



Ya-Chun Cheng,

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Children- Caring

Paiwan Tribe Beauty

Stepping into the pediatric ward, one often hears a bright smile, cheerful talk, and then sees a petite, dark-brown-skinned nurse. She is the head nurse - Ya-Chun Cheng. People familiar with the ward gave her the nickname “Black Beauty”. Under the leadership of Ya-Chun, the pediatric ward is a source of warmth. In Ya-Chun’s ward one always feels the sunshine of a spring day.

A Paiwan Girl Who Loves Reading

Ya-Chun Cheng is an aboriginal Taiwanese from the Paiwan tribe. Her hometown is in the village of Tu Pan, Township of Ta Jen, Taitung County. She comes from the same township of the famous super-doctor Chao-Pin Hsu.

Ya-Chun is the youngest among her four siblings. Her father is a blue-collar worker, who barely earned enough to support a family of six. Her aunt always provided timely support to improve the family condition. Ya-Chun’s cousin, when she was little, was a schoolteacher who voluntarily took care of her and her brothers and sisters. However, Ya-Chun’s elder brothers and sisters were not very keen in school works. Therefore, with the consent of her parents, Ya-Chun’s aunt helped her moved to Kaohsiung when she was in her 4th grade, and was transferred to the school where her cousin was teaching. Since then, Ya-Chun started her schooling away from the family.

After graduated from elementary school, Ya-Chun was admitted to both Taitung Girl’s Middle School and Fooyin College of Nursing. She seriously considered the public



Since the second year at Fooyin College of Nursing, Ya-Chun Cheng discovered the enjoyment of nursing; she supported herself with scholarship due to her academic excellence. Photo shows (second to the left, front row) the second year nursing student Ya-Chun Cheng.



school to reduce the family's financial burden. However, her aunt thought nursing is a more stable career. In addition, there were several nurses in the area that gained respect of the villagers. After many discussions between her aunt and her parents, they encouraged Ya-Chun to select Fooyin. The decision became the starting point of her nursing career.

Ya-Chun still remembers that, in her freshman year at Fooyin, most of the classes she took were either for fundamental knowledge or of general education. She was very bored with the class works. Fortunately, once the second year started, she found professional nursing courses to be interesting. She worked very hard, and the effort manifested in her academic achievements. She was on scholarship most of the time, which significantly reduced the financial burden on her family.

As Ya-Chun began her internship, one of the most valuable experiences she gained was the feeling of being needed. "Once I took a lady to the hospital for some tests, she grasped my hands throughout the procedure. It was then I discovered how I was needed by the patient."

Loves Pediatrics, Takes the Tzu Chi Challenge

In June of 1999, Ya-Chun graduated from Fooyin College of Nursing. Her first vocational choice was to stay in Kaohsiung. She loved the city that nurtured her and wished that the college would recommend her to her preferred hospital, but it did not work out as she planned. She returned to eastern Taiwan not too far from her hometown. She would like to start her career in a reasonable-sized hospital, and Tzu Chi hospital was a viable choice on her list. "Honestly, I did not give too much of a thought," she said. Ya-Chun's taste for challenge was evident in the criteria she set for her first job.

Ya-Chun prioritized pediatrics as the first choice, the best place for her open and cheerful personality. She remembers that, in the beginning, she had to take care of children with rare diseases. By observing the helplessness on the faces of those children and their parents, it led her to realize the true value of nursing.

Overcome the Torture of the Probation Period

With the confidence and leadership she brought to the ward today, it was hard to believe that Ya-Chun almost failed to overcome the torture of her probation. That was not because she did not work hard!

Admitted to the hospital of her wish and entered the ward of her choice, Ya-Chun confidently thought that she could perform brilliantly, and a bright future is awaiting her.

She placed a tremendous amount of pressure on herself to get ahead. This pressure eventually became a force to retard her learning capability. Ya-Chun fell behind not only to the fellows entering the hospital at the same time as she did, but also to the interns who came in months after. She was worried, afraid, anxious, and her confidence almost collapsed completely. Even though that was not the first time she was away from home, she called her mother daily and cried to her, "I want to go home." Her mother, though heartbroken, never forgot to encourage her daughter and urged Ya-Chun to move on and never give up. Meanwhile, Ya-Chun gained support from her fellow interns. With the warmth of family support and friendship, she finally overcame the nightmare of probation.

Caring of Cancerous Children, Taking Over the Mission of Ward Head

Since the very beginning of her clinical services, Ya-Chun was involved with taking care of children with cancer. There are, most of the time, more than 10 young cancer patients in the ward, who demands patience and time when nursing. She loved all her patients. She frequently shared her nursing experience with the ward partners, and as result, the whole unit could function as a team with solid mutual understanding.

Perhaps because of working with these young cancer patients re-stimulated her mission of aiding those in need, Ya-Chun switched to another position as a senior nurse. But it took her a long time to adjust the change of role and tasks. Many time,

Ya-Chun Cheng is proud to be a Paiwan and been able to serve aboriginal children. Photo shows Ya-Chun Cheng interacts with a child with leukemia.





she thought of quitting. Ya-Chun still remembers, "I am deeply obligated to Doctors Jung-Lung Chen and Su-Hua Chen. Because of their inspired guidance I was able to advance my skill and knowledge in the field of pediatric nursing."

At the same time, most of the senior nurses were beginning to pursue advanced studies. That gave Ya-Chun the thought of change. She and a senior nurse, I-Lin, spent three years at school to work for an advance degree.

After three years as a senior nurse, Ya-Chun assumed the position as the head nurse of the pediatric ward. Once familiarize with the routines, she proceeded to assemble a dream team. The new position broadens her vision in every aspect of life. Ya-Chun said, "Before, it was one-to-one between the patient and I. I was so anxious to get praises and confirmations. Now that I am a supervisor, commanding my entire unit would make me much happier than to be praised."

Ya-Chun learned from her supervisors and colleagues that empathetic positive comments are an excellent approach to interact with her colleagues. A good supervisor needs to realize that a positive influence has a far-reaching effect on the team members. Timely instructions and guidance, or to accompany one's colleagues along their tasks, may present them the opportunity to seek their personal goal in their career planning.

Display of Professional Passion, Serve Aboriginal Cancerous Children

Ya-Chun has the obvious appearance of native Taiwanese, but one cannot tell which tribe she comes from. She has a lively personality; whenever she is working,





During her 14 years with Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital, Ya-Chun Cheng participated twice in the care of Pilipino conjoined twins. Photo shows the pediatric ward nurses handed an album they made to the pair of separated Pilipino conjoined twins.

her ward is always filled of bright smiles. Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital is always occupied with large numbers of aboriginal children. If visitors came from Tai-Mar Li or Southern Taitung, Ya-Chun would talk to them with her mother tongue; however, if they do not speak Paiwan, eventually they would have to communicate in either Taiwanese dialect or Mandarin. Even so, the children and their parents are all very close to Ya-Chun. They would share with her all their family happenings, large or small.

Ya-Chun is now in her 14th year with the pediatric ward. She treats all of her co-workers as her benefactors. She thanks everyone who had helped her to establish her journey in the career of nursing.

During her Tzu Chi years Ya-Chun participated twice in the care of separated Pilipino conjoined twins. She also involved in the special case where an Indonesia boy suffered from a giant jaw tumor. Ya-Chun often spends her off-hours and vacations with her patients, believing it would generate some breathing room for the children's family, especially for those with financial difficulties. In Tzu Chi, where charity and medical care collaborate hand-in-hand, Ya-Chun has the opportunity to serve the children of special needs, which enriched her professionally and spiritually.

After her marriage, Ya-Chun decided to stay in Hualien. Her husband, who works in Kaohsiung, can only visit Hualien during vacations or public holidays, and the distance encourages to treasure every moment spent together. Currently, Ya-Chun is working on her Master's Degree and continues to work toward her dreamed journey. She decides to pass on her knowledge and skills to her junior nurses. She is also determined to dedicate her heart and energy for the health of her aboriginal patients.