



One Precious Trip to Gratitude

By Ya-Ping Kuo, RN, Tzu Chi Hospital, Yuli Branch

"I always thought that to participate in international disaster relief efforts, free clinics, or supplies distribution events, one has to have the free time and prepare properly to help other people."

However, after actually attending them, I realized that as long as I am willing, I can help at any moment. This is what I learned after returning from distributing supplies in Gui Zhou, China, from January 2 to January 6, 2009.

We started out from Yuli, Hualien County and signed in at the Tzu Chi office in Ban Qiao, Taipei County. The next day, we took a plane to China. Along the way, I was doubtful about the mission. I worried about my ability to help with the distribution process, or the free clinic on site. Then I received a text message from Superintendent Yu-Lien Chang. It quelled my worries and hesitation.



Ya-Ping Kuo(second from left) was greatly impressed by the opportunity to represent Tzu Chi for the event.

The text message said, “Ya-Ping, I envy you this time for being able to help patients in another land. Distributing supplies is a great honor. Be mindful of your own health, happy New Year, and bless you!” I felt reassured with his words of encouragement.

Love Affects the Weather – from Rainy to Sunshine

We arrived in Gui Zhou early in the morning. Our team started at midnight in order to reach the destination on time. It began to thunder, and then followed by heavy rain. As we listened to the raindrops falling onto the roofs of the car, we began to worry. At this rate, the supplies we brought along might be soaked with rain water, delaying the distribution. Assuming the supplies survived the rain, the moisture would have encouraged the molding, which would greatly disappoint the villagers. While we were still thinking about this, we had reached our destination: Luo Sha Town of Luo Dian County.

Upon our arrival, the rain was still heavy, with no signs of abating. Our volunteers began singing the song “Great Love with Care”, and we hoped that we would accomplish our mission. While singing, the rain slowly dwindled. Even more amazingly, while reading Master Zheng Yen’s letter, the rain stopped altogether. The sun finally came out. It was as if Master Zheng Yen had come to visit

and the weather better be cooperating. We were all very pleased and surprised. The event was carried out successfully without incident.

I reflected on the experience, with no prior experience except a belief cherished by Master Zheng Yen, “Just do it and it’ll be alright.” Working as a volunteer really is enriching. One keeps looking for more work to do and not to let down on the good deeds. The exchange and communication between the volunteers and the villagers were very natural and sincere, and I found it to be impressive. It happened because we are genuine, with kind and loving hearts.

Nothing is Comparable to Compassion and Gratitude

During the supplies distribution, I happened to notice a young girl seating next to us, very quiet and not speaking at all. When I tried to engage her, she suddenly burst into tears. It turned out that she was an orphan, and she missed her family. The volunteers then reached out to her, giving her small presents, and soon she slowly began to smile. Although we only knew her for a very short time, she treated us like her family. With very little left, she bought us candies and shared with the volunteers. Her act of sharing, with little means she had, means she had felt the presence of love.

On the third day, we went to Ping-Yan village to distribute supplies. A 14-year-



old boy left us a very deep impression. His father died, and the mother went to work in another village to support the family. He and his younger sister lived alone most of the time. He took care of the cows and chickens. We were very sad to see children living in such poverty, but he exclaimed, "I am tough!" I think he was telling us, "Don't worry, I am going to survive!"

Teenagers nowadays in Taiwan are disobedient and rebellious. Some of them are addicted to the Internet, spending all

day playing online games. They have so many things that they take for granted. I always want to share with friends about the little boy in Ping Yan village, his determination and courage. It reminds us to treasure what we have

A Thousand Pieces of Gold Can't Exchange for Appreciation

I felt extremely fortunate and thankful for the opportunity to serve in an international relief, especially on the fourth day when I was chosen to represent Tzu Chi for the contribution ceremony. This was an incredibly great honor. I was representing all of the Tzu Chi volunteers in the world, and I could personally give all their love and care to the villagers. Their expression of happiness and satisfaction was heart touching.

From my initial hesitation to becoming confident upon my return, I learned an important lesson: "To cherish what one has that money can't buy." Upon returning to my job, I cherish my position and don't just complain about anything. I cherish every opportunity to take care of another patient.

Even with no souvenirs for the trip, I felt rich as a result of the experience.



Immediately after the supplies distribution, followed by a free health clinic, Ya-Ping (second from right) found happiness the more she worked.

Experience

Frugality

– The Medical Relief in Fu Ding, Mainland China

By Yu-Fang Hung, Head Nurse, Obstetric Ward, Tzu Chi Hospital, Taichung Branch

I had never been involved in any relief effort in mainland China out of personal fear and misunderstanding about the country until I was called by Director Yi-Fang Liu. She persuaded me to not give up any opportunity to serve in a foreign country because I might have a different perspective in life after the experience. As a result, I decided to go to China for the first time ever.

Relieving Hearts of Fu-Ding's Residents – Seeing Is Believing

In preparing for the assignment of dental hygiene, I made sure I had the proper materials such as the proper tooth brushing techniques from my dentist colleagues.

On December 31, 2009, I arrived at our first stop, the Fu Ding hospital in the city of Fu Ding. The name Fu Ding doesn't sound foreign because I have heard of it on the Tzu Chi Da Ai Television when Tzu Chi sponsored the rebuilding of a hospital in the city. No wonder the hospital looks so familiar since it is modeled on the



existing design of all Tzu Chi hospitals. For instance, I see the familiar “Jing Si Aphorism” posters, volunteers wearing Tzu Chi vests, and the medical staff demonstrating the Tzu Chi sign language.

I really don't know what to expect in my first encounter other than the little contact I had from the people sharing their experience coming back from Fu Ding. During the first day orientation, it seemed like everything was in order. On the second day we arrived at the distribution site and the materials and supplies were ready for us. The distribution went on smoothly while

I was setting up a dental hygiene seminar. Then I discovered the communication problem because of the local language barrier and the fact that villagers were more anxious to get their supplies. I decided to call off the session, and immersed myself in helping the villagers with supply distribution.

It was chilly in the mountains. The temperature was below zero degrees in Celsius. A long line was already forming and many elderly were shivering in the early morning cold. Their exposed hands were bright red due to the zero temps. Tzu Chi volunteers helped villagers put on some



Yu-Fang Hung was prepared for the dental hygiene clinic but was hindered by the communication barrier. She then joined the team in interacting with villagers, whose frostbitten hands were vivid reminder of the poverty and harsh weather elements.

Vaseline ointment. I remembered stories about the hardship of these villagers, that their hands were rough as rocks, yet as sharp as a can opener. I couldn't picture this until I actually held the hands of a grandma. Seeing is believing, and I felt it with my own hands. I have worked many patients, even mothers and their newborns, but never have I seen such coarse hands. They are the evidence of hard labor and extreme poverty. The feeling is indescribable.

Carrying Bags of Rice on the Shoulder, Yet Feeling Content

The third day we left Fu Ding for Fu Chou. We departed at 5 am in the morning and it took about 3 hours to arrive at Fu Chou. We quickly teamed up with the local volunteers and made our way into the city of Tina lan. We saw people lining up for the distribution but the supplies were still in the warehouse. Our experienced team leader quickly mobilized every available resource to move the supplies out of the warehouse. I had the experience of carrying bags of heavy supplies into the distribution center. Fortunately, the distribution went smoothly and the unexpected hiccup did not cause any problem.

During the last couple of days of supplies distribution, I teamed up with some local volunteers to visit some families to understand their living condition. Most recipients are the elderly, living alone in a

tough environment. Most suffer from high blood pressure and diabetes as a result of the lack of medical care; many simply cannot afford the treatment. The living quarter is a simple shack made with mud and plywood. Standing inside the shack and bundled up with layers of clothing, the cold wind coming through the cracks made me shiver. I can only imagine the extreme difficulty of the elderly living in such conditions. One can hardly understand the bare necessity of life that is so evident when in this supposed civilized world.

Master Cheng Yen said, "The tangible material is for others, the intangible happiness is for oneself." I feel content with the ability to serve others in a distant land. Even though the work of carrying the food supplies was laborious, particularly in cold weather and under tight schedule, everybody was happy with big smiles on their faces. The supplies reached the villagers, just in time to provide a little bit of warmth in the freezing weather.

Be Content with What You Have – Live a Frugal Life

I am thankful for the opportunity to distribute supplies to poor villagers in a remote area. I learned from the villagers, and was impressed by their frugality and optimistic nature. Looking at our modern world, the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis and the current global economic recession are to some extent caused by human over



The villagers, living in extreme harsh condition, are optimistic and frugal. The visit reminds Yu-Fang Hung to be thankful.



consumption. We are constantly chasing the goods and materials, a vicious cycle that only adds to our depression when the demands aren't satisfied. We tend to ignore the need to live the simple way. One can only be thankful when one is feeling content.

The fact that we still have jobs, and the ability and resources to help others, is

a wonderful and thankful feeling. Master Chen Yen always preaches to live frugally. We ought to be thankful for what we have because it is a blessing. The experience will stay with me and remind me to share with others. I learned an important lesson from the villagers that to live frugally is a beauty in life.

Love Delivered to

Taimali, Taitung

By Jing-Ling Chiang, Lecuturer, Nursing Dept., Tzu Chi University

The summer youth camp was postponed due to the destruction of typhoon Morakot on August 8, 2009 in Taiwan. The plan was supposed to provide a community health seminar and at-home visits to native people and residents in Lanyu and nearby islands. Teachers and student nurses at the Tzu Chi Univesity planned the summer camp with the approval of the Department of Health Service in August of 2009. Following the aftermath of typhoon Morakot, the plan was changed to provide disaster relief and care in Taimali, Taitung instead. The main mission was to coordinate distribution of relief supplies and to provide medical care to victims and survivors. On August 22, fourteen student nurses and staff, led by Hui-Ling Lai, headed toward the emergency shelters, the Jie-Da Elementary School and the Jia-Lan Community Center, to provide consecutive six-day services in Taimali, Jin-Peng County, Taitung.



Do What You Can Do, Not What You Want to Do.

Led by the Tzu Chi Tzu-Cheng brothers, we arrived at the Jie-Da Elementary School during the first day of the relief effort. The place was designated as the first emergency shelter for Jia-Lan villagers when they retreated from the mountain during the typhoon. Tons of relief items piled up in the classrooms and hallways. Jie-Da Elementary School is a small school with only one hundred student capacity. Now it became an emergency shelter for thirty-three households and storage facility for tons of relief items. About twenty persons squeezed into a classroom, the lack of privacy and the wet weather made us sad. However, no one was complaining. The elderly were busy attending to their knitting while children were playing and the middle-aged working on reconstruction or continuing their organized search for relatives and survivors. It appeared that these victims were strong and their spirit was high.

On August 22, 2009 we asked the victims and the survivors about how we could help. They countered by asking us to organize the relief items that piled up in the classrooms and hallway. We were glad to comply.

Our plan for providing medical care was again changed in an instant. Planning can never catch up with changes on the fly. With the victims' request, we first



Tzu-Chen Fathers and Yi-De Mothers went from Guan Shan to Taimali to help students and teachers in organizing and cleaning the classrooms.

organized the relief items by doing an inventory and physical count during the day. At night, we helped distribute the supplies to the needy families. Finally, we learned how to organize and distribute supplies with a sense of accomplishment because we helped the victims complete a difficult task. Interesting enough, the victims didn't really know how to express their gratitude in words, instead, they kept saying that we were the most efficient and functional team among others. There were other organizations that came to help, and some of them couldn't change their plan to meet the needs of the victims. There were even teams who just showed up and took pictures and left. Victims felt that they were manipulated by these unethical organizations to gain peoples sympathy, probably to enrich their own agenda. This also reminded ourselves that we need to

be thoughtful when helping others.

The most important thing to remember is to do it with love, not asking for anything in return. We should be thankful for any given opportunity and to respect others at the same time. Tzu-Chen Fathers (male commissioners) and Yi-De Mothers (female commissioners) were supportive and we were blessed with their company. These students truly felt the presence of love with Tzu-Chen Fathers and Yi-De Mothers guiding them.

Learn to Be Thankful

Throughout this program, students learned not to waste money in things that are not necessary. "Only buy what you need, not what you want; money should be spent wisely on the people who are in need." They not only encourage themselves but also their families as well. I also like to remind people to pay attention to the expiration

dates when donating food supplies. For apparels and clothing, please make sure they are in good condition. Shoddiness and badly worn items would only make victims feel unwanted. Before donating supplies, please contact the corresponding charity or organization to see what they need. Also, label individual items on the package with regards to the content, size and quantity. This will facilitate the processing and expedite the delivery to victims. For infant formula, list the brand name, the age group and quantity.

With a Good Attitude, Everything You See Is Good

Everyday around noon, after reorganizing the supplies distribution, we were supposed to go down the hill to the Taitung Tzu Chi Recycling Center for lunch. However, the victims invited us to join them for lunch but their only concern



Pack the relief items into the boxes, move it to the distribution site.





was we might not be used to their food. We gladly accepted and soon after, we were all standing in one of the kitchen's corner feasting on the food. Joy and happiness filled the room and everyone was smiling. At about five or six o'clock in the evening, when it was about time to start the distribution, we were asked to delay it till after their dinner. We decided to stay and cooperate with their schedule. At about eight pm, we finished the distribution and they offered us a ride to our lodging. We thanked them for the hospitality, but decided instead to walk down the hill. It was just a pleasant walk under the magnificent sky and the beautiful moon.

Water Just Flows the Way It Is Supposed to

When we saw the devastation from typhoon Morakot, we felt blessed for coming through the typhoon unscathed. It reminded us to appreciate the opportunity of being able to help others. At the Jie-Da Elementary School, we heard from one grandma victim she recalled her ordeal when her house disappeared all of a sudden. She appeared calm, composed, and optimistic about the future. I can't imagine how we would deal with it if we were in her shoes.

The village tribal leader concluded, "Water just runs the way it is supposed to. People take away the land and alter its path. As a result, the water had no choice



but to flood the man-made land."

Master Cheng Yen is critical about human activities on deforestation, the continuing cutting of trees for timber and road building alter the geological landscape of the rivers and mountains. When we are faced with the current natural disaster, we need to re-examine our behavior and our relationship with Mother Nature in order to prevent it from happening again.

Searching for the Truthful Meaning of Life That Last Forever

Dedicate to the needy, focus on efficiency, and co-operate with each other. Along the way, we learn to be thankful because we are blessed when compared to seeing the suffering of others. We help

others with our love, and are grateful for the opportunity to serve our fellow countrymen in Taimali village. We also sincerely hope that the victims can get through all this and return to their peaceful life very soon.

If one has the time and also loves to help others, one is blessed. To help others, one must have good health. For the financially able group, contribute monetary resource else dedicate time and effort. Warmness and kindness are the

characteristics of the typical Taiwanese.

A prisoner in the Ping Dong area made news for his contribution. He voluntarily dispatched to rebuild roads so that emergency supplies could go through. He also helped a lone elderly person in cleaning up the water damaged house. The elderly person was so moved they hugged each other in tears. People around them applauded for such a beautiful ending.



“Water just runs the way it is supposed to. People take away the land and alter its path. As a result, the water had no choice but to flood the man-made land.”

Love and Charity Cycle

By Lee-Chun Li, Head Nurse, Surgical Ward, Tzu Chi Hospital, Taichung Branch

In a blink of the eye it's three year anniversary for Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital. I remember on August 1st 2006, I reported to duty at the hospital while it was still in the early process of organization. A volunteer greeted me kindly and led me to the orientation area, a meeting room with a big banner of "Welcome Home." It was heart warming and I was tearful with happiness. I had never been in the hospital and yet it looked so familiar. A voice from within was saying, "Lee-Chun, you are home finally!" It was such a good feeling.


Tzu Chi Commissioners Accompany Along the Way

After reporting to duty, I attended an 8-day orientation camp which was most impressive as far as I could remember. All the attendees, dressed in uniform with gray top and white pants, quietly assembled in the hall of meditation. I was waiting



anxiously for the opening ceremony. There were ten people in a group, each accompanied by two seasoned and kind Tzu Chi commissioners. The training camp highlighted the eight individual components of Tzu Chi missions. It was food for thoughts, something that benefited me for ever.

On Jan 2nd 2007, for the first time I set foot on the much expected Tzu Chi Hospital. I began at 5-S soon-to-be



opened patient ward as part of the hospital training program. Volunteers were present at all times, taking care of us in every twist and turn along the way. They nurtured us with food and snacks, making sure we were well fed. They encouraged us with kind words whenever we were tired. Despite the fatigue, I was happy and contented. One night, we stayed up late studying and the volunteers kept us accompanied. At 10 pm, nursing management was still working hard to prepare for the upcoming certification. Mrs. Hsu, wife of the hospital director, dropped in with delicious pastries. I almost cried.

I want to tell my fellow brother and sisters, “Ever since the opening, the hospital operation has been progressing and expanding steadily. I am thankful to all your contribution, your selflessness and love. It is wonderful to be with you.”

A Patient’s Family Member Became a Volunteer -- Love Is a Full Circle

I am very happy to witness a patient’s family member becoming a volunteer. Eight months ago, Su-Mei Chen-Fang accompanied her patient husband in the hospital. Nurses greeted her husband “grandpa” with sincerity and it drew her attention. With encouragement from the nursing team to stay positive on her husband prognosis, she began watching the Da Ai TV and listening to Master Cheng

Yen’s morning meditation. Very soon she decided to become a Tzu Chi volunteer.

Su-Mei told us how thankful she was to Dr. Yun-Kang Wu and the nursing team:

“My husband was an introvert. He didn’t say much or share about his feeling. With his health deteriorating, he told me how grateful he was to have my company, and of course the doctors and nurses. I want to reciprocal the care my husband received. I learned a lot from them. When I was most helpless and depressed, they guided me, and supported me. I am most indebted to them, and deeply moved by their sincerity.”

Su-Mei was most impressed by Master Cheng Yen’s teaching: “When faced with great difficulty, don’t turn away but confront it with confidence, courage and persistency.” These words stayed her as she was helping her husband until his last breath. Eight months later, Su-Mei came back to the hospital to thank everyone on the fifth floor, the place where she found the meaning of gratitude. She not only thanks the medical and nursing team, but she became a part of them. She embraced me and the head nurse, and cried openly in remembrance of her husband.

From being a patient’s family to becoming a volunteer caring for others, Su-Mei likes to share her past experience with other patients. Even though grandpa is not there anymore, the seed of love and kindness has sprouted, and it will bear fruit later on.