

Love of Nursing in Kuanshan

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I was deeply touched by my recent experience at the Kuanshan Tzu Chi Hospital.

Shortly after the flooding on August 8th, 2008(also known as the 8/8 Flooding), I joined the medical team stationed in the Kuanshan Tzu Chi Hospital. It was my first time there. Outside, the sky and the mountains were clear and glistening. The night was bustling with the chirps of insects and birds. I closed my eyes as if I were in Shangri-La enjoying a luxurious 5-star trip. A moment later I took a deep breath to bring my senses back to this building - a white tower rising on the prairies. I then observed from the perspective of a medical professional. People crisscrossed between clinics, emergency rooms and patients' wards. Every so often, greetings with unique native tones would stand out from the texture of voices. It was quite a contrast to the fast pace of a big urban hospital. There is a tribal saying - "With a spectacular scenery, there is nothing else left to do." So how did these nursing care personnel deal with a simple living environment?

Head nurse Hua-Mei Ku leads the Kuanshan nursing team with passion. As a Christian, she embraces her mission with courage taught by Master Cheng Yen. Shu-Ping Wu, a nurse practitioner, moved to Kuanshan after she decided to marry here and continues working to help the locals. Yu-Han Chiu, a young nurse, chose to serve the local tribe despite pressure to serve in her hometown. Wen-Chun Tseng, the youngest nurse among the team, rekindles her spirit of volunteering in the new environment with ease.

Through the stories of these four individuals, we learn how they cope with their work in a remote rural hospital. We wish them success in their careers.



Nurses in the Kuanshan Tzu Chi Hospital participated in relief and free clinics right after the August 8th flooding in 2009.

The Charm of Kuanshan

Written by Hua-Mei Ku, Head nurse, Kuanshan Tzu Chi Hospital

I arrived at the Kuanshan hospital in 2000 and it has been exactly 10 years since my work here began. When I look back at my long journey in the world of Tzu Chi, I sigh with disbelief. At the beginning, I could neither comprehend the “Four Spiritual Soups” (Contentment, gratitude, understanding, and accommodation) nor understand the meaning of the four basic Tzu Chi organization structures (Heart-to-heart, harmony, love, and unity). All I cared about was my job. I couldn’t figure out what my superiors endured to make me learn. I didn’t want to take on more responsibilities. Four years later, one night in the early spring of 2005, I came home, exhausted. I sat in the living room beside the dark yellow light. I said to myself, “What’s the matter with you? Where is your passion for nursing? Where is your self-motivation for Kuanshan and your compassion for the patients? Do you really want to stay this way forever?”

After reflecting on myself, I finally accepted the position of ‘head nurse’.



Nurses in Kuanshan are capable of multi-tasking and working in different specialty areas. They also participated in the community outreach programs. This picture shows a CPR class taught by Hua-Mei Ku (top right).

In the beginning, I was scared. I faced difficulties in scheduling due to a shortage of nurses. My lack of experience and the absence of clear management directives also made it difficult for the staff to be efficient. Sometimes I just wanted to give up because of the pressure and burden. But then I remembered what the Master said: “Never let go of your courage! Never lose your confidence! There’s nothing you can’t achieve if only you are willing!” The encouragement from my superiors and colleagues also motivated me to keep going. I started taking management courses

and became actively involved in cultural and charity activities. I was proactive in understanding Tzu Chi's culture and learned to cultivate contentment, thankfulness, understanding, and compassion. Eventually I was able to lead my team.

The difference between Tzu Chi hospitals and others is that the more I learn about the Tzu Chi culture, the more I become thankful to all those whom I have crossed paths with in life. I learned to respect others with love and compassion. Our superintendent, Dr. Win-Him Poon, embodies all of the above qualities. He whole-heartedly embraces patients' health with his love for everyone. He is always visible around the hospital, sets good examples and stresses work ethics. Our nursing staff is like the 'Goddess of Mercy' (Guanyin Bodhisattva) who shows up whenever there is suffering. Although they have very little time-off due to a lack of personnel, they still try their best to serve every patient. Every nursing staff member is

required to work in maternity care, the baby nursing room, intensive care unit, outpatient clinic, and the general wards. The training process is vigorous but rewarding because we apply the skills we learn to help patients. Now our staff can help manage the quality of our nursing care and monitor the safety of our educational training and the working environment. We are grateful to the nursing department in Hualien for their guidance and support.

The charm of Kuanshan is everywhere, everyday; we are touched by the many moving stories of our patients. With compassion, we tend to view life differently in perspective. We continue to practice the teachings of Master Cheng Yen to further our understanding. Our Kuanshan branch hospital is not only composed of medical teams, but also volunteers. Together, we carry out Tzu Chi's missions in relief and charity. We hope to follow the footsteps of Master Cheng Yen to spread our love to the world.



Led by the head nurse, Hua-Mei Ku, a sign language "Love in this world" was performed during the 10th anniversary of the Kuanshan Tzu Chi Hospital on March 4th, 2010. The performance earned touched feelings from the audience.

Homecoming

Written by Yu-Han Chiu, Registered Nurse, ER & ICU,
Kuanshan Tzu Chi Hospital



It has been four years since I came to the Kuanshan Tzu Chi Hospital. It's like a big family and everybody helps and encourages each other. I feel warmth and hospitality here.

Although I did not graduate from the Tzu Chi College of Nursing, I joined the Kuanshan Tzu Chi Hospital because it is close to home. Before coming back to Kuanshan, I worked in southern Taiwan. At that time, I often felt something was missing, a lack of home feeling and hospitality. After returning to my hometown to serve the local community, I was filled with happiness. However, there was a different kind of pressure that time around. There was always gossiping about who was doing a better job than others and there were always more criticisms than compliments. I hope my experiences can improve in the future.

I would like to thank the Kuanshan Hospital for taking care of the aboriginals and remote mountain villages in the East Rift Valley, without which our tribe would have to travel long distances to visit a doctor. Though our tribe is well known for problems with alcohol, I hope the hospital will not give

up on them. They need the opportunities to better themselves with our help.

There are many things I have learned through my experiences in nursing care at Kuanshan Tzu Chi Hospital. I am thankful to be a part of this big family and will continue serving everybody whole-heartedly.



Yu-Han Chiu felt happy to come back to her hometown to serve her tribe. The picture shows that Yu-Han was attending the performance of the song in sign language during the 10th anniversary of the Kuanshan Hospital.

The Simple and Happy Life in Kuanshan

Written by Shu-Ping Wu, Nurse Practitioner, Kuanshan Tzu Chi Hospital

It has already been more than 16 years since I graduated from school and more than 11 years since I began working in the Tzu Chi Hospital. My positions include clinical nurse and nurse supervisor. I am currently a nurse practitioner. I worked at the Tzu Chi Hospital in Hualien during the first four years, and later transferred to the Kuanshan Tzu Chi Hospital. It was during this period that I met my husband and became a family member of the Kuanshan Town residents.

It has been almost twenty years since I was first introduced to the Tzu Chi culture during my second year at the National Defense Medical College. Since then I have volunteered at the Huallien Tzu Chi Hospital one week every summer and during winter breaks. During that week, our daily routines included a morning Buddha practice session, harvesting and drying green beans and cleaning the facilities in the Jing Si Abode where dharma master live. We then volunteered in the hospital and visited patients at their own homes. In the evening, we participated in singing the



Shu-Ping Wu was honored with a ten-year service award at the 10th anniversary of the Kuanshan Tzu Chi Hospital. She was also recognized as a bone marrow donor. She dedicated the award to her father who taught her to serve others.

“Jing Si Aphorisms” with sign language. I was inspired and energized each time I stayed there. Since my school tuition was government funded, I had to serve at the Tri-Service Army General Hospital in Taipei after graduation. Although my teachers, classmates, and a boyfriend were with me, I still felt like a duckweed without roots. I decided, therefore, to quit my job and to move to the Tzu Chi Hospital in Hualien. I thought my parents would have opposed my decision. Surprisingly, my father said, “We will never have to worry about you if

you work at Tzu Chi.” Their support has given me confidence for my new journey.

I was the head nurse at the Gastroenterology ward for my first assignment. Since over one-third of the staff in our unit were new recruits, our ward was the busiest among the internal medicine departments and things often went out of control and I often couldn't leave the hospital until late at night. As we became familiar with our jobs, things became smoother and we bonded with each other like sisters. One time, I came down with pneumonia and could not even walk a short distance to the hospital. I was grateful to have my colleague for escorting and helping with all check-in procedures. While being hospitalized, my colleagues

took turns to come visit. A friend's mother even came to look after me every night. Hualien has now become my second hometown and everyone around me is like a family member.

In 2003, I was transferred to work at the branch hospital in Kuanshan. The heavy workload and training courses caused me to consider leaving Kuanshan several times. A “Shi-Po” (polite saying of an elder male volunteer) tried to comfort me by taking me on a scenic tour. That didn't help. Then one day, while riding my bicycle along the countryside, I was attracted by the scene of endless rice fields. I suddenly felt awakened, and realized that this beautiful countryside is the kind of simple life style that I was looking for. Since then I have



The medical team of the Kuanshan Tzu Chi Hospital pays regular visits to the elderly in the tribe. The picture shows that Shu-Ping Wu(middle) and her colleagues were taking blood pressure for the elders.



Shu-Ping Wu hopes to have more talented doctors and nurses join the Kuanshan Tzu Chi Hospital. The picture shows that Shu-Ping (3rd to the right) participated in the eastern Taiwan free clinic.

settled with my decision to stay here and work for Tzu Chi.

Over half of the patients in Kuanshan are elderly people. Many of them are over 80 or even 90 years old and since most of the young people moved out of town for better jobs, the elderly take care of their children. Not until I was married to a Kuanshan native did I finally understand the frustration of the residents due to limited medical resources. I am thankful to the Kuanshan Tzu Chi Hospital, a small but comprehensive medical facility with services in internal medicine, surgery, and gynecology. Residents can now get medical care including basic emergency care without traveling far. In the past it took

almost one day to travel back and forth the hospital, many residents preferred to take over-the-counter drugs. If there was an emergency, they could only pray.

Kuanshan is a scenic town with an easy lifestyle. As residents here, we are sometimes envied by tourists and visitors. However, the truth is that very few people would be willing to work or settle down here. I am concerned about the health of our resident doctors since they have to do further examinations and even perform surgery after a full day of work. I wish there were more doctors that could join us to promote the healthiness of the residents in Kuanshan.

Learn to Be Useful

Written by Wen-Chun Tseng, Nurse Assistant, Kuanshan Tzu Chi Hospital

I still remember the fear and uncertainty that I felt upon graduating with no firm idea of where to begin my career. I was encouraged to join the Kuanshan Tzu Chi Hospital by a nurse who was visiting my home after the 8/8 flooding. When I came to the hospital, I felt very connected to the place. Everyone, whether in the same department or not, got along well with each other. The passion of the Tzu Chi volunteers was particularly admirable and has been a great help to our hospital.

As time passed, I gradually became familiar with the lifestyle here. This is a small hospital, but it provides convenient medical service to the villagers. The quality of the service is not affected by the scale of this hospital, which exemplifies our compassion toward the people. Although team work is required, each medical staff here is highly qualified and capable of working independently. Our senior nurses told me that they gained professional knowledge from many years of working experience. They were all good role models for me. I plan to continue learning from them so that

one day I can become a good role model for others.

It has been almost one and half a year since I came here. There are still so many things to learn but I strive to overcome obstacles no matter how difficult they are. I hope to continue our mission to save lives. When I help people I can appreciate my contribution to this world.



Wen-Chun Tseng found that the senior nurses are multi-talented. She also feels the warmth from the Tzu Chi environment.