern Iowa on May 21, 2024, and drew a line of destruction for nearly 44 miles, crashing through the town of Greenfield, Iowa.

“You’ll see that big houses up over here are damaged, and you’ll see coming out across there’s houses still standing, but they’re all damaged on the peripheral edge of it. You’ll see that damage on the outside edge of it, and you can see the clear path. So it took less than one minute to come through this type of town, and it was about just over a mile stretch through town,” Emergency Management Coordinator

Cooper explained to the assembled Tzu Chi volunteers. “Initially, it’s 157 homes, but that number keeps rising as homes are having to be destroyed.”

Reaching its peak intensity in Greenfield, Iowa, the tornado was assigned a rating of mid-range EF4 on the Enhanced Fujita scale, with maximum wind speeds estimated at 185 miles (300 kilometers) per hour, becoming the fourth violent tornado of the 2024 season and the second during the month of May. The deadly twister destroyed homes, downed power lines, snapped trees, and shredded roofs.

“It was just unreal, the number of people that were actually sucked right out of their basements and tossed about,” Cooper shared. “I mean, there were just so many of them. In fact, there is an older couple,



Adair and Guthrie County’s Emergency Management Coordinator, Jeremy Cooper, accompanies Tzu Chi volunteers during disaster assessment. Photo/Amy Hsieh



a husband and wife, who died. They were right next to each other. But they were sucked out of their basement and tossed probably a city block away. But they were lying there together.” Five fatalities were confirmed due to the large, violent, EF4 tornado that moved through Greenfield, Iowa, and injured dozens more.

**My wife called me and said that we got hit, and initially, she didn't think it was too bad. We didn't have any damage. She called me back a couple of minutes later and said the house across the street was gone, and then another house was gone, and just everything.**



**Thomas Wiggins**  
*Care Recipient*

After a significant early spring tornado outbreak occurred in the U.S. Midwest on March 13–15, 2024, with more than two dozen tornadoes reported, Tzu Chi USA's Midwest Region volunteers in Indianapolis had immediately contacted the local chapter of the American Red Cross (ARC), launching a series of disaster relief efforts. The Tzu Chi volunteer team conducted home visits alongside the ARC to better understand residents' situations and ascertain their most urgent needs. Then, on April 6, the Tzu Chi Indianapolis Service Center and Tzu Chi Dayton Service Center teamed up to hold a disaster relief distribution in Winchester, Indiana. Just a few months later, Tzu Chi USA's Midwest Region volunteers would spring to action again.

On July 28, 2024, a team of 24 Tzu Chi volunteers from Chicago traveled to Greenfield, Iowa, to carry out crucial tornado relief efforts.



Locals arrive outside Tzu Chi USA Midwest Region's tornado relief distribution at Greenfield City Hall. *Photo/Kevin Lin*

**We have some people that were still boarded up and waiting to hear from their insurance company. So everybody's at different stages of this. But there were tons of homes all the way back through here, and they're just completely gone and leveled.**

**Stacie Eshelman**

*Executive Director  
Greenfield Chamber/Main Street*



“Today, we are giving out either \$800 or \$1,000 debit cards to people whose homes were majorly destroyed or severely damaged by the tornado from the end of May,” shared one Tzu Chi volunteer at the relief distribution inside Greenfield City Hall. Cash cards like these are loaded with the love of people from all across the globe, and that heartfelt message struck deep. As care recipients gathered outside the venue, Tzu Chi’s green and white flags fluttering in the breeze, volunteers shared the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation’s origins, and how the steadfast compassion of 30 housewives helped launch charity missions that continue to unfold across decades and around the world. Coming face to face with tragedy over a half-century ago, Tzu Chi’s founder, Dharma Master Cheng Yen, knew she had to act. Joined by 30 female followers, the women set aside funds, putting small change into a bamboo tube each day before purchasing any food for themselves whilst crafting baby shoes to sell. The Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation’s footprint of charity and humanitarianism now spans far and wide. To this day, Tzu Chi continues to use a symbolic iteration of these bamboo tubes – the Foundation’s signature bamboo banks – as an everlasting reminder. Inside the venue, a series of videos were also shown, introducing Tzu Chi’s missions, its humanistic philosophy, and more.



Smiles slowly return as Tzu Chi’s disaster relief gets underway. *Photo/Kevin Lin*

**It’s really quite humbling to have this kind of response for us, you guys being strangers and stuff, but it is real. It is really welcoming. So, it’s wonderful. It’s wonderful to have that outreach, really. It truly is.**

**Jimmie Schultz**

*Mayor  
Greenfield, Iowa*







"I feel a great relief," said Kim Ehrsam, Certified Senior Health Insurance Information Program Counselor for the Adair County Health System. "The money that was donated or given to us to help with things will greatly go into play with our rebuild, and replacing the things that we've lost. I felt very comfortable. I felt like I was an important person and that everybody cared about the

reason that we're here and the people that were here. Thank you so much for what you do. Sometimes you don't feel like you are appreciated at the moment, but we greatly appreciate all the help that you've given us."

Volunteers also brought gifts for the children at the event, along with eco-friendly blankets, scarves, Jing Si aphorisms, and a

blessing charm that signifies peace, safety, and hope for each affected household. Additionally, a selection of socks, Tzu Chi publications, and other items were available to choose from.

“I love how you guys are so organized and work together, and you bring such a positive presence. It’s hard to explain,” said Greenfield Chamber/Main Street’s Executive Director, Stacie Eshelman. “But I think our people really need that, you know? If nothing else, just being in your presence, I think, will make people feel just a little

bit better about everything that they’ve been through.”

**Sometimes, from the Midwest, we like to believe that we don’t need help. But we’ve never suffered something like this before. So I appreciate you coming out, and we’re going to do every little thing we can to try to make things better, and we’ll all get through this together.**

**Stacie Eshelman**

*Executive Director  
Greenfield Chamber/Main Street*





Many locals impacted by the disaster had been staying temporarily with relatives or at a hotel, their lives and sense of normalcy turned upside down. When the volunteer team arrived, they did so with more than cash relief and supplies in hand, but with the comforting presence of someone who cares deeply.

When such upheavals occur, they can take their toll as well as time to recover, emotionally and financially. That's why it's so important to join hands as one family to bring relief. Love saves, but we must put it into concrete action.



Tzu Chi's relief encompasses more than just financial support. Volunteers know how important it is to be heard, and accompany survivors with attentiveness and care. *Photo/Tony Cheng*

The team of 24 volunteers from Tzu Chi USA's Midwest Region Office in the Chicago area had made the six-hour drive to the venue the day prior, and after the event came to a conclusion and all was packed away, they would make the drive again that evening – most volunteers needing to return to work or school on Monday. In addition to more seasoned volunteers, this group also encompassed young, college-aged volunteers who wished to join in and help.

“The tornado can destroy our house, but it can't destroy our spirit, right? We are still strong, right? We wish you all a speedy recovery,” rallied Tzu Chi USA's Midwest Region Executive Director Chong “Hsieh. And indeed, several smiles were seen as volunteers spoke one-on-one with locals at the distribution, listening intently as the survivors shared their experiences, and offering hugs and encouragement as they parted.”

After disasters, it can be a long road to recovery, but as lowans persevere with strength and determination, survivors know their Tzu Chi family is here for them.

**May the love in each of us converge into a vast ocean of hope, which can then be given to everyone in the world without end.**

***Dharma Master Cheng Yen***

*Founder*

*Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation*





# Facilitating Higher Education While Fostering Community Service

*Written by Ida Eva Zielinska*





The 2024 Tzu Chi USA Scholars Award winners from the Tzu Chi USA Northeast Region attend a special ceremony at the Tzu Chi Center for Compassionate Relief in New York. Photo/Martina Casas

On July 7, 2024, more than a dozen high school graduates gathered at the Tzu Chi Center for Compassionate Relief in Manhattan, New York, for a special award ceremony. Each was to receive a Tzu Chi USA scholarship to help pay for college or university in the upcoming academic year.

As Tzu Chi volunteer Sansan Chiang, who is on Tzu Chi USA Northeast Region's scholarships team, explained, "Every year is different. This year, we had 15 applicants, and they all qualified to become Tzu Chi's 2024 Scholars." At the event, the award recipients were eager to express their gratitude.

I'm ecstatic because this puts my foot into the door of getting higher education, and things like that are rare, especially for many minority communities. It's going to change everything. Coming from a Latino family and a single mother, there's always that pressure of money. So not having that during college, it's just going to make things so much easier for me.

“

**Martin Palomeque**  
2024 Scholarship Recipient



I really like how they help other people just like me because I know in the world you don't get the same hope, and this Foundation really did help me a lot.

“

**John Fernandez**  
2024 Scholarship Recipient



I feel very grateful because college is a little expensive, so the \$1,500 is a lot for me. I'm going to use it toward my tuition at Pace University.

“

**Jazmin Alvarez**  
2024 Scholarship Recipient



I was struggling about how to pay for college, so this scholarship is helping me. A lot will go towards my dreams of becoming a psychologist and helping others. I'm so excited.

“

**Barbara Chisolm**  
2024 Scholarship Recipient



It is hardly surprising that the scholarship recipients were so thankful for the financial assistance they received to help fund their higher education: Not having an undergraduate degree can significantly impact income, employment, and career prospects in the United States.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), in the third quarter of 2023, full-time workers aged 25 and over with a high school diploma had median weekly earnings of \$905, while those with a bachelor's degree earned \$1,499. Over a lifetime, this difference can accumulate to a substantial gap. The key findings in "The College Payoff: Education, Occupations, Lifetime Earnings," a report from Georgetown University's Center on





Scholarship recipient Barbara Chisolm (second right) shares during the award ceremony with fellow 2024 Tzu Chi USA Scholars Jazmin Alvarez (middle), John Fernandez (second left), and Juan Astudillo (left) beside her. *Photo/Martina Casas*



While the students receive Tzu Chi USA Scholars awards during the ceremony at the Tzu Chi Center, their parents watch proudly: For many, these children are the first in the family to pursue higher education. *Photo/Martina Casas*

Education and the Workforce, reveal that a Bachelor's degree is worth \$2.8 million on average over a lifetime, as Bachelor's degree holders earn 84% more than those with just a high school diploma.

Lack of a higher education also affects employment. BLS data indicates that in February 2022, the unemployment rate for people 25 years and older who were high school graduates with no college was 4.5%, whereas the rate for those with a bachelor's degree or higher was 2.2%. Yet, while not having an undergraduate degree can limit earning potential, reduce job opportunities, and hinder career advancement, many can't afford to pursue higher education after high school. It's not just the tuition, as additional costs such as

fees, books, supplies, accommodations, and living expenses can add significantly to the total cost of attendance.

Moreover, such financial constraints concerning college or university continue into adulthood. The National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators, citing the "State of Higher Education 2024 Report" produced by Gallup and Lumina Foundation, concluded that financial barriers are the biggest reasons why U.S. adults without a college degree or credential don't seek one.

## The Tzu Chi USA Scholars Program

Tzu Chi USA's scholarship program, which began in 1992, recognizes and provides financial assistance to outstanding college-bound high school graduates and continuing undergraduate students who were prior recipients. Tzu Chi USA Scholars are selected based on their financial need, academic achievement, and community involvement. The award is \$1,000 in most states, while \$1,500 in New York and California due to the higher cost of living.

To be eligible, applicants must demonstrate financial need for college tuition and related expenses and have a minimum 3.0 GPA. Moreover, since fostering social responsibility and volunteerism is among Tzu Chi's missions, the applicants must also demonstrate a community spirit and readiness to contribute to society and the common good. To do so, they must submit two pieces of personal writing:

- An autobiography explaining why they should be awarded a scholarship, stating the reasons for financial need and how they intend to use the funds; their personal and academic achievements with specific examples; their academic and career plans with specific goals; and their past and current involvement plus plans for making a difference in their community.
- An essay about Tzu Chi, based on the information gathered from websites, publications, news articles, etc., explaining what they've learned about Tzu Chi that inspires them and why.

The scholarship is renewable for up to four years. Continuing undergraduate students must provide written proof of completing 50 volunteering hours with Tzu Chi or another non-profit organization during the current academic year when re-applying.



Each scholarship recipient is unique, and all their families are proud of them. Here members of Tzu Chi USA Northeast Region's scholarship team meet Martin Palomeque during his home visit. *Photo/Martina Casas*





During the award ceremony, Tzu Chi volunteer Sansan Chiang (front left) and Tzu Chi USA Northeast Region Executive Director Freeman Su (front right) contemplate the impact this aid can have on the scholarship-winning students' future. *Photo/Martina Casas*

**We try to plant a seed in their minds so they will know how to pay back to the community. I think that's very important. I'm thinking about the 'seed' as the letters S, E, E, and D. The S stands for sustainability, to continue to do a good job; the first E for enthusiasm, to become very loving and help people; the second E for empathy, to know how to care for others; and the D for determination to help people.**

***Freeman Su***

*Executive Director*

*Tzu Chi USA Northeast Region*



Tzu Chi's approach certainly resonated with the 2024 scholarship recipients, as Barbara Chisolm, one of them shared at the award ceremony in July: "I remember researching about the scholarship, and I really liked the whole idea of giving back to people and felt that was something I wanted to do. So, I think this organization is amazing: It's supportive and helps young people while inspiring them to give back."

## Getting to Know the Applicants

The application process for Tzu Chi scholarships is in-depth and personal. The autobiographical essay is often a welcome, even enlightening component. "The essay was very nice because I could talk about my situation, myself, and my family," Jazmin Alvarez remembers. "I just got to express myself fully on paper. It was definitely a learning experience as well," Martin Palomeque shared.

Once the scholarship teams in Tzu Chi USA's nine regions receive the written applications, they evaluate them. Those approved become the official applicants, and home visits or phone interviews follow so the teams can understand each student's background better and get to know them. In Tzu Chi USA's Northeast Region, teams visited applicants in Brooklyn, Queens, and upstate New York.



Tzu Chi USA Northeast Region scholarship team members head out to meet the 2024 applicants through home visits. Photo/Martina Casas

This year, several applicants were from Peekskill in upstate New York. During the visit to her home, Jazmin Alvarez, who will study nursing, proudly told the Tzu Chi team, “Hopefully, in the future, I can provide care for my community.”

Martin Palomeque, who will attend Hunter College and plans to become a teacher, explained, “I want to come back here. I want to help the kids here the same way my teachers helped me.”

John Fernandez told the visiting team about his experience helping with community food distributions. “Years before, my mom would also go and get food, so I wanted to give the food as well,” he said. “When I do get to college, I’m going to be doing criminal justice. Because I know recently there has been a lot of racial stuff happening, and I wanted to help that out.”

Barbara Chisolm, who will attend Binghamton University, expressed her humanitarian concerns, saying, “Further in my career in



During each home visit, the teams listen attentively, happy to get to know each worthy applicant. Photo/Martina Casas

psychology, I want to start a volunteer thing for therapists to come together and help those people who don’t have insurance and people who can’t afford it.”

As Tzu Chi volunteer Sansan Chiang reflected on the visits in Peekskill and others in the Northeast Region, she marveled at the qualities exhibited by all the applicants: “They are so elegant, they are so nice, and even their family, which supports those children.” The visits are part of the evaluation methodology, yet at the same time, they honor the students and their families, the award ceremony being the crowning moment in the process. In this regard, certain high schools deserve credit as they are also fundamental in finding worthy Tzu Chi scholarship candidates.



## A Flourishing Connection in Upstate New York

Students can learn about Tzu Chi USA scholarships online. Still, there's nothing better than a personal introduction, and that's what relationships such as those with Maria Gordineer, in charge of the College Resource Center at Peekskill High School, can offer.

**Every year since 2015, a Peekskill High School counselor, Ms. Gordineer, has been very nice. She always supports very qualified students in applying for our scholarship. She knows her students well, and she knows Tzu Chi as well, the philosophy.**



**Sansan Chiang**  
*Tzu Chi Volunteer*

**Tzu Chi, even though it's global, we're still not very well known in the community. So we want someone to introduce their students to Tzu Chi because we are doing good things for everyone.**



**Freeman Su**  
*Executive Director  
Tzu Chi USA Northeast Region*

At the award ceremony, the 2024 scholarship recipients from Peekskill expressed their gratitude and love towards Gordineer, not only for her having introduced the scholarship to them but also for helping guide them through the application procedure. They exclaimed: "The process is long, but she was there to help in every single way. She'll stay up late, like after hours, just helping you do the application." "She's the best. She always helped me with everything." "All of these students here, it's because of her. All our success can be attributed to her."



Maria Gordineer, Peekskill High School's college advisor, is beloved by her students and Tzu Chi USA. Photo/Screenshot from Tzu Chi USA Video

Gordineer arrived in the United States from Columbia in 2000 and is now a college guidance advisor working with Grade 12 students at Peekskill High School. She discovered the Tzu Chi scholarship one day while exploring online and thought, "Wow, I'm going to call!" That got the ball rolling. "They started communicating with me. I also attended the ceremonies in Queens, bringing along some assistant principals and teachers," she remembers. "I haven't stopped with Tzu Chi to this day!"

**I think it is good that Tzu Chi supports students since many need it. They come from families who don't have the means to buy a book or pay for transportation. We're truly grateful for your support for our high school students.**



**Maria Gordineer**  
*College Resource Center Advisor  
Peekskill High School*

The 2024 cohort of scholarship recipients is off to a brighter future, yet many others set out on this path before them. Each is contributing to their community in unique ways. Some even work for Tzu Chi, as is exemplified by one previous scholarship recipient in Santa Ana, California.

## An Inspirational Story

Sandra Barcenas came to the United States from Mexico with her mother in 2008, when she was just seven years old.



Sandra Barcenas and her mother, Ubaldina Fuerte, must build a new life from scratch in the United States, with only each other to count on. Photo/Courtesy of Sandra Barcenas

We came here to reunite with her father, but when we arrived, he was no longer here for us. So, we stayed alone, just the two of us. We have faced many challenges. I believe this is why she is so motivated to help others. She knows there have been times when we didn't have much, but we've always made an effort to give back.

**Ubaldina Fuerte**

*Sandra Barcenas' Mother*

“

Watching her mom as she struggled to support them ingrained a strong work ethic in the little girl. “Because of her hard work and everything, I was able to focus on my studies,” Barcenas explains. At the same time, the two gave back. “My mother would make a lot of donations to St. Jude Children’s Hospital, and that just stuck with me. And then we did a lot of community service, too. We volunteered at a homeless shelter. And since then, I have always volunteered within my community.”



Ubaldina Fuerte is immensely proud of her beloved and studious daughter, who attended university and attained a higher education after graduating from high school. Photo/Courtesy of Sandra Barcenas





Sandra Barcenas and the Tzu Chi USA and Listos California team conduct community outreach.  
 Photo/Courtesy of Sandra Barcenas

Barcenas was an ideal candidate for a Tzu Chi scholarship, and thankfully, she found out about the program in 2019 and applied. “In my high school senior year, I was looking for scholarships and one of them ended up being Tzu Chi,” she recalls. “A lot of scholarships aren’t available to me due to my immigration status, but Tzu Chi didn’t request any immigration status, so I received the scholarship throughout my four years of undergrad studies.”

“She is the first one in our family to go to college and to help many people,” her mother is proud to say. Barcenas completed a double major in political science and legal sciences at the University of California, Berkeley. During her studies, she began by volunteering through the Tzu Chi Collegiate Association at Berkeley. Then it expanded when she noticed a family needing assistance to pay for a funeral and approached Julie Lin, Tzu Chi USA’s charity leader in Orange County, who green-lit the aid for this family. The connection between Barcenas and Tzu Chi only deepened from there.

**Sandra Barcenas is such a kind, big-hearted lady, and because of her big heart, not only do we help her, but she helps us more because we need interpreters. So, she started to be a translator for family cases; when local families have difficulties, she helps me by doing translation.**



*Julie Lin  
 Tzu Chi Volunteer*

After Barcenas graduated, she began doing immigration research for the Distributed AI Research Institute, which does ethical AI research. “My career aspiration is to help my community.” Then, an opportunity to work part-time with Tzu Chi USA arose, and Lin immediately thought of Barcenas: “Her kind heart is so much a match to our Tzu Chi mission and vision, right?” The position was to be a community liaison focusing on Spanish-speaking communities and working with a Tzu Chi USA partner in California, Listos: The organization’s name, translated from Spanish to English, means “ready.”

**This program is basically to prepare communities of color to be ready in case of any disaster or emergency situation, whether that be an earthquake, a flood, or wildfire since they're more prone here in California. That's one of the reasons why I ended up helping Tzu Chi within this program, just because within our communities of color, there are a lot of impoverished communities, and I'm actually part of one of them.**

**Sandra Barcenas**  
Community Liaison  
Tzu Chi USA



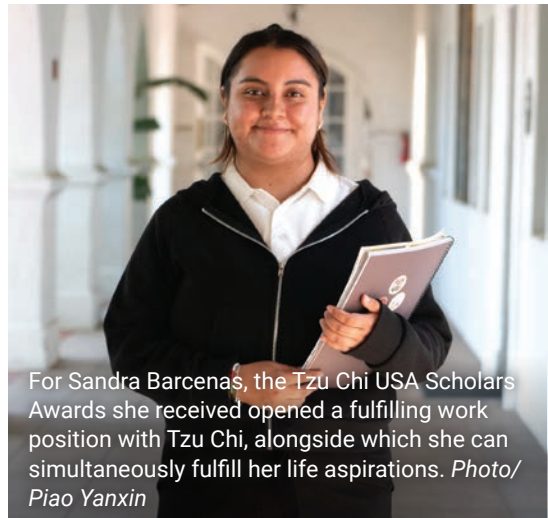
For Tzu Chi USA, this is a beautiful and blessed happy ending. As Lin sees it, Barcenas is an excellent example if Tzu Chi wants to continue in the United States. While working for the organization, Barcenas can fulfill her personal goals and dreams of helping the immigrant community at the same time.

**We want to have more young people and more local people join Tzu Chi. I understand that those young generations need to make a living, too. So that's the other thing. We're looking for opportunities so they can have jobs in Tzu Chi and also carry out their ideas and mission.**

**Julie Lin**  
Tzu Chi Volunteer



In Tzu Chi's view, Lin says, "We have one world and one family. Although our founder is from Taiwan, it's not only for Taiwan. It's supposed to be a global organization, so every place should have a Tzu Chi with local volunteers. That's what we're looking for."



For Sandra Barcenas, the Tzu Chi USA Scholars Awards she received opened a fulfilling work position with Tzu Chi, alongside which she can simultaneously fulfill her life aspirations. Photo/ Piao Yanxin

## May the Scholarship Program Grow

In 2023, Tzu Chi USA provided \$168,500 in financial aid, benefiting 109 students nationwide. And now, in 2024, a new group of Tzu Chi USA Scholars Award winners is beginning their higher education journey, both pursuing their dreams and exploring ways to be of service to society.

**Now, it's our turn to prove to Tzu Chi that they chose the right people by doing great things. Thank you to Tzu Chi for this amazing opportunity. I feel very honored.**

**John Fernandez**  
2024 Scholarship Recipient



**I hope they realize how much they're affecting and changing lives and that they continue to do it because it's instrumental. I just want to tell them to keep doing what they're doing. And hopefully, they inspire others as they inspire me.**



**Martin Palomeque**  
2024 Tzu Chi USA Scholars Award Recipient





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The Starbucks Coffee Company team volunteering at Tzu Chi USA Northeast Region's food pantry in Flushing, New York, on April 5, 2024, poses for a group picture. Photo/Daniel Ferrara

# Coming Home to Tzu Chi Through Starbucks

Written by Ida Eva Zielinska





Tzu Chi USA Northeast Region volunteer Sansan Chiang (middle) knows full well how much the community needs charity assistance, thus each food pantry is cause for celebration as everyone prepares.  
*Photo/Daniel Ferrara*

**You know, we see people in need all the time, and we just want to help. This is just a great opportunity for us to do so.**



**Daniel Lee**  
*Starbucks Coffee Company*

While it was already spring in New York City, the temperature on April 5, 2024, was brisk, especially if spending a lot of time outside. However, that didn't stop Daniel Lee, along with other Starbucks employees dressed in winter attire, from arriving at the Tzu Chi USA Northeast Region Office in the Flushing neighborhood of Queens borough to volunteer at the outdoor food pantry Tzu Chi has been running there since 2018.

The morning began with a group circle, where all the volunteers serving that day joined hands and swayed in unison as they listened to a motivational Tzu Chi song with lyrics that encourage “love and care for all.” Then, the Starbucks volunteers, along with all the others, helped bundle fresh produce into single portions they would distribute to the several hundred people expected, who were already beginning to line up outside the Northeast Region Office before the official start of the food pantry at 10:00 AM, a long queue extending to the corner and back, filling the street.

**The food pantry is operated on Fridays all year round. Fruit, vegetables, and dry food are distributed. The pantry partners with Food Bank for New York City, United Way, NYC’s Human Resources Administration, and New York State’s Nourish New York program. We receive funds or food from these organizations. We also distribute donated adult diapers, walkers, wheelchairs, and winter clothes. Each week we serve 300 families on average.**



**Sansan Chiang**  
*Tzu Chi Volunteer*

For Daniel Lee, volunteering here was not his first time, and he was glad to help the community. He remembers growing up in New York with his family: “We didn’t have much money. Sometimes, we would go to events like this to get groceries because sometimes, you need help, right? And giving back in the same way feels good. It just comes full circle.”

Others also found a sense of fulfillment in doing this.



Daniel Lee from Starbucks helps bundle vegetables into portions. Photo/Daniel Ferrara

**This is my second time here. I really love the atmosphere, and I’ll be happy to recommend it to my co-workers as well!**



**David Rosario**  
*Starbucks Coffee Company*

**We’re very happy to be able to help and support people in our community. We feel very fulfilled, and it just helps brighten our day that we’re making a difference in someone’s life.**



**Victoria Liou-Gonzalez**  
*Starbucks Coffee Company*

April is actually a big volunteering month at Starbucks, as it is when the coffee company celebrates its Global Month of Good – initially called the Starbucks Global Month of Service. The initiative launched in 2010, the company’s 40th anniversary, when Rodney Hines, then the Director of Community Investments for Starbucks U.S.





As this crowd attests on April 5, 2024, Tzu Chi USA Northeast Region's food pantry services in New York City draw hundreds of locals needing food assistance. Photo/Daniel Ferrara

Retail Operations, proposed incorporating volunteer service into the celebration. "What truly embodies the spirit of our company is courage and passion," he explained, "to improve the lot of others and to not be a bystander. We thought, what better way to recognize four decades of Starbucks in locations around the world than a global service project."

As a day or week would not suffice for hundreds of thousands of *partners* (employees) to participate, Starbucks now designates a full month for the project annually. Thus, each April, Starbucks

partners worldwide engage in community service and invite their colleagues, customers, and community members to volunteer with them. It is in this spirit that Victoria Liou-Gonzalez introduced Tzu Chi's food pantries to Starbucks in 2021. In fact, she is no stranger to Tzu Chi.

**Victoria grew up in Tzu Chi. Her mother, Mingchu Hwang, has been a Tzu Chi volunteer for over 30 years.**



**Sansan Chiang**  
Tzu Chi Volunteer

## Growing Up in Tzu Chi

Victoria Liou-Gonzalez was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, where her mother, Mingchu Hwang, first discovered Tzu Chi in 1984 when her daughter was just one year old. Hwang and others were eager to start a chapter there and followed the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation's bamboo bank spirit by striving to donate regularly. However, not long after, the family moved to the United States in 1986.

Settling in New York City, Hwang reconnected with Tzu Chi by chance. "I believe it was a hair salon that she had gone to, and they were also doing this concept where they would be donating money every month and getting a New York chapter started," Liou-Gonzalez recalls her mother telling her. These early pioneers' efforts reached fruition when, in 1991, they established Tzu Chi USA's Northeast Region with its headquarters office in Flushing, Queens.

By then, Liou-Gonzalez was eight and became the first student at the Tzu Chi Chinese weekend school opened in New York; these weekend schools are now known as Tzu Chi Academies. There, she learned the Chinese language and culture but was also exposed to Tzu Chi's community service philosophy, reinforced by her mother's volunteer activities in which the little girl participated.

"I would be involved in street cleanings and then visiting nursing homes, foster homes, and homeless shelters, and helped with donation requests for any natural disaster relief, developing this love and compassion for others, wanting to support people in my community," Liou-Gonzalez

remembers. "So I think that upbringing helped me to develop and grow into a very caring person, putting myself in other people's shoes, seeing other people's perspectives, and wanting to help people."

However, Liou-Gonzalez remarks that it was almost like living two lives, one in Tzu Chi and the other in her regular school, where her peers didn't engage in community service, something she enjoyed immensely. As a self-described introvert, when she joined the local Tzu Chi Youth Group as a teenager, participating in Tzu Chi activities allowed her to develop leadership skills and greater confidence. "I looked forward to seeing my friends at Tzu Chi. I grew up very shy and reserved and kind of kept to myself. Going into Tzu Chi was an outlet for me to learn to be myself and be comfortable."

And yet, Liou-Gonzalez drifted away from Tzu Chi and her friends there when she left to study at Binghamton University. "I stopped attending any Tzu Chi events," she recounts, "My mom would ask me, 'Oh, why don't you come to this event?' And I don't know, I'd lost touch with those friends and kind of lost interest in that community."

## A Catalyst to Come Home

After graduation and a few years of working at other corporate jobs, Victoria Liou-Gonzalez began working for the Starbucks Coffee Company and was on course to a life independent from Tzu Chi. But then, the COVID-19 pandemic struck in 2020, and her community spirit gradually reawakened amid the global crisis. "It was a very challenging time for everybody. And I personally felt a little lost working from home every day, not being able to see my family, co-workers, and any of my friends often," she says, looking back. "I felt very isolated."



As 2021 rolled around, Liou-Gonzalez remembered that the Starbucks Global Month of Good was approaching: “A thought just came to me; I was like, ‘Oh, Tzu Chi is the nonprofit I grew up with, maybe I can make this introduction, start a partnership.’”

**I reached out to the lower Manhattan, the Chinatown food pantry, to see if they had any opportunities for us to start volunteering there. And they were very receptive and very open, very excited for us to go volunteer. So that’s when it started, April 2021.**



**Victoria Liou-Gonzalez**  
*Starbucks Coffee Company*

As she pondered having taken these steps, Liou-Gonzalez realized, “During the pandemic, everyone was going through a really tough personal time. And I think giving back to the community was like my own source of therapy and a way to pull myself out of any feelings of anxiety or negativity.

And it uplifted me again; like it brought me back to life to be grateful and that I have both the compassion and passion to help others.”

After introducing the food pantry at Tzu Chi USA Northeast Region’s Manhattan Service Center in Chinatown to Starbucks and her colleagues in 2021, she connected them with the pantry at the Region’s headquarters in Flushing, Queens, in December 2023. Since then, Starbucks partners have come to volunteer at both locations several times a year, with more coming in April, as it’s the organization’s Global Month of Good. Each food pantry event is an eye-opening experience where they recognize that people need help even in their own communities and are motivated to continue volunteering.

**It feels so good. And then you get to take that good spirit back to your team and enlighten them to join you the next time you come out.**



**Adair Maxwell**  
*Starbucks Coffee Company*



A team from Starbucks, including Victoria Liou-Gonzalez (middle), volunteers at Tzu Chi USA Northeast Region’s Manhattan Service Center in Chinatown in April 2023. Photo/Courtesy of Victoria Liou-Gonzalez



Starbucks partners volunteer at the food pantry run by the Tzu Chi USA Northeast Region Office in Flushing for the first time in December 2023. Photo/Courtesy of Victoria Liou-Gonzalez

## This Connection Is Bringing More Than Volunteers

Starbucks partners coming to volunteer at Tzu Chi USA Northeast Region's food pantries in New York City is not the only marvelous aspect of the connection between Tzu Chi and Starbucks that Victoria Liou-Gonzalez forged, as grants from the coffee company are another.

Starbucks Foundation, the philanthropic side of the Starbucks Coffee Company, runs a Neighborhood Grants program. Starbucks partners and alums can nominate local grassroots, community-led nonprofit organizations to receive grants through it. "It ties in with April Global Month of Good because as we volunteer at nonprofits, we also get to nominate them," Liou-Gonzalez explains. "We get to write about our experience working with this nonprofit and why they're deserving. The more nominations a nonprofit receives, the higher the amount, usually from 1,000 to 10,000."

**Ever since April 2021, we have been nominating Tzu Chi every time. There have been six rounds of this neighborhood grant, and they received \$40,000 in total from these rounds. The last round was from June 2024, and they're receiving \$10,000 this year. 131 people nominated Tzu Chi. I was in shock because usually, we have maybe 60 or 80. If we can stay in contact with other regions like New Jersey or reach out to other chapters, volunteering opportunities can keep expanding; this could get bigger and bigger.**



**Victoria Liou-Gonzalez**  
Starbucks Coffee Company



In June 2024, Victoria Liou-Gonzalez (fourth left), with her mother Mingchu Hwang (middle) and fellow Starbucks partners beside her, surprises the Tzu Chi USA Northeast Region team in Flushing, New York, with the news they are receiving a \$10,000 Neighborhood Grant from Starbucks. Photo/Courtesy of Victoria Liou-Gonzalez

## Reflections and Gratitude

As Victoria Liou-Gonzalez looks back on her initiative in introducing Tzu Chi to the Starbucks Coffee Company, she deservedly feels a sense of pride, yet one imbued with gratitude and goodwill. "As I reflect and think, if I hadn't taken the initiative to make the introduction, no partners would have known about Tzu Chi and these volunteering events. Tzu Chi would not have received all these grants in the last four years. I am glad I made the decision as it has been wonderful to create a positive impact for my nonprofit and my company," she says while acknowledging the group effort in the same breath: "These partners, because of their volunteering and their efforts along with Tzu Chi's partnership, we made this happen together, so it's the best feeling in the world."





“I’ve known Tzu Chi since I was eight years old. I’m 41 years old now,” Liou-Gonzalez says as she considers her life journey and how this initiative has brought her home to an organization she loves and its core values of giving back and caring for others. “When I help and give back, it also makes me feel good about myself; the feeling is mutual,” she reflects. “And if I can be a good person, it just makes the world a better place. I’m spreading my love because I want people to see the difference they can make and the impact.”

As for her partners at Starbucks, who have discovered volunteering in Tzu Chi’s activities thanks to her efforts, they couldn’t agree more.

**I would do this every time. Yeah, this is amazing.**



**Adair Maxwell**  
*Starbucks Coffee Company*



The fulfilled smiles of Adair Maxwell (left) and David Rosario (middle) as they work suggest Starbucks partners volunteering during Tzu Chi’s food pantries will continue. *Photo/Courtesy of Victoria Liou-Gonzalez*





# The Future Blossoms for Tijuana's Youths

*Written by Adriana DiBenedetto and Meijuan Su*





Teachers, staff, and students from Tzu Chi's Hope Classroom in Tijuana, Mexico, are as focused on academics as they are on becoming global citizens and environmental ambassadors. *Photo/Christopher Yang*

**Every achievement grows out of the seed of determination.**

***Dharma Master Cheng Yen***

*Founder*

*Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation*



**T**he Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation believes in the promise of our youths near and far, and the potential that lives within us all. However, not all children have access to supportive and inclusive learning environments – or ones that promote social mobility. And so, Tzu Chi's educational mission strives to advance a global humanistic culture that supports equality, compassion, and hope.

Through a range of programs and initiatives, Tzu Chi's education mission balances developing the mind and opening the heart, emphasizing both academic and emotional intelligence, with a comprehensive curriculum that nurtures spiritual, analytical, physical, social, and creative growth while fostering integrity and responsibility. Also foundational to Tzu Chi's mission is the need to protect our planet for future generations, thus incorporating green approaches and routines into its curriculum.

Decades ago, Tzu Chi helped advance education in Tijuana with an elementary school. The Foundation's educational mission locally has continued to evolve over the years, most recently implementing a program for Tijuana's youths known as the "Classroom of Hope." Today, it empowers students with the resources to transform communities.

## The Origin of Tzu Chi's Education Mission In Tijuana

Tzu Chi volunteers have been active in Tijuana, Mexico, since the early 1990s, assessing local conditions and ways Tzu Chi might help. Then, in 1995, Tzu Chi volunteer Amoy Manguy encountered a school that gravely needed assistance. Classrooms were fashioned with garage doors and tarpaulins, creating a sometimes precarious situation for students to learn effectively. Many simply didn't attend.

**Many children were wandering around. They didn't get to go to school.**

“

**Ahmui Tse**  
*Tzu Chi Volunteer*

After investigating needs thoroughly, Tzu Chi started the building process for what would become Escuela Primaria Tijuana Tzu Chi, also known as Tijuana Tzu Chi Elementary School. Steadily, school became a place where youths could truly enjoy their time and studies and develop their innate potential to flourish in brand-new classrooms – with a basketball court and emergency shelter on the way.

As Tzu Chi's work continued, local parents joined in as well, taking part in nutrition workshops and learning performances that incorporated Sign Language. In 2005, this group of community-minded parent volunteers and faculty even organized a trip to Taiwan to meet Tzu Chi's founder, Dharma Master Cheng Yen, and solidified plans for further progress, eventually creating one of the most advanced elementary school environments in Latin America.



Escuela Primaria Tijuana Tzu Chi continues to grow, with 900 students from ages 6-12, and four special education teachers. "What impresses us the most in our collaboration with the Tzu Chi Foundation is sharing, being supportive, focusing on ecological care, sharing our traditions, and being able to get close to people who are not your same nationality, but feel them as part of your family," shared Graciela Sanchez, the school's Headmaster.

Students actively uphold eco-friendly routines, such as recycling cardboard and



Tzu Chi's Classroom of Hope empowers the community with the resources to develop, organize, and execute meaningful projects while growing in social awareness as responsible global citizens. *Photo/Christopher Yang*



plastic, and have taken an interest in environmental protection both in and outside of the classroom. The funds collected from recycling go directly toward school supplies, such as pencils and notebooks.

**Since Tzu Chi came here, there were many changes. We started taking care of nature by recycling, keeping our spaces clean, collaborating with the community.**

**Graciela Sanchez**

*Headmaster*

*Tijuana Tzu Chi Elementary School*



Unified in their support, members of the school strive to carry out the Tzu Chi spirit in their daily lives, passing it along from one person to the next. "I've seen children teach their parents to recycle, and even when going about their day, they make an effort to clean up the streets," said Headmaster Sanchez.

For the last 20 years, the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation has provided quality primary education, scholarships, school supplies, and more through the Tijuana Tzu Chi Elementary School in Mexico.



## Establishing the Classroom of Hope

Upon entering some of Tijuana’s communities, dust and smoke permeate the air, coating trees, cars, and fences as small fires burn waste items here and there. However, the residents of Tijuana have become accustomed to the smog.

Many homes do not have valid addresses or ready access to clean water or electricity. Although Tijuana’s city government provides free waste collection services, circumstances within and around these communities commonly lead to excess debris, and litter had become a deeply ingrained habit when all efforts seemed futile.

Due to these hardships and more, children without the required documents couldn’t enroll in formal education, facing an uncertain future with few avenues of release from the cycle of poverty present in many disadvantaged and under-resourced neighborhoods.

Determined to act once more, Tzu Chi volunteers in Tijuana collaborated with the National Institute for Adult Education (Instituto Nacional para la Educación de los Adultos or INEA), a division of the Department of Education. However, since INEA primarily focused on adult education and only offered half-day weekend programs, they couldn’t provide sufficient assistance to youths. To bridge this gap, Tzu Chi’s medical campus volunteers took the initiative to hire teachers and establish a “Classroom of Hope” at Tzu Chi’s Tijuana campus under the INEA educational system.

Officially launched on April 3, 2023, this program welcomes people under 18 and

operates five days per week. As a separate initiative from Tijuana Tzu Chi Elementary School, Tzu Chi Tijuana’s regional campus takes care of all of the youths’ essential needs, including free lunches, and offering subsidized bus fares for those who live farther away. Additionally, the campus extends its philanthropic and medical care services to support the children and their families’ physical and mental well-being, ensuring a conducive environment where youths can attend school with peace of mind. Teaching the next generation to have a positive relationship with our planet can also start early. That’s why teachers and staff are teaching students about





environmental protection – and to fabulous results, with students and teachers from Tzu Chi’s Classroom of Hope regularly holding community clean-up events.

In the Classroom of Hope, children and teens work hard to catch up on their schoolwork with the help of volunteers who work hand in hand with teachers to arrange and plan Tzu Chi’s humanistic program, allowing students to reach grade level while also learning about kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity. Every aspect of the program is actively planned to expand horizons, and envision a future that is vast and wide.



Youths, volunteers, and educators alike have been tackling plastic pollution with local solutions to problems of global proportions.  
*Photo/Christopher Yang*



Youths from the Classroom of Hope keep their community clean and protect the Earth.  
*Photo/Christopher Yang*



## Present-Day Problems and Solutions

As buds begin to bloom in Mexico, it is time for annual celebrations to get underway as people welcome the summertime. And so, in 2024, Escuela Primaria Citlalmina joined hands with Tzu Chi volunteers and students from the Classroom of Hope to participate in a special festival event. Seizing this opportunity, Tzu Chi volunteers seamlessly integrated environmental protection concepts into their event presentation. On March 22, when Tzu Chi volunteers and students from the Classroom of Hope arrived at Escuela Primaria Citlalmina, it had been decorated with colorful balloons, and the small playground was full of life. Here, students from the Classroom of Hope performed a Sign Language piece titled “One Family” amidst warm music that conveyed Tzu Chi’s spirit of mutual care through sign language and song.

After the performance, the students shared Tzu Chi’s environmental mission with everyone gathered, winning applause and praise from the audience of parents and teachers. Many parents expressed their intention to join the recycling efforts. A parent named Kimberly was particularly pleased with the students’ presentation, saying, “It’s been a very enjoyable experience. We must keep the streets clean.”

A Classroom of Hope teacher named Victor beamed as he looked back on the children’s progress. “The performance went smoothly, and the children loved it,” he said. “We did some recycling work, helping the school collect recyclables. Students also displayed DA.AI Technology items created from recycled materials. This event was so important because it helped raise awareness about taking care of our planet. We also invited parents to join us on May 11 for a community event focused on recycling.”



Classroom of Hope members join hands to keep their community spaces clean and safe – thinking globally while acting locally. *Photo/Christopher Yang*





Compassionate youths from Tzu Chi's Classroom of Hope are committed to making an impact. This relay of love – both for one another and for the environment – inspires students and community members to continue passing the baton onward. *Photo/Christopher Yang*

**I'm glad to be here today. I was nervous at first, but we're doing this to stop people from littering and to promote recycling.**

**Maria**

*Student*

*Classroom of Hope*



After the spring event ended the students and teachers from the Classroom of Hope and Tzu Chi volunteers immediately started tidying up the area, surprising parents and teachers from Escuela Primaria Citlalmina, who then joined in the efforts, too. Working together, the scene was soon transformed.

As one teacher from Escuela Primaria Citlalmina rushed to help clean up, she asked the Tzu Chi volunteers, "What school are you from? Why do your children seem so different?" The Tzu Chi volunteers promptly introduced her to the Classroom of Hope and warmly invited her to visit the campus. She gave the volunteers an enthusiastic thumbs-up, thanking Tzu Chi for sharing its environmental mission.

**We're all going there so that we can start teaching people to recycle. Many people have burned a lot of things, and the smoke it produces is everywhere. It's a place where we can cooperate with our community to make a change.**

**Cindy**

*Tzu Chi Volunteer*



From horizon to horizon, good deeds are relayed onward from person to person, creating a ripple effect within communities. We look forward to seeing this cycle of collaboration and care gradually become even larger.

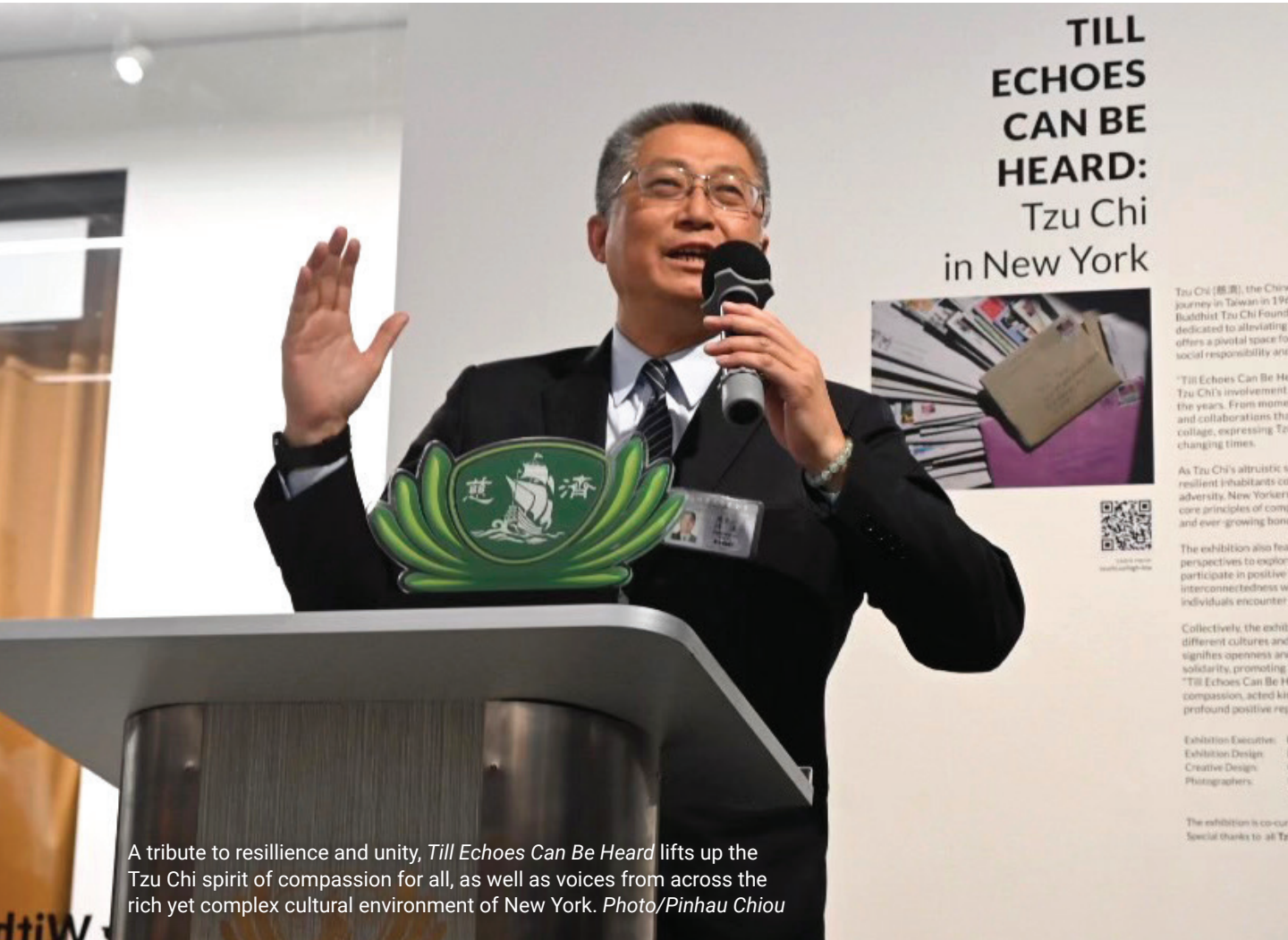
**Tzu Chi has taught us how we can work together, how we can recycle, and how we can reuse materials. Each student benefits from this in the end, and they can teach others by taking it home. Thank you very much. We're very excited, and we hope to be able to continue.**

**Miriam Patricia Chávez**

*Director*

*Escuela Primaria Citlalmina*





A tribute to resilience and unity, *Till Echoes Can Be Heard* lifts up the Tzu Chi spirit of compassion for all, as well as voices from across the rich yet complex cultural environment of New York. Photo/Pinhau Chiou

# *Till Echoes Can Be Heard: Tzu Chi in New York*

Written by Adriana DiBenedetto and Ida Eva Zielinska

From August 8 to 31, 2024, Tzu Chi USA held an exhibition at the High Line Nine Galleries in Manhattan, New York. Entitled *Till Echoes Can Be Heard*, it featured documentary photographs and videos demonstrating Tzu Chi's involvement in the New York area across decades.



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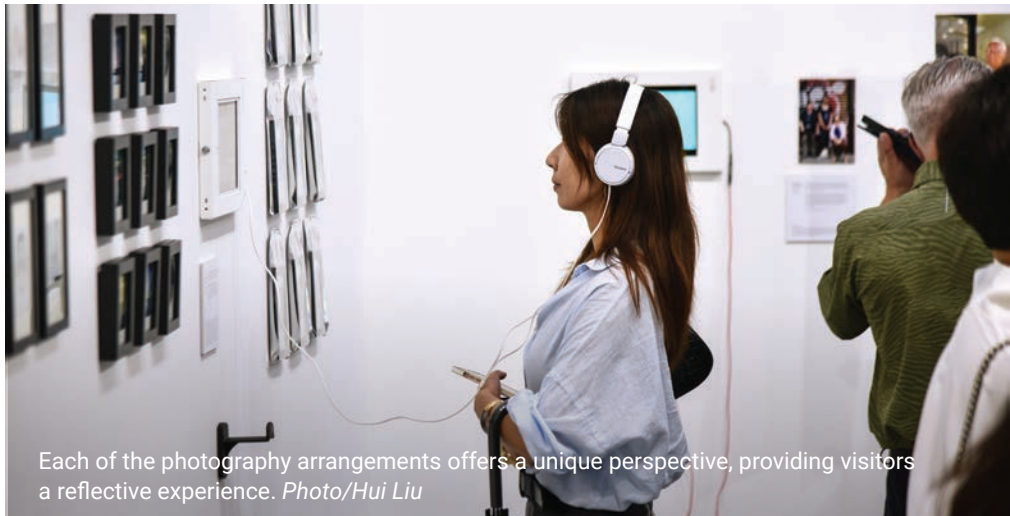
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percussions.

Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation, Northeast Region  
Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation, Culture and Commun  
Catherine Lee, Shoujan Lyu  
Cathy Ferrara, Nick Candrea, Peter Liu, Chialing Liu  
Suying Yang, Hannah Whiteman, William Yang, Ron

sted by Zi Ye.  
u Chi volunteers and Lei Huang, and Greg Guishee



Visitors are moved and gladdened seeing both new and familiar scenes at the exhibit.  
*Photo/Hui Liu*



Each of the photography arrangements offers a unique perspective, providing visitors  
a reflective experience. *Photo/Hui Liu*

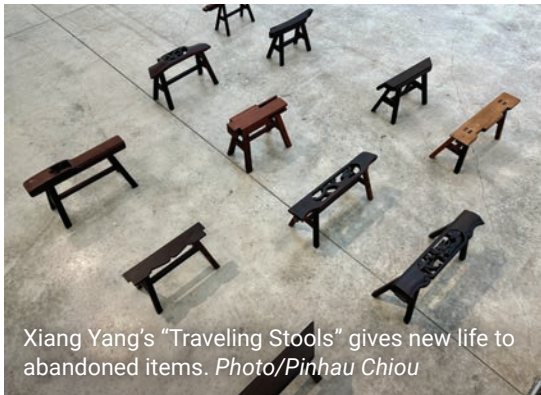
From moments of solace in times of crisis to acts of kindness that bridge divides and collaborations that celebrate shared humanity, these images created a compelling collage, expressing Tzu Chi's enduring and heartfelt care for humanity in our perpetually changing times.

As Tzu Chi's altruistic spirit and initiatives have touched the New York community, the city's resilient inhabitants continually shape and enrich Tzu Chi's mission. Especially in the face of adversity, New Yorkers demonstrate an inner strength and unity that resonate deeply with Tzu Chi's core principles of compassion and universal

love. This exhibition was a tribute to a deeply rooted and ever-growing bond.

*Till Echoes Can Be Heard* also featured artwork and projects from several artists. Their creations provided different humanistic perspectives to explore how individuals can embrace goodwill and responsibility and participate in positive social change. At the same time, viewers could meditate on the interconnectedness within the rich yet complex cultural environment of New York, where individuals encounter each other and the times intensely and daily.

**Terry Berkowitz (“Remains of the Day”)** presented a meditation on isolation during the pandemic. The artist took nearly 200 photographs during daily walks through mostly deserted streets and parks in New York City and elsewhere. To connect with others during this extraordinary time, she shared an image a day on social media.



Xiang Yang’s “Traveling Stools” gives new life to abandoned items. *Photo/Pinhau Chiou*

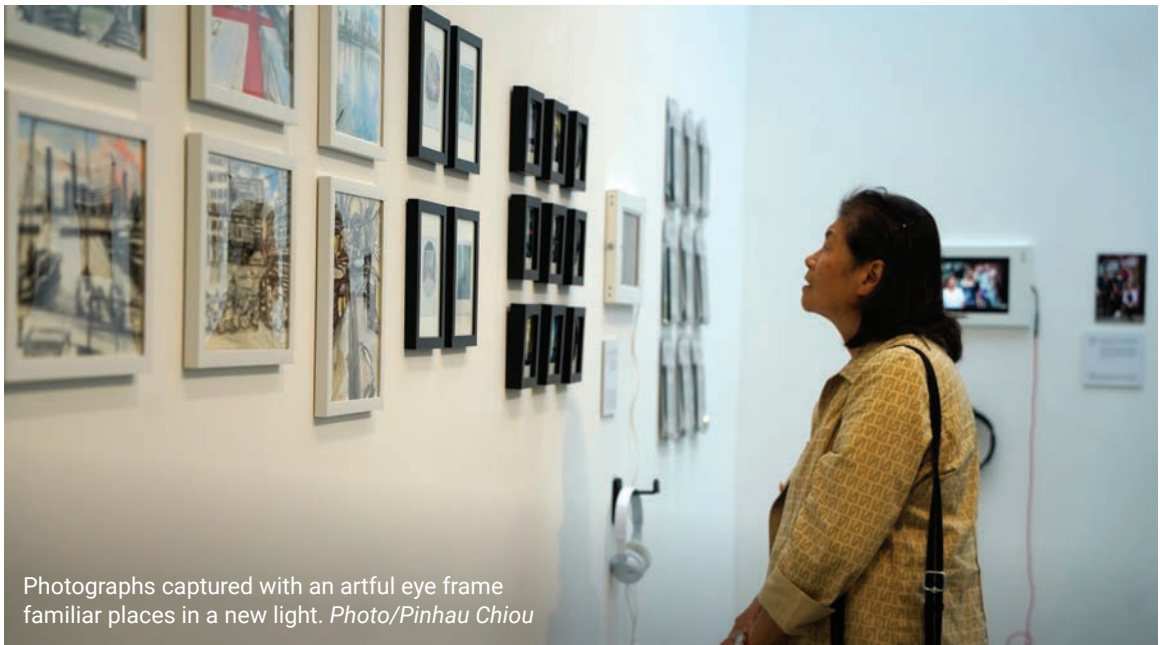
**Xiang Yang (“Traveling Stools”)** created stools from discarded antique furniture. The transformation of the abandoned objects is an allegory for reincarnation. The work has traveled internationally, with New York as its stop in August 2024.

**Peter Lin (“Original Face”)**, who participates in and documents Tzu Chi’s disaster relief and community assistance activities, shared photos that zoom directly into the heart, capturing the flow of emotion between Tzu Chi volunteers and care recipients.

**Lihua Chen (“Hi Strangers”)** used her new immigrant identity to explore an unfamiliar society. Her art project acted as a communication tool that can break cultural barriers and encourage the kindness of strangers.

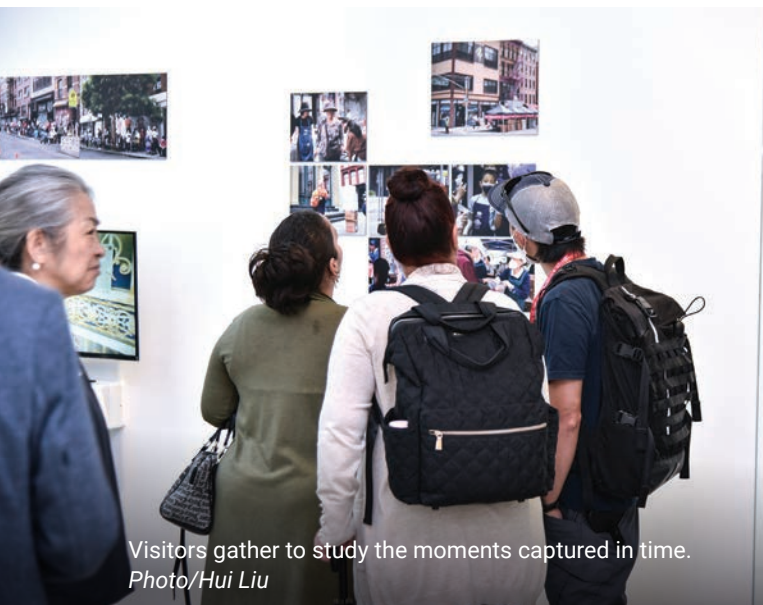
**Z. Y. (“Here and There”)** utilized an iconic visual symbol for New Yorkers – the Metro-Card – as the base for his art. He drew daily life scenes on discarded cards collected all over the city.

**Norah Lin (“Humans of Chinatown”)**, a New York high school student, featured interviews and portraits of older individuals involved in Tzu Chi’s food distributions. The project promoted cultural continuity by preserving a community’s heritage.



Photographs captured with an artful eye frame familiar places in a new light. *Photo/Pinhau Chiou*





Visitors gather to study the moments captured in time.  
Photo/Hui Liu



Positivity abounds on the exhibit's opening day, further enhanced by a captivating musical performance. Photo/Hui Liu



Created by high school student Norah Lin, "Humans of Chinatown" seeks to preserve a community's heritage while lifting up the voices of people who are seldom truly heard. Photo/Hui Liu

**Daryn Huang ("The Masked Odyssey")** presented an installation created from now-expired face masks and medical shoe covers garnered to support New York's needs during the COVID-19 pandemic, transforming them into a testament to suffering and resilience.

Collectively, the exhibition's content, displayed across distinct galleries in three sections – *Connection Through Care*; *Clear Sight, New Perspectives*; and *Serving With Compassion: Tzu Chi's Humanitarian Aid in*

*New York* – explored identity, belonging, and the interaction between different cultures and religions. It reminded us that in today's diverse society, "compassion" signifies openness and acceptance, and "relief" calls on each individual to speak out in solidarity, promoting individual and societal responsibility within the context of globalization. *Till Echoes Can Be Heard*, the exhibition's title, asked us to reflect on how if everyone embraced compassion, acted kindly, and collaborated, we could surely generate broader and more profound positive effects.





# **WONDERS ABOUND WHEN WE WORK TOGETHER**

Contribute your skills to a good cause with Tzu Chi USA!  
When you become a volunteer, you'll unite with a diverse network  
of caring individuals committed to relieving suffering  
through compassion.

**Ready to get started?**



[tzuchi.us/volunteer](https://tzuchi.us/volunteer)







# Illuminations

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

## **BE FREE, AT EASE, AND CONTENT**

**Question:** *What is a goal of life worthy of pursuing?*

**Answer:** *If we can take good care of our own minds to the point of perfection, our minds will be free and at ease. This is the happiest life to live.*

## **GIVE TO OTHERS; DEMAND OF OURSELVES**

**Question:** *What is the purpose of life?*

**Answer:** *It is to serve others to enable everyone to be happy. If we regard it as our own fundamental duty and give unconditionally, it will not be difficult. When we give, we give to others; when we demand, we should demand of ourselves.*

## **RECOGNIZE THE VALUE OF LIFE**

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

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

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

# ELIMINATE EVIL, INCREASE GOODNESS, AND FORM GOOD AFFINITIES

*"Bodhisattva-practitioners are compassionate. They always strive to benefit all beings. Thus, no matter what, they are never afraid. By treating others with love and kindness, they never offend others and always form good affinities."*

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

Every day, as I watch the happenings worldwide, I see news about climate change and international conflicts. Not only do I see sadness and suffering in this world, but I also see crises and impermanence. However, at the same time, Tzu Chi volunteers are active in various countries. We meet, connect, and collaborate with international NGOs. Whether it is fire, flood, or earthquake, we go wherever care is needed. Looking at the images and footage sent back from the disaster areas, we see that people there are truly suffering! I feel heartbroken. I also think about how blessed we are to live in a clean, bright, and orderly environment.

Many of us have air conditioning in the summer and heat in the winter. We live without worries, and we do not lack clothing or food. Our homes are clean, and we can get around without trouble. So, we should be very content. These are blessings, and we should not take them for granted. In the past, we must have cultivated the seeds of peace, wealth, and love for ourselves to enjoy the positive karmic fruits we have today. By being content all the time, we will always have more than enough. We live at peace and ease, and blessings will come without us seeking them. If we are not content, we will never have enough. Even if we are already blessed, we must continue to bless ourselves by having fewer desires, being content, contributing more, and continuously creating and increasing blessings.

In the Buddha's era, his homeland was very poor. He went outside the city gates and

saw the lives of ordinary people and the sufferings of birth, aging, illness, and death. He pondered how he could alleviate suffering like this. The strength of a single person is limited. So, he left the palace to search for an eternal path to help all sentient beings, leading them to liberation and freeing them from the bonds of ignorance and afflictions.

Giving back to the Buddha's homeland is my lifelong wish. My disciples in Singapore and Malaysia understand my wish and take on this mission on my behalf. Many have put aside their careers and stayed long-term in Nepal and India. To carry out the missions of charity, medicine, and education, they need manpower, and to start these projects from scratch, they have to form a solid connection with local communities.

They lived in comfort in their home countries, but when they went to the Buddha's homeland, they had to humble themselves and endure the heat and cold. They needed great courage. At that place, they witnessed a lot and did a lot. They truly practiced the teachings of the sutras. The Buddha came to the world for the one great cause of teaching the Bodhisattva Way. As for these Tzu Chi volunteers, they had widely spread the Buddha's teachings in their home countries before even traveling to the Buddha's homeland. They not only achieved this in tangible ways, but they embodied intangible education with their actions, teaching everyone to do good deeds.





Witnessing the genuineness and sincerity of Tzu Chi volunteers makes me feel accomplished in this lifetime. Everyone shares the same mission and walks on the same Bodhisattva Path. This path is long. Those walking ahead pave the road and guide us, and those following behind should diligently advance, step by step. Generation after generation, our steps must not deviate as we progress further and further on this path, and each step must also be steady and grounded.

Learning has no end, as we always have more to learn. If our learning is superficial, we can never thoroughly understand. Life is impermanent, and time is limited. We learn to achieve awakening, and we do so through the Buddha Dharma.

From learning to achieving awakening, we must walk the Bodhisattva Path and continuously learn with the heart of an innocent child. From simply knowing about the Path, we must seek to learn it and truly witness it. Then, we can guide others to walk on this great path.

When we take inventory of our lives, we may find that we are always busy. However, how much can we really accomplish? We may find it frustrating and only hope for tomorrow. When engaging in spiritual cultivation in this world, if we can achieve a simple life, that would be enjoyable. However, we ask ourselves if it is possible, as we always worry about many things daily.

Every day, 86,400 seconds tick away, but in fact, we do not have much time. Seizing the present moment is the practical thing to do. After each second passes, we should have no regrets. Then our conscience will be clear. Therefore, I often remind myself to stay vigilant, for “with each passing day, we draw closer to death.”

The Buddha teaches people to “refrain from all evil and do all that is good.” These are the two keys of our spiritual practice. On one hand, we must improve ourselves, and on the other, we must prevent ourselves from creating negative karma out of ignorance.

Many people find it difficult to let go of conflicts with people over matters. We always remember how someone has wronged us, and we insist on settling scores. Yet, we seldom remember how we have wronged others and how we can make up to them. The feeling of being owed by others continues to accumulate. Not only do negative causes and conditions from the past remain unresolved, but we also add new negative thoughts. Ignorance grows in our minds, and karmic obstacles continue to build.

Let us eliminate evil, increase goodness, and eliminate our karmic obstacles. Let us not dwell on past wrongdoings but instead work toward goodness and benefiting others. Let us make good use of time and keep ourselves busy, so we forget all grudges. Let us treat our interactions with everyone as an opportunity for spiritual practice. Leaving a positive impression on others is our spiritual practice with them, and with that, we have formed positive affinities with them. When we cultivate ourselves through our interactions with others, show mutual respect and love, and form positive affinities, we help foster harmony and joy in this world.

In this life, let us cultivate good seeds and help them mature. Let us accompany and take care of those who have an affinity with us and bring these virtuous seeds to future lifetimes. Let us seize the time, make good use of this world, and stand firmly in every space. Everyone, please always be mindful.



# TENDERNESS ODEN



## INGREDIENTS:

- white radish
- corn
- vegetarian pork balls
- vegetarian chikuwa
- fried bean curd
- konjac

## SEASONING:

- 1,000g water
- 15g rice vinegar
- 60g seaweed soy sauce
- sweet chili sauce
- 60g ketchup
- 300cc water
- sweet rice flour water
- 20g sugar

## DIRECTIONS:

1. Cut corn and white radish into 1-inch chunks.
2. Boil water, mix in sweet chili sauce and ketchup, then thicken the sauce with sweet rice flour and water for the dipping sauce.
3. Add water, rice vinegar, and seaweed into one pot. Boil over low heat.
4. Cook white radish and corn over low heat for 15 minutes, then add in other ingredients. Cook for 3 minutes.

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# REGIMEN STEAMED PUMPKIN BUNS



## INGREDIENTS:

- 700g all-purpose flour
- 350g wheat flour
- 350g pumpkin
- ½ tsp salt
- water

## SEASONING:

- 20g yeast baking powder

## DIRECTIONS:

1. Cut the pumpkin into large pieces and use a rice cooker to steam for 7 minutes, adding ½ cup of water to the outer pot.
2. Mix yeast baking powder with warm water (please refer to the instructions on the package). Add all-purpose flour, wheat flour, pumpkin, and mixed yeast baking powder. Add water slowly, and rub all the ingredients into non-sticky dough.
3. Place a wet cloth over the dough, and let it sit for 60-90 minutes.
4. Cut the dough into long pieces, then into smaller pieces.
5. Place the small pieces of dough into a pot to steam, and let them ferment for 15 minutes.
6. Boil water, and steam over medium heat for 15 minutes.

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State	Tzu Chi USA Offices	Address	Tel / Fax	State	Tzu Chi USA Offices	Address	Tel / Fax
AZ	Phoenix Service Center	2145 W. Elliot Rd. Chandler, AZ 85224	480-838-6556 F: 480-777-7665	IN	Indianapolis Service Center	2929 E. 96th St. #E Indianapolis, IN 46240	317-580-0979
S. CA	Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation, US Headquarters Area	1100 S. Valley Center Ave. San Dimas, CA 91773	909-447-7799 F: 909-447-7948	KS	Kansas Office	9508 Shannon Way Circle Wichita, KS 67206	316-323-5798
	Jing Si Books & Café, San Dimas		909-447-7799 x 6569	LA	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	MD	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	MA	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 Health Center - Alhambra		626-281-3383 F: 855-710-5853	MI	Lansing Office	3511 West Hiawatha Dr., Okemos, MI 48864	517-505-3388
	Tzu Chi Health Center - South El Monte	10414 Vacco St. South El Monte, CA 91733	626-281-3383 F: 855-710-5853		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	MN	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	MO	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	NV	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	NJ	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	50 Woodrow Wilson Dr., Edison, NJ 08820	973-857-8666
	West Los Angeles Service Center	11701 Wilshire Blvd. #15A Los Angeles, CA 90025	310-473-5188 F: 310-477-9518	NY	Tzu Chi Academy, Central New Jersey		
	Torrance Service Center	1355 Broad Ave. Wilmington, CA 90744	310-684-4465 F: 310-684-4460		Northeast Region/Academy	137-77 Northern Blvd. Flushing, NY 11354	718-888-0866 F: 718-460-2068
	Tzu Chi Health Center - Wilmington		626-281-3383 F: 855-710-5853		Jing Si Books & Café, New York		718-799-3000
	Orange County Service Center	22911 Mill Creek Dr. Laguna Hills, CA 92653	949-916-4488 F: 949-916-5933		Brooklyn Service Center	513 57th Street Brooklyn, NY 11220	917-909-0682
Tzu Chi Academy, Irvine	4321 Walnut Ave., Irvine, CA 92604	714-624-3026 F: 949-916-5933	Long Island Branch/Academy		60 E Williston Ave. East Williston, NY 11596	516-873-6888 F: 516-746-0626	
Cerritos Service Center	14618&14620 Carmenita Rd. Norwalk, CA 90650	562-926-6609 F: 562-926-1603	Manhattan Service Center		63 Canal Street New York, NY 10002	212-965-1151 F: 212-965-1152	
Northridge Service Center	8963 Reseda Blvd. Northridge, CA 91324	818-727-7689 F: 818-727-9272	East Long Island Office		4 Milburn Rd. S. Setauket, NY 11720	631-964-3393	
San Gabriel Valley Service Center	9620 Flair Dr. El Monte, CA 91731	626-416-4527 Warehouse: 626-416-4529	Tzu Chi Center, New York		229 E. 60th St. New York, NY 10022	212-660-9229 F: 646-864-0086	
Jing Si Books & Café, El Monte		626-448-1362	Raleigh Service Center			919-322-8389	
San Diego Service Center	5754 Pacific Center Blvd. #202 San Diego, CA 92121	858-546-0578 F: 858-546-0573	NC		Charlotte Office	4527 Dwight Evans Rd. Charlotte, NC 28217	704-281-8060 F: 704-943-1031
N. CA	Northwest Region	2355 Oakland Rd. San Jose, CA 95131	408-457-6969 F: 408-943-8420	OH	Cincinnati Office	11228 Brookbridge Dr. Cincinnati, OH 45249	513-469-2161 F: 513-469-2161
	Tzu Chi Academy, Tri-Valley		925-785-7413		Columbus Service Center	2200 Henderson Rd. Columbus, OH 43220	614-457-9215 F: 614-457-9217
	Jing Si Books & Café, San Jose		408-457-6981	Dayton Service Center	1459 E Dorothy Lane Dayton, OH 45429	937-701-7111	
	San Francisco Branch	2901 Irving St. San Francisco, CA 94122	415-682-0566 F: 415-682-0567	Cleveland Service Center	1076 Ford Rd. Highland Heights, OH 44143	440-646-9292 F: 440-646-9292	
	Tzu Chi Academy, San Mateo	2675 Ralston Ave., Belmont, CA 94002	650-888-1582	OR	Portland Service Center	3800 SW Cedar Hills Blvd #194 Beaverton, OR 97005	503-643-2130 F: 503-643-2130
	Tzu Chi Academy, San Francisco	350 Girard St. San Francisco, CA 94134	415-680-5225 F: 415-682-0567		Tzu Chi Academy, Portland	3500 SW 104th Ave. Beaverton, OR 97005	503-643-2130
	Modesto Service Center	1100 Carver Rd. #J Modesto, CA 95350	209-529-2625 F: 209-529-2625	PA	Philadelphia Office	107 North 9th Street Philadelphia, PA 19107	215-627-1915 F: 215-627-1916
	Stockton Office	1212 W Robinhood Dr. #3D Stockton, CA 95207	209-957-7800 F: 209-957-7800		Pittsburgh Service Center/ Academy	1333 Banksville Rd. #201 Pittsburgh, PA 15216	412-531-8343 F: 412-531-8341
	Tzu Chi Academy, Cupertino	1280 Johnson Ave San Jose, CA 95129	408-823-8799	TX	Southern Region/Academy	6200 Corporate Dr. Houston, TX 77036	713-270-9988 F: 713-981-9008
	Santa Rosa Office	2435 Professional Drive, Suite D Santa Rosa, CA 95403	707-546-1945		Jing Si Books & Café, Houston		713-981-8966
Sacramento Service Center	1820 Tribute Rd. # J Sacramento, CA 95815	916-568-5800	Tzu Chi Great Love Preschool & Kindergarten, Houston		713-395-0303 F: 713-395-0305		
Ukiah Office	527 S State St. #B Ukiah, CA 95482	707-462-2911	Austin Service Center	7221 Northeast Dr. Austin, TX 78723	512-491-0358 F: 512-926-1373		
Oakland Service Center	620 International Blvd. Oakland, CA 94606	510-879-0971 F: 510-879-0971	San Antonio Office	19179 Blanco Rd. #109-2 San Antonio, TX 78258	909-576-2387 F: 210-566-3970		
Tzu Chi Academy, San Jose	625 Educational Park Dr. San Jose, CA 95133	408-457-6970	Central Region/Academy/ Jing Si Books & Café	534 W. Belt Line Rd. Richardson, TX 75080	972-680-8869 F: 972-680-7732		
Fresno Service Center	7421 N Maple Ave. Fresno, CA 93720	559-298-4894 F: 559-298-4894	Tzu Chi Great Love Preschool & Kindergarten, Dallas		214-446-1776 F: 214-446-1772		
Chico Recovery Center	1001 Willow St, Suite C Chico, CA 95928	530-801-6335	VA	Greater Washington D.C. Region/ Academy	1516 Moorings Dr. Reston, VA 20190	703-707-8606 F: 703-707-8607	
Orlando Service Center	5062 W. Colonial Dr. Unit 140, Orlando FL 32808	407-292-1146 F: 407-479-3662	WA	Richmond Service Center	1318 Tomahawk Creek Rd. Midlothian, VA 23114	804-306-6037 F: 804-378-3520	
Miami Service Center	8070 Pasadena Blvd. Pembroke Pines, FL 33024	954-538-1172 F: 317-645-9907	WI	Seattle Branch/Academy	15800 SE Newport Way Bellevue WA 98006	425-643-9104	
Atlanta Branch/ Tzu Chi Academy, Atlanta	3120 Medlock Bridge Rd. Building E Peachtree Corners, GA 30071	770-458-1000	WI	Milwaukee Office	5356 W. Silverleaf Ln, Brown Deer, WI 53223	414-357-8427	
Pacific Islands Region/Academy	1238 Wilhelmina Rise Honolulu, HI 96816	808-737-8885		Madison Office	1019 Starlight Ln, Cottage Grove, WI 53527	608-960-1962	
IL	Midwest Region/Academy/ Jing Si Books & Café	1430 Plainfield Rd. Darien, IL 60561	630-963-6601 F: 630-960-9360	<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> <a href="http://www.tzuchi.us/offices">www.tzuchi.us/offices</a>   <a href="http://www.tzuchi.us/academy">www.tzuchi.us/academy</a>			
	Chicago Chinatown Service Center	215 W 23rd St, Chicago, IL 60616					





## Your Love Truly Makes a Difference

The Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation is a volunteer-based international non-governmental organization established by Dharma Master Cheng Yen in 1966. While it began with 30 female followers donating 50 NT cents (around two US cents) daily from their grocery money to help those in need, Tzu Chi's humanitarian aid footprint has now reached 136 countries and regions to relieve suffering and create a better world for all through compassion, love, and hope. Its activities encompass community and social services, national and international disaster relief,

medical and charitable assistance, education, environmental protection, and the promotion of humanistic values and community volunteerism. **And yet, there's so much more we can do together. Your recurring donation can help strengthen our efforts for years to come.**

**Donate Now** ▶  
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## Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation

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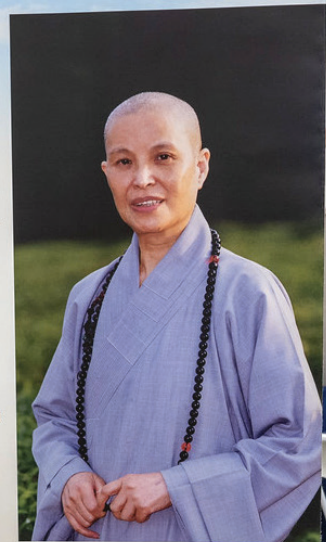
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# BUDDHIST TZU CHI FOUNDATION Compassion & Relief

In 1966, Dharma Master Cheng Yen instructed her first disciples—30 housewives—to deposit 2 cents of their grocery money every day into a money bank fashioned out of bamboo to help those in need. Over time, the movement spread throughout the community and, from the money collected in the bamboo banks, the first Tzu Chi Health Clinic was built, providing the impoverished with access to healthcare, free of cost. The Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation (Tzu Chi means "Compassion and Relief" in Mandarin) has since grown to a global humanitarian organization with operations in over 95 countries around the world and 10 million supporters and volunteers, who are guided by principles of compassion, gratitude, and harmony. The organization is dedicated to community and social services, disaster relief, medical services, education, environmental protection, as well as the promotion of humanistic values and community volunteerism.



**SMALL CHANGE,  
BIG IMPACT**

Following the historic Park that ignited in California on July 24, 2024, Tzu Chi USA's Northwest Region holds its first round of disaster relief for survivors in Chico on the weekend of August 10 to 11, and locals begin to breathe more easily amidst the optimistic atmosphere. *Photo/Andy Chiang*