

COMPASSION & RELIEF

# TZU CHI USA JOURNAL

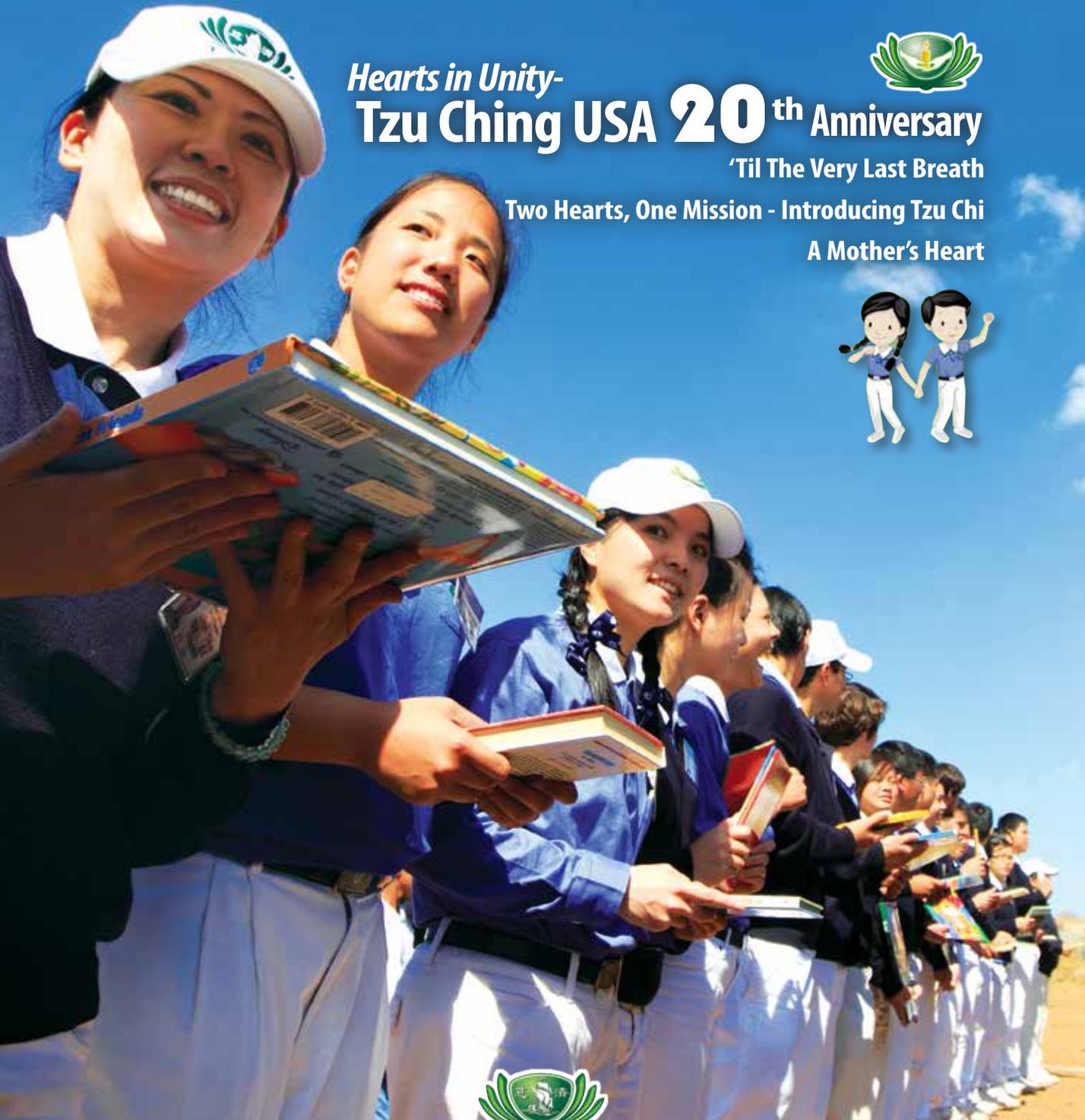
*Hearts in Unity-*  
**Tzu Ching USA 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**



*'Til The Very Last Breath*

*Two Hearts, One Mission - Introducing Tzu Chi*

*A Mother's Heart*





## CONTEMPLATIVE WISDOM

Thoughts for meditation, contemplation,  
and reflection

*Dharma Master Cheng Yen*  
Founder of Tzu Chi Foundation

## Living with Blessings and Joy

If we can start bringing blessings and joy to others  
from a young age,  
then by the time we are old,  
we certainly will not be lonely.

So, we should train ourselves  
to always bring blessings and joy to others.

With every difficulty,  
we should remain calm and content,  
and we should uphold  
this virtuous mindset  
until the end of our lives.

Contemplative Wisdom  
**LIVING WITH BLESSINGS AND JOY**  
Dharma Master Cheng Yen

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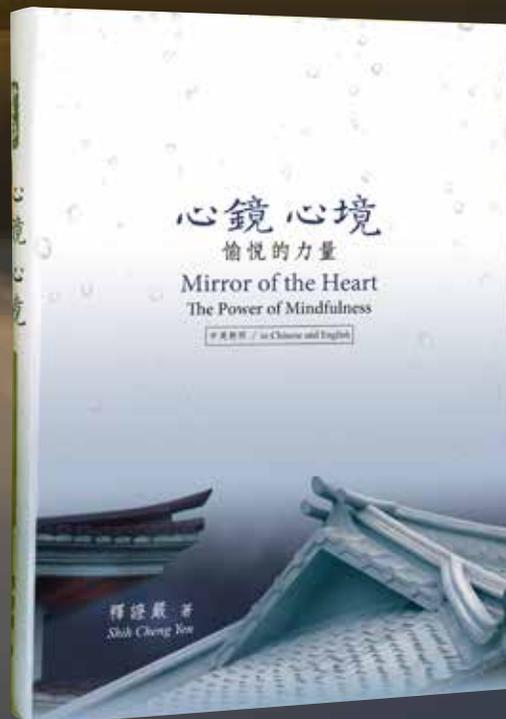


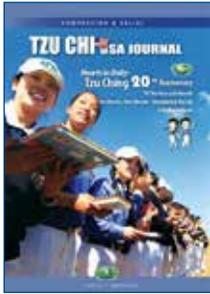
# Mirror of the Heart

## The Power of Mindfulness

“For the person in the mirror to smile, we must smile first. If we hope to live a life of happiness and ease, there is only one way —we must learn to adjust our mindset.”

Through 80 Chinese-English bilingual short teachings, Master Cheng Yën tells readers how to implement the Buddha-Dharma in our daily living through worldly Dharma. She emphasizes that we must have deep faith in the law of karma and that we must put the power of our hearts and minds to good use.





US Tzu Ching distribute books collected across the U.S. to children in South Africa.

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*Act with compassion and wisdom.  
Learn from and inspire each other.*

These are the words spoken by Dharma Master Cheng Yen on May 31, 1992, at the ceremony formally establishing the Tzu Chi Collegiate Association (TCCA, also known as Tzu Ching), in Taiwan. Since then, they have become the slogan that Tzu Ching chapters follow in their activities around the world. Here in the United States, Tzu Ching is celebrating its 20th anniversary. In the course of its development, many generations have played roles in strengthening and growing this community of young people who share the aspiration to help others while developing themselves. Those who encounter the group on their college campuses and decide to become a part of it are inspired to cultivate their compassion and wisdom. In short, they take on the mission of Bodhisattvas. Working together across different regions and generations, the Tzu Ching create a Bodhisattva family wherever they are.

In this issue of Tzu Chi USA Journal, we celebrate the stories, experiences, and efforts of Tzu Ching over the past 20 years. You will read about Tzu Ching advisors like Jessie Lee in Austin, and Yahmei and Chong Hsieh in Chicago, who have made it their life mission to guide the next generation and inspire them to cultivate the qualities of gratitude, respect, and love. You will also read the stories of Jack Fan and Carolyn Chen, who served as Tzu Ching before becoming advisors themselves. And you will read about Isabelle, a current Tzu Ching who diligently follows Master Cheng Yen's teachings with the spirit of a Bodhisattva. As they learn from each other, the Tzu Ching bring the energy of youth and the qualities of creativity and innovation to further advance Tzu Chi's missions to serve others in need.

At the 2018 US TCCA Leadership Conference in August, Tzu Ching members called out, "With hearts in unity, one gives rise to infinity." As Tzu Ching continues to grow and develop we can see unity and strength. With a common mission, Tzu Ching members work diligently to inspire others as each one advances on the Bodhisattva-path. We hope that you will be inspired by their stories. 🌱

*Devin Makizuru*

Editor-in-Chief

# JOIN THE GLOBAL **ETHICAL EATING DAY** MOVEMENT!

Mark your calendars for January 11th, and help us make a powerful change for good together by **eating local, vegan, and vegetarian** meals to protect the Earth!



**PLEDGE TODAY AT**  
**EthicalEatingDay.org**

1.3 million new pledges since January 11, 2018!

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**T**zu Chi is an organization that is led and run by volunteers, and as a volunteer myself, I have seen the dedication of our volunteers first-hand. Whether doing disaster relief, fundraising, distributions, or other activities, all volunteers work with the same spirit of love and compassion; they truly devote everything to help others.

At the start of this year, I embarked on a journey. I wanted to see how we can inspire more people to join us as members of our Tzu Chi family. My travels took me to Taiwan and Malaysia and across the United States. In every place I visited, what stood out to me was the close connections between people. Volunteers come from many different places and have many different backgrounds, as do the people we serve, yet regardless of our backgrounds, we all come together as one.

This year, Tzu Chi's Collegiate Association (TCCA, also known as Tzu Ching), is celebrating its 20th anniversary. I would like to extend my congratulations to both current Tzu Ching members and Tzu Ching alumni. The younger generation will be the ones to lead Tzu Chi in the future, and I hope they will not only keep learning and developing themselves, but will also inspire others to become more

active and engaged in helping their families, friends, and communities.

The upcoming TIMA (Tzu Chi International Medical Association) conference is yet another opportunity for us to expand our love to reach more people across the United States. Over the years, Tzu Chi has provided free medical services across the country, but there are increasingly more people who need our help. In order to reach out to those in need of medical care, we will need even more dedicated medical professionals who are willing to join us.

I hope that we can provide more people with the opportunities to experience the spirit of Tzu Chi. Master Cheng Yen always emphasizes the importance of developing good relationships with everyone we encounter as the foundation of our spiritual practice. We are all one family, and starting from ourselves, we can strengthen our relationships. One person at a time, we can make a difference. 🌱

*Han Huang*



# *Seize the Moment and Maintain Resolve Forever*

**I**n learning Buddhism, it is important to “seize the moment, and maintain your resolve forever.” We must be determined to put the teachings of the Buddha into practice. In other words, to learn Buddhism is to engage in spiritual practice—to walk the path. In Chinese, the term “to engage in spiritual practice” contains two characters—修行—that literally mean to cultivate and to walk. The Chinese character for “the path”—道—represents principles that we ordinary people must follow in order to attain Buddhahood. The Buddha’s teachings are not simply theories; they are to be actively carried out.

The Buddha teaches us to understand principles and guides us to tread the right path. If we only chant and recite his teachings without actually putting them into action, we will never reach our goal. I always say, “The sutras are a path; this path is a road for us to

walk on.” When we learn how to tread the path, we understand the teachings of the sutras.

Some people say, “I worship the Buddha and understand the Dharma, but I cannot explain the principles.” This is because they have not thoroughly comprehended the principles of the Buddha-Dharma.

We do not have to think about how profound and impressive the Buddha-Dharma is. We only need to focus on doing everything and treating everyone with utmost sincerity, to really give of ourselves, and to earnestly engage in the work of Tzu Chi. After we have done the work, we can then share our experiences with others. That is why I often say, “Just do it!” This is what I have realized in my own spiritual cultivation.

Those who joined Tzu Chi have vowed to become Living Bodhisattvas. Some people ask,



Excerpts taken from The Path to Truth  
For the Modern-day Bodhisattva-practitioner

## On the Bodhisattva Path

*“Are all Tzu Chi volunteers wholeheartedly dedicated?” It depends on their karmic affinities. If they simply listen to the principles without putting them into action, they are not making the most of their potential. Therefore, people must take action to truly grasp and realize the principles.*

*Doing Tzu Chi work means practicing the Four Infinite Minds of loving-kindness, compassion, joy, and selfless giving. To do Tzu Chi’s work is to walk on the Bodhisattva-path. As we advance forward, we must not stray from the right path. Therefore, we must abide by Tzu Chi’s Ten Precepts, earnestly perform our duties and do our part, as well as maintain unyielding faith in the Bodhisattva-path we have chosen. Then we will one day come to understand all the principles we hear.*

*In the early days of this organization, when*

*we conducted winter relief distributions at the Jing Si Abode, we always packed the relief supplies with our own hands. This provided us with the best opportunity to engage in spiritual cultivation. Not only were we engaging in spiritual cultivation by chanting the Buddha’s name aloud and in our hearts as we packed the supplies, we were also cultivating through our actions. Along with the supplies, we were providing our love. With this love, the relief supplies could bring impoverished families the warmth they desperately needed, just like sunlight during winter. As we packed, we were mindful of every detail, such as sorting the goods properly, tying up the packages, and ensuring that they were not too heavy to carry. Although the work was labor intensive and taxing, we did it happily because these packages of love would be duly delivered to those in need. Our joy was genuine.*

*For the first decade, Tzu Chi focused on charity work. Over that period, a few Tzu Chi commissioners and I would walk around local communities, even traveling to remote mountain areas, to visit and care for the poor. In addition, we toured around Taiwan twice a year to follow-up on our care recipients.*

*One of the care recipients left me with an indelible memory. One day we came upon a dilapidated hut. We knocked on the thin wooden board that served as the door. A man inside the house told us to push on the door to enter. It was pitch-black inside. We turned on a five-watt light bulb and saw the man lying on a bamboo bed by the door. Then we saw the rat that was gnawing at his foot! The man was completely paralyzed and could not feel pain. Although he was aware of the rat gnawing at his foot, he did not have the strength to shoo it away. Before long, his wife came home. From a distance, we saw her carrying a bundle of hay so big that we could barely see her behind it. Four children followed her. Their older children were coming home from grade school, and the younger ones had gone with her to work. The wife told us that the oldest child was smart and had been praised by his schoolteacher. But as they were so poor, he would be lucky if he could finish grade school.*

*It made my heart ache to hear this. I told the wife that as long as she took good care of the family, social services would aid them, and Tzu Chi would help as well. I encouraged her to allow her children to continue their schooling. This family was one of Tzu Chi's first charity recipients.*

*However, as we helped more people, we discovered even more families in need. What was the cause of this? At that time, Taiwan's economy was booming, and people could find employment as long as they were willing to work. Why, then, were there so many men in their prime who needed help?*

*I began to examine the poverty issue in Taiwan. I spent the next six years visiting and evaluating care recipients. I considered the situations of all these families and found that some were seniors who lived alone, while the rest were mostly middle-aged care recipients who suffered from accidents or work-related injuries. These people were debilitated by serious conditions resulting from initially minor illnesses that were left untreated. Most of them were the breadwinners of their households and were once financially stable. But when they became sick and needed long-term care, their families could not recover from the financial*

deficit nor bear the medical costs. Their children could no longer continue with schooling, which brought on other problems.

During that time, I traveled to many places in Taiwan collecting and analyzing data, and I came to this conclusion: Illness leads to poverty. Therefore, I decided to establish clinics that offered free medical care.

After we set up a free clinic in Hualien, I realized that medical services in Hualien were inadequate. Sometimes, doctors were unable to diagnose their patients due to a lack of medical equipment. Other times, patients that needed hospitalization could not receive treatment due to their lack of financial resources.

In the meantime, we also encountered difficulties in our relief work. Due to insufficient medical resources in eastern Taiwan, we had to send our patients to western Taiwan for treatment. If the patient was a husband, his wife would accompany him to take care of him. Then there would be no one at home to take care of their children. So, Tzu Chi helped these families and took care of their children. As such, more and more complications emerged.

In those early days, when I expounded the Earth Treasury Sutra, also known as the Ksitigarbha Sutra, I truly admired the great vows that Earth Treasury Bodhisattva made. In addition, after personally witnessing so many forms of suffering in this world, I made the vow to build a hospital in Eastern Taiwan.

This vow was too ambitious for my abilities at that time. But there was no point in making a vow unless I committed myself to carrying it out, so I told myself to go ahead and just do it! Think about it: If I had not courageously taken that first step, would there be Tzu Chi hospitals now to save lives and safeguard love?

There was no economic value in building a hospital in Hualien, but Tzu Chi's focus was on equality and the value of human life. Our mission is to respect life. I always told myself to neither think too far nor too much but to simply "seize the moment and maintain my resolve forever." The goal of building the hospital was not to make a profit, but to save lives. The Dharma is not just meant to be preached. We must walk the Bodhisattva-path and put the Dharma into action. 🌿



# Tzu Ching USA Timeline

1991 - College students and children begin volunteering with Tzu Chi USA. They are dubbed the "Tzu Chi Youth Group."



**1991**  
Cerritos, CA  
Monrovia, CA

1998 July - A group of North American Tzu Ching attend camp in Hualien, Taiwan



**1992**  
Tzu Chi Collegiate Association (TCCA, also known as Tzu Ching) is officially established in Taipei, Taiwan

**1995**  
San Francisco, CA  
Washington D.C.  
Phoenix, NV

**1996**  
Seattle, WA  
Orlando, FL  
Boston, MA  
Dallas, TX

**1997**  
Arlington, TX

**1998**  
Austin, TX



**1992**  
New Jersey, NJ

**1993**  
Irvine, CA

**1994**  
Champaign, IL  
Pittsburg, PA  
Houston, TX

**1995**  
San Francisco State,  
University of Portland,  
Carnegie Mellon University

**1996**  
University of California,  
Berkeley

**1998**  
California State  
University, Stanislaus,  
Stanford University



1998 September - Inspired by their experience at the camp in July, the group meets in San Jose and officially establishes the North American Tzu Ching (NATC). They begin taking on national projects together, vowing to follow in Dharma Master Cheng Yen's footsteps. This marks the beginning of the family we know as Tzu Ching in the US today.



1998 December - Tzu Ching visit Master Cheng Yen during winter camp to relay their aspirations. Master Cheng Yen gives the group her blessings and officially recognizes the NATC.

Photos by: Allan Tian, Nancy Ku, Trisha Yeh, Carolyn Chen, Peggy Lo, Anny Chiu, Sandy Chiu, Valerie Tseng



1999 - Tzu Ching USA begins production for the musical, "The Unforgettable Sorrow: A Legend of Hope," a fundraising effort following the 921 Earthquake and the first large-scale national project undertaken by the NATC.

2004 - Tzu Ching Retreat at Southern Region in Houston, TX



2008 - National Retreats officially become "Leadership Conferences" and begin including classes in English.

2008 - Conference at National Headquarters in San Dimas, CA.

2008 - Tzu Ching USA 10th Anniversary.



2011 - Tzu Ching USA distributes school supplies in South Africa. This huge effort takes months of preparation from Tzu Ching across the US.



2013 - Conference at National Headquarters in San Dimas, CA  
2013 Tzu Ching USA celebrates its 15th anniversary



1999

2000

2001

2002

2003

2005

2008

2009

2010

2010

2012

Columbus, OH

Rutgers University, New York University, Cornell University, University of California, San Diego

University of Michigan

Torrance, CA  
Atlanta, GA  
Tucson, AZ

Lansing, MI  
Chicago, IL

Michigan State University

University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, University of California, Irvine

Tzu Ching undertakes a Morning Dharma study initiative in the US  
Stony Brook University

San Jose, CA

Honolulu, HI  
Stockton, CA  
New York City, NY

Texas A&M University, Georgia Institute of Technology, Emory University, The University of Texas, Austin

1999

2000

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2011

2013

The Ohio State University, University of California, Los Angeles

The first National Tzu Ching Retreat is held in Los Angeles, CA.

University of California, Davis

University of Southern California

University of Washington

St. Louis, MO

Tzu Ching undertakes a Morning Dharma study initiative in the US  
San Francisco, CA

Florida State University, University of Central Missouri, Schenectady County Community College, San Jose State University, University of California, Merced

University of Hawaii, Manoa, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, The University of Texas, Dallas, University of the Pacific

California State University, Northridge, University of Maryland, College Park



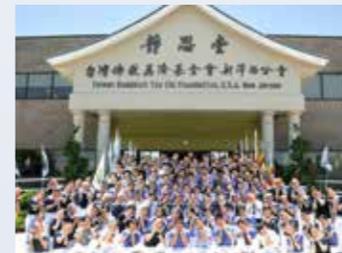
2002 - The NATC is recognized to be two distinct entities: Tzu Ching USA and Tzu Ching Canada



2006 August - Tzu Ching USA participates in the Youth Assembly at the United Nations for the first time.



2010 - Conference at Midwest Region in Darien, IL.



2011 - Conference at Mid-Atlantic Region in Cedar Grove, NJ



2012 - Conference at Central Region in Dallas, TX

Community Chapter Established  
Campus Chapter Established

2014 - Conference at Mid-Atlantic Region in Cedar Grove, NJ. This is the first Tzu Ching conference using English as the primary language.



2016 - Conference at the Northwest Region in San Jose, CA



2017 - Conference at the Greater Washington D.C. Region in Reston, VA



2014	2016	2017	2017	2018
University of California, Riverside, University of Iowa, California State University, Long Beach, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Arizona State University	California State University, Fresno, Fordham University	Berkeley City College	Peralta District, CA	Pasadena City College, CA



2015 - Conference at Southern Region in Houston, TX



2018 - Conference at National Headquarters in San Dimas, CA  
2018 - Tzu Ching USA celebrates its 20th anniversary

# Seizing the Moment



Yen-Ping Liu

*When we idle away our time, we are wasting our life, but if we can proactively serve others, we are making good use of our life.*

~ Dharma Master Cheng Yen ~

“Hello everyone, welcome to the magnificent Chez de Jing-Si! I am Jack, the Curriculum Team Lead, also known as your Head Chef. We have an amazing feast prepared for you to enrich your senses, with four amazing dishes called the All-Embracing-Virtues!”

Standing at the podium at the 2018 English Spiritual Retreat in Houston, Texas, this is how Jack Fan introduces the Buddhist concepts of the Four-All Embracing Virtues: “giving,” “beneficial conduct,” “loving speech,” and “working together.” The crowd erupts into laughter, amused, engaged, entertained. Young and tall, and standing with a navy blue Tzu Chi apron and tall white chef’s hat, who else could have thought of such a strange, whimsical, and comical way to introduce Buddhist

principles to the audience--and who else could have pulled it off so successfully, with such apparent ease?

The presentation was a success, as many of Jack’s endeavors are. With a bright smile, Jack sets the tone of the entire retreat, before stepping off the stage to roaring applause. Who is this person, and how did he get here?

At first glance, it may be difficult to characterize Jack. With a relaxed and easygoing persona, Jack can charm a crowd, bringing humor and energy to the room. But offstage, Jack is quiet and unassuming. Behind the carefree exterior lies a thoughtful, precise, and highly skilled individual. A Tzu Chi Collegiate Association (TCCA, also known as Tzu Ching) alumni turned dentist, Jack



bridges two worlds, mentoring Tzu Chi's college group while serving as part of the medical mission. With Jack's experiences and vision, he represents the new, young generation of leadership that will shape Tzu Chi in the United States.

Jack's journey in Tzu Chi began at the age of five, when his grandmother took him to meet Master Cheng Yen at the Jing Si abode in Hualien, Taiwan. As she patted Jack on the head, other volunteers nearby joked that Jack would surely become a volunteer when he grew up. Years later, as a college student at University of California, San Diego (UCSD) Jack would in fact join Tzu Chi as a collegiate volunteer. In October 2003, a huge wildfire raged throughout San Diego County. With UCSD canceling many classes, Jack eagerly rose to the occasion to take part in a relief distribution for people who had lost their homes due to the wildfires. There, he witnessed the principles of Tzu Chi's relief work first-hand. As he saw how volunteers interacted with the affected, consoling them and handing out the distribution supplies personally with a 90-degree bow, Jack was touched. The volunteers' dedication and the harmonious way the event was coordinated inspired Jack to join Tzu Chi.



*Jack (left) performs a sign language song as a collegiate volunteer.*

Jack would continue to volunteer throughout his college years, but as he served, he often felt hesitant in taking on different roles and responsibilities. This reluctance would eventually turn into his biggest struggle as a volunteer. Jack recalls, "The senior volunteers always had high expectations for us Tzu Ching; we were told we are the future of Tzu Chi, we are the seeds that will sprout. It is our responsibility to pass on the Dharma." Jack frequently felt that the work was too much for him to take on or that he was not the right person for the job. At the same time, Jack felt a sense of community and family among those in Tzu Chi. As he fondly remembers, "A lot of the volunteers treated us like their own kids. They would invite us to come to their home to eat and would always check up on us."

With the support of other volunteers, Jack gradually began to take on different tasks. Seeing the results each time, Jack felt empowered. In one particular instance, during a New Year ceremony, a senior volunteer asked him how he wanted the stage to be set up. At that moment, Jack realized, “It’s my stage now.” Jack dedicated himself to the stage design, managing the lighting, layout, and all of the other particular details. In the end, he had set up the stage according to his vision. After the ceremony, Jack heard people comment on how fitting the stage was for the event, how well-thought-out the layout was, and how well the lighting worked. People noticed all of the details that Jack had considered. Jack’s motivation grew and he began to challenge himself by taking up new responsibilities and broadening his horizons.

After graduating from UCSD, Jack found work as an administrative assistant at Tzu Chi USA Medical Foundation. Though Jack was working there, he was still unsure of what he wanted to do; he was looking for a direction in his career. Through the free clinics held by the medical foundation, Jack gained experience training on the job as a dental assistant, but his heart was not set on a dental career until he participated in a medical outreach for those affected by Hurricane Katrina.

That outreach was a life-changing experience for Jack. Working as an assistant to Dr. Lai, a volunteer dentist, Jack was especially touched by one particular case. One of the dental patients

treated by Dr. Lai had been in the hurricane, and as she was getting out of her house, she was hit in the face by a bookshelf. This broke her two front teeth, and she was unable to afford treatment. As a result, the woman was very self-conscious; she didn’t dare to smile.

As Jack watched, Dr. Lai spent over an hour working to fill in and shape the woman’s two broken teeth so that they would match her other teeth. Although Jack thought that Dr. Lai could have done the same job quickly, resulting in functional but unsightly teeth, Dr. Lai took the time to provide highest quality care. After the procedure was finished, the patient looked at herself in the mirror. Jack could see that the result had transformed her; it was a great boost to her confidence. It was clear that to Dr. Lai, the people who came to see him were not just “patients,” they were people truly in need of help. The results of these dental services were life-changing. This experience led to Jack’s decision to pursue dentistry, and he committed himself to this new direction in life.

While in dental school, despite his heavy workload, Jack remained connected to Tzu Chi. When he relocated to Austin, Texas to begin his dental career, Jack soon connected with the local Tzu Chi service center in search of volunteer opportunities. In Austin, he met Tzu Chi volunteer Jessie Lee, who was leading the TCCA chapter at the University of Texas. Despite battling cancer,

Jessie put all her energy into loving and caring for the collegiate volunteers there. Her tireless dedication was a great inspiration for Jack as he became more involved with mentoring the TCCA members at the University of Texas, whether organizing meetings throughout the semester or guiding student officers through training retreats.

Working with Jessie, Jack came to see the importance of seizing every moment to do good. Reflecting on Tzu Chi's teachings, he most frequently thinks about Master Cheng Yen's words, "When we idle away our time, we are wasting our life, but if we can proactively serve others, we are making good use of our life." Jack has changed from a person who was uncertain about the future and reluctant to taking on responsibilities to a person who leads and guides others while striving to seize every second. Jack's experiences culminated in the 2018 English Spiritual Retreat, when he successfully served as the lead of the curriculum team. Just a few months later, Jack would again participate in running a national event as he served as a curriculum mentor for the Tzu Ching 20th Anniversary Retreat in San Dimas, California.

In his work as Tzu Ching advisor, Jack has increasingly seen the Tzu Ching as the future of Tzu Chi USA. He sees the creativity and innovation of the Tzu Ching. Along with the energy they bring to the organization, the youth are constantly finding new ways to do things. With their skills in communication and technology, Jack

*Jack (center) assists in a dental treatment at a medical outreach in New Orleans.*



finds that the youth have enormous potential to do things more efficiently, a quality that deeply resonates with him. Jack finds the Tzu Ching he advises to be a source of motivation that pushes him toward innovation. Having learned through his own journey in Tzu Chi, Jack is now in the perfect position to nurture and guide the next generation to success. "I want to build bridges between the older generation and the younger ones. The older generation have a lot of experience to share, but the younger generation can also inspire them with their creativity. It's important to learn from and inspire each other." 🌿

*Yen-Ping is a volunteer in the Tzu Chi Austin service center. He became a certified volunteer in 2009 and has been mentoring Tzu Chi Collegiate Association members at University of Texas at Austin.*



◀ TCCA graduates and members embrace Jessie SG and wish her improved health at the chapter's first annual graduation ceremony in May, 2015. (Photo: Thomas Hong)



# 'Til the Very Last Breath

## Regan Wang

*"We cannot control the length of our life, but we have the ability to expand its breadth and depth."*

~ Dharma Master Cheng Yen ~

“Dear all, Our beloved Jessie Lee SG\* just passed away this morning. She is currently placed in a funeral home and her memorial service date is to be determined at the moment. Please include her in your prayer.”

These were the words posted in the *Tzu Ching Officers 2014-2015* Facebook group on June 21, 2015. It was a regular Sunday afternoon in the middle of summer. I was only casually browsing through Facebook. This wasn't supposed to happen. I knew she was sick, but I had no idea it was like this.

*Tzu* means “compassion,” and *Ching* means “youth.” Tzu Ching refers to the members of Tzu Chi Collegiate Association (TCCA), the college affiliate of Tzu Chi Foundation. Jessie Lee served as lead advisor for the TCCA chapter at The University of Texas at Austin (UT Austin) from 2012, when the chapter was re-established at the university, until her passing in 2015. She was 49. In her short time leading TCCA Austin, she spearheaded the effort to re-establish the chapter and drove the chapter's remarkable success story.

\*SG is short for the Chinese characters *shi gu*, which literally translate to “teacher” and “aunt.” *Shi gu* is a respectful title that younger volunteers use to address more senior female volunteers in Tzu Chi. The male equivalent is *shi bo* (SB), which translate to “teacher” and “uncle.”



*TCCA Austin officers and advisors, with Jessie SG in the middle, proudly display the chapter banner while holding up UT Austin's "Hook 'em Horns" hand sign.  
(Photo: Provided by Tsang-bin Wen)*

Only two months earlier, I was elected president of the TCCA Austin chapter. One month later, on behalf of everyone in attendance at TCCA Austin's first annual graduation ceremony, I presented a bouquet of

sunflowers to Jessie SG to wish her improved health. After she received the flowers, the graduates and I all embraced her in a tender moment, and, as far as we knew, everything was going to be okay. I thought I would soon be working more closely with her as chapter president. That was my reality.

What I didn't know – what we all didn't know – was that Jessie SG had been battling a recurrence of endometrial stromal sarcoma, a rare form of uterine cancer, since the discovery of its relapse in 2013. She had first discovered a tumor from the same cancer in 2009 and had it surgically removed the same year. In 2011, in light of her previous cancer history and changes in her work environment, Jessie SG made the decision to leave her full-time job as

a senior software engineer to focus more on her own health. It wasn't until two years after she left her job when she finally discovered that the cancer had relapsed.

After leaving her job in 2011, Jessie SG divided her time between tending to her family and volunteering with Tzu Chi. For a number of months, she contemplated her next steps in life – how did she want to focus her time and energy moving forward?

She found that answer in January of 2012. During an annual Lunar New Year event hosted by the Tzu Chi Austin Service Center, Jessie SG noticed a group of college-aged adults volunteering to help out at the event. This was an unexpected sight – a TCCA chapter had been established in Austin in the late 1990s, but that group had dissolved by the mid-2000s. Who were these young folks, and how did they know about Tzu Chi?



*Jessie SG poses for a selfie with Tzu Ching as they rehearse for a Lunar New Year performance in February, 2015. (Photo: Provided by Michelle Su)*

Jessie SG and her family enjoy Spring flowers in full bloom at Wildseed Farms in Fredericksburg, TX in April, 2004. (Photo: Shawn Su)



Jessie SG quickly found out that these young adults were current UT Austin students who were connected to the Tzu Chi office in Houston. She knew this was it. The chance had come for Tzu Ching to be re-established in Austin, and she knew she couldn't allow this opportunity to pass her by.

Jessie SG had found her next step, her purpose. She wasted no time. By that summer, an idea that had sparked just months earlier had given rise to an officially registered organization on campus.

Over the next 3 years, TCCA Austin would become one of the fastest growing and most successful TCCA chapters in the US. The early days were tough. A relatively inexperienced officer group faced the enormous responsibility of building a meaningful and sustainable organization from the ground up. Through the inevitable challenges of direction setting, event planning, and membership recruiting, Jessie SG's extensive experience and careful guidance enabled Austin Tzu Ching to establish some of the most foundational elements of the organization – a family system with SG “moms” and SB “dads,” key chapter events that are still held to this day, and most importantly, a

powerful spirit of service, sincerity, and family.

In a few short years, Jessie SG had transformed a hopeful dream into a vivid reality. By the time I was elected president, TCCA Austin was quickly becoming a model chapter across the nation. It was readily apparent to anyone who worked with Jessie SG that she was exceptional in all aspects of leading an organization. Yet, her greatest impact was not operational in nature. To the countless individuals whose lives she touched, her impact was deeply personal.

Po-Chen Yang, secretary of TCCA Austin from 2013-2014, reflects, “I feel that if I hadn't met Jessie SG, I don't know if I would have been able to make it through college.” Po-Chen was born with a hearing loss and relies on hearing aids to communicate. As a result, he had always found it extremely difficult to carry normal conversations and develop relationships with others. When he met Jessie SG, she helped him begin to build the connections he had always longed for. “I was usually the one who had to step out [to try and reach others], and even then, I wasn't able to interact much with other people. But she actively stepped into my life... With her support, I gradually got to know each person better. She opened the door for me to build deeper relationships with others.” These deeper relationships, coupled with the constant emotional support from Jessie SG, enabled Po-Chen to navigate even the toughest trials of his college years.

Trial by trial, Jessie SG became Po-Chen's closest confidant. He reminisces, "I feel that in those couple of years, she was probably the one who knew the story of my college life the best. Whether good or bad, I felt that I could tell Jessie SG anything." Iris Yeh, public relations officer from 2012-2013, echoes this sentiment. "I could trust her fully. I never had to worry that she would give up on me. No matter what I did, she would always be there... Just like a mother. She really was just like a mother."

To many of us, *mom* is exactly what Jessie SG was. Shawn Su, Jessie SG's husband, recalls, "She really treated these kids as her own. Even to the point that sometimes Michelle and Eric [their children] would be kind of jealous!" Michelle Su, Jessie SG's daughter, jokingly confirms, "All these people would come looking for my mom. She was always needed, always wanted, and I was like, 'Dang, what about me?'"

Truly, Jessie SG spent so many of her waking moments on us, for us, with us. She held the responsibility of our futures as her own, and she took it upon herself to show us that we were so much more than we believed we could be.

Jacky Kuo remembers that he wanted nothing to do with volunteering and Tzu Chi in his freshman year. He recalls leading a self-serving lifestyle and having little interest in others. Nevertheless, Jessie SG would gently remind him that he was always

welcome in the Tzu Ching family. "Because of her constant open arms, I didn't fall away... She never judged me for what I was doing then... She never gave up on my potential to do good, even when sometimes I may have given up on myself." When Jacky was ready, Jessie SG's open arms welcomed and embraced him. He realized he hadn't been the person he wanted to be, and he resolved to redefine his life from that point onward. Three years later, he would serve as chapter president.

One by one, Jessie SG touched our hearts and transformed our lives. Alice Jean, officer from 2013-2015, tells me, "Every Mother's Day, I still send her a Mother's Day message on Facebook. I know it'll never be read, but she just has this ability to inspire others and continues to inspire me." Michelle exclaims, "Well, I mean, if she's the mom of all these Tzu Ching, that means she left me behind with all these brothers and sisters." She sure did.

Tsang-bin Wen, director of the Tzu Chi Austin Service Center, tells us that during the graduation ceremony, Jessie SG had said to him, "I think this may be my



*A resident at a local nursing home follows along as Jessie SG performs sign language during an annual holiday party held for the residents in December, 2014. (Photo: Thomas Hong)*



*Tzu Ching deputy advisor Jack Fan (first from left) and officers run towards Jessie SG for a group hug while filming a video representing US Tzu Ching in March, 2015. (Photo: Thomas Hong)*

More than building an organization, Jessie SG was building the future – for each one of us, and through each one of us. *This* was her aspiration.

And for this aspiration, she gave her all – until the very last breath. 🌿

*Regan Wang graduated from The University of Texas at Austin in 2016 and currently works as a project manager. He continues to be involved with Tzu Chi at a local and national level.*

graduation too.” That day, we never would have known that Jessie SG was pushing her physical limits to even be in attendance, much less to present herself in the same dignified, spirited manner we had always known. To us, she was just Jessie SG as usual. Angel Chen, deputy advisor in the chapter’s early years, recounts, “Towards the end, she was using sheer willpower to participate in all of the events. Yet, when you saw her, you couldn’t tell.” Eric Su, Jessie SG’s son, remembers, “She didn’t want to see this illness as a disability or excuse to not do something.” When Jessie SG’s body shouldn’t have been able to do anything more, her heart, her mind, and the strength of her will enabled her to do more anyway. Angel SG continues, “Her aspiration gave her the strength to fulfill her purpose before she left. When I look back, that’s just it – she just had such a strong aspiration.”



*Regan Wang takes a photo with Jessie SG at his first US TCCA Leadership Conference in August, 2013. (Photo: Yen-Ping Liu)*



# Two Hearts, One Mission – Introducing Tzu Chi

Marco Tjioe

*Transient though life may be, one's contributions will live on;  
as love knows no boundaries, its spirit will always remain.*

~ Dharma Master Cheng Yen ~

*Amor, amor, amor!”*

*“Love, love, love!”*

*“Ai ni, ai ni, ai ni!”*

*These are the words exchanged during the Midwest Tzu Chi aid distribution at Casa Central in Chicago on July 1, 2018, as Yahmei Hsieh begins the distribution by welcoming families from Puerto Rico. Many of these families had taken refuge in Chicago in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria. As many as 137 families have joined the aid distribution event, which has garnered support from the local Spanish speaking community and the city of Chicago.*

*“Ai ni’ means ‘love’ in Chinese, just like ‘amor’ means ‘love’ in Spanish,” says Yahmei in her typical high-spirited voice. She smiles from ear to ear. Repeating ‘ai ni’ three times is Yahmei’s signature cheer, and it is very effective in conveying the warmth of the Tzu Chi family during aid distributions.*

*Yahmei passes the microphone to her husband, Chong Hsieh, the executive director of Tzu Chi USA Midwest Region. “Do you know what Tzu Chi means?” Chong asks the crowd. “It means ‘compassion and relief.’ What you receive today may not be much, but we want you to know that it comes with the love and blessings from people all over the world.” The audience erupts in cheers.*

Yahmei and Chong have been active in Tzu Chi for over 20 years. What started as a spiritual search turned into a full dedication to grow the Tzu Chi Midwest family. “Our Dharma names, which are the names Master Cheng Yen gave us, can be combined and rearranged to mean ‘introduce Tzu Chi,’ explains Yahmei. Indeed, throughout the years, many people in the Midwest region have come to learn of Tzu Chi, and there has been a growing number of Midwest volunteers—this is the outcome of the guidance from Yahmei and Chong.

Their journey started in 1996, as Yahmei frequented bookstores to learn about financial investments. At the time, Yahmei was also searching for a spiritual path to follow. She stumbled across the book “Master of Love and Mercy: Cheng Yen,” and learned how similar Master Cheng Yen is to Mother Teresa, a spiritual figure Yahmei had wanted to meet. This prompted Yahmei to contact the Tzu Chi office in Los Angeles. From then on, her affinity with Tzu Chi grew, nurtured by the volunteers who made Tzu Chi feel like a home to her.

Although Chong supported Yahmei’s involvement in Tzu Chi, he was cautious in the beginning, as he did not know the organization well. He followed Yahmei wherever she went to make sure she was safe. Chong often watched the ‘Tzu Chi World’ program broadcasted from California on satellite TV. Many scenes in the program touched Chong’s heart, and some even moved him to tears. When he and Yahmei visited global Tzu Chi headquarters in Hualien, Taiwan for the first time in May 1997, he learned how Master Cheng Yen was moved to establish Tzu Chi Hospital upon seeing a pool of blood from an expectant mother. The mother had been denied care because her family could not afford to pay the security deposit for the treatment. This story struck a chord with Chong, who was immediately

reminded of his own mother who had gone through colon cancer. Chong recalled how his family did not have enough money to pay for the treatment deposit. Chong, who was 12 years old at that time, recalled walking with his father around their village all night to ask people if they could borrow money for the surgery. Unfortunately, they did not collect enough money since many were poor at that time. Chong recalled thinking about how much suffering the poor had to experience. He vowed that when he grew up and made enough money, he would try to help the people who were in need, especially those who did not have money for medical treatment or basic necessities they desperately needed. At Hualien, Chong realized



◀ Chong Hsieh (back row, first from right) and Yahmei Hsieh (front row, fourth from right) with youth volunteers at Midwest Tzu Chi headquarters in Darien, Illinois. (Photo: Sylvia Aye)

that the work being done by Tzu Chi was exactly what he had dreamed of doing when



he was a little boy. Since then, he has followed the Tzu Chi path, dedicating his life as a volunteer.

After their first meeting with Master Cheng Yen, Yahmei and Chong returned to Cleveland. A few months later, they received a call from a Tzu Chi volunteer with whom Yahmei was close, Jing Yi, who told them about Master Cheng Yen's wish to set up a Tzu Chi office in Cleveland. On June 29, 1997, Stephen Huang, CEO of Tzu Chi USA, came to Cleveland and worked with Yahmei and Chong to establish a Tzu Chi chapter. Around 250 people came for the opening ceremony, and donations were collected to support the new chapter. Tzu Chi in Cleveland started a little differently from other Tzu Chi chapters at

that time. Rather than starting from charity, the first regular event at Cleveland was a morning prayer every Sunday. It was a service that reflected Yahmei and Chong's dedication to Tzu Chi's value of spiritual cultivation. As time passed, the Cleveland chapter incorporated all four of Tzu Chi's missions, charity, medicine, education, and humanistic culture, into its activities. Yahmei and Chong went back to Hualien often to learn more about Tzu Chi and ensure that the Cleveland chapter was aligned with Tzu Chi's founding spirit. Master Cheng Yen often encouraged them to stay longer at the Jing Si Abode whenever they returned to Hualien.

In 2003, Master Cheng Yen asked Yahmei



*Volunteers take a group photo after an aid distribution for the Puerto Rican families affected by Hurricane Maria. (Photo: Scully Chen)*

if she would become the executive director of Tzu Chi in the Midwest Region. Accepting this assignment would mean leaving behind a life of contentment in Cleveland and relocating to the Chicago metropolitan area. That year, as Yahmei traveled to different Tzu Chi offices, she considered Master Cheng Yen's request. By that point, the Tzu Chi volunteers she worked with had become her family. Thus, Yahmei agreed to take care of her Tzu Chi family in the 12 states of the Midwest region.

Running the operations in Chicago took a lot of dedication, yet Yahmei was up to the challenge, encouraged by Master Cheng Yen's assurance that she would do well in Tzu Chi. For the first 6 months, Yahmei lived out of a hotel room in Chicago. She thought that she would simply help to organize Tzu Chi in Chicago and return to Cleveland once she completed her service. But half a year became a year, and a year became sixteen years. Yahmei is still in Chicago today, helping to lead volunteers. This is a responsibility that she shares with Chong, who has been with her every step of the way. For nine years, Chong would fly to Chicago from Cleveland every Friday to meet with Yahmei and help with Tzu Chi in Chicago. Every Monday morning, both would wake up at 3:30 am; Yahmei would drive Chong to the airport in Chicago to send him off to Cleveland for his work. Throughout all their efforts, Chong and Yahmei have been supportive of each other. "We each do

50%, so together we do 100%," says Yahmei.

These days, Chong and Yahmei are diligently working to help support the future generations of Tzu Chi's leadership. "We have a lot of expectations for the younger generation," Yahmei says. "I feel like a mother to the younger generation. I really love and respect our youth volunteers, and I learn a lot from them. At the same time, I want them to learn about discipline, gratitude, respect, and love."

After years of dedication, their efforts in training the youth are gradually coming to fruition. At any given time at the Tzu Chi Chicago headquarters, young volunteers work alongside experienced volunteers, doing anything from taking photos and videos, organizing scholarship award ceremonies, developing children's summer camps, leading sign language rehearsals, planning disaster relief distributions, or teaching in the Tzu Chi Chinese school. Across the Midwest region, there are Tzu Chi Collegiate Association groups with young volunteers independently planning community service, fundraising, and group bonding activities. Chong and Yahmei carry the responsibility to make sure the work of Tzu Chi's Midwest region continues to move in the right direction. They also hope that the young generation will understand the teachings of Master Cheng Yen. "The young volunteers are the future leaders of Tzu Chi," says Chong. "If we don't guide them right, Tzu Chi will face a lot of challenges. We need to pass down Tzu Chi's mission."

*“Young volunteers in front!” comes a voice from the stage as everyone shuffles for a group picture. The Puerto Rican Hurricane Maria aid distribution has just ended. It is a successful event, with 137 families served. The warm and loving atmosphere is a result of the hard work that Chong and Yahmei have put in throughout the years in organizing Tzu Chi in the Midwest and guiding the volunteers. “It was very emotional for me. I was really feeling all the love,” says one aid recipient. “Giving love to people in such a way is really warm and refreshing,” says one of the 42 Spanish-speaking volunteers who underwent training a day before the distribution. As the group photo is taken, a feeling of unity binds all volunteers together.*

*Young and old, everyone has come together to make a difference in the lives of families in need. Yahmei and Chong smile for the picture, sharing a sense of gratitude with the volunteers who make it all possible. 🌱*

*Marco Tjioe is a Tzu Chi volunteer in the Tzu Chi USA Midwest region. He is a Tzu Chi Collegiate Association alumni from the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, and is currently volunteering to teach the Humanistic Culture class at the Indianapolis Tzu Chi service center. Marco works at Indianapolis as a post-doctoral researcher.*



*Yahmei Hsieh and Tzu Chi Collegiate Association volunteers bid farewell to students from James Ward school after a Happy Campus program event at Midwest Tzu Chi Headquarters (Photo: Phillips Kay)*

Carolyn (far left) with other Tzu Ching during her first hospital volunteer camp in Taiwan in 1994. (Photo: Carolyn Chen's collection)



# A Mother's Heart

Alec Chi

*"The greatest blessing in life is peace. The greatest joy in life is love."*

~ Dharma Master Cheng Yen ~

As far as anyone knew, Carolyn Chen would not be attending the Tzu Chi Collegiate Association (TCCA, also known as Tzu Ching) 20th Anniversary Retreat.

It wasn't that she did not want to attend, but it would be very difficult for her. Carolyn had just had a baby, and taking care of her newborn daughter along with her older son was a full-time commitment. Considering that Carolyn lived with her family in Houston, Texas and the retreat was in San Dimas, California, it would have been a long

journey even under normal circumstances.

So of course, everyone was in shock when Carolyn appeared on Friday afternoon. She came to encourage and congratulate the camp staff and Tzu Ching for their hard work in making the event a success.

This is the kind of dedication that Carolyn has. Although busy, Carolyn knew that the Tzu Ching retreat was something she could not miss. For Carolyn, the visit was just part of her aspiration to guide and support the young generation of





collegiate volunteers who are just as much a part of her family as her husband and children are. Indeed, family has always been at the center of Carolyn's experiences in Tzu Chi, and it is by balancing the responsibilities of taking care of her family and taking care of her own heart that Carolyn has been able to give so much to others.

Carolyn's journey in Tzu Chi began through her family. In 1994, Carolyn attended her first summer camp, volunteering at Tzu Chi Hospital in Hualien, Taiwan. Her mother signed her up, and at first, Carolyn did not like it at all. They stayed at the Jing Si Abode, which was very different back then; the summer heat was uncomfortable, and it was out in the countryside. At that time, the dorms weren't built yet, so Carolyn and the attendees would sleep in the offices while other people were still busily working.

But as the summer went on, Carolyn's affinity with Tzu Chi grew. Though Carolyn was always sleepy in the mornings when the morning sutra recitations started, she soon developed an interest for them. Carolyn also noticed that she had grown quite fond of the patients she saw every day in the hospital and the doctors and nurses she assisted, as well as the halls she walked through. During the last days of the camp, an elderly man who reminded Carolyn of her

own grandfather gave her some advice. He told her that she should learn Taiwanese. At the time, Carolyn only spoke Mandarin and English, and this presented a language barrier with her own grandparents, who only knew Taiwanese. The next day, Master Cheng Yen had some parting words as well. She suggested that if the volunteers could tend to those in the hospital, who had been complete strangers, then they could be just as patient and caring with their own families.

Those short bits of advice from both the elderly man in the hospital and from Master Cheng Yen that summer had a huge impact on Carolyn. Taking their advice, Carolyn started learning Taiwanese and tried to better communicate with her grandparents. Suddenly, a new world of stories, experiences, and philosophies opened up to her as she and her grandparents became closer. She even learned the story of how they had fallen in love. Years later, after both her grandparents had passed



*Master Cheng Yen certifies overseas TCCA officers in 1998. (Photo: Carolyn Chen's collection)*

away, Carolyn reflected that she had been able to become very close to them because she learned how to communicate with them.

After returning to the United States from her first summer camp, despite being an ocean away from Taiwan, Carolyn's dedication to Tzu Chi only grew. She would be highly involved in Tzu Chi events and activities throughout high school and in college as she was attending Texas A&M in College Station. At that time, in order to participate in Tzu Chi events, Carolyn would make a weekly three-hour round-trip from College Station to Houston, where she and her fellow Tzu Ching members would spend their time participating in nursing home visits, going to women's centers, and doing home visits for the elderly. The long drive did not affect Carolyn's enjoyment in Tzu Chi activities in the slightest. Whenever there were events outside of Tzu Chi that required her attention, Carolyn would always think, "I wish I was at Tzu Chi instead."

Although all of Master Cheng Yen's teachings have had an impact on Carolyn's life, there is one teaching in particular that stands out to Carolyn, and it has become Carolyn's signature teaching. In 1997, in a personal interaction with Master Cheng Yen, Carolyn vowed that she would do anything to help her. Anywhere, anytime, Carolyn told Master Cheng Yen that she would do whatever she could, even if all she could give was the strength in a single finger. In response, Master Cheng Yen

replied, "The most basic thing you can always do for me is to take good care of your heart."

As Carolyn continued to advance on the Tzu Chi path, she began working on the national stage, becoming a national Tzu Ching advisor in 2016 for Tzu Chi USA. Carolyn has seldom missed an annual Tzu Ching retreat and has been the driving force in planning and implementing them since 2010. However, as she achieved milestones in her Tzu Chi life, milestones in her personal life would start to compete for her attention as Carolyn started to raise her own family.

These days, as Carolyn cares for her children, she often returns to when Master Cheng Yen instructed her to take care of her own heart. With two children to raise, Carolyn faces the challenge of balancing her time in Tzu Chi and her time as a mother. The value that Carolyn places on family and the value she places on Tzu Chi are, at least at this point, in direct competition, and Carolyn frequently feels the strain and tension in balancing both parts of her life. "The conflict is always there," she says. "If you really want to commit to the work of Tzu Chi, it requires a lot of time and a lot of energy, both physical and mental." Motherhood requires just as much attention.

Yet, Carolyn has found ways to bring both aspects of her life, Tzu Chi and motherhood, together in complementary ways. Although she initially felt guilty about not being able to commit to Tzu Chi in the same ways she used to, Carolyn

*Carolyn promoting vegetarianism with her husband Jason and son George.  
(Photo: Carolyn Chen's collection)*

thought to herself, “If I can’t do as much work in Tzu Chi as I could before because I need to raise my children, then I had better make sure I focus completely when I take care of them. If I do a bad job as a parent and I am not doing Tzu Chi work, then my time is completely wasted.” Thus, Carolyn has turned her struggle into motivation to raise her children well.

As a parent, Carolyn applies one of the fundamental characteristics of Tzu Chi’s teachings; she always remembers that the teachings are meant to be applied in daily life. Carolyn frequently reads Tzu Chi stories on vegetarianism to her children to teach them about respecting life and caring for the environment. Although Carolyn says that she is not a good cook, she has been practicing how to cook vegetarian food for her family, and she has taught her older child to respect life. As a result of Carolyn’s guidance, her son George does not kill mosquitos or ants, but will gently blow them away instead if they are bothering him. Although Carolyn guides her children the best she can and hopes they will come to walk on the Tzu Chi path as she does, she also ultimately sees that her role is not to force Tzu Chi or any other lifestyle onto them, but just to share with her children the things that are important to her.

In the same way, Carolyn wants to support the next generation of leaders in Tzu Chi. She hopes that each generation of Tzu Ching can learn to work together as a family in the United States,



with a broader view that goes beyond college chapters and regional areas. Just as Carolyn hopes to guide and support her own children, she hopes that experiences and stories will be passed down in Tzu Chi from generation to generation.

As Carolyn continues to move forward, she feels like she is starting a new journey, and she is learning new things every day. Yet she has also gained wisdom as she reflects on the teaching Master Cheng Yen gave her about taking care of her own heart. This teaching has helped Carolyn realize that one can only take on Master Cheng Yen’s mission when one has begun the journey of becoming a better person. 🌱

*Alec Chi is a student at Brooklyn College pursuing a degree in dietetics. He enjoys growing, cooking, and eating plants. As a Tzu Chi Collegiate Association member, he continues to support his college chapter and volunteer with Tzu Chi.*

# Reflections of Impermanence from Pahoa

Devin Makizuru

*When faced with negative circumstances, we must not be resentful.*

*Instead, we must be forgiving and gracious.*

~ Dharma Master Cheng Yen ~

What do you say to someone who has just lost their home?

This was the question that ran through my mind before our first disaster relief distribution on the Big Island.

Although I had some experience as a Tzu Chi

volunteer from supporting nursing home residents in Honolulu, I had never been on a disaster relief trip. Just one month before, fissures on the sides of the volcano, Kilauea, suddenly began to release a flood of lava that burned through houses and properties on its way down to the ocean. Now, I was part of a team going to the Big Island. We

were going to do a hot meal service at the community shelter and bring comfort and support to the people there.

I didn't know what to expect. Would the people there be welcoming? Perhaps they would feel depressed, or maybe even angry.

*The Big Island lava flow destroyed houses and land on its way down to the ocean.  
(Photo: Devin Makizuru)*





All I knew was that those who ended up in the shelter had lost almost everything they had.

Arriving at the shelter, I took my position at the water station, adding slices of lemons and limes to the cups of water we would be serving. As I saw the volunteers mindfully plating the lunches, my eyes were drawn to a couple sitting near one end of the room. The man had his arm around his wife who was sitting, hunched over, her head in her hands. He was speaking to her quietly, assuring her that everything would be alright. The couple stayed seated even when the shelter residents had started to gather at the front of the room to receive their meals. I walked over.

“Hello, my name is Devin. Would you like some water?”

They turned toward me; a moment passed. “Yes, that would be nice; thank you,” the women replied. Before I knew it, they had invited me to sit down with them.

We spent the next 20 minutes talking as the couple told me their story. “We had moved out here to the Big Island. It took us years of searching, and we finally found the perfect home. We had actually just finished moving in. Then this happened.”

I asked them if they had just lost access to their home or if their house had been destroyed by the lava flow.

“It’s gone,” the wife said. “We had been told to

evacuate, and we have been listening to the news every day on the radio. Now, we know for sure. All of the houses in that area have been destroyed.”

I was suddenly at a loss for words. What do you say people who have gone through such losses? Finally, I spoke. “I’m so sorry. I cannot imagine what you must be going through.”

The couple nodded, and we shared another moment of silence. After a long while, I asked them, “What will you do now?”

At that moment, something changed. Suddenly, it was as if their thoughts shifted from the past and present to the future.

“We will stay here,” the husband said resolutely.

“We lost what we have, so the only thing left to do is move forward,” the wife added. Then we began a new conversation, a conversation about options and opportunities, a conversation about a new life.

It was clear that this couple was already looking to the future. Though they had lost their home, they were still strong. They had accepted what happened and were moving on. In an instant, it was as if they were completely different from the people I first saw.

Dealing with impermanence is something Master Cheng Yen frequently talks about. Indeed, impermanence is one of the fundamental teachings of Buddhism. We see and experience



*Tzu Chi Hawaii volunteers work with Big Island community volunteers to serve hot meals at Pahoehoe Community Shelter. (Photo: Mark Ladao)*

impermanence every day of our lives in both big and small ways, and we all have to face it and learn how to deal with it when it comes. Master Cheng Yen advises us to let go. Yet it can be difficult to do so. It isn't just physical items that we may need to let go of, but things that have emotional value: things that represent the effort, commitment, and love that people have devoted to building things, to creating things. However, I was soon to find that it wasn't just that one couple who was able to deal with their situation with patience and grace. Story after story, I saw the same thing repeated, people going through grief, but then turning around to look at things from a different point of view.

There was Gloria, who had to leave everything she had behind in the evacuation. She told me that she had learned the virtue of humility after staying

in the shelter, and she had resolved to help and support others who had been affected by the lava flow. A young mother who did not want to burden her family by staying with them in an over-crowded apartment on Oahu told me how she was

determined to stay in the shelter for the time being to recover. Despite losing her home, she still wanted to live on the Big Island and be part of the community. And then there were Native Hawaiian community members who were planning to establish a self-sustaining community once the lava flow died down. Despite their losses, all of these people had not only responded to their circumstances with acceptance, they held on to hope.

The next day, as we drove to visit the lava fields, I reflected on the day before. I remarked to Paulina, our guide, that I couldn't imagine how I would deal with the situation if I were in their shoes. "I don't think I would be able to handle losing the all the things that I have, or

the discomfort of staying in a shelter without knowing when I would be able to return home, or if there would be a home I could return to.” Although I follow Master Cheng Yen’s teachings, I haven’t been in a situation where all of my material possessions were suddenly taken away from me and I was suddenly made homeless. “I’m sure you would be able to handle it.” Paulina said. “People here recognize that things are constantly changing. We never know how long things will last. While they are here, we can feel grateful, and when we lose them, we need to move on. But every person has the capacity to accept things, to pick themselves up and start again. Every person has that potential within themselves.”

The interactions with people on the Big Island are what I will remember the most from our short time there. I thought about how they dealt with hardships and disaster, and how they found their spiritual strength to pick themselves up and move on. Although I have never suffered personal losses from a disaster, I may

experience those losses one day. But I realized that if those on the Big Island could find their strength despite their losses, if the time ever comes, I would be able to find my strength too.

As we stood on the lava fields, Paulina’s friend stopped by. She would soon be losing her home in the lava flow as well. “We will rebuild,” she said. “We bought the land, so we will still have it even after the eruption is over.” She smiled softly. “It’s a new beginning.” Paulina took both of her hands and held them. “It’s a new beginning.” 🌿

*Devin Makizuru has been volunteering in Tzu Chi since 2012. He worked as a teacher before becoming a staff with Tzu Chi’s Dharma as Water Team in Hawaii.*



*Tzu Chi Hawaii volunteers pose for a group photo after the hot meal service. (Photo: Stella Chow)*



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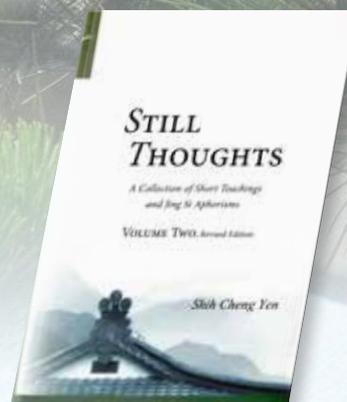


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# Dharma Q & A

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



## Regaining Youth

Q: An eighty-year-old gentleman said to Master, “My grandson said I seem to be growing younger. Is this possible?”

A: “It is because your heart is filled with love. Your loving heart not only nurtures happiness among the people around you, it also purifies your body and mind.”

## Dealing with Anxiety

Q: “Many parents are worried that their children will not excel in their schoolwork.”

A: “The hearts of parents and children are interconnected. If you are visibly anxious about their performance in school, that will disturb your children. Do not focus so much on the perceived success or failure of your child; success is invariably followed by failure. Besides, with diligence and effort, anyone can become a master in their field.”

## The Proper Approach to Life

Q: “What is the proper approach to life?”

A: “You must take responsibility for every word you say and make sure that everything you are doing is part of a larger plan. Then things that come up in the near future will not deter you from pursuing your life’s goals. Plan for the future, yet be responsible in the way you are living right now.”

*Excerpts from Jing Si Thoughts, Volume 2 compiled by Jing Si Editorial Group (Jing Si Publications, 2015). For more information, please visit Jing Si Books & Cafe (directory on pg 62-64) or [jingsi.shop](http://jingsi.shop).*

On May 26, 2018, the Tzu Chi Academy in Cupertino, California held a graduation ceremony to conclude another successful school year and congratulate students on reaching a new milestone in life. Arthur Chih (in blue) and the graduates performed the sign language drama of Venerable Jian Zhen, "From Vow to Action."

Photo: Jiang Guo-an



▲ The Kilauea Volcano eruption on the island of Hawaii displaced many people from their homes. Tzu Chi volunteers in Hawaii went to Keaau High School for three weekends in July to distribute cash cards and blankets to provide love and support to those affected. Here, a resident embraces Cheng Sheng Lee to show her gratitude.

Photo: Nancy Wei



▲ On May 14, 2018, Tzu Chi volunteers from Tzu Chi USA Headquarters Region held a Great Love Mobile Food Pantry Program distribution in partnership with Rowland Unified School District Family Resource Center in California. This program delivers fresh produce including fruits and vegetables to students and families in need. Here, volunteers hand fresh produce to recipients.

Photo: Luo Shuli

## Tzu Chi USA in Action



◀ In the United States, Father's Day is on the third Sunday of June every year. The Tzu Chi Great Love Preschool in Dallas, Texas held a Father's Day event on June 15th, 2018, inviting parents to participate. The children personally made cards to give to their parents to express their gratitude to their parents.  
Photo: Shirley Wu

▶ On May 26th, 2018, Tzu Chi USA held a scholarship award ceremony at the Tzu Chi El Monte Service Center in California. Tzu Chi USA's scholarship program encourages underprivileged students to work hard in school, in hopes that they can use the same spirit of love to give back to society in the future. Brother Han Huang (left), CEO of Tzu Chi USA, presented the awards to the award recipients.  
Photo: Luo Shuli



From March 22 to March 25, 2018, the Tzu Chi Southern Region Office held the national English Spiritual Retreat. James Fung from Indiana attended with four students from Myanmar whom he has tutored. James has sincerely and selflessly assisted the Myanmar refugees with academic mentorship, and his students, who have since joined Tzu Chi, attended this retreat together with him.  
Photo: Provided by Tzu Chi Southern Region Office





To celebrate the 52nd Anniversary of Tzu Chi, Tzu Chi volunteers in Long Island, New York held a bowing pilgrimage for the first time. They respectfully bowed every three steps, chanting the Buddha's name to pray for a world with no disasters.  
Photo: Wang Huangquan



▲ On May 27th, 2018, heavy rains in Maryland caused disastrous flooding. Tzu Chi volunteers in the Greater Washington DC area immediately launched a disaster relief operation. On June 10th, volunteers issued cash cards and eco-friendly blankets. Zhang Wenlong (left) explains how to use the cash card.  
Photo: Provided by Tzu Chi Greater Washington DC Region Office



▲ For the first time, the Tzu Chi International Medical Association USA went to Hue Quang Buddhist Temple in Santa Ana, Orange County to hold a medical clinic for Dharma masters and lay devotees, and invited Vietnamese-American doctors to provide medical services to the public. Dentist Jenny Le (right) was responsible for the first level of examination for patients.  
Photo: Luo Shuli

## Tzu Chi USA in Action



◀ During the US Tzu Chi Collegiate Association Leadership Conference on August 16-19, 2018, volunteers celebrated the 20th anniversary of Tzu Ching in the US. The conference that took place at the Tzu Chi USA Headquarters in San Dimas, CA culminated in a celebratory evening program. Here, Han Huang, the CEO of Tzu Chi USA, invites the senior volunteers, Tzu Ching alumni and their families, and the most recent Tzu Ching members to join him in cutting a birthday cake.

Photo: Pohan Chen

In mid-September 2017, Hurricane Harvey and Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico. With the assistance of the United States federal government, 450 affected families relocated to Chicago. The American Red Cross invited Tzu Chi to join the relief effort. After obtaining the list of affected households the Chicago city government, Tzu Chi volunteers held a distribution on July 1, 2018. Hispanic volunteers at the Puerto Rican Cultural Center assisted with on-site translation.

Photo: Provided by Tzu Chi Midwest Region Office



# Tzu Chi Collegiate Association Anthem

Music & Lyrics: Chou Yuan

Translation: Anny Chiu

*Under the sun on this great land, we bring Dharma to the whole world  
Through love and compassion, we share the light of our hearts  
Respect all life, practice kindness with great joy and selfless giving,  
Nurture profound wisdom, and fulfill the value of life*

*Through the practice of wisdom, carry on the mission of Buddha  
Through the practice of kindness, carry on the mission of great love*

*Under the sun on this great land, we bring Dharma to the whole world  
Through love and compassion, we share the light of our hearts  
Respect all life, practice kindness with great joy and selfless giving,  
Nurture profound wisdom, and fulfill the value of life*

*Through the practice of wisdom, carry on the mission of Buddha  
Through the practice of kindness, carry on the mission of great love*

## Reflection:

When I translated the anthem, it brought me back to the time when we first organized North American Tzu Ching in 1998. There was a strong feeling of camaraderie and teamwork. The volunteers from the different chapters all shared the same goals and values, to “practice kindness, compassion, joy, and selfless giving” in order to “nurture profound wisdom.” We felt that this practice ultimately brings meaning and value to our lives.

As Tzu Ching or Tzu Chi volunteers, our mission is to cultivate these qualities within ourselves so we can “share the light from our hearts” and “bring Dharma to the whole world.” This mission of great love is the mission of the Buddha, and to accomplish it, we will need to come together in the practice of both compassion and wisdom.

**Tzu Chi Collegiate Association** (also known as Tzu Ching, Chinese for “compassionate youth”) was established in Taiwan in 1992 and later in the US and Canada in 1998 under the name “North American Tzu Ching.” In 2002, the US branch was renamed Tzu Chi Collegiate Association USA.



Illustrations: Catherine Lee

*Anny Chiu has been a Tzu Chi volunteer since her college years. She currently lives in Northern California and works in real estate investment. Annie frequently travels to Guatemala and other countries where she is active in local Tzu Chi initiatives.*

Music, like love, can form connections between people, no matter when or where. Tzu Chi volunteers will often sing Tzu Chi songs with people to bring hope and joy in troubled times. Please scan the QR code on this page to enjoy the music video for this song.



# Reaching the Source of Pure Water

*If we wish to perfect our spiritual practice on the Bodhisattva-path,  
we must not be intimidated by any mental or physical hardship.  
With perseverance and courage, we will reach our goal.*

~ Dharma Master Cheng Yen ~

In our hearts, there is a source of pure spring water. That water is the Dharma, which can irrigate the fields of our hearts and nurture seeds of goodness. We all have this source; it is inherent to us all. But sometimes it feels like this well has run dry, and thus we lack the nourishment that the water provides. Sometimes, for whatever reason, we are unable to find the water. We may need to dig for it. Perhaps the water may be blocked at its source. However, if we work hard enough, we can remove them and reach the pure water that can nourish us and cleanse us of defilements.

Long ago, there was a village with a severe shortage of water. Without water, soon the villagers would be unable to survive. So, they worked hard to dig for water. There was a boy in this village who watched the adults and helped out wherever he could. The adults dug

a deep pit, and the boy worked hard to help move the dirt away. But after a long time and much digging, they still had not found any water. Eventually, the adults felt like giving up. They thought that even if they dug deeper, they would not be able to find any water. Since the adults did not have any more energy, they lost their faith, and one by one, they left.

The boy, however, did not give up. He thought to himself, "So many people have spent so many days digging; should we just give up like this?" So the boy climbed into the pit and started to dig again. He dug until he saw a large rock. Because the rock was very heavy, he was unable to move it by himself. Everyone else had left, so no one could help him. Since the boy was tired, he lay down for a bit. As he was drifting off to sleep, he suddenly heard something. The boy listened carefully. He thought he heard the sound of



flowing water. Where was it coming from? He realized it was coming from beneath him. The boy used his hands to start digging again. For six days and nights, the boy continued digging, never leaving the pit. Finally, he had dug away all the earth around the rock. There was now a gap between the rock and the ground, so he pushed hard to lift up the rock. With immense effort, he managed to push it aside. When the rock moved, water emerged. Having used all his strength, the boy fainted; but he had reached the water. The water slowly flowed out, soaking the boy.

When the boy woke up, he was surrounded by water. People were looking for him, but no one knew he was in the pit. The boy yelled with all his strength, “There’s water here! There’s water!” A person from the village heard him and followed the sounds of his calls to the pit, where they saw the water. Then,

the boy fainted again. The villagers quickly pulled him up and marveled at him, this boy who had spent six days in the pit. He had moved the rock so the water was able to come out. Through his persistence, he had saved the entire village.

As spiritual practitioners, we must have the same spirit as that boy. We must be mindful. By being mindful, we will be able to hear the sound of the Dharma in our hearts, just as the boy was able to hear the sound of the water. We must also have perseverance. As we continue to engage in spiritual practice, after a long time, will we still have faith? Or will we lose our faith? If we maintain our faith and work hard enough, the water of Dharma can flow and we will be able to reach the source of our clear, pure wisdom; we will be able to nourish ourselves, and our hearts will be clear and unobstructed. 🌿

# Gua Bao

Kevin Chiang / Photos by Steven Chiu

*“The greatest blessing in life is peace. The greatest joy in life is love.”*

~ Dharma Master Cheng Yen ~

This year marks Wenhua Chiang's eighth year as an instructor at the vegetarian lifestyle cooking class. In the class she teaches, one of her most popular dishes is Gua Bao. When asked why it is that her Gua Bao in particular tastes so delicious, she replies, “It takes a lot of heart!” While Wenhua doesn't think the dish is particularly difficult to make, there are many parts to the dish, and if you don't put a lot of love and heart into making each part, then the entire dish will not taste as good.

This spirit not only applies to Wenhua's Gua Bao, but to all experiences in Tzu Chi. It was nearly 20 years ago when Wenhua decided to join Tzu Chi as a volunteer and 15 years since she became a Tzu Chi Commissioner. Since then, Wenhua has devoted much of her free time volunteering for Tzu Chi. Whether cooking, practicing sign language songs, or folding newspapers for recycling, Wenhua finds joy by truly putting her love into every single thing she sets out to do.



Kevin Chiang is a Tzu Cheng Faith Corps member and an active member in the Tzu Chi community. His mother Wenhua, inspired him to join Tzu Chi as a volunteer and considers his involvement to be her greatest achievement. 🌱

### **Gua Bao Bun Ingredients (makes 6):**

- 2 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 2 1/2 tablespoon granulated white sugar
- 1 teaspoon rapid-rise yeast
- 1 tablespoon cooking oil
- 3/4 cup warm water (100-110°F)
- Salt to taste (suggested: 1/4 teaspoon)

### **Gua Bao Filling Ingredients (makes 6):**

- 1-2 small cucumbers
- 1 potato
- preserved vegetables (酸菜)
- 3 squares of bean curd skin (豆包)
- Mix A: fine granulated sugar 2 tablespoons, white vinegar 2 tablespoons
- Mix B: white pepper 1/4 teaspoon, cornstarch 3 tablespoons
- Mix C: soy sauce 2 tablespoons, sugar 1 tablespoon
- peanut powder
- cilantro
- cornstarch



# Gua Bao

## Directions:

### Gua Bao Bun

*(Cooking time: 2 hours, including rising time)*

The gua bao bun can either be bought in Chinese supermarkets such as 99 Ranch Market or can be made at home. This recipe makes 6 homemade gua bao buns.

1. Mix all the dry ingredients for the bun in a mixing bowl. Slowly add the water and mix until there is no more dry flour. Let the dough rise for 15 min.
2. Divide the dough up into 6 equal portions. Let the dough rise for another 10 min.
3. Roll out each portion into a flat oval shape. Brush on a thin layer of cooking oil on one side.
4. Fold the bun over in half, with the oiled side folded in. Place the buns on small pieces of parchment paper and place them in a warm place to rise for 1 hour.
5. After the buns have risen, transfer them to a steamer and steam for approximately 20 minutes. If using a stovetop steamer, set it on medium to low heat and be sure to leave a crack for the lid.

### Gua Bao Filling

*(Cooking time: 40 min)*

1. Cut washed cucumbers into slices. Combine the cucumbers slices with Mix A.
2. Peel and steam or boil the potato. Mash the potato with Mix B. Mix in a little water if necessary. Spread the mashed potato and cornstarch mixture to top of the bean curd skin.
3. Fry the bean curd skin on both sides, starting with the mashed potato side facing down, until it turns golden brown.
4. Save 3 tablespoons oil in pan and add the preserved vegetables. Stir with Mix C. Add 1 cup of water and the fried bean curd skin from Step 3. Cook until the sauce is reduced.
5. Open the steamed gua bao bun and apply 1 teaspoon of peanut powder to each bun. Add 1 teaspoon of preserved vegetable mix, half a square of fried bean curd skin, 4 cucumber slices, and cilantro to each bun to complete.





◀ Representatives from Tzu Chi's Medical Mission travelled to Cambodia to promote a medical cooperation plan. On May 24, Samdech Techo Volunteer Youth Doctor Association (TYDA) and Tzu Chi Medical Foundation signed a memorandum of understanding, the "Cambodia Medical Aid and Emergency Relief Partnership." They pledged to serve the Cambodian people by operating free medical clinics and allowing the transfer of patients to local or Tzu Chi hospitals in Taiwan for follow-up treatment. Cambodian doctors and nurses are also allowed to go to Taiwan to receive training.  
Photo: Liu Qiulin



▲ On May 20th, Tzu Chi volunteers from the West Toronto Service Center and students and parents from the Mississauga Tzu Chi Academy went to Rhododendron Park in Mississauga to carry out cleaning activities, practicing environmental protection in the community.  
Photo: Zheng Weiyuan



▲ To celebrate the Buddha's Birthday, Mother's Day, and Global Tzu Chi Day on May 19th, Tzu Chi volunteers in Johannesburg, South Africa, held their first Buddha Bathing Ceremony and distribution event for blind residents and their families. They led everyone in expressing their gratitude and reverence for teachers, parents, and all sentient beings. Here, local volunteers and collegiate volunteers guide the blind attendees to pay respects to the Buddha and receive the flowers.  
Photo: Ken Tsai



*Tzu Chi USA volunteers have continued to accompany the local people in Manabi, Ecaador, following the Earthquake in 2016 and flood in 2017. On May 26th, a prayer service and Buddha Bathing ceremony was held in Santa Ana Church. They invited local residents to participate with a spirit of harmony and cooperation between religions. As volunteers led them in the song "Love and Care for All," volunteers were touched that many attendees remembered this song and sang along.  
Photo: Provided by Tzu Chi USA HQ*



*▲ On May 20th, Tzu Chi volunteers from Bandung, Indonesia went to the Aziziyah Foundation to care for 29 disabled children and donated corrective shoes and other materials. Here, Ni Chaozhu (right) and Li Qianzhao (middle) interact with the children.  
Photo: Muhammad Dayar*



*▲ On June 3, UK Tzu Chi volunteers went to Gloucestershire to participate in the Gloucester Vegan Hippy Market event. They set up booths to promote Jing Si products and raise awareness about vegetarianism and environmental protection. Volunteers also assisted the event organizers in recycling during the event, keeping the area clean. Here, Zhu Jianlong (right) introduces Jing Si Instant Rice to the public.  
Photo: Wang Suzhen*



◀ The second session of the Tzu Chi Volunteer Leadership Camp was held in Sanchong and Banqiao in New Taipei City from June 20th to 25th. Tzu Chi volunteers from overseas came to Taiwan to diligently learn so that they could bring back what they learned to their respective countries to take action locally. In the class “Deepening the Roots of Charity in the Community,” volunteers from all over the world brainstormed more effective ways to serve their communities. Here, an attendee from Mozambique, Cristina Narciso Muchanga (2nd from the left), suggests that teaching occupational skills will allow local residents to rise above their conditions of poverty. Photo: Huang Mingcun



◀ To recognize World Oceans Day, Tzu Chi volunteers and children, teachers, and parents from the youth class in Changhua, Taiwan went to Wanggong Fishing Port to carry out beach cleaning efforts, taking action to protect the marine environment. The volunteers mindfully worked to clear garbage from the beach and even removed garbage stuck between the rocks. Photo: Zou Zhonghong



To celebrate the Buddha's Birthday, Mother's Day, and Global Tzu Chi Day on May 19th, Tzu Chi volunteers in Johannesburg, South Africa, held their first Buddha Bathing Ceremony and distribution event for blind residents and their families. They led everyone in expressing their gratitude and reverence for teachers, parents, and all sentient beings. Here, local volunteers and collegiate volunteers guide the blind attendees to pay respects to the Buddha and receive the flowers. Photo: Ken Tsai



▲ La Romana Tzu Chi Elementary and Middle School in the Dominican Republic ended the school year in mid-June. To encourage the students, Tzu Chi volunteers commended a role model student in each class; they also awarded students in the categories of "greatest improvement" and "best team-player" to encourage students to study hard. Photo: Provided by Dominican Republic volunteers



▲ On June 24th, Tzu Chi volunteers of the Tzu Chi Gold Coast Service Center in Australia went to the Brassall Shopping Centre in Ipswich City to hold this year's second aid distribution and a Buddha Bathing Ceremony. Tzu Chi volunteers distributed food and other materials to care recipients to help lessen their financial burden. Photo: Hong Wanwen



National Headquarters Region

# A Beautiful Life

Jonathan Tran

*If we do nothing meaningful, our life will pass by in vain.  
But if we work unceasingly for the betterment of mankind, ours will be a beautiful life.*

~ Dharma Master Cheng Yen ~

I remember seeing Dr. William Keh during the Tzu Chi Collegiate Association graduation ceremony. A quiet and unassuming man in a pressed suit and tie, he stepped onto the low wooden stage at the Orange County Service Center in Laguna Hills, California. His speech was brief, but I remember his message. “Volunteerism is valuable work,” he said. “Through volunteering, not only do we help people, we also become happier, spread our happiness to others, and learn about our world and ourselves.”

Dr. Keh is actually the current CEO of the Tzu Chi USA Medical Foundation, and he is in the best position to speak on the benefits of volunteering; he has served as a full-time Tzu Chi volunteer for over 20 years. In that time, he has worked to develop Tzu Chi’s medical services in the United States while also learning and developing himself. To Dr. Keh, the benefits of volunteering far exceed any material compensation he could gain working as a doctor. Instead, he has been given a unique purpose in life and a path to follow.

Dr. Keh’s journey began in 1994 on a flight to Taiwan. On the plane, he met a Tzu Chi commissioner who shared the story of

how Dharma Master Cheng Yen had founded Tzu Chi and built a hospital for the underserved in the Eastern part of Taiwan. Dr. Keh noticed how the commissioner’s eyes beamed when she talked about the work of volunteers, and how being able to care for patients was an honor for her. He was so moved that he donated all the money in his pockets to Tzu Chi on the spot.

Although they parted ways after the flight, it wouldn’t take long for Dr. Keh to encounter another Tzu Chi volunteer, this time in his own hometown. Stephen Huang, head of Tzu Chi’s international affairs, visited Long Island to give a speech there. Dr. Keh’s wife heard the speech and



*Dr. Keh, then CEO of Tzu Chi USA, addresses volunteers participating in a volunteer training workshop in 2009. (Photo: Sze Min Sim)*

was inspired. She soon joined Tzu Chi. Over time, Dr. Keh noticed his wife slowly begin to change, becoming gentler and more soft-spoken. Wanting to change and grow as well, Dr. Keh became part of Tzu Chi's activities and soon became involved in the organization's disaster relief efforts. In time, he took on the position of Director of Tzu Chi USA's Long Island branch.

Dr. Keh's journey was just beginning. In 2001, he was asked by Master Cheng Yen to move to southern California, where help was needed to develop Tzu Chi's missions. Dr. Keh left behind his position as director in Long Island to move. Due to his diligence, Dr. Keh had earned enough to support himself and was thus able to become a full-time volunteer. Though his medical practice had provided him with a direction in life, Dr. Keh wanted something even greater. Tzu Chi provided him the opportunity to help those who could not afford medical care, and he would dedicate all of his efforts to serving the people who need care the most.

After moving to California, Dr. Keh soon formed a team and a central administrative office for Tzu Chi USA's medical mission. In addition to his responsibilities as a full-time volunteer, Dr. Keh used his free time to study healthcare administration. By 2002, he had become the director of Tzu Chi USA's Medical Mission. Under his leadership, the free clinic medical services Tzu Chi provided extended their reach to

San Bernardino, California; Tijuana, Mexico; and even more areas in North America.

However, at this time, Dr. Keh faced a dilemma in ensuring that Tzu Chi's services could reach as many people in need as possible. In particular, there was a large gap in medical services among "the working poor." In California, working people who earned minimum wage did not qualify for free clinic services, but they also could not afford health insurance or primary care. Under these circumstances, the health conditions of these working poor often deteriorated over time.

Recognizing their need, Dr. Keh and the medical mission addressed the issue by creating low-cost community clinics. In 2005, Tzu Chi established a community clinic in South El Monte, California, which expanded the scope of their services by providing medical and dental care at low, affordable cost, alongside the original free clinic in Alhambra, California, that had been in operation since 1993. In 2010, the medical mission established another community clinic in Wilmington, California, which enabled Tzu Chi to offer healthcare services to members of this mainly Hispanic community for a \$20 minimum charge per visit. Dr. Keh insisted that Tzu Chi's medical mission would fulfill its mission to provide healthcare to the underserved, whether they qualified for free services or not.

Dr. Keh's volunteer career has been marked by service in many different roles. He gave up his

position as CEO of Medical Mission for a time to become CEO of Tzu Chi USA in 2006. After serving for six years, Dr. Keh passed the position to Han Huang, wanting to give opportunities to younger generations to lead and serve, to experience the same sense of purpose that drives him to volunteer.

Stepping back into the Tzu Chi Medical Foundation as CEO in 2014, Dr. Keh continues to plan for the future of Tzu Chi USA's medical work. He hopes that within two years, Tzu Chi's clinics will become federally-qualified health centers; he is driving the efforts to ensure that Tzu Chi USA's clinics meet the requirements to attain this designation. As federally-qualified health centers, the clinics will be able to obtain federal funding, reducing the cost of operations and allowing the medical mission to expand to new initiatives. Unlike in Taiwan, where Tzu Chi's hospitals were the focus in developing the medical mission, Dr. Keh sees the future of Tzu Chi USA's services in the development of multi-service clinics and satellite clinics operating in many communities across the United States. For Dr. Keh, developing the medical mission has truly become his life's work.



*Dr. Keh checking a patient's shoulder during a medical outreach in Tlaquiltenango, Mexico. (Photo: Yue Ma)*

In serving as a volunteer, one of the greatest opportunities Dr. Keh has had was the chance to learn about himself and others, particularly during his interactions with Master Cheng Yen herself, who has been there every step of Dr. Keh's journey. When Dr. Keh visited Taiwan during the time he was relocating to California, he anticipated the challenges he would face with the transition. At that time, Master Cheng Yen told him three things to consider as a leader: "First, be mindful, especially of people's feelings. Second, be straightforward with your intentions; you are doing this work not for yourself, but for others and for Tzu Chi. Lastly, work with love; this will help you to get along with others." This wisdom has become particularly meaningful

in Dr. Keh's various positions in Tzu Chi. As a CEO, working with others was simple and straightforward. In administrative positions, it is just a matter of following the chain-of-command, and any problems can be solved by following administrative procedures. However, as a volunteer lead, it is even more important to lead by example. Developing consensus is important in Tzu Chi, as all volunteers are equal. As Dr. Keh explained, "You cannot get angry; you just need to persist and convince others of your point in order to get things done." Working well with others, even in difficult situations, is important to Dr. Keh.

Dr. Keh remembers one experience in particular. During a visit with Master Cheng Yen, a fellow volunteer complained about Dr. Keh in front of Master Cheng Yen herself. The volunteer did not agree with how Dr. Keh had handled a previous incident. This complaint dampened Dr. Keh's spirits and left him feeling discouraged. Master Cheng Yen swiftly acted to relieve this tense moment with wisdom. She told the volunteer who criticized Dr. Keh that if she had been in his shoes, she would have handled the previous incident in the same way. Master Cheng Yen further went on to tell Dr. Keh, "Whenever someone brings up something critical, we need to be very mindful of ourselves and our actions." Both Dr. Keh and the other volunteer felt comforted by Master's words, as she validated both Dr. Keh and the other volunteer. By observing Master

Cheng Yen's example about dealing with difficult situations, Dr. Keh was inspired to challenge himself to become even better in working with people.

Looking back, Dr. Keh's journey as a volunteer in Tzu Chi has led him to grow. He considers Master Cheng Yen "the best teacher he has ever had." He is quick to point out that though volunteers do not gain any material things from the work they do, what they do gain and learn is much more valuable. They find meaning and purpose in life, and they are able to nourish their mind and spirit by developing themselves. As Dr. Keh explains, the benefits one attains through volunteering are especially important to medical professionals. "One may gain money or status as a medical professional, but these do not mean anything once one passes away." Perhaps most importantly, in his experience volunteering, Dr. Keh has gained happiness. The joy and fulfillment that one feels when doing the work he does is not something that money is ever able to buy. When Dr. Keh reflects on it, it is clear; he is truly living a beautiful life. 🌿

*Jonathan Tran is a Tzu Ching alumni from the University of California, San Diego. He is currently studying English as a Foreign Language at UCSD Extension. He hopes to become an English language teacher. In his spare time, Jonathan enjoys weightlifting, playing badminton, and reading fiction.*

# Delivering Compassion and Virtue

Bonnie Marino

*“Compassion has love and benevolence as its essence,  
and sincerity and kindness as its practice.”*

~ Dharma Master Cheng Yen ~

On June 17, 2018, I set out on my path to go to the Big Island of Hawaii and experience all of the beauty and grandeur of the largest and last of the islands that the demigod Maui pulled from the ocean floor with his magical hook. From Akaka Falls, to the beauty of the green sand beaches, to the breathtaking views of the Hamakua coast, it was more beautiful than I had imagined. I was also greeted by the beauty and tragedy associated with the fire goddess Pele as she continues to grow and expand the Big Island of Hawaii. In her destructive creativity, she has left many residents in dire need of help. It was in this need that I found my way to the Tzu Chi team from Honolulu, Hawaii.



Bonnie Marino (center) and David Mo (right) help Jium Hong Chang (left) to set up the sign-in table for the Big Island distribution. (Photo: Nancy Wei.)

They came to the Big Island of Hawaii to help with the relief efforts for the people affected by the volcano eruption. I felt like a little fish in a big pond, but we all have our place in this world. I will never forget the table I sat at, the welcoming smiles of everyone, and the focus and professionalism of the Tzu Chi team members. From handing out clipboards, pens, and paper, to offering resources and services, they compassionately helped people in their time of need.

I knew I wanted to volunteer with the volcano relief efforts and there was more to learn there than I ever hoped. Even though it was my first day ever volunteering, it certainly, hopefully, won't be the last. The team of professionals I had

the honor of working with from Tzu Chi showed more compassion than I had ever seen. Throughout all of my medical experiences and personal life experiences, I believed I had the ability to empathize with people, especially when witnessing raw human emotions of despair. And though I was prepared to help, there were some affectees who pulled at my heartstrings and brought me to tears; one was a teacher who had lost her entire school and, as many others had, her home.

During one particularly memorable moment, a young mother of two was walking out of the distribution after receiving relief funds. Her 5-year-old son asked, “Mom did we get the money?” I suddenly had the thought that no child should have to worry about food, shelter, and what tomorrow brings. Several of those affected by the disaster talked about friends whose homes were destroyed by looters. Even in the land of Aloha, there are those whose core belief is “What’s in it for me?” This lack of the Aloha spirit is devoid of all virtue, and I felt it to my soul. I asked myself, “What stolen material possession could possibly make your life better?”

We have all experienced hardships, and I am



no stranger to them. However, those in need who came to us were amazingly grateful we were there and that we were able to do for them what we were able to do. In the spirit of giving, we gave our time to the community. Those who came for help also gave to us. They gave us their stories and their heartfelt thanks, and they renewed within all of us our sense of purpose and desire to work together and make a difference in the lives we touched.

During my second day volunteering, I met several Tzu Chi team members in Hilo for a day-long meeting to brainstorm what we could do for the community and how we could continue our efforts to reach out to families in need. As a group, we realized the feeling of isolation many people have during this time. Some are living without their primary needs being met. Through the efforts of the Tzu Chi team, I could see resources being made available and a vision and hope for the community to become stable again. The meeting

with the Tzu Chi team was an inspirational one, and I believe to my core that through our ongoing efforts, we will make a difference. In only two days, I feel as if I have made life-long connections with the Tzu Chi team and the community.

I commend all the volunteers who set the example of what true virtues are; some of them have dedicated their life to service. And it is my hope that good seeds are planted on the Big Island as the island continues to grow. Additionally, I also want to thank the Tzu Chi 360 staff from New York who captured heartfelt stories and priceless photos that speak volumes. You are a very gifted

team and my fervent hope is that our paths will cross again soon.

Natural disasters and suffering will always be a part of our lives, yet I have realized that it is not about what happens to us, but about what we do about it. I hope that we can cultivate the virtue of wisdom and do what we can to change the things we are able to change, one day a time. And for our youth who look up to us for answers, may we give them faith, compassion, and courage. 🌱

*Bonnie Marino received her Doctorate in 2016 in the area of Metaphysics. She is an author and first time Tzu Chi volunteer.*



*Volunteers pose for a group photo after the Big Island distribution. (Photo: Nancy Wei.)*

# *A Bodhisattva-In-Training*

Isabelle Tseng

*“A person with a generous heart and compassion for all beings lives the most blessed life.”*

~ Dharma Master Cheng Yen ~



*Isabelle reflects on the Bodhisattva-path during a lunch break.  
(Photo: Boris Tsang)*

***Berkeley, California, 5:30 AM***

My Tzu Ching service day is about to start, but I'm struggling to keep my eyes open.

You would think that on summer break, I would be sleeping in. However, this Sunday morning, I am up bright and early. Mariko, the President of Berkeley City College Tzu Chi Collegiate Association (TCCA, also known as Tzu Ching), greets me with her signature beaming grin. She has woken up even earlier than I have and has already made breakfast. Mariko hosted me overnight at her place so that we could carpool to Modesto, which is an hour and a half away. Her uncle Eric often drives Tzu Ching to community service events, unconditionally taking care of us as he volunteers by our side. This is just a small glimpse of the warm and giving nature of the Tzu Ching Bodhisattva family.

“Bodhisattva,” the Sanskrit term for “awakened being,” had always been an intimidating Buddhist term to me. I grew up hearing all about the



## Young Bodhisattvas

Bodhisattva-path throughout my time in Tzu Chi. In tandem with my academic education, I had also received a Tzu Chi education. From the Tzu Chi Chinese yoyo class in pre-school, I advanced to Tzu Chi Academy, then to Tzu Chi junior youth group, then to the high school Tzu Shao group, and now the college Tzu Ching. Through my experiences with this community, Tzu Chi has deeply become part of me. But throughout this journey, I hadn't entirely grasped the concept of Bodhisattva until I realized that being a Bodhisattva is simply being a genuinely good friend to all.

As we drive to the Modesto dental outreach, I meet enthusiastic Tzu Ching and we quickly become friends. I love how Tzu Chi community service has an inexplicable power to foster wholesome relationships with others, for everyone has the same energy of loving, compassionate kindness toward each other.

Dental outreaches are some of my favorite events to participate in, as they instantly bring brighter smiles to patients after treatment. They are priceless experiences, as I get to see how dentistry can relieve oral discomfort as well as boost the patients' confidence by improving their smiles. Modesto is in Central California, part of San Joaquin Valley which is known as the home of highly underserved populations, particularly Hispanic migrant farmers. Tzu Chi offices in Modesto and Fresno provide regular medical

outreach services to aid these communities. I am grateful that these offices also pave the way for volunteers who live in the more affluent San Francisco area to participate in aiding these communities.

### *Modesto, California, 8:30 AM*

We arrive at the dental outreach event. My job today is to be a dental assistant for Tram, a dedicated hygienist.

Everyone serving today at the dental outreach is a volunteer, and the services being delivered are completely free to patients regardless of age, ethnicity, and religion. I always feel inspired when seeing health professionals coming together on their days off to treat those who are underserved. When I turned eighteen, I excitedly joined TIMA, the Tzu Chi International Medical Association, as I always looked up to health professionals as my Bodhisattva-heroes. Serving with compassion is great for our mental health when the chaos of the world seems overwhelming. My generation grew up in a competitive environment. People strive to be high-achievers and overtake others, and it seems that outer beauty and consumption are praised more than inner beauty and generosity. Social



*Isabelle (right) assists Tram, the dental hygienist. (Photo: Mariko Chang)*

media has made things even more complicated. Dharma Master Cheng Yen, Tzu Chi's founder, advises to focus on small acts of selfless love that create positive ripples in the world. She has unwaveringly walked the Bodhisattva-path every day for over fifty years.

***The air conditioner is broken. It is 80° F in here.***

Indeed, being a Bodhisattva-in-training certainly comes with challenges. Under my Tzu Ching uniform and dental scrub, I am sweating next to the patients. The low-tech suction dental tool operates only with a person constantly holding it while it is in the patient's mouth. I am switching hands constantly, as both of them get sore over time with such a repetitive task. What keeps me going, like the Energizer bunny, is providing comfort to the patients and focusing on what the dental hygienist needs me to do. Of course, along the way, shaved ice temporarily relieves me from the heat.

***We work to clean teeth, patient after patient. It is hard work, but it is so fulfilling!***

On our way back, Uncle Eric drops off Susan, Chris, Jing, and Aaron. It is tiring enough volunteering at a dental outreach, but Uncle Eric has the additional task of driving all of us safely home. He truly models the strong and persevering Bodhisattva spirit to us. Aunt Susan treats us to ice cream before leaving Modesto, as it is National Ice Cream Day. Striving to be a Bodhisattva-in-

training isn't all serious. It is fun too, especially when surrounded by good friends.

***Berkeley, California, 8:00 PM***

As my Tzu Ching service day ends, I am still smiling despite the physical fatigue, and I am deeply grateful.

After arriving back to Berkeley, the rest of us quickly part ways. After a long day, Uncle Eric still needs to catch up with his work. Jing has a paper due tonight that she still needs to finish. Mariko has homework and upcoming finals to study for, and I have an overdue article to write and my driving test tomorrow morning. This is life walking on the Bodhisattva-path in modern times. Bodhisattvas are constantly busy, but they can persevere due to their vows.

Earth Treasury Bodhisattva is known as the king of great vows. His vows began with his quest to end his mother's suffering. Later, he extended his vows to all those he saw in suffering, because he considered everyone to be a member of his family. In the same spirit, Dharma Master Cheng Yen founded Tzu Chi to relieve all suffering while teaching and guiding us, just like a good friend would. She feels others' suffering as her own, and when others are happy, she feels happiness. This is the spirit of the Bodhisattva.

Emulating a Bodhisattva is embodying what it means to be a good friend to people, animals, insects, plants, and all living beings. A Bodhisattva

is neither biased nor discriminatory toward any form. Naturally, good friends would immediately do whatever it takes to help and protect others. Bodhisattvas are good companions in life, bringing joy and light to those around them. I believe that everyone has it within themselves to always be a good friend to others and embody their inner Bodhisattva.

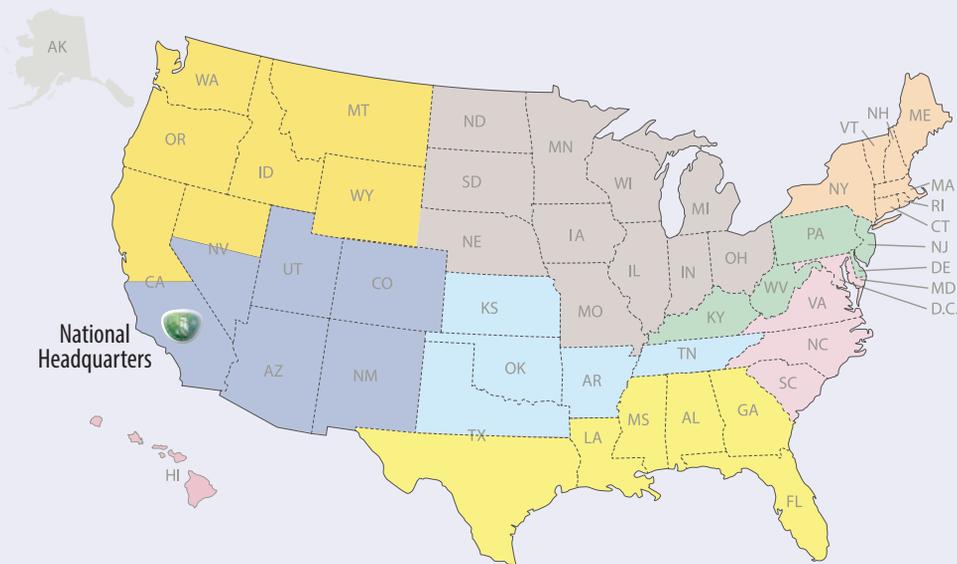
My life would have been undoubtedly less meaningful and much more confusing if I didn't encounter the Bodhisattva-path as a way of life at an early age. Although I am still on the path of self-discovery and have my share of troubles, growing up with the Dharma has been a blessing for my mental health. I hope that more youth will learn the Dharma. It is not as complex as some may think. For me, the Dharma is all about becoming a true friend to ourselves and others. In Tzu Chi, we believe in our own inherent goodness and we strive to ignite a spirit of service. I hope

that we all join hands and hearts to better the world. 🌱

*Isabelle Tseng is currently a DC chapter Tzu Ching and an undergraduate at Johns Hopkins University. She has been part of Tzu Chi her whole life and is inspired to take action through its global humanitarian work. Being a vegetarian since birth, she finds that her choice of diet helps her to cultivate compassion for all beings.*



*Being a Bodhisattva is simply being a good friend to all, which also includes residents living in a nursing home. Isabelle, (third from the right) stands with Tzu Chi volunteers as they bow to thank the residents for the time spent together. (Photo: Pohan Chen)*



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# TZU CHI

## A BRIEF HISTORY...

In 1966, Dharma Master Cheng Yen founded the Tzu Chi Merit Association in Hualien with the support of thirty housewives who each put aside fifty Taiwanese cents (around two US cents) of their grocery money every day to establish a charity fund. In the first year, they helped a total of thirty-one elderly, ill, and poor people from fifteen families. As word spread, more people participated, and the initiative gathered strength. It spread beyond Hualien: first across the island of Taiwan and then around the world.

Today, Tzu Chi is a nonprofit charitable organization with ten million volunteers and supporters in over fifty countries worldwide. Over the past fifty years, Tzu Chi's four missions—Charity, Medicine, Education, and Humanistic Culture—have grown from the seeds of gratitude, respect, and love. With time, 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 and facilities nationwide. Volunteers give back to their local communities through activities such as emergency disaster relief, homeless services, school support programs, college scholarships, income tax reporting assistance, holiday care packs, free and low-cost medical clinics and outreaches, cancer support groups, community education classes, and the 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 major disasters such as hurricanes, wildfires, floods, and tornadoes. Internationally, volunteers have provided relief in earthquakes and other disasters in Haiti, Japan, Nepal, Ecuador, Mexico, and many other countries.

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





## Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation

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*Act with compassion and  
wisdom. Learn from and  
inspire each other.*

~ Dharma Master Cheng Yen ~



*Attendees at the 2018 Tzu Chi Collegiate Association Leadership Conference participate in a group activity exploring the concept of compassion.  
Photo: Pohan Chen*

