

慈濟

Tzu Chi

Buddhism in Action

A Call to Action

Creating a Sustainable Earth



**Master Cheng Yen encourages us to reach out
when we see others suffer. If we can't do it alone,
we can call on others to help.**

HSIAO YIU-HWA

Working for All Living Beings

Translated by Teresa Chang

No one can avoid suffering living in this world. Even unbelievably wealthy people have their share of suffering. A perfect, worry-free life does not exist. Even so, we all have the ability to alleviate suffering. We can't possibly help all living beings in this world, but we can all do our part. When we see others suffer or hear about someone's plight, if the circumstances allow, we should give them a hand. If we can't do it alone, we can call on others to help. Working this way, with combined strength, we will be able to reach people in need wherever they are.

We live in a world of great disparity. People in wealthy countries can afford to pursue all sorts of enjoyments, whereas those in poor ones lack even the basics. This is a situation that can be remedied, though. If people who are better off can reduce their desires and be content with less, we could free up many resources to help the poor. For example, there is no need to eat until we are one hundred percent full. We could eat until just 80 percent full and use the money we save from the remaining 20 percent to help the disadvantaged. Simply by eating slightly less, we can reduce the number of hungry people in the world.

In addition to hunger, some people are gravely ill because they cannot afford medical treatment. Tzu Chi is working with the International Buddhist Society (IBS) to build medical facilities in Lumbini, Nepal, to help local poor people meet their medical needs. In July, our volunteers from Malaysia and Singapore traveled to Nepal to check on the construction of some facilities we were helping to build for IBS's free clinic. They also checked on the operation of a dialysis center we helped build for the free clinic. Our volunteers visited the countryside to check on local people's living conditions during their trip, too.

A couple of months earlier, during a similar visit to the country, Dr. Tang Kiat Beng (陳吉民), a volunteer from Malaysia, happened to pass a household in Lumbini and see a little boy, lying on his stomach, squirming on the ground trying to reach a nursing bottle with only his mouth so he could feed himself. Sadly, he wasn't having much success. Feeling deeply for the boy, Dr. Tang

cradled the child's head with one of his hands, held the bottle in the other, and patiently fed him the milk. The physician and other volunteers later discovered that the boy's parents both suffered from disabilities. The mother was blind, and the father had mental issues. The latter made a living by doing odd jobs on nearby farms. The boy's sister was old enough to go to school but didn't because the family was too poor to afford it.

This is often how a vicious cycle of poverty is perpetuated. Deprived of an education due to poverty, children grow up to be illiterate. As a result, they can only find low-paying jobs and struggle to get by. Such a situation is not uncommon in this area.

Our volunteers reached out to the family after seeing their plight. They provided food for them and arranged for the girl to attend a nearby school. It's thanks to karmic affinities that our volunteers and the family were brought together. If, due to our volunteers' help, the family's lot improves, then they are truly blessed. I'm happy that their paths crossed, and I wish the family the best.

The Buddha was born into this world for one great purpose—to inspire people to relieve suffering in the world. More than 2,500 years later, we must seize our karmic affinities with Buddhism and try our best to emulate the Buddha's heart. We are all capable of the same love and wisdom as the Enlightened One. Let's take it upon ourselves to work for Buddhism and all living beings. Let's see it as our responsibility to improve the welfare of mankind.

Without action, nothing will happen. If, after learning the Buddha's teachings, we do not live them out, then we are getting nowhere. I have never stopped calling on everyone to bring forth the love in their hearts and put it into concrete actions, but I need your help to spread the message to make a bigger difference. I hope everyone practices gratitude and contentment, allows their love to grow, and opens their arms to embrace all living beings. May we have the karmic affinities and strength to create innumerable blessings for the world and deliver all needy people from suffering. ❀

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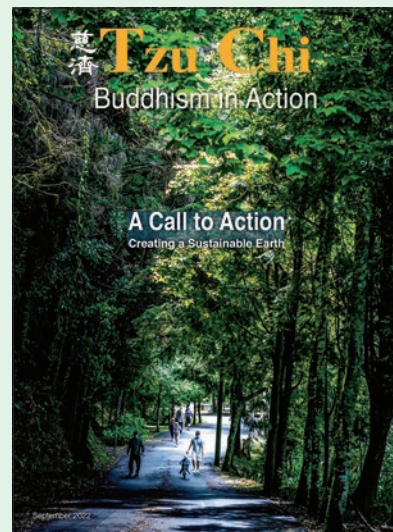
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Tzu Chi brings aid and love to the underserved around the world.

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On the Cover:
Photo by Huang Xiao-zhe



The *Tzu Chi Bimonthly* welcomes contributions of personal experiences or reports of Tzu Chi activities. We also welcome letters to the editor containing personal comments or opinions on matters of interest in the Tzu Chi world. We reserve the right to edit the letters for purposes of space, time, or clarity. Letters should include the writer's name, address, and telephone number.

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Trees form an important part of the carbon cycle. When more carbon dioxide is released into the atmosphere than natural processes can remove, the impact can last a thousand years.

An aerial photograph of a lush green forest. A narrow, dark path or streambed winds through the center of the image, surrounded by dense vegetation and numerous tree trunks of varying sizes. The perspective is from directly above, looking down into the forest canopy.

A Call to Action

By Yeh Tzu-hao

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Photos by Huang Xiao-zhe

Our world is experiencing the hottest period in recorded history. Countries around the world have pledged to achieve net zero emissions by 2050 in an effort to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius and prevent the worst impacts of climate change. What we do today will determine the future of the Earth.

A young married couple, toddler in tow, is enjoying nature up close in a forest recreation area in Taiwan. The little girl tightly clutches her dad's index finger in her tiny fist, looking curiously and a little timidly at the towering trees lining their path. The sight of her bright, round eyes exploring the world, her steps tottering, makes people smile. What a happy scene; what a beautiful, peaceful world.

But the beauty and peace of the world cannot be taken for granted. How long can it last?

In fact, the world is more fragile than we might imagine. Take Taiwan for example. The island has suffered a severe storm-induced disaster every three years on average since 2000. Rainfall is uneven. Extreme warm and cold weather events have become even more pronounced.

At the same time, the global mean temperature has been hitting new highs. According to a report issued by the United Nations' World Meteorological Organization in May 2022, the past seven years have been the warmest seven years on record. The report also pointed out that four key climate change indicators—greenhouse gas concentrations, sea level rise, ocean heat, and ocean acidification—all set new records in 2021. The melting of polar and glacial ice is causing sea levels to rise. High temperatures and reduced rainfall have kindled unprecedented, raging wildfires.

Twenty or 30 years from now, when today's toddlers have reached their 20s or 30s and are visiting a natural area with their own children, what will they be seeing? Will it still be a scene of beauty and peace?

It's now or never

Carbon dioxide emitted as a result of human activity is fueling the increase of extreme weather events and natural disasters around the world. Faced with the climate crisis, nearly 200 countries attending the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (also known as the COP26), signed the Glasgow Climate Pact at the annual climate summit held in Glasgow, Scotland. All participating countries agreed to adhere to the 2015 Paris Agreement and pursue efforts to limit the global temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. More than 130 countries pledged to reach net zero emissions by 2050.

Human activities emit greenhouse gases, most notably carbon dioxide and methane. These gases cause global warming by trapping the sun's heat in the atmosphere. Net zero refers to a state in which greenhouse gas emissions released into the

atmosphere are balanced by an equivalent amount absorbed or removed from the atmosphere. Carbon emissions can be captured by natural means—trees being the classic example—or through artificial interventions, such as carbon capture technologies.

Currently, 30 billion tons of carbon dioxide are being released globally into the atmosphere per year. With these quantities going into the air, achieving net zero emissions is a tough challenge. However, if we fail to take major action to reduce emissions, the global temperature is on track to rise by about 3.2 degrees Celsius by 2100, resulting in disastrous consequences. "It's now or never, if we want to limit global warming to 1.5°C [2.7°F]," said Jim Skea, the co-chair of Working Group III of the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. "Without immediate and deep emission reductions across all sectors, it will be impossible."

If we compare the Earth to a damaged ship in need of major repairs, cutting emissions is the most urgent task if we want to prevent it from sinking any further, if we want to ensure that humanity has a future.

The first order of business in cutting emissions to zero is to reduce our dependence on coal, oil, natural gas, and other fossil fuels. It's also essential to transition to a circular economy. According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, "A circular economy reduces material use, redesigns materials to be less resource intensive, and recaptures 'waste' as a resource to manufacture new materials and products." Only when governments, industries, and individuals work together to reduce waste and greenhouse gas emissions will it be possible to balance economic development and environmental sustainability.

Even though it is difficult for our world to eliminate completely its dependence on fossil fuels, the governments of many nations and international or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have taken influential action to address the climate change issue. For examples, countries in the European Union reached an agreement in March this year on the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) regulation, planning to levy a world-first carbon dioxide emissions tariff on the importation of polluting goods, starting in 2026. Put simply, importers will be required to purchase CBAM certificates corresponding to the embedded emissions in their imported goods. This measure essentially reduces the competitiveness of carbon-intensive goods in the European Union.



← Extreme weather events, such as sudden heavy rainfall, have been occurring with a greater frequency in Taiwan over recent years. This photo shows flash floods in Chiayi, southern Taiwan, caused by such cloudbursts in August 2018.

↓ The largest source of greenhouse gas emissions worldwide is the use of fossil fuels. HSIAO YIU-HWA



The financial sector has also joined in efforts to address climate change. Banks and investors, for example, are pledging to shift their funding in ways that help reduce carbon emissions. In Taiwan, the Financial Supervisory Commission under the Ministry of Finance issued in March this year a road map of sustainable development for Taiwan's listed corporations. The plan requires all listed companies to disclose their greenhouse gas inventories by 2027 and to verify such inventories by 2029. This is an effort towards energy saving and carbon reduction.

Carbon reduction becomes a must

As the international community ramps up greenhouse gas mitigation efforts, environmental issues have moved from the wings to center stage for nations and companies around the world. Bill Gates summarized the reason for this shift in his book *How to Avoid a Climate Disaster*: "The countries that build great zero-carbon companies and industries will be the ones that lead the global

economy in the coming decades." Taiwan, with its high reliance on exports, is among the economies that must step up their carbon reduction efforts. Companies that fail to measure up to international environmental standards risk failing in the open market, further impacting a country's overall economic competitiveness.

It's not just the manufacturing industry that faces the challenge of carbon neutrality—the same goes for the transportation sector.

Tzu Chi volunteer Denghsien Yeh (葉燈憲) is in charge of fleet management at an airline company. He said he and others in his company are working to reduce the weight of aircraft and increase the efficiency of engines to optimize

Tzu Chi volunteer Huang Ju-zi (黃菊子) picks up trash washed up on a beach in Tainan, southern Taiwan, her bag filling quickly. Reducing the production of garbage at the source is the key to lessening its impact on the environment.



transportation efficiency. "In the future, all flights heading to Europe have to meet EU's environmental protection demands," Yeh said. He opened his company's sustainability report, which includes a comprehensive list of the airline's energy-saving and carbon-reduction measures. Their actions run the gamut from retiring gas-guzzling older aircraft to going digital as much as possible to cut the usage and waste of paper.

As a result of the international community's consensus to promote a transformation to carbon neutrality, the survival and development of enterprises, nations, and societies is now inextricably linked to their efforts to reduce carbon emissions. However, in Taiwan, more than 80 percent of power still comes from burning fossil fuels. This accounts for more than 170 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions per year. Power that comes from renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind, comes to less than seven percent.

Since most businesses on the island still rely on traditional energy sources with a high carbon footprint, their transition to net zero emissions will be a tougher challenge. This further puts them at a disadvantage with their competitors on the international market.

In order to keep up with the international competition and push the transition to a net zero future, Taiwan's National Development Council (NDC) in March 2022 presented a road map for Taiwan to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050, along with an explanation of an overall strategy. The NDC said that working on climate legislation and technology R&D, and through a combination of renewable energy, power saving, resource recycling, and green living tactics, the government will advance a broad transition across Taiwan's energy sector, industry, lifestyle, and society to allow the island to become a net zero green economy before 2050.

No one is an outsider

Whether it is to fulfill an enterprise's social responsibility or a strategy to remain economically viable, many company owners and managers have worked to broaden their knowledge of environmental protection. They've enlisted the help of experts to take greenhouse gas inventories of their companies and plan courses of action to move their companies in the right direction. They have similarly asked their supply chains to take action.

Compared to the strict demands placed on the manufacturing and transportation sectors, the international community has not yet required non-

profit charitable organizations, hospitals, or schools to achieve net zero emissions. Even so, Tzu Chi, one of the largest NGOs in Taiwan, has announced its goal to reach net zero carbon emissions. This is a natural continuation of the foundation's environmental efforts, its care for the Earth, and a strong sense of commitment to bring about a better world. Tzu Chi's leadership in this area was initiated more than three decades ago, when Dharma Master Cheng Yen called on everyone to recycle.

Tzu Chi's hospitals and schools have been designed using green architecture approaches. Buildings were planned to optimize ventilation and reduce exposure to sunlight to cut down on the use of electricity, and rainwater recycling systems were installed to conserve water resources. Environmental education has made Tzu Chi volunteers particularly eco-conscious. They not only endeavor to reduce their own carbon footprint, but also to spread the word on the importance of environmental preservation.

Tzu Chi's environmental efforts over the last 30 years have won recognition from the Taiwanese government and the international community. Both Tzu Chi Dalin Hospital and the Tzu Chi University of Science and Technology received a National Environmental Education Award in 2013 for their efforts in promoting environmentalism. The Tzu Chi Foundation, Tzu Chi Senior High School, and Jer Lin Chen (陳哲霖), a Tzu Chi environmental education lecturer, were recognized with the same award this year.

Before Taiwan's government announced its determination to achieve net zero emissions by 2050, Tzu Chi had already laid a recognizable foundation for Taiwan's society to advance in that direction. The foundation announced in 2021 its goal to reach net zero emissions by 2050. Its plan to attain that goal consists of taking a greenhouse gas inventory of the foundation, analyzing current emission levels, and then formulating and taking actions to offset those emissions. When the inventory statistics are out, specific goals will be set for 2030, 2040, and then 2050 to gradually reach the holy grail of net zero.

Jer Lin Chen, a National Environmental Education Award winner this year, advises everyone, whether they work for the government or a private enterprise, not to view the mission to achieve carbon neutrality as yet another arduous task to tackle, but instead set their sights on the future. When they take the long view, they will better understand the value of their efforts. "Is the purpose of net zero emissions to save the Earth or



human beings?” Chen explained. “It’s humanity who is seeking sustainability. If we work to reduce emissions with our children and grandchildren in mind, we’ll meet the challenge a lot more willingly.”

Tzi-Chin Chang (張子敬), who heads Taiwan’s Environmental Protection Administration, stresses the importance of starting with oneself when it comes to responding to climate change. “How can we achieve net zero emissions by 2050?” he asked. “One important item is behavioral change. Our careless behavior has resulted in the generation of a lot of carbon dioxide emissions or the waste of many resources. That’s why in our country’s road map to net zero, there is an approach called ‘green living.’ If we all work together, we’ll achieve very good results.”

A carbon reduction road map released by the United Nations in April this year also pointed out how behavioral and lifestyle changes can quickly reduce end users’ yearly greenhouse gas emissions by at least five percent globally. In other words, everyone can contribute to carbon neutrality by adjusting their lifestyles. Examples include adopting a vegetarian diet, preventing food waste, avoiding excessive consumerism, reducing the

Students at Tainan Tzu Chi Senior High School in southern Taiwan take a nap at noon in a classroom designed to optimize ventilation, which reduces the need for air-conditioning.

use of air-conditioning and heating, buying durable and repairable products, and using car-sharing services.

Human beings have inflicted much damage to the environment, and climate change and global warming are becoming worse. And yet, if individuals, enterprises, governments, and nations across the world are all willing to do what they can to reverse the trend, the world’s future might not be as bleak as climate experts have predicted.

Just as Sundar Pichai, CEO of Google and Alphabet, said, “Meaningfully reducing carbon emissions will take big, bold moves and small, meaningful changes.” On the large scale, it can involve an entire nation; on a smaller scale, an individual. Whether it is systematic, across-the-board transformation at the national level, or small, personal changes, such as avoiding one-use items, all of us play a part in determining our future. The power of change is in our hands. ♣



A mother and her two children riding a Taipei Metro train look out a window at Mount Guanyin in New Taipei City, northern Taiwan. Only when humans can coexist in harmony with nature will a convenient, comfortable lifestyle last. It takes everyone's participation to reach the goal of net zero carbon emissions.

Jer Lin Chen

Environmental Education Lecturer

By Yeh Tzu-hao

Abridged and translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Photos courtesy of Jer Lin Chen

I'm willing to promote environmental education for 30 more years—until I am 101 years old. I believe I'll live to see the day when human beings succeed in limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. —Jer Lin Chen

“One time, I drove my SUV to give a talk about environmental protection to a group of students,” said Jer Lin Chen (陳哲霖), a Tzu Chi environmental education lecturer. “Afterwards, it occurred me: ‘These middle and elementary school students I talked to do not drive at all. Who leads a lower-carbon, more energy-saving lifestyle: me or them?’”

Realizing that he wasn’t practicing what he preached, he began to bike as much as possible to get around, including to his speaking engagements when the distance was manageable. Practice makes perfect. Now he can easily ride 30 kilometers (19 miles) without feeling tired at all. If for nothing else, showing up at a speaking engagement on a bicycle instead of in an emissions-spewing vehicle gives more credence to his lectures on environmental protection.

As an environmental education lecturer, Chen has taken part in many activities held by government or private organizations to increase eco-awareness. It was not unusual that event sponsors included as many as 50 to a hundred items in their action plan for a more eco-friendly lifestyle. A seasoned environmental promoter, however, Chen believes in brevity and simplicity when it comes to encouraging people to take action to protect the Earth. He knows it is better to start with less than ten steps and work from there. The most important thing is not just to know, but to do.

On June 28 this year, Chen won a National

Environmental Education Award, given by Taiwan’s Environmental Protection Administration. “I no longer remembered all the things I did in the past for the environment,” he said. “But applying for the award caused me to reflect on how I embarked on the path of environmental education. It all started 16 years ago when I joined Tzu Chi as a recycling volunteer.”

Chen retired from the technology industry in 2005, when he was just 55 years old. After his retirement, he and his wife began volunteering at the Tzu Chi Bagualiao Recycling Station in Kaohsiung, southern Taiwan. Guided tours were given to members of the public visiting the station. Before long, Chen observed that when explaining how to correctly sort recycling, what one volunteer taught a group of visitors might be different from that of another volunteer. The mixed messages sparked his creativity to come up with a mnemonic for remembering the different types of recyclables. Made up of just ten Chinese characters and numbers, his mnemonic was easy to remember and quickly became the standard chant to teach people about what materials were recyclable. Chen was good at presenting recycling in a lively way, so speaking invitations began flooding in. He was invited to give talks on how to sort recyclables and do other things to protect our environment, not only at Tzu Chi recycling stations, but also to schools and organizations.



To broaden and enrich his knowledge of environmental protection, Chen began studying in 2018 at the Graduate Institute of Environmental Education at National Taiwan Normal University in Taipei, northern Taiwan. His age at the time—69—easily made him the oldest student in the entire graduate institute. Though he was already an environmental lecturer certified by the Environmental Protection Administration, obtaining his master's degree was important—but what mattered even more was to deepen his knowledge of the environment, and then be able to transform such knowledge into simple, practical approaches to help people protect the Earth.

Work together to keep below 1.5C

Over the last couple of years, country after country has pledged to achieve net zero emissions by 2050. This indicates that clean energy such as solar and wind power will be replacing fossil fuels in the near future, as pointed out by Thomas Friedman, the author of *Hot, Flat, and Crowded: Why We Need a Green Revolution—And How It Can*

Jer Lin Chen created *Water Cube*, an installation made up of a thousand PET bottles, to explain how precious water resources are on the planet.

Renew America. Anticipating the transition to clean energy, many government officials and corporation owners around the world have felt a sense of urgency: “If we don’t take action today, we’ll regret it tomorrow.”

Chen believes that it is the inescapable responsibility of the government and industry sectors to push the use of green energy and the implementation of other carbon reduction measures. With them leading the way and building the necessary infrastructure, emissions can be cut by upwards of 50 percent. However, he emphasizes it’s also important to recognize the impact individuals can make by being more eco-conscious and environmentally friendly in their daily lives. We can all contribute to carbon reduction by making more judicious choices in terms of how we live, how we get around, and what we eat. “Even though such



efforts can't help cut emissions by as much as 50 percent," Chen said, "they can at least help achieve a 30 percent reduction."

Chen made an action plan for how everyone can cut carbon emissions in their daily lives. He called the plan: "Practice 1+5 to Keep Below 1.5." Climate scientists have warned that the increase in global temperature must be kept below 1.5 degrees Celsius to avoid the worst impacts, i.e. severe climate disruptions that could exacerbate drought and other disasters worldwide. To stay below that safe limit of 1.5 degrees Celsius, humanity must make meaningful cuts to carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions in the coming decades.

Chen's action plan includes six items to help people reduce their carbon footprint: (1) Save water. He advises everyone to keep the water flowing from their tap to the width of one chopstick; (2) Eat at least one vegetarian meal every day or go vegetarian; (3) Never waste food; (4) Avoid one-use tableware and other disposable

Using tap water Chen's way—keeping the water flowing to the width of one chopstick—can save a lot of water, and it works just as well as a greater flow.

HUANG XIAO-ZHE

items. He suggests people carry reusable cups, bowls, eating utensils, handkerchiefs, and shopping bags; (5) Turn off lights after use. In other words, conserve energy as much as you can; and (6) Choose the mode of transportation that leaves the least carbon footprint.

"To sum up," Chen said, "we can't leave it to a handful of people if we want to meet the net zero and sustainability goals. We are in this together."

Create the future you want

Chen has created many easy-to-remember catch phrases and effective presentation props or visual aids to help him promote recycling and enhance environmental awareness. One of his best-known creations is *Water Cube*, an installa-

tion made up of a thousand recycled PET bottles. “If we use a thousand PET bottles to represent all the water in the world, the amount of water humans can access is equivalent to just one bottle,” Chen explained. “This shows how precious water resources are. This creation of mine [Water Cube] led me to develop the ‘chopstick’ idea in using water [that is, keeping the water flowing from the tap to the width of one chopstick].”

“I’m willing to promote environmental education for 30 more years—until I’m 101 years old,” Chen added. He pledged to cultivate 3,000 people in those 30 years who not only live an eco-friendly life themselves but can give talks on and help spread the importance of environmental protection. According to the United Nations’ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, global temperatures will stabilize when greenhouse gas emissions reach net zero. For 1.5C, this means achieving net zero emissions globally in the early 2050s. Chen, now 71, believes he’ll live to see the day when human beings succeed in limiting the planet’s warming to the crucial 1.5C threshold.

“When the future looks dim, people tend to be more pessimistic,” Chen said. He remarked that he can understand why many young people nowadays choose not to get married and have chil-



Jer Lin Chen, an environmental education lecturer, bikes to his speaking engagements whenever possible.



“Practice 1+5 to Keep Below 1.5” Action Plan

Help limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius to maintain a livable planet.

- Save water by keeping the water flowing from the tap to the width of one chopstick.
- Eat at least one vegetarian meal every day.
- Never waste food.
- Avoid one-use tableware and other disposable items.
- Turn off lights after use.
- Choose the mode of transportation that leaves the least carbon footprint.



dren—he knows that they feel helpless in the face of the various problems facing society and the world today, such as severe income inequality and the climate crisis. However, he is convinced that by increasing public awareness and knowledge of environmental issues via environmental education, more and more people will see the importance of green living and net zero emissions, and be prompted to take action to help. He believes that the future is promising.

It’s the same the other way around, however. Change won’t just happen on its own. If people continue to turn a deaf ear to the warnings of climate experts, or refuse to take seriously their organization or company’s carbon-reduction plans, humanity’s progress to achieve carbon neutrality will slow down, or be delayed to the point it’s too late to do anything.

“Keep below 1.5 and make a sustainable Earth possible,” Chen urged. “Any change in the right direction gets us closer to our goal.”



The Future Is in Our Hands

By Yeh Tzu-hao

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

People in our generation are already confronting the problems of extreme weather conditions and insufficient resources. If we don't cherish our Earth now and take action to protect it, what kind of future will upcoming generations have?—Wu Pei-shan

“Tickle, tickle...” Wu Pei-shan (吳佩珊) is having fun with her nephews, one ten months old and the other over two years. The two youngsters are giggling with glee under their aunt’s tickling fingers.

Wu loves her siblings’ children as if they were her own. She babysits them when she goes home on weekends or vacations so that her sister and brother can have a breather, and she strives in her daily life and at work to help ensure that we are leaving behind a better planet for them.

“People in our generation are already confronting the problems of extreme weather conditions and insufficient resources,” she said. “We have only one Earth. If we don’t cherish it now, what kind of future will upcoming generations have?”

Wu is young, in her early 30s, and a member of a Tzu Chi team that promotes vegetarianism. She has urged other adults more than once to think of future generations and lead a greener life by eating vegetarian, conserving energy, and taking other actions to reduce their carbon footprint. Though she now lives and works in Taiwan, she began her commitment to environmentalism much farther south, in the Land Down Under.

From Australia to Taiwan

When she was younger, Wu left Taiwan for Sydney, Australia, to pursue her college education. She majored in hotel management. It was

there that she met Tzu Chi volunteers and became a member of the Tzu Chi Collegiate Association. Since Australia is among the drier countries in the world, the authorities there emphasize the importance of conserving water. Wu joined older Tzu Chi volunteers in Sydney in becoming the city government’s water conservation ambassadors, and they’d visit Chinese schools to share with teachers and students how to save water. In the process, Wu herself learned a lot about water conservation.

“We often heard the government in Australia appeal to people not to wash their cars during water shortages,” Wu said. “In our home, we developed a habit of putting a bucket in our bathroom to catch our shower water; then we’d use that water to flush the toilet. I’ve kept the habit to this day.”

After she graduated, Wu stayed and worked in Australia. She continued to lead an eco-friendly lifestyle. The city in which she and her sister lived could get as cold as 1 or 2C (33.8-35.6F) in the winter, and hotter than 30C (86F) in the summer, but they didn’t use air-conditioning or heating—they just tried to adjust to the temperature. “Since I could commute to work by train or bus, I didn’t have to drive,” Wu said. “When we went grocery shopping, we used reusable shopping bags. And we reused plastic bags until they were torn.”

Wu returned to Taiwan in 2015, and she started working at Tzu Chi headquarters in Hualien, east-



ern Taiwan, in early 2016. She had become a vegetarian when she was in college, and she wanted to inspire more people to switch to vegetarianism to help cut emissions and protect life. She began promoting the earth-friendly diet after work via eating shows on social media. Her work in Tzu Chi now is to help the foundation promote vegetarianism via projects and activities such as the 21-day whole-plant diet program started by Tzu Chi volunteers in Malaysia. (For more about this diet, please read the November 2021 issue of our magazine.) Though her large workload keeps her very busy, she never allows herself to become lax in practicing environmentalism in her daily life.

When food in her refrigerator is running low, she bikes or walks to a traditional market to buy package-free food ingredients. She asks vendors not to bag her purchases and instead just puts all her food items in a reusable shopping bag she carries. She even removes the rubber bands used to keep vegetables bound together and returns them to the vendors. Because of these practices, she produces almost no packaging waste when she cooks. She also does not use any disposable tableware. "If I need to eat out or buy ready-made

The T-shirt Wu Pei-shan is wearing is ten years old. She carries containers and reusable shopping bags when she goes grocery shopping. She produces little garbage because of the green life she leads.

LI PEI-YUN

food, I make sure I take my reusable cup, bowl, and chopsticks."

Small inconveniences, big impact

In order to reduce waste, Wu even switched to cloth sanitary pads, the kind that can be washed and reused. Though using cloth menstrual pads instead of the disposable kind means that she has to take the trouble to wash and sun- or air-dry them, she doesn't mind the extra work. "I'm just doing what women used to do—before the invention of single-use sanitary pads," she said.

She even persuaded her brother to use cloth diapers for his son. She didn't need to persuade her sister to do so because her sister knew early on the benefits of cloth diapers, that they are more breathable and eco-friendly. But it took her some work to convince her brother to do the same. She

even bought cloth diapers for him so he could use them on his newborn son.

Based on the experience of her two nephews, parents need to prepare 35 to 40 cloth diapers for one child to use because the diapers need to be washed. The numbers seem high, but if disposable diapers are used, a baby will need to go through more than 5,000 before they grow out of the need for them.

Wu observed that though it takes time to wash cloth diapers, as well as water and electricity, they are still more environmentally friendly than the one-use kind. "Besides, they trap less heat and are better for the baby's skin," she added.

In addition to urging those closer to her in age

to "go greener," Wu has done the same with her parents, who run a guesthouse. Wu suggested that they stop providing single-use toothpaste tubes, toothbrushes, razors, and other similar items to their guests. It wasn't easy to get the seniors to accept the new idea though.

"My dad used to run a five-star hotel in Taipei," Wu explained, "so he puts a premium on service quality. He believed that it was a must to provide those items to our guests." Wu's university major was hotel management, so it was easy for her to understand her father's insistence on serving their guests' needs the best they could. However, she believed that given the global attention to climate change and the general consensus to reduce emissions, people will accept a new way of doing things in the name of the environment.

When staying at others' guesthouses during their family trips, Wu would seize the opportunity to advise her parents to learn from those guesthouses' environmental approaches, such as opting for natural, organic shampoo or body wash, reducing the use of plastics, and using motion sensor lights to save energy. By and by, her parents came around and began running their guesthouse in a more environmentally friendly way.

"We stopped providing single-use items five years ago," said Wu's mother, Li Mei-yu (李美育).

Eating vegetarian is good for the environment. Wu, a vegetarian herself, helps Tzu Chi promote vegetarianism.

CHEN HONG-DAI





What You Can Do for the Earth

Everyone can do their part to reduce global warming, via how they use electricity at home, how they get around, and what they choose to eat.

✓ Energy use assessment

STEP1 : Do a home energy assessment. Check the energy use of the electronics and appliances in your home, as well as the frequency with which they are used and their expected lifespan.

STEP2 : Switch to LED bulbs and other energy-saving appliances. Set your air conditioner at a higher temperature; a one-degree-Celsius increase can reduce the energy used by six percent.

STEP3 : Determine if you are using less power and reducing your carbon emissions compared to the same period last year by checking your electric bills.

✓ Transportation

- Walk or bike more to reduce your carbon footprint.
- Avoid driving when you are traveling long distances; opt for train, bus, or another type of public transportation instead.

✓ Opt for a plant-based diet

- It takes more water to raise livestock for food than it does to grow crops.
- Animal agriculture generates more carbon emissions than raising crops.
- Every meal can help cut emissions if you consume less meat and dairy products.

✓ Reduce food waste

- When you throw away food, you also throw away the resources and energy used to grow, package, and transport it.
- Decaying food in a landfill produces methane, a powerful greenhouse gas.

✓ Choose eco-friendly products

- Buy local and seasonal food, as well as products that have a smaller carbon footprint and produce less waste.
- Your every purchase choice affects the Earth.

“When people make reservations with us, we tell them they’ll need to bring their own toiletry items because ours is an eco-friendly guesthouse.” Due to their daughter’s influence and the environmental information they have been exposed to, Li and her husband have come to realize the importance of doing what they can for the Earth. “I believe everyone resonates with efforts made for the plan-

et,” Li continued. “We’ll continue doing our part to help.”

Wu makes a good case for what she urges people to do for the good of the planet. She’s even more convincing because she walks her talk. Her commitment to the Earth and the actions she takes to protect it are not just for the benefit of her beloved nephews, but for all the children in the world. ♣

The Green Approaches of Tzu Chi Schools

By Yeh Tzu-hao

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Photos courtesy of Tzu Chi Senior High School

Energy use soars when summer heat waves hit. How can we balance human comfort and energy conservation? Reducing emissions isn't just a slogan for teachers and students in Tzu Chi schools—it's a way of life.

Residential and commercial buildings account for half of all global energy use. Air-conditioning (AC) is a major contributor to greenhouse gases. How to balance users' needs and environmental protection is a challenge.

"Global warming is really making itself felt," said Lo Wen-jui (羅文瑞), the president of the Tzu Chi University of Science and Technology (TCUST) in Hualien, eastern Taiwan. "It's so hot. Both the dormitories and classrooms are very hot."

Despite the sweltering summer heat, TCUST and Tzu Chi University, also in Hualien, were the last among the colleges and universities in Taiwan to install extensive air-conditioning on campus.

In 2016, TCUST helped organize the annual joint entrance examination for Taiwan's two- and four-year tech colleges. It was also serving as one of the test sites. All test sites for the exam were at the time required to be equipped with AC, so when testing officials visited the school and discovered that most of the classrooms on campus did not have AC, they asked President Lo to address the issue. This was the impetus for installing campus-wide air-conditioning.

Administrators at TCUST had heard that students in other schools had forgotten to turn off the air conditioners in their classrooms when they left after a class, thus leaving the machines running for the rest of the day. They thus decided to adopt a "user pays" principle from the very beginning: teachers and students need to first insert a prepaid

card to use the AC in a classroom or dormitory room. When there is no more money on the card, there will be no more air-conditioning for them. Because of this measure, the school's teachers and students are very conscious of their use of the cooling system on campus, thus greatly helping conserve electricity related to air-conditioning use.

Because the prepaid cards didn't apply to the use of the electric lights and fans in the classrooms, it was easier for students to forget to turn those off. It was not unusual to see the lights still blazing and the fans still whirling without a single person in the classroom. "That's why we installed timers in the classrooms," President Lo explained. "We set it up so that the lights and fans switch off on their own after an hour, which is about the length of a class period."

The president is very satisfied with this fool-proof mechanism, designed by the university's General Affairs Department. New students enroll in the school every year, and while they might not know the school's environment or regulations very well, such a mechanism effectively wards off





The Tzu Chi University of Science and Technology, Tzu Chi University, and Tzu Chi Senior High School leased their roof space to a solar energy company to have solar panels installed. Tzu Chi Senior High School alone generates over a million kWh of electricity per year this way. A monitoring and control system keeps track of the power produced.



instances of oversight and saves electricity.

To further cut energy use, TCUST, already 33 years old, has picked up its pace to retire old, energy-inefficient pieces of equipment and replace them with greener alternatives. The efficacy of these efforts shows. Wei Tzu-kun (魏子昆), the head of the school's General Affairs Department, said: "Our school installed more than 700 air conditioners. With that number, there should have been a noticeable spike in our electricity use, but there's been an increase of just under five percent."

TCUST even helps produce energy, along with Tzu Chi University and another Tzu Chi school in Hualien: Tzu Chi Senior High School. The three schools leased their roof space to a solar energy company to have solar panels installed. A total of 2,409 solar panels were installed in TCUST, capable of producing 800,000 kWh of electricity per year. Tzu Chi Senior High School generates over a million kWh of electricity per year this way. All of this

contributes to Taiwan's efforts to develop green energy sources and achieve net zero emissions.

Green architecture

According to the United Nations, greenhouse gas emissions from air-conditioning and refrigerators are expected to increase 90 percent by 2050 compared to 2017. Besides actively developing clean energy sources, green architecture, which helps cut the consumption of energy and other resources and produces less waste, is another good way to cope with this.

The construction of Tzu Chi Senior High School began in July 1999. It was designed to be eco-friendly. Double outside corridors, elevated roofs, sky-

TCUST students volunteer at a recycling station. Such activities promote environmental awareness.

COURTESY OF TCUST





Applying what they had learned in class, fifth graders from the elementary division of Tzu Chi Senior High School visited a family receiving long-term care from Tzu Chi to help them set up a solar panel to improve their quality of life.

lights, and other features were planned to reduce the need for air-conditioning and illumination. A rainwater recycling system and a small sewage treatment plant were included to conserve water. A lot of trees and other greenery were planted.

About two months after construction began, Taiwan was hit by a powerful tremor known as the 9/21 earthquake. Following the quake, Tzu Chi started a project to help rebuild schools destroyed or severely damaged in the quake. Tzu Chi Senior High School incorporated some of the design concepts for these schools into its own construction too. For example, interlocking bricks were used to pave roads and vacant areas in the school. Pavements built with such bricks are more environmentally friendly than ones made of solid slabs of concrete, because the bricks allow rainwater to permeate into the ground.

Tzu Chi Senior High School opened in September 2000. The double outside corridors—meaning classrooms flanked on each side by a corridor—increased shade and reduced exposure to sunlight, and the elevated roofs and ceilings facilitated air flow. Whether in the classrooms, dormitories, or staff offices, the natural ventilation made it easier to keep cool.

The rainwater recycling system and interlocking paving bricks conserve a lot of water resources for the school and the local community. Rain landing on the greenery and paving bricks seeps directly into the ground. Principal Lee Ling-hui (李玲惠) said, “Our school is located in the middle of the Melun River alluvial fan and covers an extensive

area of 16 hectares [40 acres]. Based on the average annual rainfall locally, the precipitation our campus retains is the equivalent of 30 percent of the source water for Hualien City’s tap water supply.”

The school has more trees than people, making it a green campus, literally. According to estimates from the school administrators, Tzu Chi Senior High School has over 3,000 trees. The principal said, “When people visit the school, they will find all the buildings grey—as is typical of a Tzu Chi building. It’s only later I came to realize why: the grey, pebble-dashed exteriors of the buildings are meant to make the color of nature stand out. We humans shouldn’t compete with nature.”

The trees do more than contribute their color in making the campus greener—they also are essential in the fight to stave off global warming. This is another way they make the school “greener.”

Vegetarianism

Another aspect that makes Tzu Chi Senior High School eco-friendly is the small amount of garbage produced by the faculty and students, even though the school campus encompasses not just a high school but also a junior high and an elementary division as well as a kindergarten. The small amount of garbage is possible thanks to the thoroughness with which teachers and students reclaim recyclable items. Take the elementary division for example: all the garbage produced by the more than 560 students and faculty members for an entire school year can be contained in only two dumpsters. Government sanitation workers do not

need to visit the school every week to collect garbage, but only when the school administration notifies them to do so.

As is typical in other Tzu Chi schools and facilities, only vegetarian meals are served at Tzu Chi Senior High School. Teachers eat the same vegetarian food as the students, and they explain to the youngsters the benefits of such a diet.

"Methane is a greenhouse gas and has a warming potential 24 times that of carbon dioxide," Principal Lee explained. "When cows and sheep burp or pass gas, they release methane into the Earth's atmosphere. All the children in our school understand the connection between the livestock industry and greenhouse gas emissions." Environmental benefits aside, teachers also help students understand that eating vegetarian helps protect life.

The school administration makes a point of explaining to potential students and parents why the school is meatless. "We don't want them to feel that we are forcing such a diet on them," Ms. Lee said. "Instead, we explain the reasons behind the choice of such a diet so that they can come to identify with it."

In response to the international trend to achieve carbon neutrality, the school made preliminary calculations of the emissions teachers and students help cut by eating vegetarian. Eating a vegetarian meal can reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 0.78 kilogram (1.7 pounds). Given that the school had 2,097 students and teachers in 2021, it was calculated that their vegetarian lunches alone helped cut emissions by 64.5 tons a year, 1.7 times those absorbed by Da'an Forest Park. (Da'an Forest Park, covering an area of 25.9 hectares [64 acres], is an ecological park with abundant greenery located in Taipei, northern Taiwan.)

However, the efforts by a single school alone were not enough to stop global warming. As it got warmer and warmer in Hualien, the architectural design to increase shade and facilitate natural ventilation was no longer adequate to help the school withstand the heat. Air-conditioning was installed in Tzu Chi Senior High School in September 2019, making the school one of the last private secondary and elementary schools in Taiwan to install AC. Like TCUST, Tzu Chi Senior High School adopted a "user pays" principle in the use of air-conditioning.

"One time, some students who lived in the same dormitory room complained that they had used up the 300 NT dollars [US\$10] they had prepaid for AC in just three days," said Xie Jun-ming

(謝俊銘), a team leader in the school's General Affairs Department. "They asked how that was possible, so I printed out a list detailing their AC use to show them." Xie explained that when the school had air-conditioning installed on campus, they introduced smart electricity meters into the school as well. The daily energy use in the school's classrooms and dormitories were tracked on computers in the General Affairs Department. When Xie checked the records, he found out that while students in other dormitory rooms usually didn't turn on their air-conditioning until ten at night and turned it off at two or three in the morning, those students turned on their air-conditioning as early as seven at night and didn't switch it off until six in the morning. "They also set their AC temperature very low," Xie added. "It caused the compressor to start up more often, thus leading them to use up their quota more quickly."

Students are vigilant of their use of air-conditioning because of the "user pays" system. Wang Pei-ru (王佩茹), a teacher in the elementary division, said with a smile: "Sometimes we lend our classrooms out on weekends or holidays to be used as test sites by people from outside the school. When that happens, students are always quick to remind personnel in the General Affairs Department to not chalk the air-conditioning used on that day up to them."

Responsible global citizens

Even the way the school celebrates its anniversary is eco-friendly—students and teachers clean up streets in Hualien City on that day. They have done this for several years, starting when the school, now 22 years old, turned 18. By picking up garbage and sweeping up streets, children use their hands and actions to protect the environment and pay back the community.

The school has also developed a systematic environmental education that begins in kindergarten and continues through elementary to senior high.

"The children in our kindergarten are still very young," Principal Lee said. "We help them build basic concepts of ecology by leading them to, for example, experience the beauty of the natural environment." Such exposure to nature decreases their fear of animals such as earthworms and nurtures their love for the Earth. Children in the elementary division are guided to have a general idea about the entire ecosystem and the current situation of the environment and natural resources. Students in junior high are led to think about the relationship between humanity and the sustainability of the



environment, while high schoolers are taught to fulfill their role as responsible global citizens via social participation.

The school's environmental practices and approaches have for years been integrated into both daily activities and formal classroom education. This year, their efforts won recognition from Taiwan's Environmental Protection Administration: the school earned a National Environmental Education Award.

"Award or not, we regard it an inescapable responsibility to practice environmentalism and promote environmental education," said Principal Lee. She recalled what a parent once shared with her: that when his son was going abroad to study, he checked the luggage he had packed and found out that he had packed reusable bowls and chop-

Students from Tzu Chi Senior High School celebrate their school's anniversary by cleaning up streets in Hualien City, eastern Taiwan.

sticks to take abroad. The parent cheerfully observed that this showed how his son was a veritable graduate of Tzu Chi Senior High School.

Principal Lee reiterated her school's mission to promote environmental education. She said that her school will be more than willing to share their practices and experiences in this area with people from all sectors of society. She also welcomes other schools, organizations, and individuals to share with the school their experiences in protecting the environment. This way, everyone can work and learn together for a better Earth. ❀

Compassion Has No Enemies

By Cheah Lee Hwa

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Photo by Hsiao Yiu-hwa

Compassion for others drives out discord and animosity.



If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we should find in each man's life sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all hostility." This is a quote from American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807–1882). It contains real food for thought.

Everyone has innate compassion. When you learn how someone you are against has suffered in their life, compassion for them arises in your heart. You might let go of your grudges, your dislikes, your differences, your anger and hatred, and you may even desire to reach out to help

them, your animosity forgotten.

Dharma Master Sheng Yen (1931–2009) said, "Compassion has no enemies; and wisdom no vexations." This saying corresponds to the quote from Longfellow and teaches us that we do not need to wait until we get to know the secret history of our enemies to forgive them. When we take good care of our minds and nurture compassion in ourselves, we won't have any enemies in the first place.

Dharma Master Cheng Yen once told a true story that goes as follows:



A taxi driver pulled over to the side of the road to buy something. When he had stopped his car and was opening his door to get out, a motorcyclist crashed into his vehicle. The motorcyclist was a police officer. Badly injured, he ended up in a vegetative state.

After the tragic accident, the police officer's family filed a lawsuit against the taxi driver, who lost the suit. The driver was ordered to pay 18,000,000 Taiwanese dollars (US\$600,000) in damages. Devastated by the enormity of the compensation, he buckled under the pressure and

committed suicide. Following that, it was decided to foreclose on the family's home for the money to pay the debt.

Tzu Chi volunteers visited the driver's family to find out if they needed help. The volunteers' hearts went out to the driver's wife when they saw that she was thin and wan and yet was now left to raise three young children alone. About to lose their home, she didn't even know where she and her children would live.

Despite her plight, she wasn't angry at her husband for leaving a huge debt behind, nor for leaving her and their three young children to fend for themselves. Instead, she felt really bad about what had happened to the police officer. She expressed her wish to visit the officer's family and deliver to them the 600,000 Taiwanese dollars (US\$20,000) that she had received from her husband's car insurance company.

Tzu Chi volunteers made arrangements so that she could visit the officer's family. During the visit, they learned that the officer's wife had just been diagnosed with cancer, and that it was already terminal.

When the officer's wife saw how thin and wan the driver's wife was and yet now had to support three young children on her own, she felt deeply for her. Even though she was ill, she decided to forgo all compensation and drop the foreclosure.

The driver's wife was very grateful, but insisted that the officer's wife accept the 600,000 Taiwanese dollars she had brought with her. The officer's wife wouldn't hear of it; she asked the driver's wife to keep the money, saying she would need it for her family.

The driver's wife refused to take the money home. In the end, the officer's wife withdrew 400,000 Taiwanese dollars (US\$13,330) from her own savings, put it together with the driver's wife's money, and donated one million Taiwanese dollars (US\$333,330) to Tzu Chi to help the foundation rebuild schools damaged in a major earthquake in Taiwan. Despite the misfortune the two women had encountered, they showed amazing compassion and understanding for each other. In them you see the brilliance of human nature.

Master Cheng Yen praised the two women for transforming ill will into love, and bad affinities into good ones. Because of her praiseworthy action, the officer's wife made a huge difference in the driver's wife's life. Not only that—her benevolent decision would undoubtedly fill the remainder of her life with ease and peace. What an inspiring story of compassion and wisdom. ❀

Precious Giving in a Difficult Time

By Susan Chen and Zhu Xiu-lian

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Photos by Lu Pei-ling

These displaced Ukrainians were going through a hard time, but they donated what they could at Tzu Chi distributions to help others.



By mid-June 2022, Susan Chen (陳樹微), a Tzu Chi volunteer from Germany, had been in Lublin, Poland, for about three months, organizing the foundation's aid work for Ukrainian refugees. Tzu Chi had begun reaching out to Ukrainian refugees in Poland in March 2022, following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February, offering gift cards and other aid in Warsaw, Lublin, Poznań, and Szczecin.

On June 12, Chen and a group of volunteers from Austria, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Taiwan, and Ukraine traveled from Lublin to Opole, a city about 500 kilometers (310 miles) away, for the upcoming distributions there. It was nearly ten at night by the time the party of nine arrived.

Opole, located in southwestern Poland, is one of the oldest cities in the country. It has a population of just under 130,000 people and boasts many notable historic buildings. When Radosław Atlas, a businessman in Opole, and his wife, Chen Hui-ru (陳惠如), learned about Tzu Chi's humanitarian work elsewhere in Poland, they contacted the foundation. The couple wanted to work with Tzu Chi to help the refugees their city was hosting.

Six distributions were held on June 14 and 15 in Opole Stegu Arena in Opole. The city government provided the venue and aid recipient lists, and sent employees to help at the events. Radosław Atlas offered the use of trucks from his company and the help of his employees to transport Tzu Chi's eco-blankets, made from recycled PET bottles, from Warsaw to Opole for the distributions.

The events on the two days benefited more than a thousand people. To ensure the distributions could go smoothly, city officials including Malgorzata Kozak, the director of the family assistance center, and Anna Radlak, the director of the benefits center, visited the venue the day before the events to check out the site and the preparatory work. They personally participated in the distributions too.

Considering that many recipients would be mothers with their kids in tow, the city govern-

Tzu Chi volunteer You Yue-ying (游月英) thanks a Ukrainian mother during a distribution held in Opole, Poland. The young mother had just deposited money into a Tzu Chi coin bank to be used for charitable purposes.

Tzu Chi's Help for Displaced Ukrainians

- ▶ Aid provided: Gift cards, cash cards, and eco-blankets distributed; daily necessities distributed or donated; cooperation with or support for organizations that are helping Ukrainian refugees
- ▶ Number of distributions held: 359
- ▶ People who have benefited: 78,647
- ▶ Shifts put in by work relief participants: 1,192

▶ Gift cards and cash cards

- ▶ Each gift card (pictured below) is worth 2,000 Polish zlotys (US\$450), redeemable at a major supermarket chain in Poland. A total of 24,995 cards had been given out by mid-July 2022.
- ▶ Tzu Chi switched to distributing cash cards on July 16, each loaded with 1,000 Polish zlotys. A total of 13,297 such cards have been given out.



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ment thoughtfully set aside a play area in the stadium. Youngsters could draw or put together jigsaw puzzles in the play area, supervised by volunteers, while their mothers filled out forms and had their identities checked to receive gift cards and blankets provided by Tzu Chi. Each gift card was loaded with 2,000 Polish zlotys (US\$450).

"I don't remember seeing any instance of charitable aid on such a large scale in my entire time in Opole," said Arkadiusz Wiśniewski, the mayor of Opole, referring to the aid provided by Tzu Chi. He added that government financial support for the Ukrainian refugees would begin to run short in about a month. Tzu Chi's help was like timely rain. "Let me thank you again, Tzu Chi from thousands of kilometers away. Many thanks to our Taiwanese friends."

Because we are family

When the Ukrainian version of the Tzu Chi song “One Family” was played during the distributions, participants stood up and, following the lead of Tzu Chi volunteers, began signing the lyrics. The soft singing in their familiar language soothed the Ukrainians on-site and eased their homesickness. When it was time to pray, the English version of the Tzu Chi song “Prayer” began. Many closed their eyes and, with their palms pressed together or hands folded, prayed sincerely. Though they might not have understood the English lyrics, the song’s touching melody moved many to tears.

Lian Yi-ying (連怡瑩), a Tzu Chi volunteer from the Netherlands, introduced in English and Ukrainian the origin of the foundation during the distributions. She explained how Tzu Chi had started with 30 housewives each saving a little of their grocery money in bamboo coin banks every day to help the needy. She also explained that the money on the gift cards Tzu Chi was distributing came mostly from small donations raised from across the world. After hearing how small amounts of money, when put together, could be used to do a lot of good, many participants deposited money into the coin banks on-site to help other needy people. Some put in Polish bills worth as much as 20 zlotys (US\$4.4).

Each distribution lasted about three hours and ran back to back. Before one distribution came to an end, participants of the next one were already lining up outside the stadium waiting to enter. It was very warm on the afternoon of the second day, so event organizers quickly allowed people into the venue. Chen Hui-ru, Radosław Atlas’s wife, served water to the waiting people. A Ukrainian woman asked her where she could buy books introducing Tzu Chi. Chen generously gave the woman a Tzu Chi book gifted her by a Tzu Chi volunteer, making the Ukrainian very happy.

When the two days’ events came to an end, Przemysław Zych, a deputy mayor of Opole, delivered a letter of appreciation on behalf of the



Deputy Mayor Przemysław Zych (right) stands next to Tim Lu (呂宗翰), from Tzu Chi headquarters in Taiwan. Lu is displaying a letter of appreciation from the Opole city government to Tzu Chi and Master Cheng Yen.

city government to Tzu Chi volunteers and asked for it to be presented to Dharma Master Cheng Yen. Volunteer Susan Chen gave the donations they had collected over the two days via coin banks to the deputy mayor to help the city government aid more Ukrainians. Taking the heavy coin banks, the deputy mayor said, “This is the most precious thing that has happened over these two days. Even in their most difficult times, the Ukrainians gave with love!”

On June 3, a hundred days after the Russia-Ukraine war started, Amin Awad, the United Nations’ crisis coordinator for Ukraine, said in a statement: “This war has and will have no winner. Rather, we have witnessed for 100 days what is lost: lives, homes, jobs and prospects.” The Ukrainians’ homeland has been covered with the scars of war. Tzu Chi volunteers prayed that they can accompany Ukrainian refugees through this difficult time, until the day they safely return home.



I Believe Tzu Chi Will Be Here

By Zhang Zi-fang

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

A married couple in Poland has worked with Tzu Chi to help aid reach Ukrainian refugees.

It was not yet nine in the morning, but a line was already forming in front of the Minor Basilica of St. Vincent de Paul in Bydgoszcz, northern Poland. Those queued were waiting for a Tzu Chi distribution, soon to begin. Some looked sad, others uneasy. A worried-looking, older woman checked with a volunteer to make sure she was on the recipient list. The woman mentioned that she had arrived too early for the distribution and was feeling hungry. Volunteer Monica Chang (張淑兒) responded by bringing her some bread and fruit to eat while she waited.

The first distribution that day was one of four Tzu Chi held at the church in Bydgoszcz in early

June 2022. The events were a joint effort of Tzu Chi, the church, and the Bydgoszcz city government. The list of potential recipients was supplied by the city government. The Ukrainian refugees who were notified to come to the events had to bring their identification papers and produce

Monica Chang (second from left, back row), Łukasz Baranowski (third from left, back row), their children, and other volunteers delivered distribution items to two Ukrainian refugees who couldn't come personally to a Tzu Chi distribution in Rokietnica, Poznań, because of illness.

COURTESY OF TIM LU



them on-site before they could be processed and receive their gift cards.

At one point, a commotion arose from the desks where identification was being checked. Chang and a Ukrainian volunteer, Olha, hurried there to find out what was happening.

At the source of the hubbub, they met a 63-year-old woman and her eight-year-old grandson. The young boy, making a fuss, was the source of the noise. "My grandson's parents were both killed in the war," the grandmother explained. "He has a congenital recessive disease, and his emotional state became even more unstable after we had to flee Ukraine to escape from the war."

The boy appeared very tense. His grip on the hand of a volunteer beside him was extremely tight, but as soon as the volunteer tried to loosen it, he began to scream. Chang and Olha brought fruit and bread to the woman and her grandson, then tried to soothe the youngster.

The two felt such deep sympathy for the grandmother, who not only had to bear the pain of losing her daughter and son-in-law, but also had to fend for her ill grandson alone in a foreign country. How could she take care of their living expenses in Poland, not to mention her grandson's medical bills?

Chang and Olha couldn't stop crying later, watching the grandma and grandson leave.

Chang reported them to the city government and listed them as a potential case for Tzu Chi to track and care for. She hoped Tzu Chi's help that day had at least given the grandma and grandson some sense of hope.

Stepping up to the plate

Chang, originally from Taiwan, had settled in Poland after marrying a man there. She lives with her husband, Łukasz Baranowski, and their three children in Poznań. The couple began helping Ukrainian refugees by offering financial aid and daily supplies after the war started in February 2022. "Then I thought, 'what else can I do for these refugees?'" said Chang. She believed Tzu Chi was sure to give help to these refugees, even though she didn't know when they might arrive in Poland.

Instead of waiting for Tzu Chi to come, Chang decided she might as well take the initiative to contact the foundation. She used to work at Tzu Chi's Da Ai TV in Taiwan, so she contacted a former colleague there. That was how she and her husband began helping organize Tzu Chi's humanitarian work for displaced Ukrainians in Poland. Even though the couple had to take care of their three young children and were busy at work, they bravely stepped up to the plate to do what they could.

✔ I have never seen as many tears in my life as when I participated in our relief mission for Ukrainian refugees. Despite the language barrier between us, I can fully understand their pain. I am an ethnic Chinese and used to live in Laos, but I fled my hometown after Laos fell to communist forces. I eventually ended up in France. With no one to depend on in a foreign country, I couldn't have made it through that difficult time without friends' help. Because I was once a refugee myself, I can empathize with the displaced Ukrainians, even though all I can do is hand them Kleenex when they cry.

—Kuang Ling-fang (匡齡芳), Tzu Chi volunteer from France

✔ I help operate the sound system at our distributions. I was deeply stunned when I looked down from the stage and saw the faces and expressions of everyone in the audience. Most of those who came to our distributions were older people, women, and kids, especially mothers with children in tow. They reminded me of my own daughter. I thought of how hard it would be for her and how my heart would break if today it was she who had to flee from a war with young children in tow. I really wish I could be like a mother to these refugee mothers and help make their journey through this trying time easier.

—Zheng Ci Lu (鄭慈璐), Tzu Chi volunteer from the Netherlands

✔ I'm not really fit to participate in an international relief mission. I'm 75 and the help I can offer is limited by my linguistic ability. Most of the time I use body language, hugs, or smiles to convey my love and care for those we're helping. But I still volunteer for our international relief work because I love Master Cheng Yen very much. I want to help her carry out the work she wants to do; I want to love everyone she loves. So, as long as I'm still able, I'll keep at this. I'll keep at this until the day I no longer can.

—You Yue-ying (游月英), Tzu Chi volunteer from Austria



The couple had never worked on refugee relief before. They had no idea where to start, but learned as they went. The most challenging part was the paperwork; there was a lot of it to be submitted for approval and processing. It was hard in the beginning, but they have since become adept at it. Be it handling contracts, customs affairs, legal issues, dealing with factories, or negotiations with the government, they can take it all in stride now.

"We talked with government agencies and discussed contracts and legal issues with our partner organizations," Chang observed. "We also helped Tzu Chi headquarters in Taiwan translate documents, and repeatedly reviewed contract terms and conditions with them." Because of the six-hour time difference between Poland and Taiwan, she and her husband never felt fully rested during that period due to sleep deprivation. Yet they persisted—all because of a desire to help the needy.

In March and April, they checked out various shelters for Ukrainian refugees in Poznań, purchased necessities locally, and donated them to help the displaced. In May, they began helping Tzu Chi and one of its partner organizations, the Red Cross, hold distributions of gift cards in Poznań and nearby cities. Shipment after shipment of gift cards and other aid items provided by Tzu Chi arrived in Poznań during that period. They were all stored in the couple's home.

Lukasz Baranowski is a manager at a tech company. He was surprised at the trust the Tzu Chi Foundation had placed in them. At the same time,

A distribution held by Tzu Chi at the Minor Basilica of St. Vincent de Paul in Bydgoszcz, northern Poland, on June 4, 2022.

LU PEILING

he could sense the heavy responsibility that came with the trust. It pushed him to do his best to help the foundation's aid reach the needy.

Just as Tzu Chi has treated them with respect and trust, the couple treats the Ukrainian participants of a Tzu Chi work relief program with respect and trust too. "If we have a difference of opinion with a participant," said Chang, "we always discuss and talk it over." She told the participants she and her husband worked on the same level as they, that they were not in a higher position, and that they were helping Tzu Chi with the same sincere desire to aid those in need. The couple has, due to their work together, become good friends with the Ukrainian helpers. The ties the Ukrainians have developed with the couple have further helped them feel less lonely in a foreign country.

Chang said they never stopped encountering kind people who reached out to help of their own accord after the distributions were launched. They offered distribution venues, helped move relief supplies, served as liaisons, provided refreshments for the events, and even helped look for resources. "We've run across fantastic people," Chang observed. "Everyone is more than willing to contribute what they can. That's why we have come to enjoy our work more and more." ❀

A Warm Welcome for Newcomers

Tzu Chi Canada Reaching Out to Ukrainians

By Sammi Huang

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Photos by Kelly Zhen

Ukrainian refugees in Canada need the most basic of items to help them start their lives anew. Tzu Chi volunteers are helping to meet their needs.

Tetiana, 39, was shaken awake by her husband, Yuriy, 37, on the night of February 24, 2022. He told her the war had started and a missile had hit an apartment near their home. Wasting no time, they started packing important items in case they needed to flee.

An air-raid alarm cut the air at unpredictable times over the next few days: three in the afternoon, six in the evening, five in the morning—sometimes even in the depth of night. Every time the siren blared, Tetiana and Yuriy would grab their two children, both under three, and hurry to a basement air-raid shelter. Their nerves were frayed after a few days like this. This is how they came to a tough decision: to flee Ukraine immediately, even though it meant leaving their home and car behind.

Accompanied by Yuriy's mother, 62-year-old Iryna, the family set off from Kyiv. They fled to eastern Poland first, then continued to Germany. They eventually landed in Canada on March 31. Their trip wasn't an easy one. Since there were five of them, just buying plane tickets was difficult, not to mention having to cope with the feelings of helplessness and fear that beset them during the journey.

Tetiana was a lawyer in Ukraine. Both she and her husband were highly educated and held high-paying jobs. But now their family of five had no choice but to settle in Yuriy's brother's living

room. "I really can't imagine a war happening in the 21st century," said Tetiana.

The first step: mastering English

Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022, forcing millions of Ukrainians out of their country and triggering a humanitarian crisis. The Canadian government responded by giving priority to applications for asylum from Ukrainians. The first batch of newcomers arrived in the country in early March. They were offered three-year work permits and access to health care, education, and other benefits.

The Nativity of the Mother of God Orthodox Church in Richmond Hill, Ontario, is about three kilometers (1.9 miles) from the Tzu Chi North Toronto office. The church started caring for newly arrived Ukrainian refugees in April. When Tzu Chi volunteers learned that the church needed help with their work, they met Reverend Art Lambert online to determine how the foundation could assist. The reverend is also a practicing lawyer specializing in immigration and family law, so he was also helping refugees apply for permanent Canadian residency.

Rev. Lambert told the volunteers in the online meeting that the church was focused mainly on newcomers with no relatives in Canada. Most of them were women and children. He observed that most of the Ukrainians had come to Canada emp-



Tzu Chi volunteers visit Tetiana, Yuriy, and their family, newly arrived in Canada from Ukraine.

ty-handed, with nothing but their passports and the clothes on their backs. Another obstacle for them was the language barrier. Everything combined was making it hard for them to start their new lives in the country. They needed almost everything, from small daily essentials such as toothpaste and toothbrushes to larger items such as furniture. Some community residents had donated clothes and other items to the church, but 80 percent of the donated items were not fit for use. The reverend thus expressed hope that Tzu Chi could provide practical things that the newcomers could put to good use.

After the meeting, Herbert Cheng (鄭楊河), CEO of Tzu Chi Eastern Canada, decided that Tzu Chi would quickly move to help. Volunteers carefully reviewed the lists of needed items provided by Rev. Lambert. Some of the needed items, such as slippers, sneakers, and underwear, would be difficult to purchase because every recipient required their own size. As a result, they decided to include gift cards among the other types of aid to help the newcomers buy directly what they needed. Every newcomer would receive a card worth 150 Canadian dollars (US\$115).

Tzu Chi held its first distribution on April 25. A woman had noted in her list of needed items

that she hoped to receive a stroller and a car seat. She said she had two children, a two-year-old and a 15-year-old, and that there was a new baby coming, due the following month. She was very happy when she came to the distribution and learned that she'd receive a two-in-one stroller and car seat that day. She shared with Tzu Chi volunteers that she was an accountant in Ukraine. She hoped to master English as soon as possible to help her land a job after her baby was born so that she could support her children.

In addition to gift cards and requested items, volunteers prepared a care package for each refugee, containing a Tzu Chi eco-blanket, a bottle of hand sanitizer, a bottle of disinfectant wet wipes, and a box of face masks.

Volunteers noticed during the event a woman who had remained silent from the beginning. They struck up a conversation with her, aided by Rev. Lambert as the interpreter. The woman explained that her hometown was located in Mariupol, one of the areas in Ukraine that had suffered the most destruction from the war. She



had requested clothes, footwear, and socks, as well as a set of cookware and tableware. She had been in Canada for nearly two months, and yet hadn't been able to obtain such basic goods yet. The conversation helped the volunteers realize how difficult it could be for the refugees to obtain even the most basic supplies.

Another woman had arrived in Canada with her parents, both getting on in years. She said that her hometown was located among the battlefields of eastern Ukraine. They had even once seen a missile whiz by their apartment. She and her family had spent days in their basement before finally deciding to up and leave. Her immediate goal now was to master English and get a job. Speaking of the aid from Tzu Chi, she said she was impressed that people who didn't know them and who weren't even of the same ethnic or cultural background as they would reach out to them like this. She found it very touching.

They have nothing

Volunteers conducted another distribution on May 15, benefiting another five families. The

Volunteers pose after packing items to be given to Ukrainian refugees in a distribution scheduled for May 15.

FRANCIS LEUNG

items requested included all sorts of clothes, footwear, and socks. Because the weather was warming up, two families hoped to receive electric fans. Two families asked for trolley bags; without vehicles, they would make their trips to a supermarket on foot easier.

Other things requested included cookware, cutlery, kettles, and bath towels. Volunteers' hearts were wrenched by a requested list of basic items followed by the addendum: "The family indicates they have nothing." Feeling for the refugees, three volunteers spent a whole day getting the things on the lists ready. They completed their mission a couple of days before the distribution was to take place, after visiting five large retail stores. When packing the goods, volunteers thoughtfully wrote the name of each recipient on the items, then pasted on a sticker bearing a Tzu Chi logo.



Two of the five families scheduled to come to the distribution were unable to show up in the end: they had to isolate themselves at home due to COVID-19 infections. Father Andriy, of the Nativity of the Mother of God Orthodox Church, signed on their behalf. The church would then arrange for the gifts from Tzu Chi to be passed on to them. During the event, the priest made a short speech in English and Ukrainian. He pointed out that many Ukrainians had left all they had in their homeland and had arrived in Canada empty-handed. "Let's pray that Canada can become their new home."

One of the Ukrainian women who had come to the distribution shared a piece of good news with Tzu Chi volunteers—her husband had found a job with a moving company. But this happy news aside, she was worried for her mother and daughter because they were still in Ukraine. She couldn't wait for the war to end. Another woman had come to the event with her two children, aged six and 12. Her requested items included building blocks, a soccer ball, and paint brushes and paper for watercolors. While their lives were going

Father Andriy speaks during a Tzu Chi distribution for Ukrainians in the Nativity of the Mother of God Orthodox Church in Richmond Hill, Ontario.

through such cataclysmic changes, she hoped that her children would find some comfort in painting and playing sports.

They are safe now, but...

Liubov was a Ukrainian woman who had accompanied a friend with a broken leg to the distribution. When she saw how well organized the volunteers were and their genial and kind manners, she got up enough courage to ask them for help. She said that her husband's younger brother, Yuriy, his wife, Tetiana, and other family members had fled the war in Ukraine and were now living in her apartment. (Yuriy and Tetiana were the couple described at the beginning of this article.) Liubov explained that she and her husband were not doing well enough to give their relatives all the help they needed and that it would mean a lot to them if Tzu Chi could help.



Volunteers hug newcomers from Ukraine in a distribution held on July 21. The event helped ten families.

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A group of volunteers visited the woman's home in Scarborough on May 20. Liubov lived with her husband and 12-year-old son. Their apartment wasn't large to begin with, but now had to accommodate five more people. A double bed and two cribs had been added to the living room, while a sofa bed had been placed in the vestibule. Though it was crowded, the volunteers could see that everyone was doing their best to keep the environment clean and tidy.

Tetiana was feeding food to her three-year-old son when the volunteers arrived. The volunteers' interactions with the family were a little awkward at first but soon warmed up. Volunteer Andersen Chu (朱啟誠) sat on the floor and chatted easily with Yuriy, the young father, looking like friends. Yuriy has a PhD degree and was a department manager at a logistics company when he was in Kyiv. He had already obtained a work visa in Canada and was working hard to find a job. But it hadn't been going well because he had no work experience in Canada. Chu gave him some advice and offered to look at his resume and help improve it so that it might be easier for him to secure a job.

Volunteer Jane Huang (黃淑珍) sat off to one side talking to Tetiana. Tetiana said that though they were now safe in Canada, her heart was still full of sadness when she looked back on the huge changes that had taken place in their lives over the

last three months. Huang took out a copy of *Jing Si Aphorisms* (a collection of short sayings by Dharma Master Cheng Yen) and gave it to the mother of two. The book was a four-language edition. Huang suggested that Tetiana open it to a random page and read it whenever she felt troubled by anything in life—she might find peace in the Master's wise words. Tetiana opened the book and saw this sentence: "Though we shouldn't think too highly of ourselves, we oughtn't underestimate ourselves either." Reading it, Tetiana told Huang she would be stronger for her two children.

She added that never in her wildest dreams had it occurred to her that war would break out, but she was deeply grateful to all those who had helped them along the way. She thanked the volunteers for the blankets, face masks, hand sanitizer, and gift cards they had brought, especially the gift cards. She said the cards were very important to them.

Before the volunteers left, they introduced the Ukrainian version of the Tzu Chi song "One Family" to the family. Everyone was pleasantly surprised. The soft melody and moving lyrics warmed the family and encouraged them to bravely face the challenges ahead.

Volunteers held more distributions in June and July and will continue to reach out to newcomers displaced by the war. Our world isn't perfect. That's why we need love. ❀



How to Gain Happiness

By Jian Wen-ling

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Photo by Hsiao Yiu-hwa

Happiness is a common desire of humanity. All our efforts are directed toward this end. People are happy when they feel positive about the overall state of their lives and assume that it corresponds to their ideal state of life.

But what if, after a lifetime of hard work, you are diagnosed with cancer? Would you still be able to feel happy?

I teach at the Institute of Religion and Humanity at Tzu Chi University, in Hualien, eastern Taiwan. I once met an elderly couple at a Tzu Chi recycling station in Kaohsiung, the biggest city in southern Taiwan. The husband had battled oral cancer for nearly ten years; his jaw and part of his gums had been removed as a result, preventing him from eating naturally. Even so, he and his wife reported to the recycling station every morning at eight and volunteered there until five in the afternoon. They took things apart there to be recycled or reused. Before they went to sleep each night, they made plans for the next day. Full of hope for the future, they planned what tasks they would tend to the following day, if they could live to see it. Though the husband suffered from a serious illness, he took good care of his heart and mind and gave selflessly, which led him to often experience joy and happiness. He was full of energy and extremely satisfied with his present life.

"To be able to give is a blessing!" the couple said. "It's our loss if we don't give whenever we can." The happy smiles on their faces and their firm tones of voice showed their confidence about the value of their lives. They said they took up recy-

cling because they wanted to leave a better Earth for future generations. They said that doing meaningful work made them feel they were living worthwhile lives. They cared less about how long they could keep on living, but more about whether they could make the most out of their lives. Their children and grandchildren all worked and lived out of town, so they had channeled their love of family into a selfless dedication to the environment, into a determination to protect the Earth for future generations.

Doing everything mindfully is their way to cultivate spirituality. "Take good care of your heart and mind," they shared. "Be upright and don't harbor selfish intentions when doing good. Only when your heart is in the right place can you walk on the right path." The husband said he used to squander a lot of time in meaningless chatter and gossip with others, but that was in the past. Now he had found meaning and purpose in his life through his volunteer work with Tzu Chi, via his environmental protection efforts, so he dedicated himself wholeheartedly to the good cause. Before my interview with them came to an end, the couple said in unison that a person will never feel ill if their mind is completely on what they are doing. People who are industrious have no time to fall sick, they said.

When you are so focused on every task at hand that your mind rises above any physical discomforts, that it rises above the bondage of life and death, then you will be able to contribute the best you can and taste the kind of happiness that transcends aging, sickness, and death. ❊

Sandeep Goes Into Town

Helping an Indian Boy Obtain Treatment

By Zeng Qian-yu, Yuan Shu-zhen, and Wu Xiu-ling

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Photos courtesy of Tzu Chi Hualien headquarters

A little boy in India with an unusually large abdomen appeared accidentally on footage filmed for an upcoming Tzu Chi musical sutra adaptation. The sight stirred the compassion of Dharma Master Cheng Yen, thus beginning an incredible journey to find the boy and help him obtain treatment.

A Tzu Chi team in Taiwan is producing a musical sutra adaptation to promote the Buddha's teachings, scheduled to be staged in Taiwan at the end of this year. In order to make the production as good as possible, the team arranged to have video footage taken of locations that were significant in the Buddha's life to show on stage. These included Rajgir, one of the Enlightened One's most important preaching locations. On June 12 this year, the team reported on the progress of the production to Dharma Master Cheng Yen, showing her the video footage that had been captured. One of the shots they presented had unintentionally showed a thin little boy with an unusually large abdomen. He was obviously suffering from some kind of disease.

Seeing the boy stirred the Master's compassion. She even mentioned him for two days in a row in her Dharma talks, which showed how worried and concerned she was about him. "Let's go look for him," said the Master.

Thus began a mission to find the boy in the video and help him get treatment. But finding him in the second most populous country in the world, 91 times the size of Taiwan, would be like looking for a needle in a haystack. To begin, staffers at Tzu Chi headquarters in Taiwan contacted the company in India that had helped capture the aerial footage. With their help, they learned the name of the village in which the boy might be living. With that information, they had a chance of tracking him down.

But even with the name of a village, how could the boy be located? After all, India is 4,200 kilometers (2,610 miles) from Taiwan. It was then they remembered Abhishek Kumar, a new Tzu Chi volunteer who lives in Rajgir and works as a Chinese language tour guide. He might be able to serve as Tzu Chi's eyes and ears in India to find the youngster. When asked if he could help, he readily agreed to do his best to find the boy.

Abhishek set off to look for the boy at 9:30 on the morning of June 14, the day after he received the request to help locate him. All that he had to



Sandeep's image, with his swollen abdomen, was captured by accident on footage filmed for an upcoming Tzu Chi musical sutra adaptation.

help him find the boy was the name of the village, some photos, and the footage in which the youngster was seen. Driving a motor scooter, braving a scorching sun and temperatures up to 48 degrees Celsius (118 degrees Fahrenheit), Abhishek traveled through village after village to track down the mystery boy.

At five in the evening, just as the sun was about to set, Abhishek saw a large banyan tree that had appeared in the video. He walked down a trail next to the tree and began asking villagers in the area if they knew of the boy. Based on their directions, he found the boy just before dusk fell. He immediately contacted Tzu Chi volunteers in Taiwan via video chat to tell them of his good news. He was so excited, his eyes sparkling with joy, he had forgotten all about his fatigue.

Meeting the boy

The boy's name is Sandeep Kumar. He's nine and has seven siblings. His 18-year-old brother is already married with two children. Sandeep lives with nine other family members in a brick house in Badrepool, a typical rural village in India. Though there are ten of them living together, there is only one bed in their home. When Abhishek arrived, Sandeep's mother was chopping something that looked like rice stalks outside the house to feed the family's livestock.

Via video chat, Tzu Chi volunteers in Taiwan told the mother about the care and concern Master Cheng Yen and Tzu Chi felt about her son. The mother was happily surprised and replied with hope in her voice: "I'm very thankful to Tzu Chi. It'd be great if my boy could receive treatment and even get a chance to go to school."

Abhishek himself was deeply moved by the selfless Great Love that had traveled across seas to reach a little boy in his country. He could tell that the family in front of him was poor, so he immediately went to buy some food for them. He brought back 25 kilograms (55 pounds) of rice, ten kilo-



Sandeep is about to be delivered to the intensive care unit for observation after the surgery to drain fluid from his abdomen was completed.

grams (22 pounds) of flour, five kilograms (11 pounds) of potatoes, a liter of cooking oil, and an assortment of spices, biscuits, and chocolate.

To help Sandeep obtain treatment, Abhishek enlisted the help of Vivek Kumar. Vivek is another Tzu Chi volunteer in India and lives in Bodhgaya, where the Buddha is said to have attained enlightenment. The two men first met each other in 2013, when they were both learning Chinese in New Delhi, India's capital. Their paths crossed again nine years later because of Tzu Chi. They now live 70 kilometers (43 miles), or about three hours, apart. Accompanied by Vivek, Abhishek visited Sandeep and his family again on June 16 to discuss how to arrange for medical attention for the boy.

Before setting out to meet Sandeep for the first time, Vivek thoughtfully prepared some gifts for the boy, including stationery and new clothes. Considering the boy's extended belly, he had chosen larger size clothes so that they would fit Sandeep.

Sandeep rarely wore new garments, but he didn't look particularly happy when he put on the new clothes. There was no smile on his face. It was probably because he had long felt he was different from others. The ridicule he had suffered from others had worn away the innocence other

children possessed. His eyes had an indifference and vacuity in them that was heartbreaking to behold.

In fact, Sandeep's parents had taken him to the doctor before, five years ago. They had visited a hospital in Patna, Bihar, and even brought back the X-ray film taken of the boy and his ultrasound test results. But because the family couldn't afford the treatment and because the doctor had told them the surgery would be risky, they made the decision to forgo treatment.

Sandeep's medical history was forwarded to Dr. Chao You-chen (趙有誠), the superintendent of Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital in northern Taiwan. He judged that the boy's extended abdomen wasn't a result of roundworm infestation or ascites (the buildup of fluid in the abdomen most commonly caused by cirrhosis of the liver), but rather was linked to a urological condition. The case was passed on to Deputy Superintendent Yang Shei-Dei (楊緒棣), an expert in pediatric urology. Dr. Yang immediately contacted physicians in Kolkata (formerly Calcutta) and New Delhi and conferred with them online about possible treatments for Sandeep.

A 20-hour journey into the unknown

Since Sandeep's medical records were five years old, the doctors decided that the boy should be examined again to obtain the most updated information about his condition. On June 23, Abhishek accompanied Sandeep and his parents to Bodhgaya, where they met up with Vivek and took the boy to a hospital for an examination.

The next day, as soon as Vivek obtained the X-ray film, he reported back to the Tzu Chi doctors in Taiwan. After reviewing the test results, Superintendent Chao concluded that Sandeep's condition was one of those extreme cases where an illness was allowed to deteriorate to a point beyond imagination due to lack of medical intervention. "If the boy came to Taiwan," the doctor added, "he would receive very good care. But we need to put ourselves in his shoes: he has rarely even stepped outside of his own village." All things considered, the superintendent felt it'd be best for Sandeep to receive medical care in India.

He suggested a direction for the boy's treatment. "His right kidney can still function normally. If given proper treatment, he still has a chance to grow up properly. We will need further information on the left kidney to decide how to take care of it. I suggest taking the boy to senior physician Dr. Sujit Chowdhary in New Delhi to have

the fluid drained from the boy's abdomen before we assess further treatment options."

New Delhi is 1,100 kilometers (684 miles) from Sandeep's village. On July 18, Abhishek accompanied the boy and his parents from a bus stop near their home to Rajgir. There they boarded a train, and after a three-hour ride arrived at Gaya railway station, where they met up with Vivek. The real challenge was the trip from Gaya to New Delhi. July and August are the hardest times of the year to get a train ticket. Vivek had to bend over backwards to secure tickets for the five of them. The tickets he managed to purchase were for a train that got them to New Delhi in the shortest time, but even so it still took 12 hours. After arriving in New Delhi, they had to travel yet another hour to get to the hospital. The entire trip lasted 20 hours.

Sandeep and his parents had never traveled far from their home, so this trip was a brand-new experience for them. When the five of them boarded the train bound for New Delhi, Vivek considerably helped the family get their beds in the sleeper car ready. The parents, who were shy, and Sandeep, who was quiet, soon fell asleep, apparently wiped out from the journey so far.

When day came, they converted their beds into seats. Abhishek wore a smile throughout it all and saw to it that everyone had their meals. He has two young children at home, so he empathized with what Sandeep's parents must have been feeling about their son.

It wasn't an easy trip. The weather was so warm that everyone perspired profusely on the train. The couple remained silent most of the time. For the sake of their son's future, they could not be afraid. They had to take the chance that had come their way and march forward bravely into the unknown.

Surgery

Sandeep and his parents met with Dr. Sujit Chowdhary at Indraprastha Apollo Hospital. "Why did you wait until now to seek treatment for your child?" the doctor asked, stunned by the sight of the child with an abdomen as big as a large watermelon. "He should have received treatment long ago!" It was only then that Sandeep's mother realized her son's condition was so dire and required immediate care. It made her appreciate even more Tzu Chi's efforts to find them and help Sandeep get treatment. It was a race against time.

Vivek took care of the procedures required for

the boy to have surgery, while Abhishek tended to the needs of the family. Because Sandeep was still so young, his mother was allowed into the operating room while he had the surgery to drain the urine from his abdomen. The operation took an hour, after which Sandeep was transferred to the intensive care unit for observation. His abdomen was already looking a lot smaller.

It is hard to imagine how he got through every day with his abdomen so full of urine. Seven liters of fluid were drained from his abdomen during the surgery, with more flowing out in the days following the operation. The boy's girth gradually shrank from 72 centimeters to 59 centimeters (28 inches to 23 inches). Dr. Chowdhary said that he would need to be observed for four to six weeks before assessing his renal functions.

When Sandeep had improved enough after the surgery, he was discharged from the hospital and was staying in a local hotel. Things seemed to be going well, but then something shocking happened. Instead of becoming flat, Sandeep's abdomen caved in, as if a big hole had appeared there. Vivek immediately contacted Taiwan. Superintendent Chao explained that it was because the organs in Sandeep's abdomen had become misshapen after being compressed for so long, but the condition would gradually improve. Just as the doctor said, the boy's abdomen began to look more normal soon afterwards—even the over-stretched skin was on the mend.

"Keep his legs raised to see if we can get more urine out," the superintendent instructed via the Internet. Following his directive, Vivek and Abhishek tried all kinds of postures with the boy in an attempt to drain more fluid. They didn't even mind when urine leaked out from the drainage tube and splashed them as they worked to find the best position.

To help Superintendent Chao decide whether Sandeep could safely return home, Vivek found a medical testing lab to have an ultrasound test done on the boy. "Judging from the ultrasound report, the surgery to drain the fluid was a great success," said the doctor. "Very little fluid was left in the abdomen. It's okay for the boy to go home now." Thus assured, Vivek and Abhishek began arranging for the trip to accompany the family home.

When Sandeep arrived at home on July 24, his neighbors came to check on him. Surprise and happiness were written all over everyone's face. "We were doubtful in the beginning, but now we know all this is true," a neighbor said. "We can't believe he has really recovered."



After surgery, Sandeep's girth was reduced from 72 centimeters to 59. Assessments of his renal function remain to be made.

"I wouldn't have been able to save my own child if you hadn't sought us out," said the father, who had been quiet throughout the journey. Now finally home, he was unable to contain his excitement and he voiced his gratitude. Even Sandeep's grandparents had rushed over to see their grandson. Holding Abhishek's hands warmly in theirs, they said: "Many thanks to the esteemed Master Cheng Yen. Many thanks for changing our boy's life."

"I wouldn't have been able to pull this off without Vivek's help," said Abhishek. He was grateful to Vivek for helping him and the family through the ordeal. Vivek responded by saying: "None of us had ever come across anything like this. We were scared. Fortunately, Abhishek was on hand all the time to help take care of the boy."

What has happened to Sandeep was nothing short of a miracle. It could not have happened without dedicated individuals in Taiwan and India doing their best to bring relief to this little boy. The story of love continues, showing that no distance, no ethnic differences, and no borders can dampen the spirit of Great Love. ❀

A Poet Mother Embraces Hope Again

By Lin Lu-qing

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Photos by Chen Chiou Hwa

Her son was killed in the Syrian civil war. With Tzu Chi's help, she rebuilt her life in Jordan and began embracing hope again.

Ismahan Al Masri, 60, is from Syria. She is quiet and most often wears black in public. She gives the impression of having been through a lot of heartache in life, but has come to accept everything with poise. Every time Tzu Chi Jordan holds an activity, she travels from her home in Ramtha to the national capital of Amman to take part in the event. Ramtha is a city located in the northwest of Jordan near the border with Syria, about 90 minutes from the capital. Knowing that her finances are a challenge, Tzu Chi volunteers sometimes offer to subsidize her travel expenses, but she always declines.

In 2019, during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, Ismahan once again took a bus to Amman to attend a Tzu Chi event. The Tzu Chi Jordan office had invited some volunteers to the office to learn videotaping techniques that day. As usual, Ismahan listened quietly in the audience as the event progressed. When it came to an end, she surprised everyone by standing up and saying that she would like to recite a poem she had written in Arabic to dedicate to Tzu Chi volunteers. The poem she read went like this:

*Let's offer a prayer of peace
For those who built a sanctuary of love
And gave shelter to our hearts.
Let's offer a prayer of peace
For the loving eyes
That look at us with concern from afar.
Let's offer a prayer of peace
For the helping hands
That reach out to us with love.
Let's offer a prayer of peace*

*For the bubbling spring
That generously gives and nourishes everyone.
Let's offer a prayer of peace
For those in whose smiles we see hope
And feel our mistakes forgiven.
Let's offer a prayer of peace
For those who free us from pain and sorrow.
Let's offer a prayer of peace
For those who look poverty fervently in the eye.
Let's offer a prayer of peace
For those who come from afar,
Bringing light to struggling families.
Let's pray for their compassionate hearts
And offer up to them our love and gratitude.*

Everyone was amazed when she had finished. No one knew she could write, let alone write well enough to pen such a moving poem.

A heartbroken mother

Ismahan and her family used to live in Daraa, Syria. Daraa was an important agricultural area in the south. People there were kind and unsophisticated. Ismahan's husband, Mousa, ran a thriving blacksmith's workshop. The couple hoped their two sons would take over his business in the future.

Sadly, that future was never to arrive. In March 2011, a civil war erupted in Syria, and Daraa was thrown into turmoil. The couple wanted to uproot their family and flee to Jordan, but their older son, Ali, refused to leave. Not wanting to leave without him, the family stayed. After persisting for more than a year, Ismahan and Mousa finally decided to leave with their younger son, Ali's



two-year-old daughter, and his wife, who was six months pregnant. Ali, 24 at the time, decided to stay and join the Free Syrian Army.

After arriving in Jordan, the family stayed separately with different families, and even lived for a spell in the Zaatari refugee camp. Life was difficult, but for Ismahan, it couldn't compare with the pain of worrying about the safety of her older son. In July 2013, Mousa decided to take a risk and return to Syria to accompany Ali. Sadly, just two months later, Ismahan received the news she had most dreaded.

September 28, 2013, was a day Ismahan will never forget: her beloved son was killed in battle that day. His comrades held a funeral for him. Before her husband came home, Ismahan asked him to bring back the clothes her son was wearing when he died. Her husband did as asked, bearing the tragic burden back to his wife. Clutching her

Ismahan Al Masri (left) recites a poem she wrote for Tzu Chi volunteers in 2019. She prayed for blessings for them with the poem.

COURTESY OF TZU CHI JORDAN

son's blood-stained pants to her chest, Ismahan was beside herself with grief.

Chen Chiou Hwa (陳秋華), the head of Tzu Chi Jordan, recalled the first time he met Ismahan. "She held the pants and cried in front of us," he said. "Smelling the pants, she said her son's blood was more fragrant than perfume. That was such a sad scene." Chen vividly remembers how even the air at the time was saturated with heartrending sorrow.

By then, Ismahan and her family had been settled in Ramtha for more than half a year. Tzu Chi and a local charity were working together to help them. When Tzu Chi volunteers in Amman

learned that the family had lost their son, they visited them to extend their condolences and see whether there was anything they could do to help. Tzu Chi began providing long-term aid to them afterwards, helping them with their medical needs and easing their financial burdens.

Tzu Chi volunteers visited the family every month. Touched by their care, Ismahan said, "No one has made us feel as safe as Tzu Chi. Tzu Chi has eased the pain and mental torture the war has caused us." Gradually, she began joining Tzu Chi volunteers in doing good and helping others.

In February 2018, a 6.4-magnitude earthquake hit Hualien, eastern Taiwan, toppling buildings and killing 17 people. When the news reached Jordan, Ismahan decided to help with Tzu Chi's relief work for the quake by sewing gloves out of recycled fabric and donating them to be sold. She also made woolen caps and donated them to refugee children.

In late 2021, when Jordan was going through the fourth wave of COVID-19, Ismahan tested pos-

itive for the infection. She asked Tzu Chi for help in mid-December, and after treatment with medications and an oxygen concentrator, she recovered and regained her health. She was deeply thankful to Tzu Chi volunteers, who checked on her every day. She paid forward their love afterwards by helping Tzu Chi care for others in Ramtha infected with COVID-19. Whenever someone tested positive and needed an oxygen concentrator, she asked her younger son to sign them up for help and deliver a concentrator to them.

Love emerging from pain

Ismahan had a study with a large collection of books when she was living in her hometown in Syria, and was in the habit of recording her family

Ismahan has transformed her grief of losing her son to the Syrian civil war into a force for good. She is pictured here using recycled fabrics to make gloves for a charity sale.





Holding a donation box, Ismahan solicits donations for Tzu Chi at a Tzu Chi event.

life. She inherited her father's talent for writing; her work is powerful and moving. "I put everything that occurred to me in writing—that was my way of life," she said. Though her copious writings were destroyed in the war, they still live in her heart.

She often volunteers for Tzu Chi now, with her five-year-old granddaughter in tow. She treasures and cherishes a letter wishing her the best written to her by Dharma Master Cheng Yen. The letter makes her feel that thousands of miles away there is someone who really understands her. She has even written a poem for the Master:

*When darkness shrouds me,
You are the moon that illuminates me.
The sun shines its rays on us
Because of my beloved you.
You allow me to embrace hope again.
You give my family and me happiness.
Your heart, full of love, erases my sorrow.
You are the mother who bears all my heavy burdens.
Your heart is as broad as can be
As you call on everyone every day
To give others love and security.
I'm doing my best to sow seeds of goodness
Until every place becomes green.
We plant kindness, love, and hope
To pass them on generation after generation.*

Tzu Chi volunteers have been visiting and caring for Syrian refugee families in Ramtha—such as Ismahan's family—for ten years. When Ismahan, her father, and her husband needed surgery to remove their cataracts, Tzu Chi subsidized the cost for them. When Ismahan's brother's family was being accepted into Germany, Tzu Chi paid for their plane tickets so that the family could immigrate to Europe.

"When my life was at its most difficult, Tzu Chi gave me unconditional love," Ismahan said. "I'm now a part of Tzu Chi. I'll reach out whenever I meet people in need of help." She pledged to live out Master Cheng Yen's teachings for as long as she lives.

Ismahan's heart harbors pride for her son. She might not be able to completely heal from his loss, but has transformed her grief into a force for good. Her story has inspired many Syrian mothers who have had a similar experience. Life is an echo. When you send out love, it comes back to you. Ismahan is looking toward the future with a heart full of gratitude. "Let our hearts and the entire world become more beautiful," she prays.



Let Go and Free Your Heart

By Liao Zhe-min

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Photos by Hsiao Yiu-hwa

She has been visiting the needy for more than 30 years and has met a lot of people who have had a tough life. Those experiences helped her untangle some painful emotional knots that had kept her heart from being free.

It was springtime. A light drizzle, accompanied by a breeze, was falling in the Lanyang Plain, in Yilan, northeastern Taiwan. A married couple, Lin Su-yu (林素玉) and Xu Shan-bao (許杉寶), was accompanying a group of fellow volunteers to visit some Tzu Chi care recipients.

The party came to a brightly painted sheet metal house, fronted with flowers and other plants. This was the home of Mr. Cai and his wife, though it was not how Lin and Xu remembered it. "It looks so different now!" the couple said with one voice. When they saw Mr. Cai, whom they hadn't seen in a long time, they asked, "How have you been? Do you remember us? We visited you many years ago."

Lin and Xu are both senior Tzu Chi volunteers with many years of experience visiting the needy. They used to visit families in the mountains, but they gave that responsibility many years ago to another group of volunteers when they started making home visits to the needy in Yilan's urban areas. On this day, they were accompanying that group of volunteers to visit some households on their old route.

Mr. Cai gradually recalled the couple. "I remember you now," he said. "You are the Tzu Chi brother and sister who worked in a post office. It has been almost 30 years, but you still remember and come to visit me! I'm so grateful!" He continued with a sense of humor: "I never got very far in school, nor am I highly placed in society, but so many people still think of me and have come to visit. I'm so blessed."

Carried back in time, they began to reminisce about the past. Lin praised Cai for being able to operate his power wheelchair now and for taking better care of himself. She was also glad to learn that Cai's wife now has a part-time job as a home care provider, and that they are doing better financially. "Take good care of yourself. We'll see you next time," Lin said to the couple as she prepared to leave with the others. After bidding farewell, the volunteers made their way to another household.

Stepping beyond her family life

Lin's parents started out as fishmongers in a market. Later, her father switched to driving a delivery truck to support his five children. Lin tested into a commercial high school after graduating from junior high. She excelled in accounting and abacus math. After making it through high school, she passed a civil service examination and began working in a post office. Her future husband worked at the same post office, which is how they met.

After they were married, they lived with his mother, who cleaned homes and washed clothes





for a living. Lin's mother-in-law had a taste for alcohol and would develop a quick temper when she had too many drinks. To prevent her from getting angry, Lin helped her wash clothes. Lin was very busy at work. After a hectic day at the post office, she returned home to cook, do the dishes, then go to a stream to wash clothes. It was usually ten by the time she returned home. "I was under a lot of pressure when I lived with my mother-in-law," Lin recalled. "I didn't know how to regulate my emotions, and I lost a lot of weight. I became very emaciated."

In 1983, Feng Yu-xia (馮玉霞), a post office co-worker, began taking Lin to a local suburban temple twice a month. They would listen to Dharma talks and eat vegetarian food served by the temple. At around that same time, via her work at the post office, Lin met Mr. Huang, the father of

Lin Su-yu is a senior Tzu Chi volunteer living in Su'ao, Yilan, northeastern Taiwan. She has visited the needy for more than 30 years.

Dharma Master De An (德安) at the Jing Si Abode. (The Jing Si Abode is the Buddhist convent founded by Dharma Master Cheng Yen in Hualien, eastern Taiwan.) As a result, Lin heard a lot of stories about Tzu Chi, and she became a donating member. She was later trained and became a certified Tzu Chi volunteer.

Because of her work, she could only take part in Tzu Chi activities in the evenings or on the weekends. Her volunteer work included visiting the needy in Su'ao and Nan'ao, both in Yilan. Nan'ao, which is the southernmost township in Yilan, covers a large mountainous area. On the

days when Lin, her husband, and another volunteer couple, Xie Lai-wen (謝來文) and You Qiao-ling (游巧玲), were making home visits to needy households in Nan'ao, they'd rise at the crack of dawn and pack their lunches before driving to the township. They could visit about 20 families at most in a day, which included those already on Tzu Chi's long-term care recipient list and those newly referred to the foundation for help. At noon, they'd have a short lunch break at a pavilion near Aohua Village before continuing on their way and carrying out the rest of their visits.

Lin recalled that Mr. Cai, the care recipient mentioned at the beginning of this article, had had a high-voltage accident when he was younger, which had resulted in damage to his spine and caused his hands to atrophy. Tzu Chi decided to donate a brand-new power wheelchair to him to help him get around. When Lin and other volunteers visited him to deliver the wheelchair, they saw how difficult it was for Mrs. Cai to move him out of bed. That led the foundation to donate another piece of equipment—a mechanical lift—to make it easier for Mrs. Cai to care for her husband. The couple was good at repairing electrical appliances and other household items, so they made a small income by assembling stereos and fixing furniture and other items for people.

Another family Lin and the other volunteers visited on this day consisted of a sick father and his children. The single father did odd jobs to support his family. Their house used to be in such ill repair that when it rained outside, it rained inside too. Volunteers arranged for repairs to the house

so that it could protect the family from the elements and allow them to live more comfortably.

"Seeing so many people hard pressed to get by has made me reflect on my own life," Lin remarked. "My husband and I are free of any financial worries, and we even have the ability to volunteer to help others. I'm deeply grateful for that, and deeply contented."

Lin's work with Tzu Chi even helped her untie the knots in her heart about her relationship with her mother-in-law. When she had first joined Tzu Chi and was invited to share her story in small volunteer gatherings, she'd often burst into tears before getting to that part of her life that had brought her a lot of pain. "My time in Tzu Chi has helped me let go of a lot of things that used to trouble me," Lin explained. "When you have encountered so many poor, sick, and underprivileged people and realized that many people are worse off than you, you stop obsessing over many things. I stopped putting all the blame on my mother-in-law—it was the alcohol that made her emotionally unstable."

In the latter stage of her life, her mother-in-law was diagnosed with diabetes and quit drinking as a result. After an amputation due to a complication of her diabetes, she required assistance with her daily living activities. Lin helped care for her. Sometimes when she was cutting her in-law's hair or sponge bathing her, she could see she was in a really good mood. Lin realized that nothing in life is so hard that you can't transcend it. All it takes is a change of mindset, a shift in perspective, for you to become more cheerful.

Never Give Up

An Interview With Lin Su-yu

Compiled by Liao Zhe-min

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Q: Supplying financial aid is not the be-all and end-all when it comes to helping needy families. Sometimes money can't improve their lives. What else can we do for them?

A: In helping the underserved, we need to be flexible and provide the kind of assistance that suits the circumstances of the case best, instead of

assuming that monetary subsidies are all that is required.

Some aid recipients, for example, fail to make good use of the money we give them: they might spend it on drinking or gambling. When that happens, we need to quickly adapt by giving them daily necessities or other needed items instead. No matter the behavior of the aid recipient, we

still want to help meet the financial needs of his or her children—for example, by subsidizing their school fees or daily living expenses. At the very least, we need to make sure the youngsters are fed and clothed and can go to school. If they study out of town, we help with their rent, too.

Even though we do what we can to help, sometimes tragedy strikes—for example, one time the older daughter of a family receiving aid from us committed suicide. This unfortunate event prompted us to think about how we should have paid more attention to the children's emotional needs instead of just helping the family get by financially. We realized we needed to learn how to better interact with the children of a family.

It is a comfort that the younger daughter of the family has stayed in touch with us. When I ran into her in a post office, she greeted me cheerfully. When she landed a job after she graduated from a junior college, she even sent us a message to share her joy with us.

Even though what we can do for the children of such dysfunctional families is limited, we can at least help the young ones feel that the world is full of love by showing more care and concern for them.

Q: The families you help are usually experiencing very difficult circumstances. How do you adjust your mood when faced with such sad situations?

A: When I visit young people with disabilities or older people living alone with no one to care for them, I often feel so much for them that tears come unbidden to my eyes. But if I allow myself to be swept up in sadness and cry with them, my emotions will get the best of me and I won't be able to make a sensible assessment of their situation. If that happens, how will I be able to help them overcome their financial, educational, or medical challenges? So, I need to remain strong regardless of the situation. If I feel really, really sad, I'll hold it until I leave the household to have a good cry.

I've been visiting the needy for more than 30 years. No matter how much our society has progressed, or how wealthy we have become, the number of people needing help has never decreased. There are so many suffering people in the world in need of help. No matter how powerless we might feel, we must do what we can to help. We must not give up on any struggling individual or family, or let go of any chance to help



Lin and other volunteers visit Mr. Cai, an aid recipient she used to help care for. She was happy to learn that he and his wife were doing well.

them. When it comes to doing the right thing, we should just do it.

Q: With more than 30 years of experience caring for the needy, what do you have in mind to share with new volunteers?

A: For so many years, I've always kept in mind what Master Cheng Yen has taught us, about how we need to exercise both our compassion and our wisdom to do good. Simply giving compassionately is not enough; compassion must be accompanied by wisdom. Avoid looking at things on their surface. When we see an able-bodied man, we might ask why we need to help him. But perhaps he has kids at home who need money to go to school or older family members who need care. We must also remain objective, even if we know the needy family we are visiting, even if they are our friends or relatives. We must not allow our personal feelings to sway our assessment.

Even when a case is closed, if need be, we should still visit the household regularly. Sometimes a former care recipient's children leave home to study or work, and they, facing an empty house, might need company or care. We are the ones who can bring love to them. We should also try to interact more often with the children of a family under our care. If we can help them feel more love from society, they are more likely to be inspired to give to others in the future. ❀

Mom Took a Fall

By Ng Hooi Lin

Translated by Tang Yau-yang

After a fall, an elderly person may be unable to take care of themselves, experience depression, and suffer a loss of appetite. A dietician in Singapore explains what nutrients such patients need the most and how she, with the help of others, helped her mother get back on her feet after a fall.

My mother fell in March 2022, in our family home in Ipoh, Malaysia. The doctor diagnosed fractures in her leg, for which she underwent surgery. Elderly people who suffer a fall are often less able to care for themselves afterwards, a situation that my uncle faced many years ago. With no alternatives, he moved into a nursing home, where he lived until his last breath.

After being notified of Mom's fall, I tried to settle my mind the best I could. Then I itemized the tasks required to return to Malaysia to care for and support her. The moment I walked through the door to our family home, I was struck by the number of health supplements covering the dining table. Deliberately trying to appear nonchalant, I smiled at Mom and said, "All these bottles and



GRAPHIC BY LIN JIA-SHENG

whatnot [gifts from well-wishers] on the table shows how very popular you are, Mom.”

Many elderly people that have fallen are temporarily knocked down and depressed, and invariably fall into the trap of thinking, “I haven’t done anything wrong. Why did heaven pick me for this suffering?” There’s no denying that being unwell is trying. Thankfully, our family, relatives, and friends took turns cheering Mom on. Their sincere outpouring of care accompanied us one step after another through that difficult time. Their love went a long way toward leading us out of darkness and into the light.

Right food, healthy eating

Nutrition is one of the important factors that determine the speed at which surgical wounds and bone fractures heal. Besides the need for large amounts of calories and proteins, two nutrients in particular are essential: calcium and vitamin D. They are both key to strong bones.

The main sources of calcium for vegetarians are dairy products like milk and cheese, high-calcium soybean milk, high-calcium vegetable milk, soybean products, and dark-green vegetables low in oxalic acid, such as broccoli, bok choy, and Chinese broccoli. If during this critical period a patient cannot take in sufficient calcium from their food, they may wish to consult a dietitian to determine whether calcium tablets should be taken.

Vitamin D allows the calcium in the bloodstream to be absorbed into bones. Exposure to sunlight enables the body to make the necessary vitamin D, so spending time in the sun is the most direct approach to get this vitamin. Vegetarians can also get vitamin D from fortified grains and vegetable milk, sun-dried mushrooms, or nutritional supplements.

During recuperation, the patient also needs to obtain ample vitamin C from fresh vegetables and fruit in order to help the body make collagen. Collagen, an essential protein component of healthy bones, can help the bones heal. Furthermore, papayas, citrus fruits, and tomatoes are rich in vitamins, which support the immune system and can help fall victims fight infections.

Whetting her appetite

Like many post-op patients, Mom didn’t have much of an appetite at first. Even her favorite food could not survive but a few chews before she would spit it all out, saying, “I just don’t feel like eating.”



At times like this, many older patients ask their caretakers to cook rice porridge for them, not realizing that rice and water alone will not meet their nutritional needs, especially as they may be recovering from surgery. Instead, for my mother, I cooked mushrooms, and steamed pumpkins, leafy greens, or potatoes until they were soft. Then I mixed them in a blender before adding milk powder specifically formulated for the nutritional needs of older adults. I gave Mom this smoothie the first evening I got home, and was surprised that she drank up the whole cup in just a few minutes. She even asked me, “If I get hungry later, is there any of this left?”

During the first few days after surgery, Mom couldn’t finish a whole meal. Small but more frequent meals was one of the good strategies to cope with this. Knowing this, I had made two extra helpings of the smoothie, so when Mom got hungry, I could simply heat it up and serve it up to her.

For snacks, if it was avocados or bananas that I prepared, I would use a spoon to scoop out thin slices of the fruits and feed them to Mom as I would a baby who had just started eating solid food. As I fed her one spoonful after another, a strange thought occurred to me: I felt that at the moment I was more like a mother instead of a daughter—a mother who could shoulder so much because of love.

Mom’s recuperation was not short, and I couldn’t have accompanied her through her journey alone. My family members, relatives, and I took turns day and night to care for Mom, giving each other chances for a breather. Additionally, we added a physical therapist to the ranks of Mom’s caretakers.

With wholesome, adequate food and physical therapy in her regimen, Mom started to stand up and take slow walks in just two months. This made all of our efforts worthwhile. ❧

Tips for Recovering From Long COVID

By Liao Zhe-min

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Photos by Hsiao Yiu-hwa

Former COVID patients share their experiences and healthcare professionals share tips to help people recover from long COVID.

When a surge of COVID cases caused by the Omicron variant began to subside in June 2022, people in Taiwan started appearing in public places more often, learning to coexist with the virus.





In mid-May this year, Mr. Wu, an office worker in Taipei, northern Taiwan, arrived home from work feeling under the weather. He had difficulty swallowing and was running a fever. He took a rapid COVID test—for which he tested positive—before going to the hospital the next day for a PCR test. The PCR test also came back positive.

“It was like I had suffered lacerations in my throat,” Wu said of his COVID symptoms. “I could barely speak. My throat hurt when I ate as well.” He felt like he had fallen victim to an extremely brutal cold or flu. His symptoms lasted for about four days.

He used throat lozenges, over-the-counter medicine, and health supplements while he was isolating at home. He also drank two liters of water a day. “I felt I had recovered after a week, but I noticed that my stamina had declined. I became tired more easily. I had a couple of coughing fits every day, and sometimes suffered from shortness of breath.” To nurse himself back to health, he decided he’d exercise more often and keep healthier hours.

Ms. Chen, 51, also tested positive for COVID-19 in May. Like Mr. Wu, she noticed a decline in her stamina after she recovered. She found she needed



more frequent rests. She also had a lingering cough. After the experience, she concluded: "COVID-19 is not your typical cold or flu after all. I felt like the virus had run amok in my body, attacking all the vulnerable places in me."

Even when you recover

Compared with the Alpha and Delta variants, people testing positive for the Omicron variant have experienced reduced chance of severe illness and death. In fact, over 99 percent of those infected with this variant reported mild or no symptoms at all. In spite of those positive numbers, some people



Long COVID



Long COVID is a term used to describe the symptoms that continue or develop after an initial COVID-19 infection, and that cannot be explained by any other cause. It usually occurs within three months from the onset of the disease, with symptoms that last for at least two months.

(Source: World Health Organization)

have lingering symptoms, even months after they've recovered from the disease itself.

The World Health Organization established a clinical case definition of post-COVID-19 condition in October 2021: "Post-COVID-19 condition [or long COVID] occurs in individuals with a history of probable or confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection, usually 3 months from the onset, with symptoms that last for at least 2 months and cannot be explained by an alternative diagnosis." Common symptoms include respiratory system disorders, hair loss, rashes, depression, anxiety, difficulty sleeping, heart palpitations, chest pain, and cognitive dysfunction (brain fog).

Dr. Chang En-ting (張恩庭), a specialist in thoracic medicine at Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital, eastern Taiwan, explained that the coronavirus can attack cells all over your body, triggering an immune response and causing inflammation in your body. When the acute phase ends, a patient gradually recovers, but in some cases, the inflammation does not disappear entirely. This is referred to as chronic inflammation.

A UK study published in *The Lancet Respiratory Medicine* in April this year tracked a total of 2,320 COVID patients discharged from their hospitals between 2020 and 2021. Two-thirds of the patients felt they had not fully recovered, even up to one year after discharge. People suffering from worse aftereffects even developed more severe inflammation than before.

A person's likelihood of developing long COVID is not linked to the severity of the initial infection. In fact, people with mild and severe symptoms can suffer from lingering health prob-

People in Taiwan line up to have PCR tests at a hospital. COVID cases spiked in April and May in 2022, straining hospital resources as well as the supply of rapid test kits.

lems. According to the American Medical Association, there are three types of long COVID. The first category includes people who have ongoing symptoms due to direct cell damage from the virus. The second is when one's symptoms are linked to chronic hospitalization, such as muscle weakness. The third category covers those cases in which symptoms appear after recovery.

Mr. Ye tested positive for COVID-19 in 2021, and recovered after ten days of treatment in isolation at a hospital. However, after he was discharged, "all kinds of aftereffects of the disease surfaced," he said, "such as chest pain, coughing, poorer sleep quality, and poorer memory." He added with dismay that sometimes he even forgot he was boiling water and had scorched two pans as a result. There were also instances on which he forgot to take his purchases home from the store after paying for them.

In order to return to his former healthy self, Ye adjusted his diet by becoming a vegetarian. He also did chest expansion exercises regularly, and rode his bicycle in the afternoons. He also made sure to drink plenty of water, and used an oximeter to monitor the level of oxygen in his blood. "I've become more health-conscious," he said, which was probably a positive aftereffect of the disease.

Healthy routine and diet

Dr. Chang En-ting said that the first order of business as we learn to coexist with the coronavirus is to avoid being infected. He advised taking precautionary measures and getting immunization

People who have recovered from COVID-19 should get exercise and maintain interactions with others to help their lives return to normal.



shots, which is an effective way of reducing the likelihood of severe illness. Among those who have been infected and have recovered, the doctor has encountered some who still have shortness of breath, become tired more easily, or have a lingering cough with phlegm. He works first to reduce the inflammation in such patients, then works to eliminate their phlegm. If their conditions improve, he helps them improve their cardiopulmonary function. He instructs such patients to do aerobic exercises for at least 30 minutes a day. Exercises such as walking or tai chi will do as well.

Dr. Shen Huan-ting (沈煥庭), who heads the division of thoracic medicine at Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital in central Taiwan, advises against chilled drinks. He said that chilled drinks can lead to the contraction of the bronchus and exacerbate coughing.

COVID-19 can affect not just one's physical health, but one's psychological well-being as well. Ms. Zeng was diagnosed with the infection last year. Her condition took a turn for the worse when she was being treated in the hospital. She eventually was transferred to an intensive care unit. When she had recovered, people around her suggested that she go out to thank the medical workers and other people who had helped her along the way. But she felt as if a dark cloud was still hanging over her. She couldn't bring herself to leave her home, not even two months after she was discharged from the hospital. The experience of contracting the disease had instilled fear in her. "It's dangerous outside," she thought. "What if I get infected again?" Fortunately, her friends' company and her increased exposure to Buddhism eased her mind and changed her way of thinking: "I've regained my health," she told herself. "When would there be a better time than now to go thank those who have helped me?"

It's not just the body that needs healing after COVID, but the mind as well. Receiving care from others is even more important if your mind "falls ill." Dr. Chaucer C.H. Lin (林喬祥), the director of the Psychotherapy and Counseling Center at Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital, pointed out that some

recovered COVID patients suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder and might exhibit symptoms of inattention, anxiety, and depression. Contributing to this is that they haven't fully returned to their old routines yet.

Dr. Lin explained that most people infected with COVID are required or choose bed rest during their treatment or recovery periods. As a result, they keep very different hours than before. The first thing to do after recovering is therefore to try to return to your familiar, regular routine. You can also learn to relax in ways that feel comfortable for you. Taking deep breaths, meditating, or chatting or interacting with friends are all good ways to calm your mind or relieve your stress.

At the end of 2021, Taiwan's National Health Insurance Administration launched a healthcare program for people who have recovered from COVID-19 but still suffer from ongoing symptoms. People can check with hospitals in their area to see if they participate in this program, which integrate services in thoracic medicine, infectious diseases, psychiatry, rehabilitation, nutrition, and so on. They can then seek help accordingly.

According to a study carried out by the Faculty of Medicine at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CU Medicine) and published early this year in the medical journal *Gut*, the composition of gut microorganisms in people infected with COVID is very different from that in uninfected individuals and is related to disease severity. "COVID-19 patients lack certain good bacteria known to regulate their immune system and the abnormal gut microbiota [dysbiosis] persists after clearance of the virus, which could contribute to lingering symptoms," said the CU Medicine website. The gut is the largest immune organ in the human body; 70 percent of the immune system is located there. A healthy balance of gut bacteria is therefore important and a proper diet is essential to maintaining it. Dietician Su Zhen-ying (蘇真瑩) of Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital suggested trying a whole-food, plant-based diet. (For more about this vegetarian diet, please read our November 2021 issue.) As for those who are not used to a vegetarian diet, she suggested a Mediterranean diet. Such a diet is high in vegetables, legumes, nuts, fruits, and olive oil and low in red meat and dairy products. Rich in dietary fiber, the diet promotes gut health and helps build a healthier immune system.

Dietician Su has designed a set of guidelines to help former COVID patients promote a healthier gut and improve their health. The chart is included on the next page for reference.



1. Balanced diet

Maintain a balanced diet and eat enough calories at every meal. Without enough calories, your body lacks the essential nourishment to regain its normal function.

2. Regular meals

Eat regular meals and proper portions. Don't starve for long stretches of time. Also, cut down on processed food. Eat foods that are as close to their natural state as possible.

3. Exercise 30 minutes a day

Walk, ride a bicycle, or do exercises that can strengthen your core muscles to increase your cardiopulmonary capacity and build your muscle strength.



4. Four-food-group plate

Let whole grains, plant proteins, vegetables, and fruit make up your every meal. Each food group should comprise a quarter of your diet, but the amount of vegetables is allowed to exceed that of fruit.



5. Get enough protein

A 50-kilogram adult needs six to eight portions of protein a day. Examples of a portion include 50 grams of cooked soybeans or edamame beans, or 190 grams of soybean milk.

6. Six essential nutrients

People need six essential nutrients to maintain optimal health: protein, fats, carbohydrates, vitamins, minerals, and water. Of those, the antioxidants in vitamins A, C, and E can especially help regulate the immune system.



7. Phytochemicals

Eat greens and fruits of different colors every day. Plants containing red, orange, yellow, green, purple, black, and white colors contain phytochemicals, compounds that give them their rich colors and that can reduce inflammation.

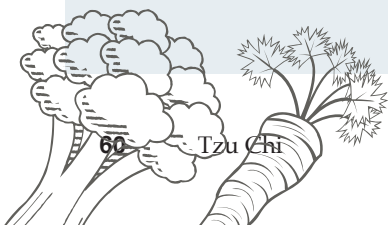
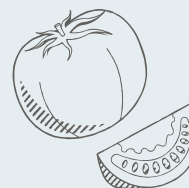
8. Drink enough water

Water flushes out toxins and waste. Take your weight in kilos and multiply it by 30 for your daily quota in milliliters. Spread out your water drinking throughout the day. Normally, have 250 ml of water every two hours.



9. No alcohol

Alcohol can weaken the immune system, which isn't conducive to fighting COVID-19.



The Illustrated JING SIAPHORISMS

The Buddha says:

My fellow monks!

"Right Behavior" means that you should not take things that belong to others, engage in immoral conduct, or engage in fornication or indecency. All this is "Right Behavior."



We should keep our minds pure. Defiled minds are self-centered and self-serving. They can only lead to evil deeds which will produce bad karma.

We behave properly for the good of all living beings. All our actions should be for others, not for ourselves. Pure minds will result in pure karma.



Even grade school pupils know that we should be honest and trustworthy, but it is very hard to do.

Dharma Master Cheng Yen: "Nothing is difficult if you have the will to do it."

Translated by E. E. Ho and W. L. Rathje; drawings by Tsai Chih-chung; coloring by May E. Gu

Tzu Chi Events Around the World



Thailand

International tourism is a major economic contributor in Thailand, but this once-flourishing sector was hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic. Taxi drivers were among those most impacted. Though the country had reopened to international tourists and things were improving, some taxi drivers still needed help to get by. To help them, aid distributions were held at the Tzu Chi Thailand office in Bangkok on June 14, 16, 21, and 24. This wasn't the first time Tzu Chi Thailand had distributed aid to taxi drivers during the pandemic.

The events were a joint effort between Tzu Chi and the Council of Public Motorist Thai Association. Suwan On-Sang is from the association. He said that as soon as he learned about the distributions, he decided to set aside time to volunteer every day at the events. When he saw how Tzu Chi volunteers at the venue were doing their best to help taxi drivers, he was motivated even more to contribute what he could.

Jakkraphan Thipdee has been a taxi driver for more than ten years. He said he had a really tough time making ends meet during the pandemic. Though the number of tourists had been increas-

Volunteers pack goods at the Tzu Chi Thailand office in Bangkok to be distributed to taxi drivers. The pandemic had hit this group of people especially hard.

PINTICHA JANSUKSRI

ing, the number of taxis on the road had increased too. Thipdee wasn't out of the woods yet, financially speaking, more so because he had to support his parents and children, who lived in the countryside. He said the necessities provided by Tzu Chi would greatly help to reduce his and his wife's living costs.

During the four days, 37 taxi drivers brought the coin banks they had received from the foundation to the venue to donate the money inside. Taxi driver Somboon Tamniam said that he had seen how Tzu Chi was putting the donations they received to good use, so he wanted to do his bit to help too. He said that his passengers often asked him about the foundation when they saw the Tzu Chi coin bank in his car. When that happened, he was always happy to share with them what he knew about Tzu Chi. Afterwards, many passengers would drop money into the bank.



Tzu Chi Thailand's distribution for taxi drivers in June was held in a drive-through fashion.

DATCHANEER SURATEP

A total of 1,319 taxi drivers received rice, other food, and daily essentials from Tzu Chi during the four days.

On June 29, a small group of volunteers visited a taxi driver named Sittichai Kanpai. He had been diagnosed with kidney disease nine months earlier, which was followed by a month of hospitalization. After he was discharged, he had to recuperate at home and learn how to do dialysis himself. He now undergoes four dialysis sessions at home every day, each session lasting for about an hour, which has greatly taken away from the time he can drive a taxi. After learning about his situation, Tzu Chi decided to provide him with emergency financial aid. Aside from the financial aid, volunteers also brought him multigrain powder on this day.

Everyone can experience difficult times in life. When that happens, a helping hand can go a long way towards making things easier. Tzu Chi volunteers act on that belief, hoping to bring relief to whoever needs it.

Indonesia

Tzu Chi Medan held a free medical clinic on July 29 and 30, 2022, in cooperation with the Indonesian Air Force and the Sinar Mas Group. The event served people living in Medan, the capital of the province of North Sumatra, and nearby areas. It was the 132nd large-scale free clinic held by Tzu Chi in Indonesia. Besides cataract surgery, other ophthalmological services and treatment in general medicine and dentistry were also offered.

People who signed up for the cataract surgery needed to undergo evaluation first. The evaluation

was held on July 23 at Soewondo Air Force Base. Because of the coronavirus pandemic, all patients and accompanying family members coming to the evaluation were required to take a rapid COVID antigen test. The same went for the medical team and support volunteers. Such COVID tests were also compulsory for everyone participating in the free clinic itself.

Seventy-five people received surgery for cataracts over the two days of the free clinic. Three people were operated on for pterygium, a benign fleshy overgrowth on the surface of the eye.

Colonel Pnb. Reka Budiarsa, of Soewondo Air Force Base, came to both the screening event and the free clinic. "This activity is a great help to impoverished people," said the colonel.

Rohli Br. Tohang, 68, was one of the persons who benefited from the free medical services. Her legs are atrophied, making her unable to walk. She said her condition is a result of not receiving proper treatment after falling from a tree when she was two years old. She lives in a nursing home now—having been a resident there for 40 years. "The nursing home provides me with free food and board and even allowances," she said. "We even have a doctor visiting us every Saturday to check on our health." Despite such good care, the facility was unable to help her receive surgery when she developed cataracts. Her blurred vision made it even harder for her to get around.

She was very happy with the result of the surgery at the free clinic. "The free cataract operation provided by Tzu Chi means so much to me," she said. "I give you my most heartfelt thanks. I can see a lot better now. Thank heaven. I hope the others



Dr. Tri Agus Haryono performs cataract surgery at a Tzu Chi free clinic held on July 29 and 30, 2022, in Medan, North Sumatra.

GUNAWAN HALIM

had their eye problems solved too.”

Dr. Tri Agus Haryono was the physician who operated on the 68-year-old woman. He started participating in Tzu Chi free clinics in 2007. “The impression Tzu Chi free clinics give me is that they are organized by very good teams,” he commented. “Everything is very efficient. The medical professionals and support volunteers work great together, so things go smoothly every time.” The physician observed that there are many cataract patients in Indonesia, and Tzu Chi’s free medical services can help bring light to them. He hoped the foundation would continue holding such meaningful events.

The United States

On June 12, 2022, a massive fire broke out at the Madison Apartments, a subsidized apartment building in the city center of Seattle, Washington. According to fire officials, the accident was “caused by an open flame that tipped over onto a mattress and ignited it.” The fire burned nearly 40 apartment units beyond recognition and affected dozens of others. The American Red Cross contacted Tzu Chi Seattle in the aftermath, asking if they could help, as most residents were of low-income status. After assessing the situation, volunteers held two distributions in early July at the Garfield Community Center, providing cash cards, blankets, and jackets.

Shane Goodsky was one of the fire victims who came to the distribution held on July 2. He said that the fire alarm did not go off on that fateful night. He didn’t even realize a fire had erupted until he

heard the cries of his neighbors. Fortunately, fire-fighters soon arrived and helped them out of the burning building. In his hurry to escape, he only had time to take his identification papers and things his mother had left him. Despite having lost almost everything, he didn’t complain. Instead, he couldn’t stop thanking the Red Cross and Tzu Chi for their assistance. He had already found a new place to live with the help of the Red Cross, and was moving into it the following week. He observed that Tzu Chi’s financial aid was a big help to him, a blessing.

Twenty-one Tzu Chi volunteers helped staff the distribution. Volunteer Michael Ng said that in spite of the hard luck that had befallen the fire victims, they were not knocked down or despondent. Instead, they all seemed to take what had come their way with a positive attitude. He really admired their spirit and courage.

Six volunteers returned to the community center on July 10 to hold another distribution for five households. Gary was a fire survivor that had received Tzu Chi’s aid on July 2. He returned to the venue on July 10 to express his gratitude to the volunteers. He cheerfully pointed to the clothes and shoes he was wearing and said he had bought them with the cash card from Tzu Chi. He also said that the coin bank he had received at the distribution on July 2 was already half full. He expected to fill it soon. “I’ll be so happy when I can return it and get another one,” he said.

The distributions on the two days helped about 40 households. The cash cards given out were worth a total of US\$23,100. ❀



A volunteer hugs an aid recipient at a distribution held in Seattle, the United States, for fire victims on July 2, 2022.

ZHENG XIN-QIAN

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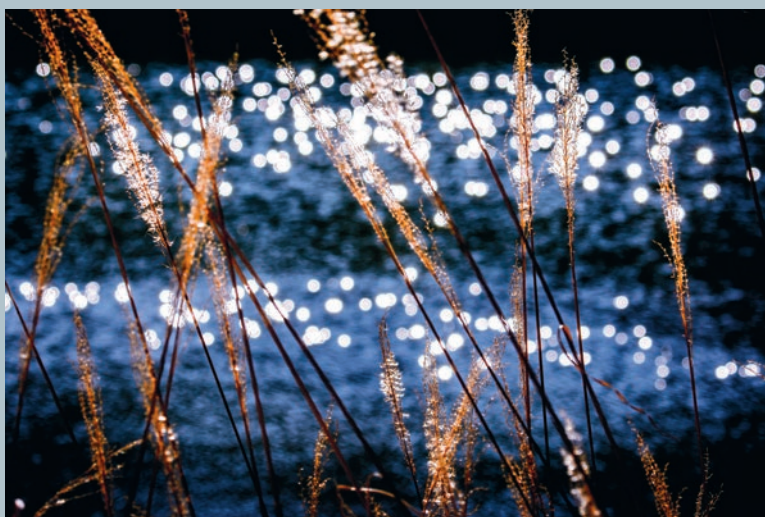
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Good fortune is about having a kind heart and creating blessings. —Dharma Master Cheng Yen

PHOTO BY LI BAI-SHI