

COMPASSION & RELIEF

TZU CHI USA JOURNAL



Begin the Day with Dharma p. 8

Celebrating a Quarter Century of Compassion p. 57

Disaster Relief Tales from Home and Abroad p. 28

Excerpt from *Life Economics* by Shih Cheng Yen p. 64



ISSUE 43 | SPRING 2015





DHARMA MASTER CHENG YEN
FOUNDER OF
TZU CHI FOUNDATION

CONTEMPLATIVE WISDOM

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

Freedom Comes from Bodhisattva Practices

Deeply attached to the Five Desires, we seek only our own happiness.

Lax and indulgent, our afflictions grow.

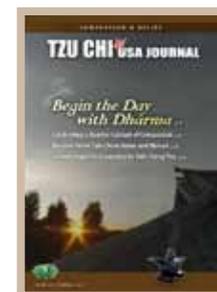
With minds covered by ignorance, we will let our lives go to waste.

By making great vows to transform all beings, we willingly give of ourselves.

By diligently engaging in spiritual practice, we do all good deeds.

Then as we walk the Bodhisattva Path, we will feel free and at ease.

Translated by the Dharma as Water Editorial Team



Cover Photo: As the morning dawns in Hualien, Dharma Master Cheng Yen delivers wisdom to start the day.

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A Sense of Direction for the New Year

Written by the Jing Si Abode English Editorial Team

Based on Dharma Master Cheng Yen's conversations with volunteers in Chinese

At the beginning of a new year, everyone is looking forward in time and considering the future. Knowing this, Dharma Master Cheng Yen took care to give her disciples a sense of direction. Below are excerpts of her key messages:

So quickly, it is again the beginning of a new year. There is really an air of festivity as everyone sends off the past year and greets the new one with joy and celebration. In the midst of this, may we keep a heart of gratitude and piety. We really need to be grateful for all the circumstances that have allowed us to remain safe and well through each and every day of the past year. As to the future, let us face each coming moment with piety and a heart of discipline and prudence, so we can usher in a future of hope.

As members of Tzu Chi, all of you are very active in dedicating yourselves to good works because you care about all the people in the world and what is happening to them. Such caring for all humanity and the problems of the world is the spirit of a Buddha. I'm very grateful to all of you for having this spirit and for all that you do to help better people's lives and truly create blessings for the community. Every day, you earnestly pray for the peace, safety, and wellbeing of all people, and you give of yourselves to help make this a reality.

Indeed, prayer alone cannot bring it about, we need to take action.

However, we need to keep this kind of sincere prayer in our hearts always. We also need to live out each and every second mindfully to make sure that we stay on the right path. At every moment, our heart and mind need to be governed by "precepts, samadhi, and wisdom." What does this mean? We need to take hold of our every thought and ensure that it is upright and that we are going in the right direction. This is very important because time moves very quickly—should our direction be off in the slightest, very quickly we will be far down the wrong path and find ourselves very off course. That is why we need to be careful and mindful with every single thought, and be disciplined in keeping ourselves on the right path. For this, our minds will need to be very centered and grounded, instead of easily influenced by outside factors and temptations. This kind of strength of mind is "samadhi." As we do this, we can develop wisdom and grow in wisdom-life. Wisdom is very important, for

it helps keep us from going down the wrong path. So, at every moment, we need to have such vigilance and sincere piety.

For our society to remain peaceful and harmonious, we and all people across society need to have such a heart of sincere piety and self-discipline in watching over our actions, words, and thoughts. When we harbor unwholesome thoughts, speak unkindly or harshly, or do wrong things, it will not only hurt ourselves and injure our character and integrity, but might also cause problems in our family. Depending on the scale of the wrong thoughts, words, and actions, problems can be caused for society, which may bring about disorder and unrest. All of these problems originate from having a wrong thought and going astray in one's heart and mind. That is why we truly must carefully guard against wrong thoughts. At the same time, we need to speak to others with a gentle and loving heart; if we can keep a gentle heart, naturally the words we speak will be kind and constructive. We should also make sure that our behavior is always upright. It is by being mindful in watching over our thoughts, words, and actions that we come to enjoy a life of peace and joy. So, whether we can have a year of peace

and blessings will depend on our own self-discipline in keeping to the right path.

Meanwhile, in our hearts, we need to harbor the great vow to strive for Buddhahood. Since we seek to learn from the Buddha, we should set as our goal the kind of full enlightenment and awakening that the Buddha attained and walk on the path that will enable us to reach it—the Bodhisattva Path. So, we need to maintain this resolve and always make sure we are keeping to the enlightened path of a bodhisattva.

The time of the new year isn't only a transition from the old year to the new. It is really a time of inner renewal. Let us remember to always keep our hearts pure and very broad and seize each moment, living it with sincere piety and vigilance as well as gratitude, continually growing in our wisdom-life.

My sincere best wishes to you for a wonderful new year. With this new beginning, please take care in your thoughts, your words and your actions every day, for this is the way to a future full of blessings, wisdom, and peace. May you always remain safe and well. Best wishes to you. 🌱

TZU CHI'S BAMBOO BANK SPIRIT

When Dharma Master Cheng Yen founded Tzu Chi in 1966, she fashioned coin banks from bamboo and asked her lay followers—thirty housewives—to save NT\$0.50 (about US\$0.02) from their grocery money every day to help the poor.

One follower asked, “Can’t I just donate NT\$15 each month?” But Master refused. She explained that though the amount was the same, it was important to give rise to a kind thought each and every day.

From these humble beginnings forty-nine years ago, Tzu Chi has grown into a global NGO with ten million volunteers and donors in over fifty countries, because it collects not only donations, but also kind hearts.

Download eBambooBank app for free on iPhone, iPad, and Android devices.



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CEO'S NOTE

The Best Way to Start the Day

How do you begin your day? Do you drink a cup of coffee? Watch the morning news? Hit the snooze button over and over? Why not start instead with wisdom and fellowship that will enrich and improve your life?

This is exactly how many Tzu Chi volunteers all around the United States have changed our routines since July 2014. Each morning we gather at 5:30 a.m. at our local offices to watch Dharma Master Cheng Yen's daily sutra lecture and share our reflections and experiences with one another.

In just a few short months, I have already seen this project lead to three wonderful results. First, many of us are changing our habits positively by observing and adopting the Jing Si Abode lifestyle of “early to bed, early to rise.” These days, everyone has become so busy that we stay up later and later to get everything done. Staying up late then becomes a habit, so even if we have no urgent work to do, we just watch television or waste time until late at night. But by pushing our schedules earlier to accommodate morning Dharma study, we achieve better order and consistency in our daily lives. In fact, one participant even described the effect as having three extra hours and loads of extra energy each day.

Second, this is an opportunity to challenge ourselves, and overcoming challenges is how we grow. Having the discipline to sleep early, wake up early, and pry ourselves from warm, comfy blankets on cold winter mornings is not easy. But overcoming these little difficulties is how we cultivate ourselves.

Third, it's just wonderful to start the day with Dharma and life philosophy. Better than coffee or the news, it's something that will help us throughout the day. And when we take in the

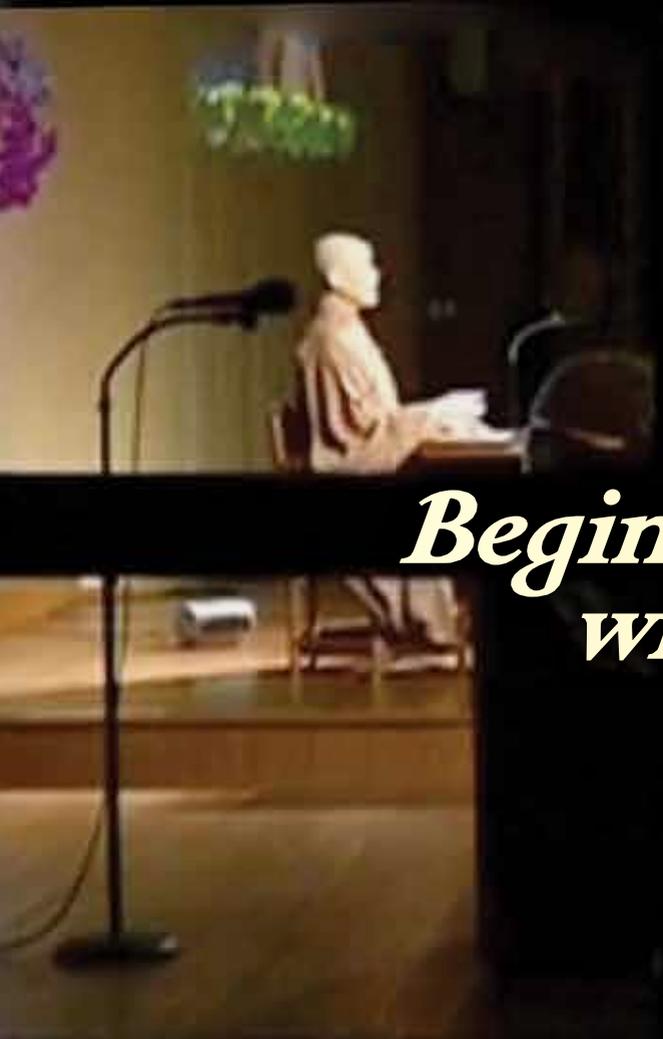
teachings wholeheartedly, we see connections to challenges we encounter every day, and the wisdom becomes part of our lives.

Each day, Dharma Master Cheng Yen explains the deep meanings of the sutras and shows us how to apply them in our daily lives. I believe that we need these teachings to accompany us. Without them, we may lose our direction, which is very unfortunate. For me, personally, these teachings help me start my day free from anxiety. They give me courage to face challenges. As C.E.O., I have to attend to different people and issues every day, and there are always urgent difficulties to address. Master's Dharma provides support and direction as I face them.

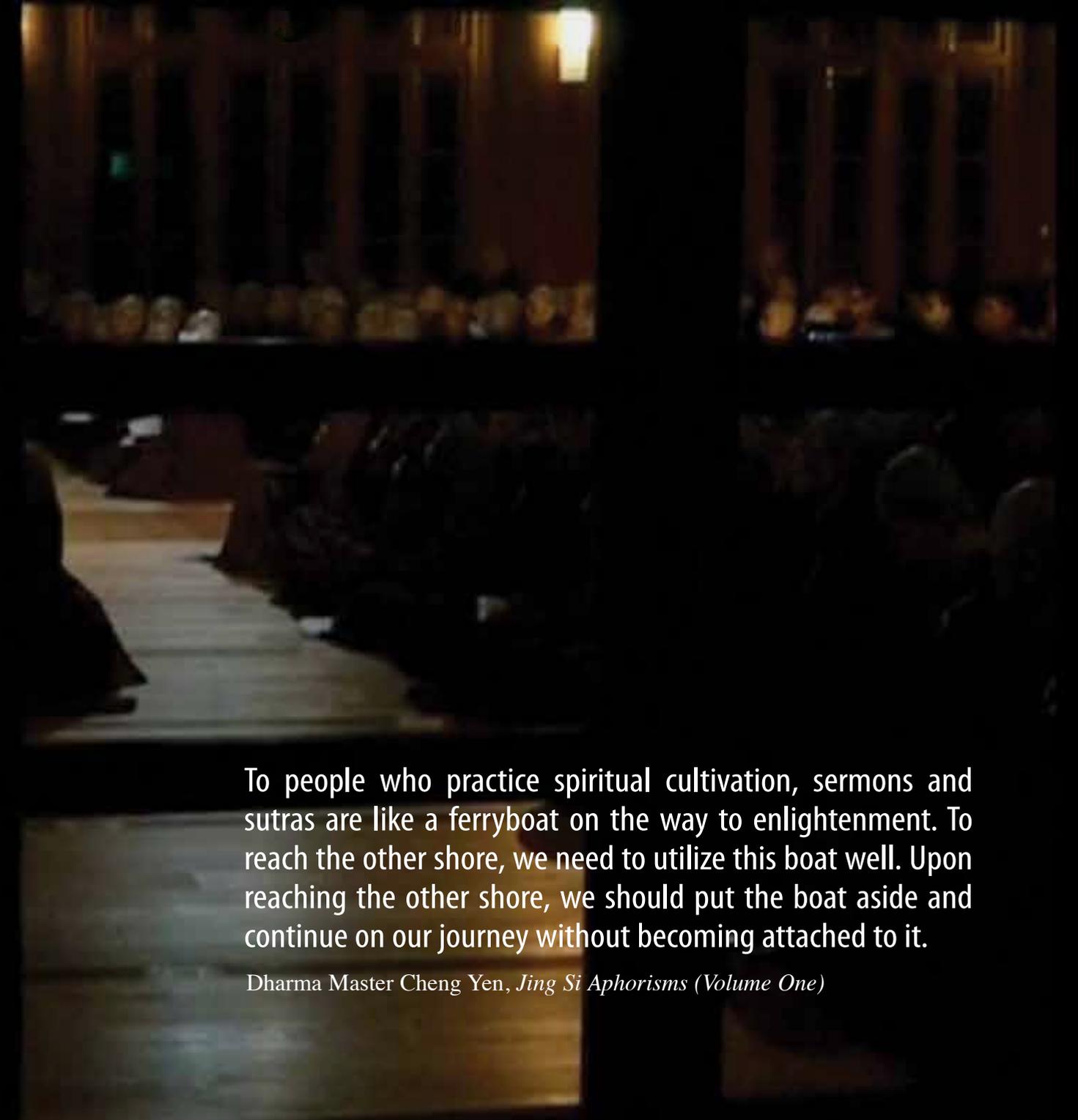
The morning study sessions are also about connecting with one another through daily discussions. When we share our thoughts and experiences, we begin to know each other better. We listen and encourage one another; we become more like family. Later, when we plan and carry out charity projects together, the atmosphere is improved because of our increased mutual understanding.

Of course, 5:30 a.m. does not work for everyone. Some live too far from a Tzu Chi office to make the daily drive. Some have to commute to work early, or need sleep after a night shift. But there are other ways. Some groups meet online in the evenings, and with the ever-increasing availability of Master's teachings in English—through books, videos, and more—there are many ways we can choose to encounter them, alone or together. Whatever method we choose, we have an amazing opportunity right now to connect with Dharma Master Cheng Yen while she's still with us. It's an opportunity we can't let pass us by. So how will you begin your day? 🌱

Han Huang



*Begin the Day
with Dhārma*



To people who practice spiritual cultivation, sermons and sutras are like a ferryboat on the way to enlightenment. To reach the other shore, we need to utilize this boat well. Upon reaching the other shore, we should put the boat aside and continue on our journey without becoming attached to it.

Dharma Master Cheng Yen, *Jing Si Aphorisms (Volume One)*

Begin the Day with Dharma

Colin Legerton

Each morning, Tzu Chi volunteers all around the country are leaving their homes and gathering together in local offices well before the crack of dawn. What is driving them out of their comfy, warm beds? What is pushing them out the door long before the sun begins to rise?

It's the chance to improve their lives. It's an opportunity to get the absolute most out of the day, by stretching it a little bit longer and making it a little bit richer. What is creating such value in the wee hours of every cold, dark morning? It's the chance to connect with Dharma Master Cheng Yen as she turns the wisdom of the Buddha's teachings into guidance for the day ahead.

Dharma at the Core

The Dharma, or the Buddha's teaching, has always been the core of Tzu Chi. The very task Dharma Master Cheng Yen was given by her mentor Venerable Yin

When you give, you gain compassion; you gain gratitude, wisdom, and peace.

Shun—to work for Buddha's teachings and for all living beings—testifies to that, and from the very beginning, these two have been intertwined. When Dharma Master Cheng Yen first encouraged her followers to put aside a few cents of their grocery money each day to start a charity fund for the poor, she insisted that the donation be daily, rather than monthly, because the act of giving rise to a kind thought each day was just as important for the giver's spiritual cultivation as the donated money was for the recipient's material well-being.

One of Master Cheng Yen's many Jing Si Aphorisms states, "When we give, we gain." Tzu

Chi volunteers deeply believe these words. When you give, you gain compassion; you gain gratitude, wisdom, and peace. This is why volunteers are so willing to take vacation time from work and pay their own travel expenses to participate in disaster relief efforts. This is why they not only show up to help others in their free time, but also attend volunteer training classes and watch videos and read books of Master Cheng Yen's teaching. This helps them understand the deeper meanings behind volunteering and gain guidance on how to cultivate in daily life.

This is not to say that one must identify as a Buddhist or subscribe to a particular doctrine or philosophy to participate with Tzu Chi. Just as the Buddha did two millennia ago, Master Cheng Yen addresses her teachings to all people. People all over the world—not only Buddhists, but also Christians, Muslims, Jews, and more—have found echoes of their own values in her words and joined Tzu Chi to cultivate themselves by supplementing or enriching their own religious practice and ethical values. Vivid examples abound in countries like Indonesia and the Philippines, where Tzu Chi is growing rapidly even as the vast majority of people identify with Islam and Catholicism, respectively.



Before the sun even rises, many volunteers gather in local offices to watch Master Cheng Yen's 5:30 a.m. teaching. Photo: Mark Chow



Dharma at Dawn

For decades, Dharma Master Cheng Yen has risen every morning before four o'clock to deliver her morning Dharma teaching in Hualien's Jing Si Abode at five thirty, a talk which is later edited into *Wisdom at Dawn*, a daily program broadcast on Da Ai Television.

Several years ago, a group of Tzu Ching collegiate volunteers started gathering in an online chat room each morning to watch her teaching, take notes, and share their thoughts with one another. Soon, volunteers began opening Tzu Chi offices before dawn in order to gather and watch a live feed of Master's talk together. Volunteers in countries like Indonesia and Malaysia, which share the same time zone, soon followed suit.

Because 5:30 a.m. in Hualien is afternoon in the United States, which makes it inconvenient for anyone at work or school to gather and watch, on July 1, 2014, the Jing Si Abode generously began to provide additional video streams of Master's entire daily talk at 5:30 a.m. in each U.S. time zone so that U.S. Tzu Chi volunteers could also participate.

Since March 15, 2013, Dharma Master Cheng Yen has been expounding the Lotus Sutra, one of the fundamental works of Mahayana Buddhism. The final teaching by the Buddha, the Lotus Sutra distills his prior teachings

and introduces the ideal method of Buddhist practice as the Bodhisattva Path—not simply achieving personal enlightenment for oneself, but helping others reach enlightenment as well.

The choice of the Lotus Sutra is significant. When Master Cheng Yen first became a nun in 1963, this was the sutra that she diligently studied each day in her small, secluded hut outside Hualien. It was also the last of the Buddha's teachings, presented at the end of his eight decades on Earth. This year, Master Cheng Yen will turn seventy-eight. She often comments that "time is running out." It is impossible to know how much longer she will be around, so volunteers feel that it is important to seize this opportunity to absorb the essence of the Buddha's teachings while she is still among us.

However, her call that "time is running out" certainly refers not only to her own longevity. Time is running out for the planet, as seen so clearly in the changing climate and the increasing frequency and intensity of natural and man-made disasters. The path to enlightenment requires clearing the mind of afflictions, and it is precisely the afflictions in human minds—greed, anger, ignorance—which lead to wrong thinking, wrong actions, and wrong habitual tendencies, which in turn harm ourselves and the environment. By helping to reduce afflictions across society, we can also help save the world before its time completely runs out.

By encouraging volunteers to watch her teachings together, rather than simply watching at home by themselves, Master Cheng Yen also emphasizes our spiritual cultivation. To be good people, it is important to maintain consistent good habits. By waking up early each day, we keep ourselves from slipping into laziness. By gathering with others to watch these teachings, we enjoy an opportunity to share experiences and learn from one another.

Difficulties at Dawn

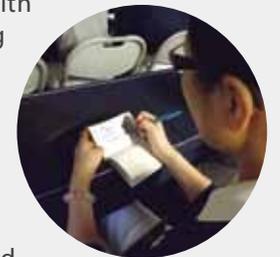
Master Cheng Yen has presented this wonderful gift, an opportunity for all, but difficulties still remain. The first is that Master Cheng Yen delivers her morning Dharma lectures in Taiwanese, a dialect incomprehensible even to Mandarin Chinese speakers. Thankfully, the several-hour gap between her live lecture and its rebroadcast in the United States provides dedicated volunteers with enough time in which to compile and translate their notes. The resulting English and Chinese transcripts are posted online and shown in Tzu Chi offices to make the lectures accessible to all.

Other obstacles are more difficult to overcome, but even these are not insurmountable. Geography is one. The United States is enormous, and Tzu Chi offices are spread far and wide. For many, it may be impossible to visit a Tzu Chi office in the morning and still arrive at work on time. Others may work early morning or late night shifts, and thus encounter similar difficulties. As the following articles attest, many volunteers have turned to the internet to solve this issue. In morning or evening online gatherings, they gain the benefit of Master's teachings and of group fellowship despite geographic or scheduling hindrances.

Master Cheng Yen has made her teachings easily accessible to all, so no matter the difficulties, everyone can find ways to connect. Many of her

books are already available in English, both in print and for electronic devices, and more are being translated. Each day, subtitled videos of her morning lectures, including *Life Wisdom* and *Wisdom at Dawn*, are posted on the Tzu Chi USA website, alongside weekly video series like *Essence of the Bodhi Mind*, and even a weekly radio program, *The Power of the Heart*. All can be wonderful resources for individuals or groups to better understand the Buddha's philosophy and its applications in daily life.

No matter how we each choose to connect with Dharma Master Cheng Yen's teachings, we should seize this opportunity while she is still with us to better understand the true meaning of our Tzu Chi volunteer work and learn how to improve and enrich our daily lives. 🌱



If you're interested in joining a study group, please contact your local office for more information. (Directory on pp. 72-74)



Volunteers gather for the morning teaching in Irvine, California. Photo: Lily Chen

Truly beneficial teachings beautify life and inspire wisdom.

Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen



Volunteers watch the morning teaching in Cerritos, California. Photo: Emerald Hsu



In New York, projectors on either side of the screen deliver rough transcripts of the speech in English (left) and Chinese (right). Photo: Jason Wu

New Books by Dharma Master Cheng Yen

Several new books of Dharma Master Cheng Yen's teachings are now available in English from Jing Si Publications.

From Austerity to Prosperity

The Power of the Heart

Life Economics

Dharma as Water (Vols. 1 & 2)

The Essence of Filial Piety

Jing Si Aphorisms (Vol. 1)

Jing Si Aphorisms: The Fundamentals of Virtue

Find these and more at jingsi.us.tzuchi.org or your local **Jing Si Books & Café**.
(Directory on pp. 72-74)

Selected titles also available for Amazon Kindle



The Mind Creates All

Reflecting on the stories Master tells can help us see ourselves more clearly.

James Kao | Translated by Colin Legerton

As mundane human beings, we are always reacting to the external environment. So when we want to calm our minds, we are unable to do so. Instead, we see scene after scene play in our minds like a never-ending film. The more we desire calm, the more these scenes play. In fact, we can only find calm when we are not seeking it. What is the reason for this?

In her Dharma talk one morning, Dharma Master Cheng Yen told a story about a dog running into a room with mirrors on all four walls. When he looked at the mirrors and saw dogs staring back at him on all four sides, he felt scared and began to bark. The dogs surrounding him also started barking, making him even more

flustered. He adopted an aggressive, fighting posture, and the other dogs did the same. They all looked as though they were going to attack. Surrounded by enemies on all sides, the dog couldn't stop spinning around. He wanted to fight this one over here; he wanted to fight that one over there. He became so exhausted from all the movement that he finally gasped for air and died.

To change ourselves, we first need to change our thinking.

Where had the other dogs come from? Actually, just like scenes of the external world constantly replay in our minds, these dogs were all projections of his own mind. Our minds are originally tranquil, but they are affected by external conditions. These mirrors were originally clear too; the dog was only fighting with his own reflections.



In truth, as long as we do not let ourselves be affected by our surroundings, we can instead affect our surroundings. If we do not let ourselves be tied down, we can rise above, just as we can find calm when we do not seek it. This dog saw so many other dogs all around him. First he became fearful. Then he started to bark. Finally he got in an aggressive posture and prepared to fight. This is precisely what it means to “give rise to delusions and create karma.”

In our lives, twenty-four hours a day pass this way in an unending cycle. Living and dying, life after life in the six realms of existence, we continue the same unending cycle. Can we change? Yes, we can. To change ourselves, we first need to change our thinking. In the *Zhuangzi*, there is the story of a solitary boatman paddling against the current on a misty morning. Suddenly, he sees another boat coming downstream directly towards him. As it is about to crash into him, he shouts, “Look out! Look out!” But the other boat still crashes into his, nearly causing his boat to sink. He explodes in anger, screaming abuse in the direction of the other boat. But when he looks carefully, he sees that the other boat is empty, and his anger dissipates.

Similarly, if we become drenched in water because of something someone has done upstairs, we may very likely scream at the person responsible, or even curse at them. However, if a sudden rainstorm soaks us, even someone with a short temper is unlikely to become very angry. Often, we are not harmed by the things that happen; what actually harms us is our way of thinking. It does not even matter whether the issue is big or small; what is important is our way of thinking. If we do not change our thinking, we cannot change our destiny. As soon as we change our thinking, our world begins to change. This is why Master Cheng Yen says that everything is about the way we look at things.

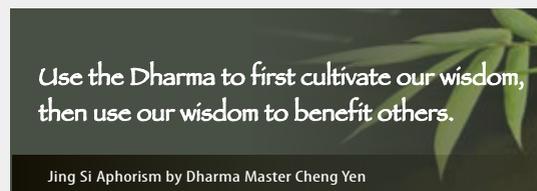
If everything is about how we look at things, then it is vital that we have the correct way of thinking. In the book, *The Thirty-Seven Principles of Enlightenment*, Dharma Master Cheng Yen tells us that the most important thing is the Noble Eightfold Path. First we need to correct our view. Only then can we achieve right

thought, as well as right belief, right livelihood, and so on.

Unfortunately, changing our thinking is not that easy, as our habits have developed over years, or even decades. There are people who say that we are born with our habits, so can they really be changed? And if so, how? This touches on a question of belief and understanding. In studying Buddhism, there are four steps: belief, understanding, practice, and realization. When you deeply believe and understand, then you can naturally act according to the teachings. But if you don’t believe or only half-understand, you may still doubt. You may think, “Why do I need to change?” Even if you believe and understand, it takes a long time to change oneself, so you still may think, “It’s too difficult. Forget it.”

This is why, beginning from August 2014, Master Cheng Yen focused several months of her morning Dharma talks on the “Belief and Understanding” chapter of the Lotus Sutra. If our belief is lacking, if we do not persevere, we may soon feel tired and fed up. Master reminds us that to ascend from the mundane world to the realm of sages, there is a long, distant road to travel, so we need to consistently move forward step by step. But when will we reach our destination? Sometimes it’s difficult to keep our hearts from feeling weary, so we need to hold tightly to our belief and let it guide us. When we persevere in our belief and have already traveled some distance on this road, we need to remain diligent and steadily move forward. No matter how long the road, as long as our two feet are steadily stepping forward, we move closer to our goal with every step.

The Bodhisattva Path extends straight before us. We should believe deeply, orient our direction correctly, make great vows, and maintain the Four Great Vows. Only then can we steadily walk this path. 🌿



Online Group Study: Walking the Tzu Chi Path

Participants in Saturday Night Dharma on Skype experience internal cultivation by walking the Tzu Chi Path together.

Greg Tylawsky

“...As we carry out the secular activities of Tzu Chi’s work, we must also focus on deepening our understanding of the Buddha’s teachings. If we only busy about with Tzu Chi’s secular activities, we may very well become so busy that we lose sight of things. So, we should learn more about the Dharma...”

“...Though members of Tzu Chi come from all religious backgrounds, we share a common purpose—to serve humanity with Great Love.”
– Dharma Master Cheng Yen

The Buddha-nature is present in all of us and is revealed, no matter our religious faith or spiritual understanding, by shedding our transgressions and bad habits that we have acquired over time. When we first begin training to become certified volunteers, we learn to understand that most of the problems in our lives arise out of our own afflictions. They are of our own doing, due to our false perceptions. In Tzu Chi, we learn that to live a peaceful and harmonious happy life, we must connect back again to the simple, pure nature that is in our heart by detecting and overcoming these afflictions. By developing moral discipline and faith in the Dharma, we can develop the strength to overcome our bad habits and attitudes one by one.

In order to overcome our own afflictions, we must first know where they come from. Why is it that I say and do the things I do? Why is it that I always desire (fill in the blank)? Why can I not get along with some people? We all have so many questions. Where do we begin?

What I have come to realize in Tzu Chi is that I cannot progress without others to help me.

When I think of internal cultivation, I think of “cleaning my mind.” Master Cheng Yen said that when we first become aware of our own afflictions, it is like taking a lamp into a darkened room that has been shut for a long time. Once we enter, the room we see is filled with dust and dirt that has accumulated over the course of our lifetime.

Once we identify the areas of dust, dirt, and obstacles in our minds, we need to begin cleaning our mind. This is done through taking in Master Cheng Yen’s teachings on the Buddha-Dharma. The Dharma acts like water to wash our minds.

As I explain to others, nothing learned in life which is worthwhile is very easy to come by. Valuable lessons always take effort, and through this effort we learn about ourselves and others. It is not easy, but as a senior volunteer close to Master once told me, “Master would not want us to do anything that was easy.” This is a happy comment to mean that when we work hard to



accomplish something, we learn from this effort and thus can inspire others to do the same.

What Is Group Study?

When I became a certified Tzu Chi volunteer and took my vow to follow Master along the Tzu Chi Path, I came to understand that an essential part of this path is my internal cultivation—taking in Master’s teachings and working diligently each day to realize the universal truths of life. But this should not be done in isolation. We also need to take in these teachings together, as a group. We should share our understandings of these teachings with each other, and most importantly, talk about how we can implement the Dharma in our own everyday lives.

These vows are a tall order. What I have come to realize in Tzu Chi is that I cannot progress without others to help me. We must

work with others, not only in the secular Four Missions of Tzu Chi, but also in our own spiritual cultivation. We must take the time to meet and take in Master’s teachings with those who hold the same aspiration to walk the Tzu Chi Path. These cohorts become our benevolent friends and we need each other as we learn and grow in Tzu Chi. As we do so, our hearts become closer, not only to each other, but most importantly to Master Cheng Yen.

Why Meet Online?

In December 2011, the very first English-language certification training program was established at Tzu Chi’s Northwest Regional Office in San Jose, California. As in the Chinese-language program, a monthly group study meeting was established whereby trainees would come to the office in San Jose to meet in person. These group study sessions were ninety minutes in length and employed both videos

and books to share the Dharma.

From the outset, problems became apparent because of the physical distance of many trainees from the office. Since this was the only such English-language class in all of Northern California, one-way travel times for many participants exceeded the duration of the ninety-minute meeting. This difficulty was further exacerbated for those without a driver’s license. Since an alternative solution was necessary, a new English-language group study program called “Saturday Night Nine” (now “Saturday Night Dharma”) started weekly meetings on Skype in October 2012.

On October 4, 2014, Saturday Night Dharma celebrated its one hundredth program after running continuously without interruption for two years. The journey has been amazing in many ways, and I can’t imagine a week without Saturday Night Dharma in my life now.

What Do We Learn? Why?

The Compassionate Samadhi Water Repentance text is an explanation of the power of karma and the strength of repentance. It was written by Tang Dynasty practitioner Master Wu-da after a personal encounter with the force of karmic retribution that made clear the necessity of repentance. It catalogues the innumerable afflictions and obstacles that Bodhisattva-practitioners encounter on their journey of spiritual practice, and it presents a practice of repentance to eliminate these obstacles.

Bodhisattvas seek enlightenment for the benefit of all beings, but in order to truly help others, Bodhisattva-practitioners must purify their minds. Repentance brings purity, so repentance plays an important role in this practice. Repentance texts are familiar to both lay and monastic practitioners, who often recite them in temples all over the world. However, the practice that Master Cheng Yen presents is not simply to be recited, but actually to be

carried out in our daily living. It is all meant to be taken in the context of the Bodhisattva’s practice.

Overcoming My Afflictions

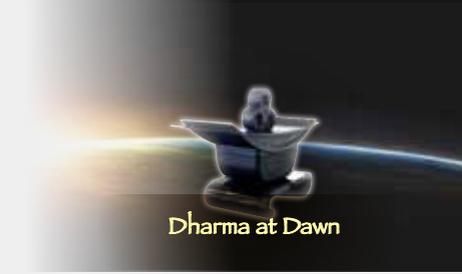
For me, SND has taught me several important lessons about walking the Tzu Chi Path and overcoming my many afflictions. It has taught me:

- The value of support from senior volunteers when embarking on a project,
- The rigors and value of diligence in taking in Master’s teachings,
- The side effects of one’s actions and how what we do or say to people we don’t even know can have a positive or negative influence on their lives for a long time,
- The value of considering others’ opinions and thoughts in order to arrive at one’s own perspectives and beliefs,
- The oftentimes lonely position when beginning something new,
- How faith in Master and the Tzu Chi Path extract one from that loneliness,
- How knowing the right thing to do—and then just doing it—makes life so very wonderful,
- How unintended consequences sometimes bear great fruit, by watching my son Sherman and others like him, both young and old, forge a closer connection to Master because of Saturday Night Dharma,
- And finally, the immense gratitude I have for everyone and everything, especially for Master Cheng Yen who has given us so much through her wisdom and the hard work of sharing the Buddha-Dharma with us through her teachings.

The goal of Saturday Night Dharma is to add another doorway to Master’s heart through the wholesome use of technology. We hope



Several SND participants enjoy a rare in-person discussion. Photo: Greg Tylawsky



Dharma at Dawn

Reflections on Dharma Study at Dawn

Early morning discussions serve as reminders to be mindful.

Mark Ostrander

In August 2014, I joined an early morning study group on Master Cheng Yen's teachings. Previously, I was viewing her teachings on my own online. I received a lot of insight, but I had a lot of unanswered questions. By attending the study group, I have gained so much more from the videos and the discussion afterwards.

One of the most important things I have gotten out of the videos to date is to always be mindful. This in itself has such a deep meaning and has helped me think about my actions and thoughts every moment. Previously, I would go along and someone would point out that my action was not necessarily correct, but after the first morning study about being mindful, I started to think about each of my actions: what was my thought before the action, and what was the root cause of the thought? This has helped me in my day-to-day actions, my relationships with coworkers, my interactions with people, and my relationship with my wife.

I began to notice that by taking the time and effort to think about my action beforehand, the reaction from other people changed. If I was approached by a person in an argumentative or bad mood, I would react calmly, thinking of the lessons I was learning from the encounter and being thankful. I would start smiling without even realizing it, and the other person would become calm and apologize for their behavior.

I began to notice that others around me were calm and smiling even when things became stressful. I would also make an effort to go to the ones that seemed stressed or troubled, say good morning or good afternoon, and smile. Most would look a little bewildered, but then smile. I realized that without even thinking, I was doing this with sincerity. This was possible

because I was being mindful, focusing on my thoughts, considering why I had bad thoughts, and then correcting those bad thoughts. When I did this, my mind would clear, and I would want to help that person have a better day. This would show in my body language, and the sincerity would naturally come through unconditionally. Before attending the morning study group, I would have avoided people with bad moods or even argued with them.

Another facet of the morning teachings is hearing the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings, then discussing the teachings and hearing all the different aspects, feelings, and interpretations from others. This gives me a better understanding of what it means to have an open mind. The sutra becomes clearer and makes me realize how we are all individuals, but we are all the same. As individuals, we each see the sutra differently, but we all have a Buddha-nature. If we take these teachings to heart and put them into action, we will find that there is no hardship we can't endure. I also realize that I'll never know who might have an answer or the knowledge and wisdom needed, so I need to be open-minded and receptive to all things at all times. Our life is our prayer, and I am grateful for this life.



Mark (left) performs in a skit during the November 2014 charity concert in San Diego. Photo: Wesley Tsai

that English-speaking volunteers all around the world can join us. If the time zone does not match, we hope that they can copy our example and use our materials to hold their own gatherings wherever they reside.

Of course it is up to all of us to actually make the effort to open this (and other) Dharma doors. It is up to us to take time in our lives

to listen, contemplate, and then act out the Dharma in our everyday lives. In so doing, we surpass ourselves and grow stronger, purer, and more mindful.

Just like how our hair and fingernails seem to grow without our noticing until one day we see the effects, this is how we improve: slowly, gradually, persistently. 🌱

Why Saturday Night Dharma Is Useful to Me

The seventeen-year-old author—technical engineer and part-time host of Saturday Night Dharma—missed just four of the first hundred SND sessions. This weekly routine from the comfort and safety of home has brought him closer to both Master Cheng Yen and his fellow participants.

Sherman Tylawsky

One of the reasons why Saturday Night Dharma (SND) is so useful for me is because it is a time to calmly learn from Master Cheng Yen and others, release our afflictions, and find out how we can apply Buddhist philosophy in our lives. When we listen to Master's teachings, we are learning the Dharma. When we discuss with others, we are learning different perspectives of the lessons and how we can apply the Dharma through our actions. What we discuss during SND is a guide for all of us. After SND, we need to finally take action and apply what we have learned and discussed.

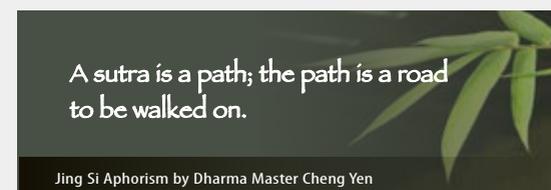
SND is only the beginning of online group study in English. I hope to help create other group study sessions so people in various time zones can learn the Dharma together. Master hopes that people can study the Dharma together and learn from one another. Other people may have different interpretations and stories that can inspire many to change. SND allows those interpretations and stories to be shared, which is why many people enjoy these group study sessions. I hope that people can

become better connected with each other in group study and inspire others to change for the better. 🌱

For more information, please visit tzuchienglish.org.

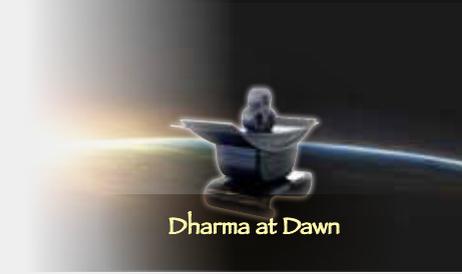


Photo: Greg Tylawsky



A sutra is a path; the path is a road to be walked on.

Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen



Getting up at 3:15 a.m. for our four o'clock discussion was hard at first, but now I look forward to it. Even if I get to bed late after Tuesday evening book club or sign language performance practice, I am still eager to wake

up and start my day with Master's teachings. I would like to thank our mentors Tenshang Joh and Tracy Fu for organizing this study group and their dedication and commitment to take this time to learn with us. 🌱



Lorrie (center) performs in a different scene during the same event. Photo: ShuLi Lo

Lorrie Ostrander

Last summer, Mark and I were asked if we would be interested in taking part in a daily study group at 4:00 a.m. Due to our respect for Master Cheng Yen, and knowing that we wanted to learn more about the Buddha and the sutras, we were looking forward to it. Waking up at 3:15 a.m. each day to take part in the study group did not come easy at first, but within a week our minds and bodies began to anticipate the hour of rising.

Listening to Master Cheng Yen's words of wisdom has helped us begin each day with a positive outlook. We live in a world of negativity, which surrounds us wherever we go, but listening to the Master each day and learning how we are all equal helps us stay focused, listen better, choose our words more carefully, and, most of all, not be quick tempered.

If we take these teachings to heart and put them into action, we will find that there is no hardship we can't endure.

Learning about the precepts, the sutras, the Four Noble Truths, and everything else has been a challenge for me. I kept hearing about *Dharma as Water*, and having purchased the book, we began reading Master Cheng Yen's writings. We began to understand the teachings each morning a little better. Master Cheng Yen's words of teaching have reached deep into our hearts. When we are having a difficult day, we envision her before us and hear her words of teaching.

Bowing in respect to the Buddha and Dharma Master Cheng Yen, hearing the "Verse for Opening a Sutra," and then ending each session with the song "Prayer" is a wonderful way to begin each day, even when we have a long day before us. We are thankful to Tenshang Joh and Tracy Fu for getting up each morning to host the Wisdom at Dawn Study Group. They are wonderful teachers who have much patience with our simple minds. Slowly, we are even beginning to learn Chinese characters and spoken words.

There are no barriers when one has an open heart and mind and is willing to expand the knowledge that we have all been born with, but which has been lost over time. There is much to learn, and there will be many teachers on life's road. It is a journey that we look forward to. 🌱

What matters is not how many teachings one listens to but how one applies them in daily life.

Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen

Bringing Jing Si Back Home

Experiencing life at the Jing Si Abode brought a new clarity to everyday life at home.

Howard Tong

This summer, I was blessed with the opportunity to visit the Jing Si Abode in Hualien for three days. It was an experience that left a lasting impression. Each day we woke up before four o'clock to ready ourselves for the morning chant and Master Cheng Yen's Dharma lecture.

I can still recall the sound and rhythm of the drum beating as we entered the main hall. Although I could not follow along with the chant, because I cannot read Chinese, it was still a great experience to listen to everyone chant in unison and witness in person a practice that happens every day in another part of the world. For me, the chant became an exercise in concentration and trying my best to not let my mind wander.

I think listening to Master Cheng Yen's lectures each morning is a great way to start the day, and now that I have returned home to San Francisco, I want to continue this practice as often as I can. Before our minds get filled with the worries and tasks of the day, listening to Dharma first sets the right attitude on how to go about the day. I am reminded to guard my thoughts, deeds and words; to concentrate on the task at hand; and to remember that every second of each day is valuable and must not be wasted.

Experiencing life at the Jing Si Abode, working with some of the Dharma masters, and meeting Tzu Chi brothers and sisters from

The true joy derived from the Buddha's teachings comes after putting them into practice.

Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen

around the world has given me the motivation to truly walk the Bodhisattva Path. I have always enjoyed volunteering, even before my visit to Hualien, but the effort I put into cultivating my mind was somewhat lacking. I would read Jing Si Aphorisms from time to time but soon forget about them and not read them again for long periods of time. I used to find it difficult to cope with stress from school and work. I had trouble concentrating sometimes because my mind would wander or I would worry about my past mistakes. When something did not go according to plan, I would get upset and frustrated; at times I took my frustration out on people I love and care about. I ended up ruining their day as well as my own, and I felt terrible for doing so.

Master Cheng Yen tells us that our time in the human realm is too short for us to stray off the right path because we then have to waste time trying to find our way back. Even small deviations can take us far from the enlightened path. I know the Bodhisattva Path is long and difficult but I now see more clearly that it is the correct path and a path I wish to follow. 🌱



Major Relief in Southern California

Tzu Chi's medical outreaches heal bodies and inspire hearts.

Adapted from reports by Liliane Yong & Audrey Cheng

Just a few months after Buddhist Tzu Chi Free Clinic opened in November 1993, the medical team held its first outreach event in April 1994. It was a significant decision: low-income individuals face many obstacles to accessing healthcare, and while the availability and cost of health insurance are often discussed, physical distance and lack of convenient access to available services can also be significant roadblocks. So, Tzu Chi volunteers went mobile to reach patients in need, and they have continued to do so regularly for more than two decades. Every month, all year round, mobile clinic vans in both Central and Southern California are reaching underserved communities with much-needed services, not to mention occasional outreaches to other regions as well.

In recent years, Tzu Chi has banded together with other philanthropic community organizations to scale up these efforts and serve thousands at a time. In 2014, three major, multi-day outreaches were held in California. First, there was the second annual Healthy Fresno in March, serving the Central Valley. In the fall, two more followed in the south: in September, the fourth annual Care Harbor LA was held in the heart of downtown Los Angeles, and two months later the third annual Care 4 a Healthy I.E. delivered services to the sprawling Inland Empire.

In both fall events, Tzu Chi volunteers joined other major medical organizations to provide low-income, uninsured patients with the care they typically cannot access. In each event, volunteers brought together all of Tzu Chi's missions to treat mind, body, and

You could find hundreds of grateful recipients, unburdened from the stress of untreated ailments, warmed and touched by the efforts of so many people who truly care.



Events like Care Harbor and Care 4 a Healthy I.E. require the hard work of countless medical professionals and volunteers from multiple organizations. Photo: Tony Yong



Left: Juan met Tzu Chi as a patient in 2013. Right: In 2014, he returned as a volunteer. Photos: Liliame Yong



A day of relief ends with "Love and Care for All." Photo: Henry Nhan



Photo: Henry Nhan

An Opportunity to Empower Ourselves

Moved by the experience, a volunteer reflects on Care Harbor.

Anonymous

As one of the general volunteers at Care Harbor in the LA Sports Arena serving in the dental area, I was inspired by Steven Voon's simple instruction to "do whatever we need to support the professionals so they can put all of their attention on the patients." I think more people can benefit from this guidance.

I want to thank the entire medical team for your dedication to planning, coordinating, and implementing this event. It went on smoothly, and you inspired us all. I also would like to extend a special thanks to the Fresno team that came down here and put their heart and soul into this event with love and care. As always, I was very inspired by and delighted to work with and learn from the Fresno team. They set a high standard to let us see what can be accomplished by compassion and commitment, and they showed possibility beyond what I had thought.

My wish is that more of us, more volunteers, will see your example. So please keep up the good work. You are inspiring not just me, but many, many volunteers. A new volunteer said, "Tzu Chi makes us better," and I could feel that she really meant it.

They set a high standard to let us see what can be accomplished by compassion and commitment, and they showed possibility beyond what I had thought.



Photo: Henry Nhan

I thought that there were fewer local volunteers than last year, but the ones who were there were more willing to engage. My personal hope was to see more participating or observing. For me, this was a major Tzu Chi event, and I hope we can take opportunities like this to build bridges with mainstream society. I hope that all volunteers can learn to carry out events with love and care like we have seen the medical team do.

On the bright side, everyone who participated this year was very willing to be involved and overcome the challenges of complicated equipment. Many offered their help in cleaning up at the end of the day, and I observed them do fantastic work, even those who were new and still learning.

Tzu Chi is always an opportunity to empower ourselves, and we had many opportunities during the event to be our best. I was also inspired by the many high-level Tzu Chi leaders who participated in simple tasks and manual labor. That is hard to find in other organizations, and it proved to me that in Tzu Chi no job is beneath anyone, for we all work together.

soul. In addition to compassionate care by medical professionals in a wide variety of fields, attendees gained access to preventive education and social services, they learned through flower arrangement tutorials how to calm the mind and beautify the home by repurposing everyday materials, and they experienced the life-changing beauty of Jing Si Aphorisms by hearing about their transformative effect on prison inmates. At Care Harbor, they even savored the delicious flavors of vegetarian food thanks to Tzu Chi's partnership with Panda Restaurant Group.

In each 2014 event, a diverse mix of seasoned veterans and eager rookies comprised the volunteer team. At Care Harbor, you could find Juan explaining the spirit of Tzu Chi in Spanish. A patient at the event just one year earlier, Juan was now a dedicated grey-shirted volunteer. You could find April, who had volunteered each year of Care Harbor's existence with another organization, but was then so taken by the Tzu Chi spirit of gratitude, respect, and love that she too had donned the grey shirt and signed up for volunteer training. You could find Tina, who had only encountered Tzu Chi by chance a few weeks earlier, but was now making a difference by sharing with passersby everything she had learned about Tzu Chi in both Spanish and English.

At each event, you could find young volunteers as well, college students from throughout Los Angeles County, and even as

far as San Diego, dedicating their weekend to serving others, learning from their elders, and absorbing the spirit of compassion, service, and love. At each event, you could find hundreds of grateful recipients, unburdened from the stress of untreated ailments, warmed and touched by the efforts of so many people who truly care.

There is no telling the full impact of these few days of large-scale medical relief. There are the raw numbers—755 patients treated in just two days in San Bernardino, more than thirteen thousand served in the first four years of Care Harbor—but these only tell part of the story. Perhaps next year there will be more like Juan, recipients inspired to give. No longer bothered by the ailments that drew them to the clinic, others may be freed to accomplish things they could never have conceived of otherwise, and in so doing help their families and communities. If some of the younger volunteers keep this spirit of service in their hearts, there is no telling what great things they may one day bring to this world. After these major medical events spilled drops of kindness into so many hearts, who knows how far the ripples may spread.

For upcoming outreach schedules and more information, please visit www.tzuchimedicalfoundation.org.

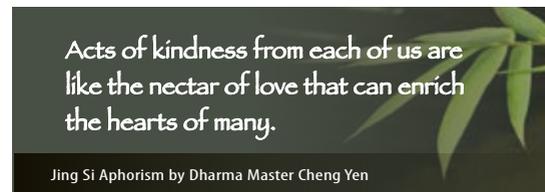


Photo: Wilson Ku

Kaohsiung Gas Explosion Relief

A restful vacation became an inspirational experience when the author seized the opportunity to serve.

Joanne Chang

In the summer of 2014, my husband and I traveled to Taipei from our home in New York City to visit relatives. Our trip had been planned as a quiet time with family, but when disaster struck, the visit became not so quiet and my “family” grew much larger than ever.

Upon hearing about the Kaohsiung gas explosions on the news on August 1, my heart sank. The explosions had killed thirty people and left countless more without access to water, power, and gas. A voice in my head repeated, “Time is running out, time is running out,” just as Master Cheng Yen always says. It was another disaster in the land where I grew up, and this time I was right there. I thought to myself, “I’m on vacation. There should be something I can do.” After a couple days of consideration, I expressed my interest to my mother-in-law, a long-time Tzu Chi volunteer. With her help, my husband and I traveled south to Kaohsiung on August 5.

Arriving at the disaster site on San Duo Yi Road—where only Tzu Chi volunteers were allowed in—I was immediately struck by a sickly sweet smell that made me dizzy and gave me a headache. We were told to put on our masks for protection.

The explosion had been unbelievably powerful! San Duo Yi Rd., one of the busiest streets in Kaohsiung, was strangely silent and filled with debris, chunks of cement, and unidentifiable garbage. It seemed like

A series of gas explosions on July 31, 2014, ripped apart San Duo Yi Rd. in Kaohsiung. Photo: Peter Lin

an apocalyptic scene from a movie or video game. A huge, long ditch along the road silently indicated that the explosion had come from ten feet underground and had extended for several kilometers along the pipelines. Dozens of young soldiers were laying down temporary bridges so that local residents living behind San Duo Yi Rd. could cross over this chasm to return home.

Like a quarantine zone after a chemical weapon attack, there were no birds, no car noises, nothing alive. The scene made me solemn and speechless. I could barely even listen to the volunteers providing information and telling stories.

Occasional sounds of drilling and shouting were the only things that pierced the silence. Buildings along San Duo Yi Rd. were the mostly severely damaged. Most of their windows were completely gone, exposing dark, charred rooms. Trees were burned to the ground. Cars were left in the street, many of them totaled. Wires, signs, traffic lights, and electric poles were flung everywhere. All the metal roll-up doors of local businesses were bent, twisted, or completely gone. Volunteers even saw three motorcycles hanging on top of a six-story building—they had been blown all the way up from the ground. It seemed as though a bomb had just exploded there.

Our task as volunteers was to deliver vegetarian rice bowls made with Jing Si Instant Rice twice a day. Teams were assigned to different routes to pass out the bowls and record the amount needed for the following meal. Hundreds of volunteers began preparing lunch at 3:30 a.m. and dinner at 1 p.m. Each day, they supplied up to eight thousand meals for care recipients and volunteers. It is reported

that roughly sixty thousand rice bowls were served from August 1 to 20.

In the past, I had only volunteered with Tzu Chi in the United States, apart from some international relief work in China and Haiti. I had never had a chance to offer help in my homeland before, so I was excited to be where Tzu Chi volunteers do their best work. I was totally impressed! People on the streets recognized and respected Tzu Chi volunteers.

Like a quarantine zone after a chemical weapon attack, there were no birds, no car noises, nothing alive.

Families opened their doors to welcome our visits. Residents living behind San Duo Yi Rd. all knew their local Tzu Chi representatives. They willingly talked with me and joyfully praised Tzu Chi's work.

Behind San Duo Yi Rd, we met a local resident, Grandma Lin, who told us, "Since the explosion, my granddaughter has been acting unusually and that scares me. She won't step outside the house or talk to us. We didn't have electricity and water for a few days, and with the powerful blast from the explosion, many large rocks crushed the roof and dropped into our third floor. We had holes in the roof for a few days, and it has been raining ever since, so the ceilings and floors were all wet and damaged. There weren't enough contractors for the entire lane, so we took turns to fix it." Tears rolled down her face as she spoke.

As soon as Grandma Lin learned that my husband Peter is a psychologist, she invited us to talk with her ten-year-old granddaughter. After friendly introductions, the granddaughter quietly and reluctantly answered our questions with single words and nods. We learned that she was finding it hard to sleep at night since the explosion and was having constant dreams of rocks darting from the sky. Any sign of a flame from a lighter or stove made her tremble. Peter

offered his professional advice that the reactions she was describing were normal. "Many people walk a similar path after such an event, and you are not alone. Only if this lasts more than six months should you seek professional help." As we spent more time with her, she became more relaxed and even began to smile.

Later on, Grandma Lin told us that the girl had developed a stuttering problem from having to manage three languages—Taiwanese, Mandarin, and her mother's native Vietnamese. She was teased at school for her speech problems as well as her darker skin color, so she had been receiving counseling for a while. After we got back from the food distribution, we passed on this family's information to local volunteers and recommended further visits and care. Several days later, we visited them once

more just before we left. Grandma Lin happily reported that her granddaughter was doing a lot better and even had a great big smile on her face!

A Mr. Chu stopped us at an intersection and requested a veggie rice bowl. He showed us the scratches and bruises on his legs from when he fell while dodging flying rocks and fire blazing through the walls and ceiling. "There was a lot of smoke from the explosion. I fell, so I decided to stay and wait for the explosion to end. When I came out, the lane in front of my house was totally blocked, so I had to dig and scramble out with just one working leg. I saw three people dead on the path. Life and death in the blink of an eye! My home is gone and I cannot do my business for at least six months! You are the only organization that is showing us the care



Volunteers walked through the community each day to provide residents with food and care. Photo: Peter Lin



Tales of Disaster Relief

and love we need. Even though it's just a small veggie bowl twice a day, it is really meaningful to me. I am extremely grateful for that. May Buddha bless you all!"

I went back to Jing Si Hall each day to document my emotions and the moving words that each resident shared with me. I found that my heart softened, my empathy grew, and my appreciation of what I have increased. Master Cheng Yen says, "We cannot control the length of our life, but we can strive to extend its depth and scope." Every time I go to a disaster site to offer love and care as a Tzu Chi volunteer, disaster residents are always grateful. In addition, they always show me the infinite capacity of humans to withstand, endure, and strive onward.

Through my conversations with disaster survivors in Kaohsiung, I got to know their thoughts and feelings. By walking on their streets, I learned a little bit about their life. By inviting me to sit in their home like an honored guest, they taught me to open myself more. By telling me their stories from this explosion, they

helped me experience their distress, anxiety, terror, worry, disappointment, and hope. I want to thank them all for extending my life's depth and scope.

I found myself more emotional during my time in Kaohsiung. The residents' feelings inevitably affected me. As Master Cheng Yen says, "Affliction is only meaningful when one can gain wisdom from it." I treasure every connection and interaction, both verbal and non-verbal, and I wish them all an expedient recovery. I hope the experience I gained will transform into wisdom and an unremitting energy and drive for me to continue on the path of Tzu Chi so that I may offer myself to society to the end of my life. 🌱

Those who realize the truth seize every moment and make it everlasting. Those who do not, idle away their time and live in regret.

Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen



With businesses closed and utilities unavailable, Tzu Chi's meals filled a key void. Photo: Peter Lin



Volunteers delivered food twice daily, rain or shine. Photo: Peter Lin



Thank You, Tzu Chi Rosalinda Rivera

Tzu Chi's relief distribution after a flood in Texas moved one recipient to send a thank-you letter to the coordinator.

Jessie,

I wish I had the words to describe how grateful I am to have been a part of the Tzu Chi experience this past Sunday. Watching you give so much of yourself was truly inspiring. I know being a leader of such a grand event like that can sometimes be a little difficult, but if it ever was for you, you never let it show.

The generosity of your organization strengthened my belief in humanity and gave me motivation to want to do even more on my part. In so many ways our community is just now beginning to recover and your gifts made it possible to take the steps necessary to move forward on the path to recovery.

Moving forward, I want you to know that you and Tzu Chi renewed my energy, my strength, and my resolve to continue to assist our torn community. And even though there is much sorrow here, there is also a strong desire to recover, to move forward, and to look at what we have and not at what we have lost, thanks to the tremendous amount of kindness you all provided us. Tzu Chi was an incredible relief in our time of need. I am so extremely thankful for your assistance, the love and the thoughtfulness you all shared with us here at Perez Elementary in Austin, Texas.

I must admit to you that it was very hard to accept the blanket you gave me knowing that I might be taking it from someone who needed it more than me. But then I realized how much I wanted it. I wanted it because it will always serve as a reminder of the immense generosity you and Tzu Chi offered us in our time of need. And it will remind me to pay it forward.

Jessie, I hope you'll remember me and Perez Elementary if there is ever anything we can do for you.

Until then, I wish you peace and well being,

Rosalinda Rivera
Parent Support Specialist
LCPL Nicholas S. Perez Elementary

For the relief effort from college volunteers' perspectives, please see "Delivering Love to Flood Survivors" in Issue 40 (Summer 2014).



Buddhist TZU CHI Foundation
www.us.tzuchi.org

The 80/20 Lifestyle

Be healthy: Reduce your meal portions to 80%

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

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



Tzu Chi volunteers are active in fifty countries and regions worldwide, and have delivered relief in more than eighty countries across the globe. With Tzu Chi volunteers widely spread across every continent and time zone, there is always a volunteer somewhere serving with respect, gratitude, and love.



◀ Tzu Chi volunteers in Surrey, British Columbia, Canada, collaborated with the Surrey Food Bank to hold a distribution and free haircutting event for young students from low-income households on August 27, 2014. Here, Tzu Ching collegiate volunteers help distribute daily necessities. Photo: Qunfang Wu



▲ On September 20, 2014, volunteers in Bolivia held a medical clinic at their office in Ciudad del Este, near the borders of Brazil and Argentina. As they celebrated the tenth anniversary of Tzu Chi's local medical outreach efforts, doctors and patients were invited to share their memories. Here, Dr. Lin performs acupuncture on a patient. Photo: Qiru Cai



After heavy August storms turned to severe flooding in low-lying areas of Burma, Tzu Chi volunteers traveled to Waw Township on August 16, 2014, to provide relief materials and care for local residents. Photo: Mianmian Wang



Tzu Chi volunteers delivered rice, along with warmth and care, to residents of Maputo, Mozambique, on October 25, 2014. Photo: Charles



◀ On August 16, 2014, Tzu Chi International Medical Association (TIMA) volunteers from Singapore traveled to Kesbewa, Sri Lanka, to provide free medical services for underprivileged locals. Photo: Cuilian Lin

▶ More than three million refugees have fled Syria since the civil war began in March 2011, and roughly one million have settled in Turkey. On October 6, 2014, Tzu Chi volunteers held a pair of relief distributions in the Gaziosmanpaşa and Arnavutköy districts of Istanbul, where they served more than five hundred refugee families. Photo: Zicheng Yu



▶ "Silent mentors" are compassionate individuals who donate their bodies to Tzu Chi after death, so that medical students at Tzu Chi University may learn through surgery simulations. Students learn their life stories and treat their bodies with deep respect and gratitude. Here, students, teachers, and family members hold a memorial service at Tzu Chi University in Hualien on September 9, 2014, to thank a silent mentor for the selfless contribution. Photo: Ronghui Xu



Tzu Chi volunteers cleaned a beach in Quanzhou, Fujian, China, on August 21, 2014, to do their part for the environment. Photo: Qingjiang Zhong



Volunteers visited the Tzu Chi elementary school in Villa del Oriente, Palencia, Guatemala, to celebrate Children's Day and the school's fourth anniversary on October 5, 2014. Here, students perform for their guests. Photo: Max Chacon



Medical Corner

Healing with Needles

After experiencing the healing effect of traditional Chinese medicine, the author vowed to share it with others.

Victor Chang

When I was growing up, my parents always used Western medicine to care for me. For example, whenever I came down with the flu or an infection, my father always gave me over-the-counter medicine or antibiotics, and they always got good results.

evaluate their health. I was curious, so I waited in line for her to examine my pulse also. All she did was feel my pulse on both wrists, and then she told me that my stomach was weak. I was amazed at how accurate she was. I had never imagined that she could discern my problems right away just by touching my wrists.

In fact, I never even encountered traditional Chinese medicine until I was about twenty-two years old. Back at the age of seventeen I began to have stomach problems that were never cured. Whenever my stomach problems flared up, I took pills that eased the pain and gas, so I would feel better temporarily. However, my stomach problems always came back to irritate me. Years went by and these problems persisted. I always had to carry the pills wherever I went, and I became very skinny from eating less food to avoid the pain.

Although I didn't really understand it yet, I already felt passionate about this quick, accurate method of diagnosis. I was determined to master her skills, so I began studying acupuncture under her mentor. After a year and a half spent training and serving as a clinic intern, I started using needles and herbs to improve my stomach problems instead of taking pills as I had before. Soon, I was able to eat more foods, and the pain slowly faded away. Now, so many years later, these stomach problems no longer bother

When I joined a Tzu Chi remote clinic for the first time, I felt welcomed by all the warm and friendly volunteers.

After a few years like this, I met a Chinese medicine doctor one day when I was volunteering at the local Christian youth counseling center. She was volunteering as well, and many of the staff members were gathered around her, asking her to examine their pulse to

me, even though I always assumed they would return sooner or later. It took a long time before I truly believed that the pain was actually gone forever. Thanks to this traditional treatment, I started to gain weight, feel happier, and have more energy. Since then, I have stuck with this



In Manchester, England, Tzu Chi volunteers picked up trash in Heaton Park on September 14, 2014. They hope that their actions will help beautify the natural environment and enrich the local community. Photo: Peifen Li



▲ In May 2014, the heaviest rains in more than a century caused devastating flooding throughout the Balkans, killing at least eighty-six and affecting well over a million. On October 18, 2014, Tzu Chi volunteers from eight European countries drove several hours to Bosnia and Herzegovina to provide emergency cash, daily necessities, and personal care to some of the hardest-hit individuals. Here, a volunteer from Frankfurt, Germany, introduces Tzu Chi's eco-friendly blankets in the town of Srebrenik. Photo: Ruinong Bao



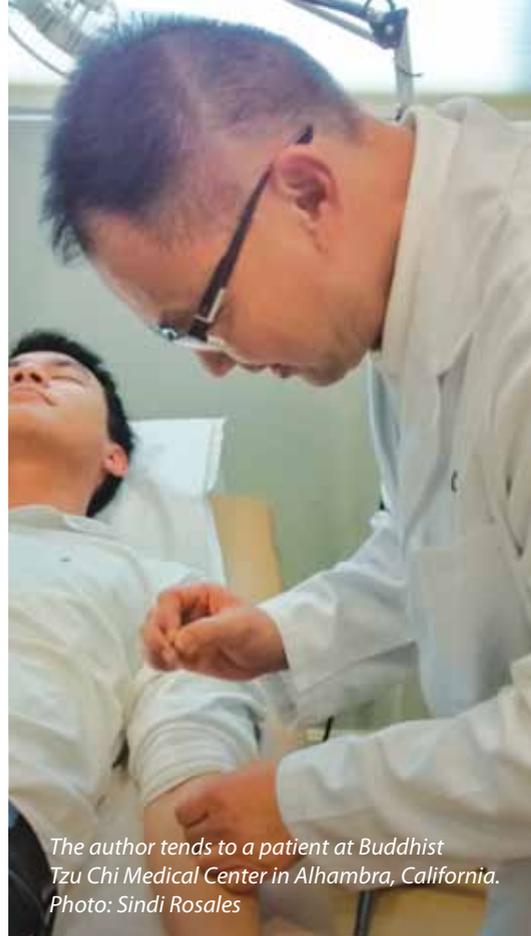
▲ After Typhoon Haiyan devastated the Philippines in November 2013, Tzu Chi volunteers immediately sprang into action to assist survivors, and they have continued their support ever since. Beginning on September 25, 2014, volunteers helped erect thousands of mid-term shelters for storm survivors in hard-hit areas like Palo and Ormoc. Photo: Fengmei Tu

Acupuncture
Acupuntura

洛托嶼佛教慈濟義診中心
Buddhist Tzu Chi Free Clinic

慈濟人醫會
Tzu Chi International Medical Association

Photo: Michelle Chen



The author tends to a patient at Buddhist Tzu Chi Medical Center in Alhambra, California. Photo: Sindi Rosales

regular access to medical treatment. I was very excited to learn that Tzu Chi was willing to travel so far to help so many people. Plus, this organization was already offering acupuncture. It was a perfect opportunity for me to join in and help out!

When I joined a Tzu Chi remote clinic for the first time, I felt welcomed by all the warm and friendly volunteers, and I thoroughly enjoyed all the delicious vegetarian dishes they made. Even though each dish was made of soy, mushrooms, and vegetables, without any meat at all, they tasted as though I were in an expensive restaurant. I was genuinely surprised to learn that vegetarian food can taste so good. At the end of the one-day trip, I felt exhausted, yet peaceful and joyful as I watched patients leave with smiles on their faces. Since then, I have been attending remote clinics quite frequently.

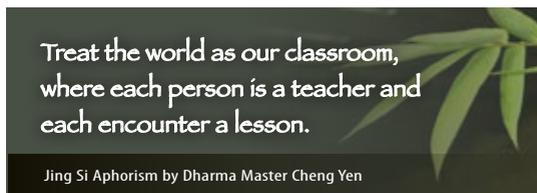
Year after year, we have been experiencing disasters, including earthquakes, floods, droughts, tornados, wildfires, and hurricanes. If these disasters knock out the power grid and running water, they can disrupt our entire social system, and even bring it to a halt. Hospitals and medical clinics that rely so much on machines and functional electricity may be completely paralyzed. Thankfully, traditional Chinese medicine employs needles and plants, so we can continue to provide treatments to heal patients even without power or running water. It is truly a gift from God that natural herbs and needles can help us survive such predicaments. I am thankful that Tzu Chi has given me the opportunity to share my enthusiasm for acupuncture, and I am especially grateful for all of the patients who have put their trust in traditional medicine and given me a chance to serve. 🌿

treatment. I continue to maintain my health with herbs and acupuncture.

While I was still living in Taipei and interning for several years in various acupuncture clinics, I witnessed firsthand that acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine can treat many different types of illness. When I came to the United States, I was confident that I could use these kinds of treatments to improve patients' health conditions, just as my mentors had, so I started to contact various health agencies to offer my services as a volunteer to help patients who might benefit from acupuncture.

But time and again, my offer was turned down. I felt embarrassed and useless. I wondered why they rejected me. Was it because of me personally or because of the type of medicine? Even now, I really don't know.

After a while, a classmate told me that Tzu Chi Medical Foundation offered acupuncture alongside Western medical treatments and that they needed volunteers to go to remote areas and help local residents who didn't have



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Tzu Chi USA website
www.us.tzuchi.org
is updated daily with videos,
articles, photographs, and more!



The new mobile-friendly website
www.tzuchi.us
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At Jing Si Publications
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Beautiful Music, Lasting Friendships

Mr. Anhua Chu wrote this reflection in late 2012 and passed away in 2013 after fighting cancer for ten long years. In the last years of his life, he participated in Tzu Chi's community education singing class as he underwent chemotherapy. Even though he often felt weak or in pain after his chemotherapy treatments, singing and spending time with his classmates filled the end of his life with great joy.

Anhua Chu | Translated by Mei-li Hamilton

Driving through the northeast corner of Los Angeles, you will see beautiful hills covered with ancient oak trees. In the middle of the trees is a group of elegantly designed old buildings. This is where our singing class meets to practice. Joyful music and sweet rhythms float on the air like water flows in a river.

If you join the practice, you will have the opportunity to learn skills like correct breathing, pronunciation, articulation, and harmonization. You will hear and sing everything from

traditional classical music to folk music to pop songs.

Singing was a gift from God to me for the second half of my life.

In addition to the wonderful surroundings, you will meet friendly volunteers and our outstanding teacher, Ms. Hazel Zhang. Her professional knowledge, creative and fun teaching methods, and tireless energy make practices a joyful experience. We especially appreciate her beautiful singing voice.

My good friend Hai Huang told me I must attend this class. He said, "You will regret it if you don't attend." I am grateful for his recommendation because I really enjoy singing and I feel it's a great blessing in my life.

My fellow classmates come from all over Los Angeles. They have different personalities and temperaments and are at different points in their life journeys. Yet we all appreciate one another and love to sing together. These good people bring joy to me and to everyone who appreciates music. Just like a beautiful landscape, beautiful singing leads us to appreciate the world more fully.



The author (front) follows along in his songbook during a May 2012 class. Photo provided by Tzu Chi Education Foundation

Singing brings out the best in all of us. When I listen to someone sing, I feel closer to him or her, and it's easier to become true friends. Singing friends help us appreciate the pure beauty of humanity and the nobility of true friendship.

We all know singing is the expression of our body, heart, and soul. Singing was a gift from God to me for the second half of my life. Rhythm expresses our feelings and emotions. Lyrics remind us of the happiness and sadness in our past. Every word I sing touches my heart,

and I will share my love of music with my fellow singers as long as I live.

Friends! Let us sing together with joyful hearts! 🌿

Happiness is not about wealth, power, or position; it is about living in peace, joy, and harmony.
Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen



The singing class performs during the 2011 Tzu Chi Continuing Education Center Open House in San Dimas. Photo: Michelle Chen

Tzu Chi Continuing Education Center in San Dimas—a division of Tzu Chi University in Hualien—is a home for life-long learning. Through the center and Community Education Programs in several local offices, Tzu Chi offers children's summer camps, instructor training, and a variety of classes providing opportunities for community members to expand their horizons, enrich their life experience, and broaden their world view. All people are invited to make new friends, learn new skills, and cherish the beauty of humanity in a friendly learning environment. For more information, please visit education.us.tzuchi.org.

Tzu Chi Is My Sangha

Sometimes the path to our destination is long and winding.

Palma Leong

A Buddhist who wants to become a monk or a nun goes through an extensive search to find the right master to follow. This process can take many forms and many years, based on an individual's personal preference. I once read about a person who posed the same single question to the senior monk at each of the many temples he visited, so that he could find the master who best understood Buddhism. He received the same answer from all except one, so he chose the senior monk with the exceptional answer as his master. Although I am not planning to become a nun, I have a strong desire to know a master

I learned later that they were experiencing one of Master Cheng Yen's Jing Si Aphorisms, "To give is better than to receive."

better before I choose to follow his or her teachings as a lay disciple. My approach is to read and read and read.

As an ethnic Chinese born in Myanmar, I come from two cultures with rich Buddhist traditions. But I immigrated to the United States when I was just twelve years old. Since I don't read or write very much Chinese or Burmese, I am trying to learn Buddhism by reading books in English.

For over twenty years, I have been reading Buddhist literature in English. Although I have a strong desire to learn, I always faced several obstacles in the past. The books I bought from American bookstores typically were not clear or to a specific point. In retrospect, I now believe it was just not my time to understand Buddhism. In the last several years, I began to seek out the books that temples give out for a small donation. Somehow, I understood the writings and messages in these books better. I realized, "I am already practicing some of the concepts the Buddha talked about, and I will change other parts of me that are not in line with the Buddha's teaching." But I wondered, "Is that all there is to Buddhism? Am I a Buddhist now?" I just didn't feel like I was a Buddhist.

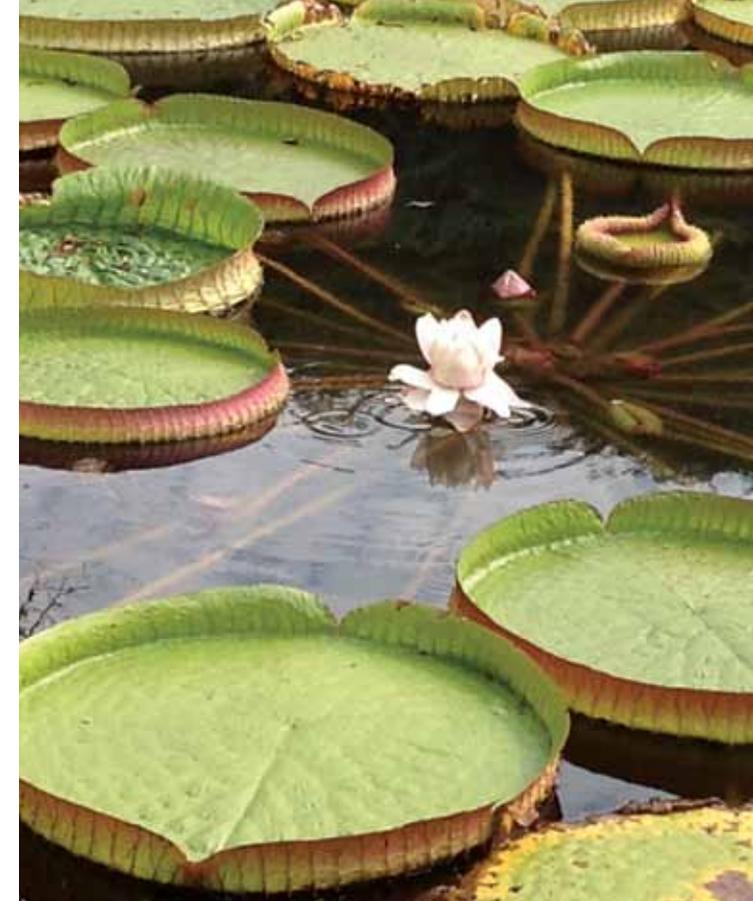
I needed to belong to a Buddhist community, a sangha, but I did not

know which one, so I started to search. I went to temples with my Buddhist relatives and friends. I even participated in several prayer services and recited sutras in Chinese through Pinyin Romanization. But I still felt like an outsider, because I did not understand what I was reciting. Someone told me to just keep reciting the sutras, and they all would become clear to me one day. That wouldn't work for me. To use this approach, I first would have to be able to pronounce each Chinese character correctly and understand its literal meaning, which I couldn't do just by reading the pronunciation. I was also bothered by negative comments I heard about Buddhists: people said that they are self-centered and superstitious, hung up on doing rituals to pray for things they want. The search for a teacher was not progressing as I wanted at all.

In the meantime, my family life was unfolding. I married a Chinese man and had three kids. There are two things that I always insisted my kids must learn: swimming and Chinese. Two-thirds of the Earth is covered with water, and I want them to know their roots. For swimming, I drove them to many swimming pools for lessons and practices. I even swam with them, to help and guide them. They learned enough fairly quickly.

Making them study Chinese was much more difficult. After-school programs and summer schools offered weekly Chinese classes, but I felt that wasn't enough, so I searched for additional Chinese classes that would fit my schedule. A relative told me about Tzu Chi Academy, which has Chinese classes on Sunday mornings. This began my interaction with Tzu Chi.

I drove to Tzu Chi USA Headquarters in the summer of 2008 and registered my kids for classes starting in the fall. I was surprised by the semi-remote location: the winding path



and narrow bridge encompassed by trees. Something was drawing me in. I felt peace. I felt comfort. I didn't understand the unusual feeling. It must have been due to the quiet location. I put it out of my mind.

To help my kids, I sat in the back of the classroom and learned Chinese along with them. I would repeat these lessons at home, or at least try to do so. I even became the assistant room mother. I began to learn more about Tzu Chi through the kids' classes, so I bought a few Tzu Chi books in English and read them all. I told myself: "Tzu Chi is a good organization. I will join Tzu Chi when I am done raising my kids." After two years of this, I left Tzu Chi.

Time passed. In December 2011, there was a school requirement that my seventh-grade twins had to volunteer for two days, but they did not. To punish them for their irresponsible behavior, I told them that they would have to volunteer for four days instead. I took them back to Tzu Chi in San Dimas and we did a whole day of recycling work together. I explained the situation to the Tzu Chi volunteers at the



The author helps prepare food for a distribution on Skid Row in January 2013. Photo: Luca Ye



The author and her sons share their story with other volunteers. Photo: Henry Nhan

recycling center, and they told me about a weekly food distribution for the homeless on Skid Row in downtown Los Angeles. Beginning then, my kids and I helped prepare and distribute hot meals most Saturdays until the program was stopped in February 2013. I did not force them. They were the ones saving their available Saturdays to volunteer. I learned later that they were experiencing one of Master Cheng Yen's Jing Si Aphorisms, "To give is better than to receive."

As we interacted more with Tzu Chi, a desire to know more about Master Cheng Yen was building up inside me. I became very interested in her life beyond the highlights I read in many Tzu Chi publications. I found what I wanted to know in the book *Master of Love and Mercy: Cheng Yen* by Yu-ing Ching. This book focuses on her personal story: her life as a child and young adult, her struggles to leave the secular life, her difficult search for a master, and her busy activities today. Many things about Master Cheng Yen resonated with me. She is an individual with very strong moral principles, who treats Buddhism as education and partakes in no rituals or superstitious practices. Through this book, I found the connection I needed to become her follower. I am grateful to Yu-ing

Ching and everyone involved in making this book available for all of us.

While we were volunteering at the food distribution, my kids were introduced to Tzu Shao, the Tzu Chi group for teenagers. At my urging, they participated in Tzu Shao, but as typical teenagers, they did not want to put on Tzu Shao uniforms. To lead them by example, I signed up for Tzu Chi volunteer training, put on the gray and white volunteer uniform, and started attending training classes. Now I notice changes within me. I'm calmer. I'm more patient. I can tolerate others' faults and flaws. When anger rises within me, I can quickly defuse it. Above all else, I am willing to be the first to apologize.

Although each action I took with Tzu Chi revolved around my kids, I am the primary beneficiary. The seed Master Cheng Yen and Tzu Chi volunteers planted in me, since the day I drove along the winding road in San Dimas, has sprouted and is beginning to bloom. I found the sangha I was looking for: Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation. 🌱



Hot meal distribution on Skid Row. Photo: Luca Ye

Fear not the challenges on our path of spiritual cultivation, for they wear away our defilements to let our Buddha nature shine through.
Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen



Ken, Leo, and Bill sing and play in Hyattsville. Photo: Rui-Hung Tsai

Singing for Seniors

In Maryland, volunteers deliver joy to elders through their beautiful voices.

Leo Wermers

It all started one day at work fourteen years ago. My computer was having problems, so I called the I.T. people and they sent someone over. She crawled under my desk and had it working in no time. While she was working on my computer, we started talking and became friends.

A few weeks later she mentioned that her husband did charity work on the weekends. When I politely asked about it, she explained that he played piano and sang at nursing homes.

"Oh," I said, "I'd be interested in that."

"You would?" she asked, surprised. She gave

me contact information for her husband, Tim Shih, and I soon joined his tiny musical group.

The next Saturday, I arrived with my guitar at a nursing home in Washington, D.C., and joined the group—Tim, his wife, and a couple of other singers. We sang for an hour, then went to another nursing home in Maryland where we repeated the performance. I became a regular member, and we continued to play at nursing homes two Saturdays a month. This was





my first interaction with Tzu Chi, and I joined the organization a year later.

When Tim went to China to teach college a few years later, I took over leadership of the group. We were fortunate to find another pianist right away—Dottie Hurley, who plays not only piano, but ukulele as well. Fourteen years later, we still sing twice a month at four nursing homes in Maryland. The group consists of about four or five regular members and anyone else I can rope into joining us.

Whenever my son or other family members visit, I invite them to sing with us. Most of our regular performers are not actually Tzu Chi members, and we're always looking for more people to join us.

At first we just played whatever we knew, but eventually we realized that the residents preferred to hear songs from their youth—the early twentieth century. Our repertoire now consists mostly of traditional hymns and popular songs written before World War II. Many of the songs were gleaned from my father's collection of sheet music and a couple of our elderly members have also provided suggestions for songs we can play.

In 2001, another Tzu Chi volunteer named Rui-Hung Tsai joined us on one of our visits. Although she was a very attractive woman, I was a little shy about asking her out at first.



Dottie Hurley performs on ukulele. Photo: Rui-Hung Tsai

One night, when the group went out to eat after singing, I asked her what she did when she wasn't singing at nursing homes. She told me her many activities including raising two kids, working full-time at an elementary school, and participating in numerous Tzu Chi activities. I immediately concluded she was too busy for a relationship, but Tim encouraged me to try. We corresponded by email for several weeks before I finally asked her out and we started dating. We hit it off and were married a couple of years

later. We just celebrated our tenth anniversary last April.

For more than a decade, this project of singing to seniors has brought me both joy and love. After so many years singing to nursing home residents, here is what I have learned:

They like old songs. In the beginning, we played the music and songs that we liked. When we asked the residents what they would like to hear, the songs they mentioned were ones they enjoyed when they were young. Most of these people are in their seventies, eighties, and nineties, so the songs they like are ones that were popular between 1930 and 1950.

It helps to be prepared. We have a list of about sixteen songs that we play consistently. Each month, we add a few songs to fill out the hour and make adjustments as necessary. The

The elderly are not people who have outlived their usefulness. They are our national treasures.

lyrics of that month's songs and links to examples on YouTube are then emailed to the people who participate in the program. This way we all have the same lyrics. We also practice the songs we'll be doing at my house each month.

Of course, not everyone shows up for the monthly practice, but the ones who come do a better job than the ones who don't. This also gives me the opportunity to introduce simple harmonies to some of the songs, because harmony always sounds better than singing in unison. I try to keep it simple because none of us are professionals. Most of us don't even read music—myself included.

I like the way our program fulfills Master Cheng Yen's teaching about filial piety and respecting all of our elders. We always leave room at the end of the program to greet each member of the audience personally. We don't just sing for the seniors. We talk to them. We make contact with them. Many of them have stories to tell and wisdom to share. We ask them what songs they would like to hear and get to know them personally. We also encourage requests from the residents. Once, a resident surprised me with a request for a Beatles song, so we added "Yesterday" to our repertoire.

I have been playing guitar since I was sixteen and I've always enjoyed the company of older people, so this program has been perfect for me. I was surprised a few years ago to find out what I do is actually a family tradition; my grandmother played piano and sang at nursing homes.



The author and his wife sing together. Photo provided by the author

I believe that there is too much misery and unhappiness in the world and not enough music and laughter. That is why I visit nursing homes and sing for the residents. Seeing them smile is ample reward for the effort we provide.

I sometimes wonder how different my life might have been if my computer hadn't broken down that day fourteen years ago. Because of that minor incident, I am now involved in charity work that is meaningful to me and married to a wonderful woman who shares my interest in serving others.

I have one last thought I'd like to share. The elderly are not people who have outlived their usefulness. They are our national treasures. They are our parents and grandparents. And one day, they will be us. 🌱



Filial piety and good deeds should not be delayed.

Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen

One Woman's Generosity

Dharma Master Cheng Yen
Compiled into English by the Dharma as Water Editorial Team

Generosity is not solely a privilege of the wealthy,
but one shared by everyone with a reverent and
loving heart.

Dharma Master Cheng Yen



Storytelling by the Master

Time passes quickly, so we must seize every moment to learn the Buddha-Dharma. Moreover, when we take the Dharma to heart, we are sowing the seeds of goodness in the field of our minds. If we work hard to cultivate this field, we will reap an abundant harvest. So, once the Buddha-Dharma is in our hearts, we must diligently put it into practice. In this way, we can also inspire those around us to do the same.

During the Buddha's lifetime, He taught with skillful means, using many different methods to help and guide sentient beings. He often used the lives of ordinary people as examples of how to apply the Buddha-Dharma in their daily living. He told the following story in the Samyuktavada Sutra:

Once, there was a tiny kingdom by the sea where war had broken out. This caused great suffering for the people there and many were forced to flee their homes. Among these refugees was an old woman named Ahlong, who was separated from her family and ended up alone in a neighboring kingdom. To survive, she had to beg from door to door.

By chance, she came to the home of a benevolent elder and his wife. After hearing of the difficulties that she had faced, they generously invited her to become a member of their household. Ahlong gratefully accepted their kind invitation and soon developed a very good relationship with the elder's wife as she helped out around the house in any way she could.

One day, she saw a group of monks as she left the house to do some tasks for the elder's wife. She wanted to pay her respect to them. When she came near them, she saw that their

alms bowls were empty. She found out that the monks had gone into the village and begged for alms, but no one opened their doors to them. In her homeland, Ahlong's family had been devout Buddhists and often made generous offerings to the Buddhist practitioners. Now, she was stranded in a foreign land with no money, and the sight of these empty alms bowls made her feel very sad.

She ran back to the elder's home and beseeched the elder's wife, saying, "Please lend me one thousand taels. I need it for a personal reason. I will gladly sign a contract to become your servant for life." The elder's wife assured her that she would give her the money, saying, "There is no need for any kind of contract or for you to become anyone's servant for life. Take this money and do as you wish with it."

Ahlong was very grateful. She quickly returned to the village and went door to door to each of the sixty households there, asking them to make offerings to the monks. Of course she also told them about the blessings that will come to them from showing generosity to others, especially from making offerings to the Buddha and the Sangha. They agreed to do this, so she divided the money among them, and they reverently prepared their offerings.

Then Ahlong quickly found the monks and told them, "Revered practitioners. If you go back into the village now, I am sure that you will find many families happy to make offerings to you."

Following her advice, the monks returned to the village and in no time their bowls were filled with delicious food. Over the next several days, every time they went into the village, the generosity of the villagers was repeated. The monks thought of the woman who seemed

to have brought them this good fortune and realized they had not seen her for a few days.

One day, when they caught sight of her, they hurried to express their gratitude. They were also curious as to why the villagers suddenly began to so joyously make offerings to them. So, she shared with them that, in the past, she had been a very devout Buddhist and had often made offerings to the Buddha and the Sangha. She also told them about how she was forced to flee her home because of the war, how she was separated from her family, and how she came to settle here.

Hearing her story, the monks felt ashamed. "We are spiritual practitioners, yet we still need to beg for food to sustain our lives. And this elderly woman, who has suffered so much in life, was willing to be someone's servant for life just to make offerings to us. She also had the wisdom to guide so many others to reverently make offerings." They wondered how they could repay this woman for her generosity. They decided that the only way to repay her was to be even more diligent in their spiritual practice. From that day on, an auspicious atmosphere filled this village.

When the king heard about the changes in this village, he sent his people to investigate. They reported back that in this village there was a group of monks who were so diligent in their practice that many people were listening to their teachings, and as a result, had changed the way they lived.

The king was very happy to hear this and issued an invitation for the monks to come to the palace. After making his offerings, the king asked the group, "Tell me, what inspires you to engage in spiritual practice so diligently?" The monks told him, "It is the selfless giving of an old woman

named Ahlong." After he heard their story, the king sent someone to find Ahlong and invite her to the palace.

Ahlong was brought before the king, and when he explained to her the reason for his invitation, she humbly replied, "But I didn't do anything. Everything that was given came from the elder's wife." The king, recognizing the depth of her humility and wisdom, invited her to live in the palace and become a teacher there.

In time, the king became a Buddhist and asked the monks to help him take the precepts and formally become a lay practitioner. Following Ahlong's example, many of the female servants in the palace also became lay practitioners.

In reading this story, let us consider the many countries today that are embroiled in conflicts, or whose governments and people are fighting each other. Because of this, there are millions of refugees who have had to flee their homes, leading to many displaced families.

Yet we still see many examples of people displaying compassion, generosity, and wisdom, regardless of their conditions. Their reverence and unconditional giving give rise to many blessings, both for themselves and others, while also inspiring others to be more diligent in their spiritual practice.

So we can see that if we put the Buddha's teachings into practice, as Ahlong did, we can have the power to transform not only individuals, but entire countries.

This is something that everyone, regardless of how much wealth or fortune they have, can accomplish. 🌱

Thai Pineapple Rice

Provided by Susan Cheng

Rice Base		Ingredients		Garnish	
5 packs	Jing Si Instant Rice (without seasoning)	1 can	pineapple chunks (drained)	1	lime
1/2 cup	Jing Si Thai Hot & Sour Spices (or equivalent)	1 cup	roasted unsalted whole cashews (or walnuts or peanuts)	1/2 cup	green onion (finely chopped)
1 tbsp.	oil	1 cup	peas (or edamame)	1/2 cup	fresh cilantro
1 tsp.	soy sauce	1 cup	currants (or raisins)	Pinch	black pepper
2 tsp.	salt	1 cup	grated carrots		

Preparation

1. Bring 2 1/2 cups water to a boil.
2. Pour oil, salt, Thai Hot & Sour Spice, and soy sauce into boiling water.
3. Pour rice into boiling water, stir, and remove from heat. Cover and let sit for 20 minutes.
4. Uncover rice. Add carrots, peas, pineapple chunks, currants, and most of the cashews (set a few aside for garnish). Stir.
5. Add a squeeze or two of lime juice. Garnish with green onions, cashews, and cilantro.
6. Serve and enjoy a delicious, nutritious meal!
7. Feeling creative? Mix it up next time by adding other favorite veggies.

**For more information about Jing Si Instant Rice and other Jing Si natural food products, please contact your local Jing Si Books & Café (directory on pp. 72-74) or visit jingsi.us.tzuchi.org.*



A wholesome life begins with vegetarianism.

Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen

- TZU CHI OFFICE
- MEDICAL CLINIC
- TZU CHI ACADEMY
- JING SI BOOKSTORE



Tzu Chi Americas in Action

With offices, clinics, schools, academies, and bookstores spread across twenty-seven states, Tzu Chi volunteers serve their local communities each and every day. When their neighbors are in need—whether in the next town, state, or country over—they reach out with love and compassion to relieve their suffering.



▲ After a fire in a Manhattan apartment building killed one and left seventy homeless, New York Tzu Chi volunteers quickly mobilized to deliver emergency cash cards and compassionate care to affected families on August 28, 2014. Photo: Fang Yuan Chou



▲ On October 11, 2014, Tzu Chi volunteers from the Greater Washington DC Regional Office served breakfast to people living on the streets of the nation's capital, providing warmth and care for their bodies and souls. Photo: Mark Tsai



Tzu Chi La Romana School in the Dominican Republic is not only an elementary and middle school, it also holds evening and weekend courses for adults. On August 9, 2014, Tzu Chi volunteers traveled from New Jersey to congratulate graduating adult students and wish them well in the next stage of their lives. Photo: Tina Lee



After a fast-moving fire in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, killed four young children and destroyed a dozen houses in July, Tzu Chi Philadelphia Service Center distributed emergency cash cards and eco-friendly blankets to affected residents on August 24, 2014. Photo: Ximing Jiang



On the early morning of August 24, 2014, a powerful 6.0-magnitude earthquake struck Napa, California. A couple hundred people were injured and many buildings were damaged. Northern California Tzu Chi volunteers held two relief distributions on September 2 and 14 to bring care and comfort to those affected. Here, volunteers and a recipient read a letter from Dharma Master Cheng Yen. Photo: Andy Chiang



Tzu Chi volunteers regularly clean the streets of Holmdel, New Jersey, as part of the Adopt a Highway program. By actively engaging in beautifying and protecting the local environment, they hope to inspire others to do their part to protect our Earth. Here, a volunteer picks up trash on October 15, 2014. Photo: Liwen Yang



As part of the Happy Campus Program, volunteers of the Greater Washington DC Region visited New Hampshire Estates Elementary School in Silver Spring, Maryland, to distribute stationery and school supplies to underprivileged students on August 18, 2014. Here, Tzu Chi Academy students help pack supplies. Photo: Mark Tsai



On June 28, 2014, Tzu Chi volunteers distributed food, clothing, and daily necessities to 167 local homeless individuals in Portland, Oregon. Photo: Wei Wu



On September 7, 2014, Northern New Jersey Tzu Chi Academy welcomed students back for another exciting semester of learning Chinese language, character, and morals. Here, teachers and volunteers form a welcome line. Photo: Weilun Wu



Tzu Chi volunteers in Dayton, Ohio, held a health information seminar on October 4, 2014. They invited special guest Dr. C.T. Lee to present on how to recover after a stroke. Here, volunteers lead attendees in an exercise. Photo: Guocheng Lin

Celebrating a Quarter Century of Compassion

Over the quarter century since Tzu Chi opened its first U.S. office on December 9, 1989, it has grown to include offices, clinics, schools, and bookstores spread across twenty-seven states. From just a few seeds twenty-five years ago, there are now thousands of volunteers all across the country serving their communities each and every day.

In the final months of 2014, a number of events were held to commemorate this major milestone along the path, the first Quarter Century of Compassion. Volunteers, donors, staff, care recipients, and community members gathered together to remember the past, celebrate the achievements so far, and look ahead to the future.



▲ At the request of the Center for Disease Control and Texas VOAD, Tzu Chi volunteers in Dallas, Texas, provided supplies and support for people quarantined after coming into contact with the first U.S. ebola patient in October 2014. Here, volunteer Yuanliang Ling inspects supplies before they are packed. Photo: Shirley Wu



▲ On September 20, 2014, Tzu Chi volunteers served a hot lunch to residents of the Institute for Human Services homeless shelter in Honolulu, Hawaii, bringing care and warmth to residents. Here, volunteers carefully prepare delicious vegetarian meals for their guests. Photo: Alex Ma

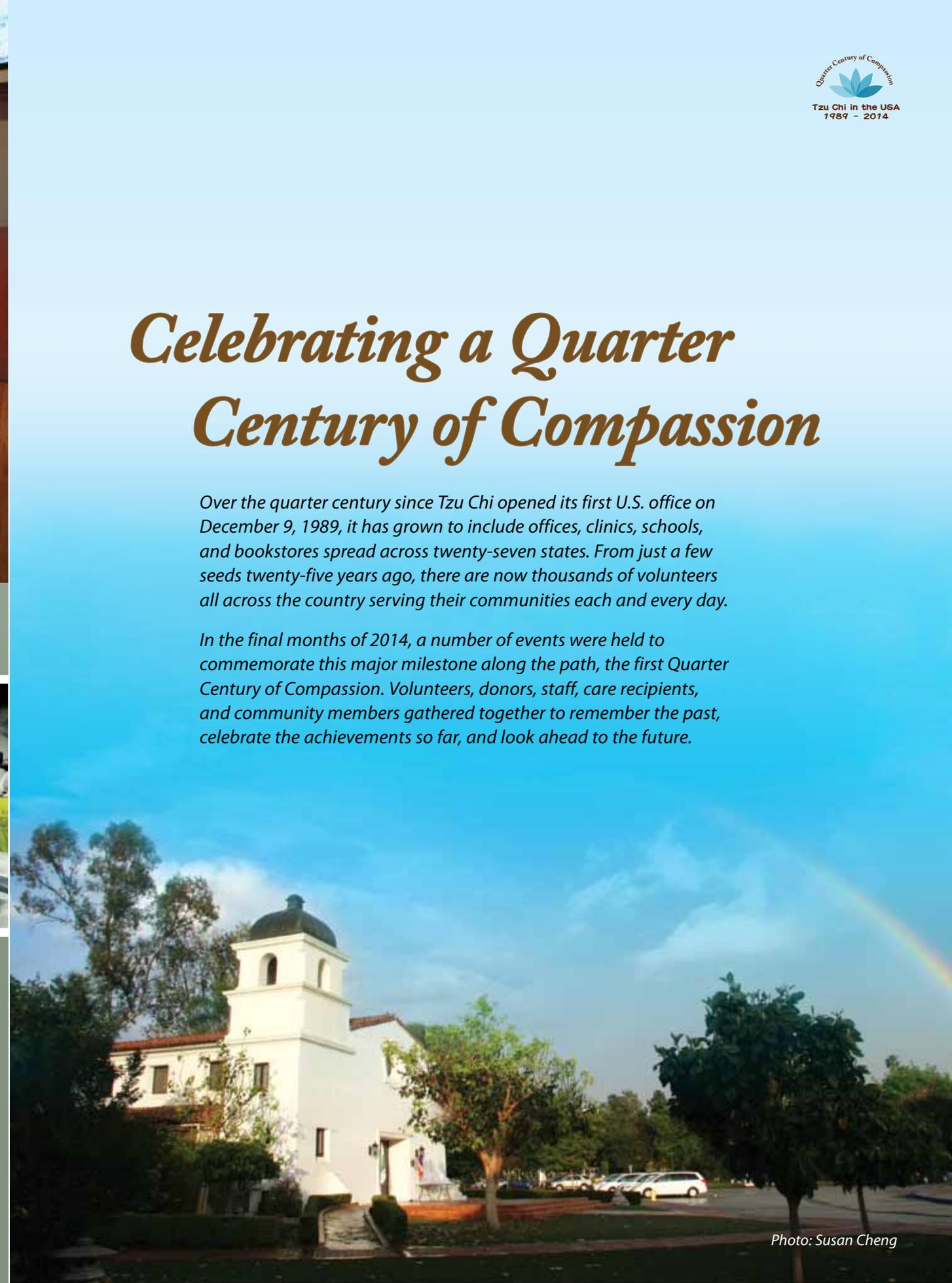


Photo: Susan Cheng



World-renowned singer-songwriter Wakin Chau performs in Costa Mesa, California, on October 4, 2014. Photo: Elaine Wong

▲ Prior to the charity concerts, Wakin Chau (center) held a press conference at Tzu Chi USA Headquarters with leukemia patient Alex Tung (third from left) to encourage bone marrow donation registration. Photo: Wesley Tsai



▲ Volunteers perform the "From Vow to Action" Dharma boat in Costa Mesa, California. Photo: Elaine Wong



▲ VOX share their beautiful harmonies with a packed audience in New York. Photo: Peter Lin



▲ Tzu Chi Youth Orchestra Long Island opens for VOX in New York. Photo: Peter Lin



▲ Northwest Regional Director Minjhing Hsieh (left), songwriter Homan Chou (center), and Wakin Chau close out the October 5 concert in San Jose.



In October, world-renowned singer-songwriter Wakin (Emil) Chau made a special international trip to California to celebrate Tzu Chi's twenty-fifth anniversary by headlining a pair of charity concerts with a total audience exceeding four thousand people. Following several moving performances by volunteers and a riveting set of songs in both Chinese and English, Wakin debuted a brand new song, "So I Stand Up," written specially for the occasion.

In November, the Quarter Century of Compassion celebration continued with a nine-city tour by popular a cappella group VOX and prolific composer Shou Chuan Lee, who is responsible for many Tzu Chi songs. Over two weeks, they shared joy and beautiful harmonies with grateful audiences in Maryland, New York, New Jersey, Illinois, Texas, and California.



The brand new Tzu Chi Education Campus in Walnut, California, is ceremoniously unveiled.
Photo: ShuLi Lo

In celebrating the first quarter century, Tzu Chi volunteers not only looked back to the past, but also planned ahead for the future. In Houston, Texas, Tzu Chi Southern Region inaugurated a brand new office on October 18, complete with Jing Si Hall and kindergarten. Following the Great Love Preschool and Kindergarten in Dallas, this is the second Tzu Chi school in Texas.

In Walnut, California, the Mission of Education's twentieth anniversary was marked by the grand opening of the new Tzu Chi Education Campus on October 10. Since the very first Tzu Chi Academy classes were held in Monrovia on September 11, 1994, the Education Mission has grown to two dozen Academy locations nationwide, as well as preschools and kindergartens, an elementary school, character education classes in public schools, community education programs, and more. In this new home, even more will be possible. 🌱



▲ Parents, students, teachers, and Jing Si Abode Dharma masters plant a tree at the new Education Campus, symbolizing the deep roots that Tzu Chi will extend into the community. Photo: ShuLi Lo



▲ A Dharma master from the Jing Si Abode in Hualien shares with U.S. volunteers during the twenty-fifth anniversary weekend retreat. Photo: Ronald Chen



▲ With a solemn ceremony attended by Dharma masters, Tzu Chi Southern Region moves into its new home in Houston, Texas. Photo: Shih-Chang Wu



▲ Volunteers celebrate twenty-five years for Tzu Chi USA and twenty for the Education Mission. Photo: Lily Chang

So I Stand Up

Producer: Wakin Chau Guitar: Wilson Teng
Music & Lyrics: Homan Chou Bass: Zach Hung
Vocals: Wakin Chau Recording: Zach Hung
Arrangement: Max Tu Mixing: Jerry Lin
Harmonies: Jim Lin Mastering: M.T. Sun
Drums: Chun-Hung Lin Stars Ferry Music Production

Something happened and my world was changed
Some people looked on while my eyes were glazed
Then a new friend came and showed me how
I could put my feet back on the ground

A little love, a little kindness can save me
You inspired me to keep going on
Life is harsh and you took me to safety
Now it's my turn to pass it on . . .

So I stand up
I will give back a helping hand
I will open my heart again
I'll remember the worst I was in was not the end

Never give up
Help is never that far away
We're not alone so we're not afraid
Moving forward with hearts and minds
One day at a time

We tend to focus on the things we lose
It's hard to see things from another view
In this busy world we're running around
I took a chance and then I found . . .

A little love, a little kindness can save me
You inspired me to keep going on
Life is harsh and you took me to safety
Now it's my turn to pass it on . . .

So I stand up
I will give back a helping hand
I will open my heart again
I'll remember the worst I was in was not the end

Never give up
Help is never that far away
We're not alone so we're not afraid
Moving forward with hearts and minds
One day at a time



Wakin Chau and Homan Chou sing a duet of "So I Stand Up" in Costa Mesa, California, on October 4, 2014.
Photo: Elaine Wong

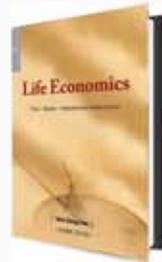
"So I Stand Up" was composed specially for Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation's twenty-fifth anniversary and debuted during the Quarter Century of Compassion charity concerts in October 2014. For a very special music video, please visit "The Song of Bodhisattvas" on www.us.tzuchi.org.



Life Economics (Excerpt)

In Chapter Three, Dharma Master Cheng Yen talks about making each moment count.

Dharma Master Cheng Yen



Immerse in the Dharma at Dawn

People often see death as eternal sleep. Actually, our nightly slumber is like temporary death. An eternal sleep lasts until the next life; a temporary death lasts until the next day. Many people are diligent and start their recycling work before dawn. I asked them why they start so early. They tell me, “Master, you have said that our lifetime is limited. The longer we sleep, the more time we waste; the more deeds we do, the more virtue we gain.” It all depends on how you think.

Life is a precious opportunity, but if we spend our time resting and sleeping, we are wasting life. We accumulate virtue only by utilizing our time to give. Sleeping too much is no rest at all; the next day we feel heavy and ache all over. The more we sleep, the groggy we become. Consequently, we are unable to think clearly.

When we see someone looking dazed, we often ask him if he is fully awake, because although he may be awake, his brain is still sleeping and his mind is cloudy. Even though he is in contact with the outside world, he cannot hear others, nor can he distinguish truth from deception or good from evil.

Some people think that since they are neither greedy nor irritable, there is no harm in sleeping a bit longer. Exactly because they do not consider themselves to be wrong, they remain lost in delusion without knowing it. This does no good for their physical life or their wisdom-life. We all have a clear innate wisdom. It is a great pity if we cannot keep our heads in everyday life, and utilize that wisdom in all our encounters. We should not live just to consume. We should cherish our wisdom-life and dedicate ourselves to serving humanity.

Even if we take no action to advance ourselves and just stay put, time will still flow past us and our bodies will age and deteriorate. Therefore, we should make good use of our abilities while we are mentally and physically fit.

I once heard a doctor suggest that people should eat to eighty-percent full and no more. We can also apply this concept to sleep. Sleeping six hours should be enough. Let us strive to live life to the fullest. Use a quarter of the day to sleep, half to give and serve humanity, and the remaining quarter will be more than enough to eat and relax.

I once read a magazine article about “morning people,” which promoted waking up early for its mental and physical benefits. While others say early to bed and early to rise, I say late to bed but early to rise. If we go to bed before eleven o’clock at night—since there are

twenty-four hours in a day, eleven o’clock is the same as twenty-three o’clock—this is “going to bed late.” Getting out of bed at five o’clock in the morning is “rising early.” With this habit, one cannot sleep so much as to become dazed and lazy.

It may be difficult to get up early at first, but it can be done. First turn your body over, then think about something else. After getting up, you will feel happy and energetic. We should train ourselves to be self-conscious and alert. When it is time to wake up, we should wake up; when it is time to rest, we should rest. Always be alert and take notice of our thoughts and thought patterns, so that these habits can become an integral part of our daily life.

A couple once brought their son to see me. They told me their son did not sleep all night because he was surfing the Internet. I asked the young man, “Why don’t you sleep?”

“I do,” he replied.

I told him, “You stay up too late. Can you go to bed earlier?”

He replied mischievously, “I do go to bed early: at five or six in the morning.”

The rise of the Internet brought forth two entirely different phenomena: one is the lure leading people on a deluded path. Glued to the computer all night, they are exhausted during the day. They are either drowsy in class or dazed at work, and their lives are seriously affected. The other is the broadening of people’s views toward the world, and their expansion of knowledge. Therefore, we must guide our children to the right path and benefit from correct use of technology.

A group of Tzu Chi college students uses the Internet to connect with youths in other countries and promote the Immerse in the Dharma at Dawn Movement. The participants turn on their computers at 5:30 a.m. and watch the live broadcast of *Wisdom at Dawn* on Da Ai Television together. The program shows the morning teaching that I have just delivered in the main hall of the Jing Si Abode. In addition to their studies at school, these young students watch the program attentively every morning and take notes. They diligently study the Buddhist teachings in hopes of increasing their wisdom.

After participating in Immerse in the Dharma at Dawn online, these students have said that they feel more refreshed when getting up early, and they have found that they have more time at their disposal. When they finish listening to the sutra lecture, it is only six o’clock, so they have plenty of time to prepare for their school work. Moreover, they can concentrate better because their minds are sharp and clear. They also feel at ease, so they are less irritated. This program enables the students to adopt a regular routine and make good use of their time.

This is what the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings describes as: “When the mind is still and free of desires, then deluded thoughts cannot enter.” This is the state of mind that we pursue. Everyone should support and encourage one another to reach this goal. In this pursuit, there is no obstruction of space or time. 🌱

Excerpted from Life Economics: Time, Space, Interpersonal Relationships by Shih Cheng Yen (Jing Si Publications, 2013). For more information, please contact your local Jing Si Books & Café (directory on pp. 72-74) or visit jingsi.us.tzuchi.org.



US TZU CHI 360°

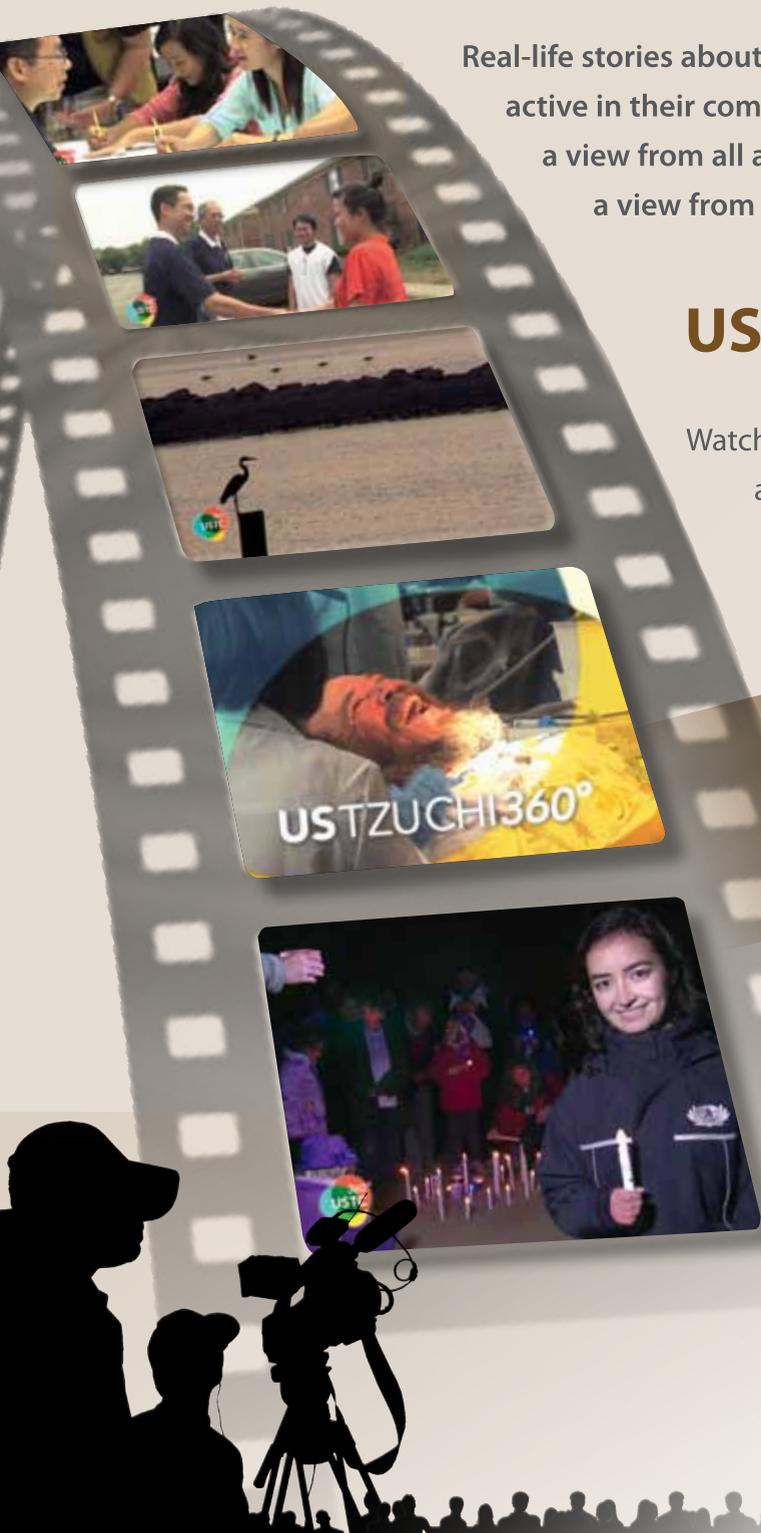
New Episode Each Week

Real-life stories about US Tzu Chi volunteers active in their communities and around the world: a view from all angles, a view from all perspectives:

USTzuChi360°

Watch episodes online at www.us.tzuchi.org and www.youtube.com/ustc360.

Click the "Videos" tab on www.us.tzuchi.org to watch USTzuChi360° and programs including Life Wisdom, a twelve-minute daily talk by Dharma Master Cheng Yen, and Tzu Chi This Week, a half-hour weekly roundup of Tzu Chi news from around the world.



Preventing SIDS

The more you know, the better you can protect your baby.

Lina Lee, LMFT

Buddhist Tzu Chi Medical Foundation

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) is the leading cause of death among infants twelve months of age and younger. SIDS occurs when a baby dies during sleep without warning signs or a clear reason.



Babies should sleep on their backs on a firm surface without blankets, toys, or soft objects.

As a mother myself, I find the term "SIDS" to be very scary, and the death of a baby is extremely heartbreaking. Parents who know about SIDS may think of it as their worst nightmare. Before our worries keep us from sleeping at night, know that although there is no 100 percent effective method to prevent SIDS, there are a number of ways we can lower the risk while giving our babies the best care possible.

Learning about SIDS and safe sleep for babies is important for all caregivers, not just for parents. Grandparents, aunts, uncles, babysitters, childcare providers, and anyone else who might care for babies should learn more. Simple actions can make a big difference.

To reduce the risk of SIDS, the Los Angeles County Public Health Department's Fetal and Infant Health Programs recommend:

- Put babies to sleep on their backs.
- Use a firm sleep surface covered by a fitted sheet.
- Keep soft objects, toys, and loose bedding out of baby's sleep area.
- Baby should not sleep in a bed or on a couch or chair with adults or other children.
- Be careful about breastfeeding in bed or in any situation where you may fall asleep while your baby is breastfeeding.
- Avoid alcohol and illicit drug use during pregnancy and after birth.

Safeguarding Health

To reduce the risk of SIDS and other sleep-related causes of infant death:

- Always place baby on his or her back to sleep for all sleep times, including naps.
- Room share—keep baby's sleep area in the same room next to where you sleep.
- Use a firm sleep surface, free from soft objects, toys, blankets, and crib bumpers.

Images courtesy of NICHD

Simple actions can make a big difference.

- Do not smoke or let anyone smoke near the baby.
- Dress your baby in light sleep clothing, such as a one-piece pajama, and do not use a blanket.
- Pregnant women should receive regular prenatal care.

Remember:

- SIDS is not caused by immunizations or bad parenting.
- SIDS is not contagious or hereditary.
- SIDS is not anyone's fault.

To learn more about how to create a safe sleep environment for your baby, please visit the National Institutes of Health's Safe to Sleep Public Education Campaign at www.nichd.nih.gov/sts or Los Angeles County Public Health Department's Fetal and Infant Health Programs at publichealth.lacounty.gov/mch/sids/sids.htm.

Turning Passion into Action

Tzu Chi Collegiate Association gives young people a venue to grow and learn from one another.

Alice Jean

Out of the blue after a Tzu Shao youth group service event in Houston, a member suddenly turned to me and asked, "So, why are you so passionate about volunteering?"

Despite our differences, we are united in a common goal.



During the retreat, Tzu Ching officers learn the importance of team work, collaboration, and supporting one another. Photo: Thomas Hong

Desperately searching for the right words, I answered, "Well, I don't believe I exist for my own sake but for the sake of others. I am blessed with the ability to help others, so I should dedicate my full potential to improving the world."

The officer retreat this year was a true inspiration because we not only completed the necessary tasks on our agenda but also centered every discussion around the "why?" Why Tzu Chi? Why Tzu Chi Collegiate Association (TCCA, Tzu Ching)? Why be an officer? We all had different reasons to explain why we had chosen TCCA, but in the end, it boiled down to the fact that a cohesive group can make an even larger impact than one individual acting alone. By strengthening family bonds and fully engaging in meaningful volunteer events, we hope to achieve the common goal of welcoming a diverse group of new members to become empowered to serve the local and international community.

Why does Tzu Chi break down all barriers? Because the core of Tzu Chi is relatable to every single person regardless of what walk of life they come from. After literally turning over a new leaf together, we focused on speaking from the heart when pitching TCCA because the fundamental essence of Tzu Chi is difficult to

describe completely. However, we learned that people are more likely to begin to understand TCCA if we each speak from the perspective of our own unique story and how we came to embrace the Tzu Chi spirit. We strive to convey that we are a small yet important part of Tzu Chi's international foundation in fifty countries because we serve the community locally.

Despite our differences, we are united in a common goal, and the passion in the room for helping others was palpable. Our discussions were productive, for everyone made sure to acknowledge others' ideas before contributing their own. This allowed the whole team to make the best compromise. We were all extremely impressed when we planned the first general meeting and welcome party in record time, because previously our meetings had not been as efficient and effective. This unprecedented event showed that we were bonding as a team and better able to understand each other's core values.

Beyond planning to make TCCA the best it can be, we got to know each other better as individuals. A majority of us strive to be more mindful and aware of others. We also strive to learn from others because there is

something good to learn from every person. What really struck me was the intense, deeply personal conversation between several officers about religion and the philosophy behind truth. Generally, controversial topics like those are kept tightly locked away, but that night I witnessed the power of communicating honestly and sincerely about one's beliefs and of being accepting of others' beliefs and doubts. In true Tzu Chi fashion, they challenged each other's life views without ever losing their mutual respect and understanding for one another. We came full circle to embody the Jing Si Aphorism: "While working, learn; while learning, awaken to the many truths of life."

I still remember walking across campus one day to class and then suddenly seeing a flash of blue. I will never forget my first impression of Jacky skateboarding past in a Tzu Ching uniform. At first, I was hesitant to wear the Tzu Ching uniform because I always stuck out, but gradually I began to realize that the distinct difference of the uniform from the normal college wardrobe gave me the opportunity to spread the concept of Great Love to more people on campus. Since every negative can be a positive if one is willing to see it as such, I am now proud to be seen wearing the uniform and I enthusiastically answer any questions

others may have. I try to make it clear that the uniform is a choice and an honor, but there are also many other avenues to passionately serve others. Through its various missions of Charity, Medicine, Education, and Humanistic Culture, Tzu Chi guides and cultivates us to become better people and to better help others, because it reminds us that we are all human.

Since kindergarten, Tzu Chi has been a constant part of my life, but only recently have I come to realize how much the Tzu Chi spirit permeates my life. Our advisor Jessie's fitting analogy comparing our Tzu Ching uniforms to Superman's iconic costume resonates with the fact that we share the common goal of using our talents to benefit all of humanity. However, as Anna wisely said, we do not have to be wearing our Tzu Ching uniforms to uphold the Tzu Chi lifestyle. Even without the Tzu Ching uniforms, we can still take every opportunity to make a difference, no matter how small, in someone's life. With our brilliant smiles and happy faces, "Let's do it!" 🌱

One who can show us the right path is a good teacher. One who can walk the right path with us is a good friend.

Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen



During the weekly tutoring session just before Thanksgiving, Tzu Ching volunteers in Austin, Texas, discuss with elementary students what they have to be thankful for. Photo: Fang-Wen Huang



Chickens and Old Grandma.

A visit to the arboretum gave eight-year-old Ziyang a whole new perspective.

Ziyang Li | Translated by Diana Liu

Chickens are not respected by anyone. They are considered the lowest form of life. Besides laying eggs and being eaten, they don't seem to do much. However, discussions with an old grandma completely changed my way of seeing chickens.

It was a beautiful and sunny day, so clear that you could see for miles. My parents and I came to visit the Los Angeles County Arboretum and Botanical Garden. We stopped at a vegetable garden with a chicken coop. Five chickens lived in the chicken coop: one with black and white stripes, two brown, one pearl,

and one black. This two-story "chicken house" was delicately decorated with "bedrooms" located to the left and a special stairway leading to the second floor. The bedroom area was built with two-by-fours, which shaded the chickens from the sunlight to allow them to have restful naps. The rest of the house had wires to keep the chickens in. There was a small door in the middle allowing the caretakers to come in and out. There were two small buckets inside to feed the chickens and wood chips covered the floor. This "chicken house" just looked so comfortable!

Grandma said to us, "Don't look down on any plants or animals, because they are all special."

As we marveled at the house, the chicken's caretaker, an old Chinese grandma, came by. We started talking to her about the chickens. The grandma's eyes lit up as soon as we mentioned them. She began telling us the story of her chickens, which had been with her for a while. Each had its own personality. The one with the black and white stripes was very gentle and honest. One of the brown chickens was very arrogant. The other brown one was fearful of everything, a true "chicken." The pearl one liked to be left alone and did not care much about socializing with anyone. The black one loved to make his house out of newspaper—an architect!

Grandma held the black-and-white-striped chicken, stroked its feathers gently, and began telling its story. This chicken grew feathers on its legs while none of the others did. The arrogant brown chicken thought this was really strange and began pecking the feathered legs with its beak. It kept pecking so much that the legs began to bleed. Grandma was not happy with what she saw, so she grounded the arrogant brown chicken for a week.

The arrogant brown chicken was not happy. It constantly jumped up and down fiercely. When it was released, it continued to bully the gentle black-and-white-striped chicken. Grandma kept the black-and-white-striped chicken away from the arrogant brown chicken, but it was no use. So, Grandma bought an ointment and put it on the feathered legs. The ointment was very spicy with a strong odor. The arrogant brown chicken did not like it. Grandma thought she had found the solution.

However, three days later, the arrogant brown chicken got used to the odor and started

bullying the black-and-white-striped chicken again. Finally, Grandma bought special little socks for the chicken, and at last the pecking stopped. We were very impressed with Grandma for spending so much time and effort so that the chickens would get along with each other and live peacefully. She was very dedicated to these chickens.

Grandma said to us, "Don't look down on any plants or animals, because they are all special." Her words touched me deeply. It's true! Every living being has the right to live and should not be looked down on because it's small. All lives are equal. We need to protect them, love them, and be their friends.

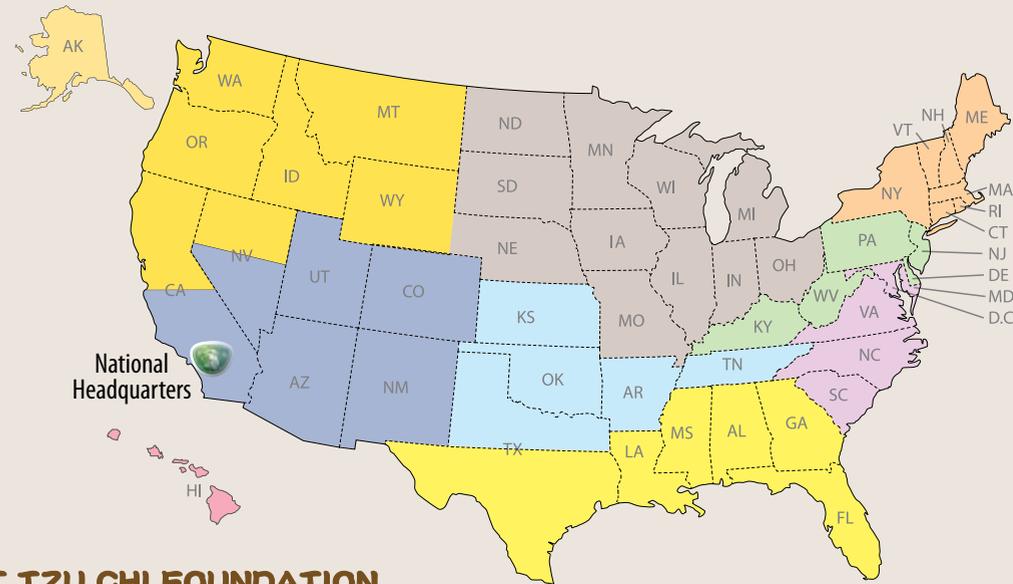
I want to thank Grandma. She helped me see chickens in a new light. 🌱



Respect for life is protecting the well-being of life.

Jing Si Aphorism by Dharma Master Cheng Yen

TZU CHI FOUNDATION, U.S.A. LOCATION DIRECTORY



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Fax: 626-636-8736

BUDDHIST TZU CHI COMMUNITY DENTAL CLINIC

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S El Monte, CA 91733
Tel: 626-636-8708
Fax: 626-636-8738

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Wilmington, CA 90744
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TZU CHI GREAT LOVE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

429 E. Wildrose Ave.
Monrovia, CA 91016
Tel: 626-357-3286
Fax: 626-357-3287

TZU CHI GREAT LOVE PRESCHOOL & KINDERGARTEN

206 E. Palm Ave.
Monrovia, CA 91016
Tel: 626-305-1188
Fax: 626-599-8098

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1920 South Brea Canyon
Cutoff Rd.
Walnut, CA 91789
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Tel: 408-888-7903

TZU CHI ACADEMY IRVINE

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Fax: 949-916-5933

TZU CHI ACADEMY MONROVIA

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TZU CHI ACADEMY SAN DIMAS

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San Diego, CA 92101
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100, Atlanta, GA 30340
Tel / Fax: 770-458-1000

JING SI BOOKSTORE DORAVILLE, GA

Tel: 770-458-1000

TZU CHI ACADEMY, ATLANTA

Tel: 770-986-8669
Fax: 770-458-1000

HAWAII PACIFIC ISLANDS REGION

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Honolulu, HI 96816
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Fax: 808-737-8889

JING SI BOOKSTORE HONOLULU, HI

Tel: 808-737-8885

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Fax: 630-960-9360

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Tel: 617-762-0569

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Tel: 617-762-0569
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Arden Hills, MN 55112
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St. Louis, MO 63132
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Las Vegas, NV 89146
Tel / Fax: 702-880-5552

JING SI BOOKSTORE
LAS VEGAS, NV
Tel: 702-880-5552

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MID-ATLANTIC REGION
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4790 Shagbark Ct.
Brookfield, WI 53005

TZU CHI

A BRIEF HISTORY...

On April 14, 1966, Dharma Master Cheng Yen founded the Tzu Chi Merits Society in Hualien with the support of thirty housewives who each put aside a couple cents of their grocery money every day to establish a charity fund. During the first five years, they helped a total of thirty-one elderly, ill, and poor people from fifteen families. As word spread, more people participated and the program gathered strength. It spread beyond Hualien: across the island and around the world.

Today, Tzu Chi is a nonprofit charitable organization with ten million volunteers and donors in roughly fifty countries worldwide. Over the past forty-nine years, Tzu Chi's four missions—Charity, Medicine, Education, and Humanistic Culture—have grown from the seeds of gratitude, respect, and love, and Tzu Chi's activities have expanded to include international disaster relief, bone marrow donation, community volunteerism, and environmental conservation.

In the United States, Tzu Chi operates nine regional service areas with more than eighty offices nationwide. Volunteers give back to their local communities through family services, emergency disaster services, homeless services, school support programs, college scholarships, income tax reporting assistance, relief distributions, holiday care packs, free and low-cost medical clinics and outreaches, preventive health education, cancer support groups, character education curricula, community education classes, and production of positive, inspiring media.

Whenever disaster strikes at home or abroad, Tzu Chi volunteers deliver cash aid, hot meals, and emergency relief supplies directly into the hands of disaster survivors. Over the years, US Tzu Chi volunteers have actively provided relief after such major disasters as 9/11, Hurricane Katrina, the 2010 Haiti earthquake, and Hurricane Sandy.

In recent years, Tzu Chi volunteers' charitable work has been increasingly recognized by the global community. Tzu Chi was granted special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council in 2010 and honored as a White House Champion of Change in 2013. Dharma Master Cheng Yen was presented with the Roosevelt Institute's FDR Distinguished Public Service Award and named to the TIME 100 list of the world's most influential people in 2011, and honored with the Rotary International Award of Honor in 2014.





Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation
佛教慈濟基金會

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Teach with propriety,
educate with virtue,
instruct with the
truth, and guide with
principles.

*Jing Si Aphorism by
Dharma Master
Cheng Yen*

