

# Los Angeles, United States

2014.09.11~14

**Care Harbor 4-day Free Clinic,  
Benefits More Than 3,000 People**

Since 2011, Care Harbor has held many periodic free clinics. In 2014, another free clinic was held from September 11 to September 14 for those

who do not have or have little insurance. This free clinic was coordinated by the Los Angeles Care Health Plan, Supervisor of the Los Angeles County 2nd district Mark Ridley Thomas, Tzu Chi Foundation, UCLA Health System, USC, as well as more than 50 organizations and three thousand volunteers participated. Don Manelli, the founder said, "Because of everyone's loving care and dedication, the free clinic was a success."

The free clinic was held at the Los Angeles coliseum; the service hours were

The four days large-scale free clinic transformed the Los Angeles Coliseum into a temporary medical facility.

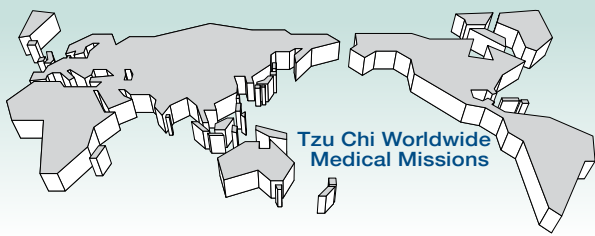


from 7 am to 5 pm daily. Even though Obama Care allows affordable health insurance, the resources of specialty care have not been resolved. The free clinic offers Eastern and Western medicine, eye care, dental care, gynecological care, flu shots, HIV and examination for sexual transmitted diseases. Since diabetic and heart diseases require longer-term care, specialists such as Cardiologists and Dermatologists were recruited to provide continuing follow-up care.

In the morning of September 9,

we handed out colored wristbands to people who were in line on a first come, first serve basis. With the wristbands, people received free medical care. One thousand bands were given out daily. The color of the bands corresponds to the date of service that patients selected. The wristband was temper proof, and removed by assigned staff on the spot only after the service was completed. Volunteers prepared the required tasks prior to the free clinic. There were 1 specialty eye-care medical truck, 21 teeth-cleaning stations,





43 portable dental-care positions, and 2 Da-Ai medical vans each equipped with 4 complete dental-care stations. In addition, there were 15 private rooms for eastern medicine examination, 21 for western medicine, and 8 for gynecological examinations.

### **September 11** **People Line-Up Overnight**

At 5:30 am, the freeways were bustling with vehicles and many people already arrived to seek medical help. Vincent Shields, a 52 years old man and second in line for help. He said this might be his second time to see a dentist. He already had a wristband. However, he was in line since 8 pm the previous night after his dinner.

The day was the anniversary of 911 (The attack on World Trade Center), all the attendees observed a moment of silence prior to the opening. Many medical students led by Dr. Magdallena Rivera, a dentist and professor at the Venice Skills Center specializing in the training of dental assistants. This was her fourth time in bringing students to participate at a free clinic.

The dental clinic not only had regular examinations, but also screened for oral cancer while performing cleaning. Dr. Stuart Macpherson specialized in root canal treatments, his patience and

thoroughness were highly recommended by patients. Dr. Steven Flesch admired the Chinese culture and was curious about Tzu Chi and the loving care of its volunteers, he inquired about Tzu Chi and the organization. Volunteer Dr. Jen-Chuan Chen also invited Dr. Flesch to participate at free clinic with the Tzu Chi International Medical Association (TIMA).

Prior to the beginning of clinic, Dr. Shin-Gong Chen reminded everyone that the first morning was usually light with patients, and cautioned everyone to get some rest whenever feasible. After 10 am, patients streamed in and the waiting area was filled with people. Spanish language translator Juan Manuel Lugo began to introduce the origin of Tzu Chi with the story of the “Bamboo Era.” Then Mr. Hui-Ping Wang led everyone to perform warm-up exercises with good appreciation and feedback. People started to walk



**Dentists and volunteers were serving the patients together.**



**Volunteer An-Hu used a loudspeaker to explain the benefit of acupuncture to people in-line.**

around instead of settling down on the chairs. Tzu Chi provided Western and Chinese medicine, dental and eye care, but also Dharma Master Cheng Yen “Jing Si” aphorisms, bamboo banks, and floral arrangement; the latter provided a soothing environment during the midst of a clinic. Therefore, Tzu Chi not only help provided a serene scene for the clinic, but also soothed the patients’ hearts.

### **September 12**

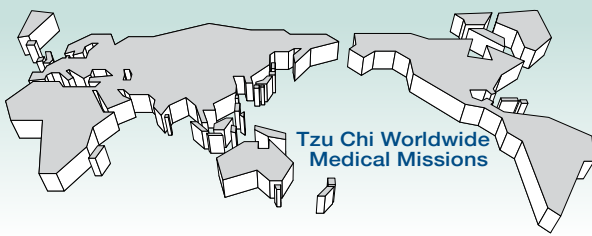
#### **Dharma Talk Before Opening**

On the second day, there were already people lining up before daybreak, signaling a busy day ahead. Mr. Gi-Sa Ger led 25 Tzu Chi volunteers in a small office of the coliseum to perform a morning Dharma session.

During the song of a prayer, other volunteers mobilized to set up the sites, the display board showed the number of people who completed the registration. There were already 125 people waiting and it was not even 8 am. Dr. Shin-Feng

Wang led volunteers from the Northern California including Li-May Lin, Zen-Wei Hsu, Yung-Ning Huang, Ja-Chi Chiang, and Lin-Hui Lui. They arrived one day early to support the operation. “We started from ground zero, we set up all the dental equipment and sanitize the area in this empty room,” said Dr. Wang who had been participating in free clinics for four years.

There were 65 portable dental stations, which need to be cleaned and supplied with distilled water. Wang and her team were always the first to arrive and the last to leave. The Northern California team, as big sisters, always reminded their local volunteers’ counterpart to go home early to take care of families. They could take over and continue for a bit longer since they stayed in a nearby hotel. Volunteer Zen-Wei Hsu was responsible for the maintenance of the dental equipment. With his dedication and support, the whole operation was smooth and peaceful.



## Suffering from Jet Lag, But Patients Come First

Dr. Shirley Chen, who just came back from the Tzu Chi Medical Association (TIMA) annual convention, started working on patients despite her jet lag. She quickly encountered a complicated case at the beginning, a patient needing surgery for a tooth extraction. It took her quite some time to complete the operation. While holding his chin, patient Orlando Sandiford was glad that the operation was successful because it had bothered him for over a year. His company does not provide dental insurance and he cannot afford a dentist. This free clinic definitely saved him.

Volunteer Steven Voon stated,

“Although the Obama Care had been rolled out for a year, many doctors did not participate and therefore many patients could not find qualified doctors even with insurance. Thus, many of them came to Tzu Chi Free Clinic for help.” Clearly, Care Harbor and related free clinics are needed.

April Goddard came from the Philippines and speaks three different languages: English, Spanish, and Philippine. She is the best volunteer to introduce people about the “Jing Si” Aphorisms. Most people bought the “Jing Si” Aphorisms to support the plan to deliver the books to prisons. One person bought 5 books and donated 4 to the prisons. Some expressed they were prisoners before or have relatives in jail. They wanted to do their best to help those who are still in prison.



**With an already busy schedule, volunteers continue a Dharma session before opening.**



Volunteer Sun Tzu Shi was campaigning “Bamboo Bank Era”



Other than free clinic, Tzu Chi provided vegetarian food to patients and publicized the concept of protecting the earth.

### September 13

## Vegetarian Meals Reduce the Carbon Footprint

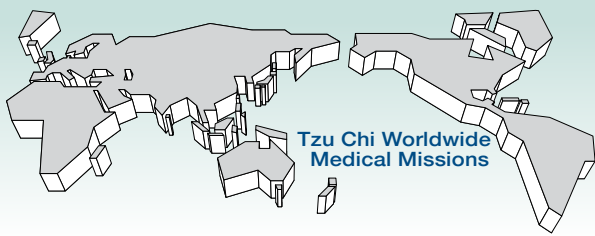
On the third day of the free clinic, there was an effort by Tzu Chi to promote awareness of a green planet with vegetarian food, discussing the benefits of being a vegetarian. Tzu Chi prepared 2,000 lunch boxes for volunteers and patients. Prior to lunch time, people wondered about the long line and asked, “Who is the famous doctor here to see the patients? Why are there so many people in line to see the doctor?” It made other volunteers laugh, who replied that that the magic was in the delicious meals.

During the lunch break, volunteers performed a sign language “love and care for.” Everyone including patients and doctors were attracted to it and moved by the rhythms. Dentists and patients paused to applaud for the wonderful performance. Some patients commented, “The free clinic not only provided free lunch, and also a great performance, what a surprise!”

## Help Those Affected by Hurricane and Earthquake

Dr. Louis Frank Telemaque, Associate Dean of Haiti Central Hospital, was invited by Mr. Gi-Sa Ger, chief executive officer of the Medical Foundation. Telemaque drove 6 hours from San Francisco to observe the operation. Dr. Telemaque is a surgeon from Haiti, and currently participating at the UCSF to discuss the cooperation between UCSF and Haiti Central Hospital. Central Hospital was nearly destroyed in 2010 during the Haiti earthquake. Tzu Chi provided hot food to the patients in the aftermath. Dr. Louis was connected with Tzu Chi and later attended the annual TIMA convention. After the Care Harbor operation, Dr. Louis was impressed and commented, “It is so incredible!”

Dr. Ramona Tascoe is a family doctor who came to know Tzu Chi after Katrina hurricane. She went to New Orleans to help the rescue mission there and was touched by Tzu Chi’s devotion. She then joined TIMA based in San Francisco.



She has 1/4 Haiti's heritage and she participated at the Haiti's earthquake rescue mission with medical teams from the United States. Thus, she met Tzu Chi twice and was invited to TIMA in Taiwan. This time, she accompanied Dr. Louis Frank Telemaque to observe and learn about the free clinic. Both of them felt they have learned a lot from this clinical experience.

### **September 14** **Re-born after 30 Years** **and a New Denture**

September 14 was the last day of the free clinic. The temperature was already 24 degrees Fahrenheit at 5 am in the morning. With many portable air conditioners, it was still very warm. However, that did not stop the loving care of the volunteers. In 4 days, there served a total 3,111 patients. Among them, 2,948 opted for Western medicine, 1,841 for dental care, 1,192 for eye care, and 580 for Chinese medicine.

Dr. Po-Ren Deng, who was on duty on September 12 and 13 at the Alhambra Tzu Chi medical center, came to assist the free clinic on his day-off. He also brought his son Kuo-Sien Deng to assist the free clinic. In order to provide more learning opportunities for medical students, Dr. Tu and Dr. Deng presented a discussion on the importance of controlling eating habits.

For 61 years old Michael Strks, it was an incredible day with expectation and excitement. On the first day of the clinic, he was promised by the dentist for a removable denture on his upper jaw. Today was the day for his new denture. After Dr. Barron installed the denture on Michael, who kept on thanking them. Barron also expressed his appreciation, "Without you all there won't be hope for doctors." Without teeth on his upper jaw for 30 years, Michael smiled brilliantly, "From now on, I can eat all kinds of food. I thank everyone, because I do not need to eat baby food anymore. I used to smoke and drink, do drugs, and dig into garbage for food. As a result my health was



**Dr. Deng Po-Ren explained the importance of controlling eating habits.**



**Cleaning and disassembling after the clinic required hard work from volunteers.**

declining. A year-and-a-half ago, I knew I couldn't live like so I joined the rehab at the substance control center." After that, Michael gained his health back, found a job and a place to live. Now he lives a normal life.

Tina Marcias, a volunteer with Hispanic heritage, used her native language to introduce "Bamboo Bank Era" and "Jing Si" aphorisms. In the morning of July 27, Tina was exercising at Santa Anita Park, and attracted to the staff and volunteers from Tzu Chi medical team while playing the song "Love and Care for." Volunteer Tzu-Shi Sun invited her

to become a translation volunteer. After she was trained as a medical volunteer, she devoted herself to many Tzu Chi's activities. She understood the meaning of "Bamboo Bank Era", "Jing Si" aphorisms and the prison project, which only made her love of Tzu Chi even more so.

After the clinic closed, many volunteers came to clean up. All dental equipment required was dismantled and repacked, which was quite cumbersome and complicated. After the hard work of volunteers and doctors from the Chinese medicine division, the coliseum was returned to its original shape.