

COMPASSION & RELIEF

TZU CHI USA JOURNAL

SOUTH AFRICA: A JOURNEY OF THE HEART

- ◆ HAITI'S MIRACLE TREE
- ◆ FLOWERS IN THE SNOW



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DHARMA MASTER CHENG YEN,
FOUNDER OF
TZU CHI FOUNDATION

CONTEMPLATIVE WISDOM

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

The Radiant Jewel Within

Clean and polish the radiant jewel within,
the perfect, luminous pure nature.
Like a clear mirror, it reflects everything.
As layer after layer of afflictions and ignorance build up,
like the accumulation of mud and filth,
the radiance of our pure nature cannot shine through.

Let the Dharma enter our hearts
to cleanse away defilements and
eliminate all attachments and ignorance.
Then the light again shines through;
this perfect, radiant wisdom can illuminate the universe.

Compiled into English by the Dharma as Water Editorial Team



The inaugural issue of the *Tzu Chi USA Journal* was published a decade ago, in February 2002, in order to "bring the message of peace and love to a world now confronted with terror and hatred." After ten years and thirty issues telling tales of compassion, the journal has expanded.

This new, larger format will allow us to share more moving stories and dazzling photographs of Tzu Chi volunteers active across the country and around the world. As before, *Tzu Chi USA Journal* will rely on quality content from generous volunteers just like you. We thank you for your past contributions and appreciate your continued support.

Gratefully, *Tzu Chi USA Journal* Editorial Team 🌱

editor's note

CEO's Note**5** To Give is to Receive

William Keh

Words from Master Cheng Yen**6** Wholesome Friends

Dharma Master Cheng Yen

South Africa: A Journey of the Heart**10** US Tzu Chi Ching Journey to South Africa

Tiffany Pan

13 The Essence of Happiness

Jayson Hsieh

16 Rural Life in the Durban Area

Tiffany Pan

18 Book Drive for South Africa

Edward Chang & Jennifer Wenli Chen

22 A Life-Changing Journey to South Africa

You Ning Lee

24 The Tzu Chi Transformation

Dennis Lee

26 Bringing Meaning to the Pain

Tsun-Hui Hung

28 Return to South Africa

Alice Chen with Tiffany Pan

29 A Meeting of White Clouds and Blue Skies

Xianbin Qiu

30 The Hands That Hold

Emily Chen

Song of Bodhisattvas**33** The Spirit of Great Love Music: Hsu Hua Ling

Lyrics: Dharma Master Cheng Yen

Storytelling by the Master**34** For the Sake of a Biscuit

Dharma Master Cheng Yen

35 Tzu Chi USA in Action**Miraculous Moringa****38** A Sustainable Hope for Haiti

Patrick Chou & Shirley Tseng

Vegetarian Style**41** Vegetable Biryani

Shiyin Huang

Living Bodhisattvas**42** Coco's Final Wish

Audrey Cheng

45 My Tzu Chi

Carey Giudici

Flowers in the Snow**47** Words of Praise

Glendale Kiwanians

48 Book Review

Shubha Jayaram

Young Bodhisattvas**49** Natural Beauty (Award-Winning Photo)

Jessica Lee

50 How I Became a Tzu Chi Volunteer

Jonathan Cancoul

53 Tzu Chi Global in Action**PUBLISHER**

William Keh

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The Tzu Chi USA Journal Editorial Team sincerely thanks all the volunteers who contributed to this issue, and warmly welcomes your articles, photographs, comments, and suggestions. Please contact us at journal@us.tzuchi.org. Please help us save paper by reading the journal online at www.us.tzuchi.org.



US TZU CHI 360

New Episodes Every Sunday

Real-life stories about US Tzu Chi volunteers active
in their communities and around the world:

a view from all angles,

a view from all perspectives:

US TzuChi 360

Watch episodes online at www.us.tzuchi.org
or find us on Facebook & YouTube.

Check out Episodes 16 & 17
for a look at the Tzu Ching
journey to South Africa!



TO GIVE IS TO RECEIVE

William Keh

Dharma Master Cheng Yen frequently reminds us that every disaster is an opportunity for awakening. In the twenty-first century, at least one major disaster seems to strike each year, so this message becomes ever more poignant.

Not long ago, I read that the March 2011 earthquake in Japan stirred loose twenty million tons of debris that is currently floating across the Pacific Ocean. Television sets, refrigerators, and even boats are expected to wash up on Hawaii's shores by early 2013. More debris will hit the Pacific Northwest a year later.

Major disasters like this earthquake seem to strike every year now and, like this earthquake, their effects are not constrained by national borders. We truly live in a "global village" and that village is growing ever smaller. Every event affects each of us, no matter where we live.

So how do we face this difficult time fraught with disasters? We can start in our daily lives. We can work harder, be more frugal, and have the strength to endure hardship. We can take responsibility not only for ourselves, but also for society and the earth. We can work together to leave for future generations a beautiful and harmonious home.

Tzu Chi volunteers take it upon themselves to support the suffering, going forth wherever and whenever they are needed. Since 1994, US Tzu Chi volunteers have been responding every time disaster strikes, whether at home or abroad. After the January 2010 earthquake in Haiti, hundreds of volunteers dedicated themselves to four months of disaster relief, and their efforts have led to several long-term relief projects. Most importantly, they successfully spread the seeds of love to the local

population, inspiring many Haitian bodhisattvas to carry on the work of caring for their local communities.

Currently, Tzu Chi volunteers from the US and Haiti are promoting the growth of Moringa trees in Haiti. Growing Moringa, with its many nutritional benefits, is an opportunity for Haitians to help themselves and others. As a sustainable local project, it is an opportunity to inspire more locals to join the effort and to pass blessings on to future generations.

This summer, a group of Tzu Ching college volunteers from across the United States took time from their summer vacations to travel to South Africa. Their hearts were set on helping those in need. But as they entered the villages and witnessed the local Zulu volunteers caring for AIDS patients and orphans, joyfully giving time and love in spite of their own poverty, these Tzu Ching volunteers began to understand the true meaning of a bodhisattva's compassion. Inspired by the local Zulu volunteers, they came to realize that in this journey they received far more than they gave.

This message is the reason why Master Cheng Yen started Tzu Chi forty-five years ago: so that by helping others we can become enlightened to life's meaning. Buddhism teaches us that each person's life has its own higher purpose. If we run around seeking only fame and fortune, then we start to think that this is the goal. But when we leave this world, fame and fortune lose all meaning.

In their journey to South Africa, the Tzu Ching volunteers found that the greater goal is the Bodhisattva path: when we give without asking for anything in return and embrace those who suffer, we see the real meaning of life and receive true joy and happiness. 🌱



WHOLE SOME FRIENDS

As mundane beings, we really need to make friends with and cherish friends of good character, for they can have a positive influence on us, by encouraging us to do good, pointing out the errors we make, and preventing us from going astray when we are in the deep suffering of anguish and afflictions.

When we become afflicted and get confused about what to do with our life, we are like a traveler who loses his orientation and doesn't know which way to go. The way for him to get back on track is to quickly seek help from someone who can point out the right road. When he is given directions, he should really mindfully listen; otherwise he will soon get lost again and not be able to reach his destination.

In life, we need wholesome friends beside us. Not only can they provide guidance, support and encouragement; they also set a good example for us. The following story will help us better understand this.

One day, when the Buddha and his disciples were out on a journey, they saw a string on the path. The Buddha asked one of his disciples to pick it up, and the disciple tentatively did so with his thumb and forefinger. Seeing this, the Buddha asked why he did not hold the string more firmly. He replied honestly, "Buddha, it really stinks." "Why does the string stink?" the Buddha asked. "Perhaps it was once used to tie fish," the disciple guessed, "and the bad smell came from the fish."

"The fish is long gone," the Buddha noted, "so why does this string still smell so bad?" "It must have been used to tie the fish for long enough to absorb the smell," the disciple offered. The Buddha agreed, "The fish and the string were once together, but are now apart, yet the string still has the smell of the fish on it. You can think about this more."

Continuing on their journey, they soon saw a piece of wrapping on the path. The Buddha asked the same disciple to pick it up. The disciple did so with a smile on his face. "You seem very happy to find this wrapping," the Buddha observed. "Yes, Buddha. It smells pleasant, like sandalwood." The Buddha smiled back and said, "It's a piece of wrapping. Why do you speak of sandalwood?" "Well," replied the disciple, "it must have been used to wrap sandalwood for it to smell like sandalwood. And although it isn't used to wrap the wood any more, its scent lingers."

The Buddha seized the moment to offer a teaching, "Yes. We human beings are exactly like the string and the wrapping; if we often mix with wayward friends, it will be hard not to be influenced by them. If we are surrounded by wholesome friends, we will have them as good examples to follow."

I remember a case that illustrated this when I visited Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital sometime ago. Entering the busy lobby, I saw a young man sitting in a wheelchair, accompanied by a Tzu Chi volunteer who seemed very kind and gentle. Walking toward



From Dharma Master Cheng Yen's Talks
Compiled into English by the Jing Si Abode English Editorial Team

them I found that the young man's body was covered with tattoos, and the pattern extended to his hands and palms.

I was very curious about why he had been admitted to the hospital, so I bent down to meet his eyes and speak to him. It turned out he had been injured in a fight after getting drunk with some friends. I patted his hand in encouragement, and seeing the openness and sincerity in his eyes, I told him, "You are still young and have your whole life ahead of you. Do you really want to spend your precious time that way, getting drunk with friends and getting into fights?" I encouraged him to think on it and told him, "It would be wonderful if the next time we meet, it turned out that you were there as a volunteer helping others." He nodded and gave me a timid smile. I smiled back and said, "Best wishes to you."

One day, sometime later, I saw him on a Da Ai TV program, being introduced as a dedicated Tzu Chi recycling volunteer. He told the interviewer about the episode in the Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital. He had taken in my words wholeheartedly and after receiving great encouragement by the Tzu Chi volunteers in the hospital, he was inspired to lead a more meaningful life.

When he was discharged from the hospital, it wasn't easy to begin anew. Knowing this, he kept in

close contact with Tzu Chi volunteers and started volunteering at a Tzu Chi recycling station. He spent whatever time he could there, turning down his old friends' invitations to join them in their activities. With the great support and encouragement from fellow volunteers at the recycling station his conviction to change was firm, and he gave up smoking, drinking, and drugs. He even established a daily habit of copying out Jing Si Aphorisms and would give the aphorisms to his old friends. He ended up influencing some of them for the better.

This young man was greatly touched and positively influenced by the unconditional love and care of many Tzu Chi volunteers. His experience encouraged him to take the initiative in helping others get back on track, as he had learned how important it is to have wholesome friends.

Drawing close to friends of good character, we unwrap ourselves in wholesome influences. We will be inspired to reflect on our thoughts and behaviors and to cultivate ourselves to become better people. Indeed, wholesome friends are like wise mentors to students, a guide at the crossroads, fragrant sandalwood to a wrapping sheet, and Dharma to our afflicted mind. 🌿



