

Nurses' Best Companions

Exemplary Yi-Te Parents

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Yi-Te Parents are Tzu Chi Commissioners and Faith Corps who devote themselves in caring for students in Tzu Chi University, college, and staff in the hospitals. Since most of the students and nurses come from other counties, Master Cheng Yen hopes these Yi-Te Parents play the role of guardians. Yi-Te Parents come from all parts of Taiwan and travel to Tzu Chi hospitals frequently to look after the mental and physical health of the staff and nurses.



Photo depicts a Tzu Chi medical volunteer working at ER of Taichung Tzu Chi General Hospital.



Learning from volunteers' congeniality

When I first stepped foot in Taichung's Tzu Chi Hospital to interview for a nurse's position in March 2007, I was looking for the hospital directory. One of the commissioners came up to me and asked, "How can I help you?" and directed me towards the elevator. Her friendliness and big smile deeply impressed me.

Two months later, I was offered the job of emergency room nurse and I accepted it. Initially, my biggest challenge was dealing with people in a new environment. To my relief, the volunteers would greet me every morning on my way to the emergency unit. Although it was awkward at first, their enthusiasm was contagious. I soon became accustomed to it and returned the gestures.

A continuous homey feeling

The emergency room is the first place to take trauma victims. Being the front line of the hospital, the ER staff never know when we would have time to eat or drink. Lunch boxes are usually delivered around 11:00 AM, but by the time we have time to eat, it is usually past noon and the food is cold. However, we are still grateful for the volunteers who bring us food and care. Once, my co-workers and I compared our

past work experiences, everyone felt this job is more rewarding, and our efforts are much appreciated. To me, one of the most decisive factors is definitely the volunteers' positive attitude.

Usually, two volunteer families would take turns to prepare and deliver extra snack boxes for the staff, and they always include fresh fruits. For example, today could be apple with guava, tomorrow might be tomato and grapes, etc. When it is the Mid-autumn Festival, there would be pomelo. We nurses feel like spoiled "children." For someone like me, who worked far from home, the boxes prepared by the volunteers remind us of care packages delivered from home. We are extremely grateful for these nostalgic moments.

Another group of volunteers, "Yi-Te moms and dads" visit us periodically to check on how we are doing. We usually dine with them and discussed recent events. Mei-Lan, who is the most experienced "Yi-Te mom", usually visits the ER and arranges get-togethers. She always brings various snacks when she comes.

After ten years at the hospital, my relationship with "Yi-Te moms and dads" has undoubtedly surpassed the regular work-related boundaries. We invite them to our weddings and major life events. We share their grief and joy. They have become like our real parents.



Volunteers can be seen everywhere in the hospital. They care for the hospital workers and also entertain them at times.

Surrounded by moms and dads' love

In July 2010, it was the first time that I experienced the official hospital accreditation by the Department of Public Health. In preparation, volunteers learned CPR in advance and came in early to clean and decorate the venue. Though some volunteers were older, their enthusiasm and perseverance enabled them to keep up with the program. Some of them even outperformed younger volunteers. When government accreditation agents left after the two-day assessment, my eyes were filled with tears. Only those who were there could understand why. I presented each

volunteer with a thank you card for their help in the ER during the accreditation period. One volunteer even scheduled his dental implants till after the accreditation, so he could be part of it. The entire process was such a teamwork and gratifying experience.

In September 2010, I attended a Tzu Chi medical retreat for the first time. "Yi-Te moms and dads" lined up and greeted us, saying "Welcome home, children." As simple as the greeting was, it touched my heart deeply. In one of the programs, over 200 volunteers encircled the medical staff hand-in-hand. In the next five days, I benefited so much from numerous forums and activities. Having been brought up by

a single mother and never known what it is like to have a father, I understood for the first time in my 30 years of life, what it was like to have so many “fathers” around me.

After working in Tzu Chi’s hospital for four years, I have become close to many volunteers. For example, I will never forget the warmth of volunteer Ching-Yuan, the smile of Chin-Chiu, the big apple from a volunteer nick named “Flying Dragon” or

the hot tea from volunteer “Wheat Tea” and many others. Many of the local volunteers have loved us unconditionally as their own children, offering us their ageless smiles.

Just as Dharma Master Cheng Yen says, “Our lives will become most joyful and fulfilling if we know how to give.” It is a truly a privilege to know all the volunteers and experience their year-round unselfishness.

Volunteers are cleaning the hospital as if cleaning their own houses the night before the medical accreditation; their attentiveness has touched ER’s deputy head nurse Yu-Ju Li.

