

Setting Sail with Strands of Love



The Tzu Chi Foundation set up a free clinic on Ren'ai Street, Hualien City after six years into its operation. The clinic, opened 46 years ago, is considered as the origin of TIMA (Tzu Chi International Medical Association). The operation of the free clinic and medical outreaches were difficult back in the days, but I told myself nothing is impossible with a determined mind. The confluence of love forms a formidable force. Today TIMA has expanded its influence worldwide and encouraged the participation of the young generation.

Illness is the worst pain among all human sufferings. Rare are the doctors who can relieve those in pain and become benefactors of others. Real doctors perpetuate their thought to save lives forever and the same.

TIMA assembles medical staff and volunteers to provide medical assistance to those who are in need. TIMA conferences have been rotating in cities worldwide, where members across the globe congregate to share their relief efforts with religious sentiments. In the 2016 conference held in the Philippines, three pairs of conjoined twins who had received assistance from TIMA shared the stage to tell their stories. Rose Carmel and Rose Carmelette Molit, the first pair to be successfully separated in 2003, are now all grown up and with a bright future. Another young man who was left undersized, underweight, and severe myopia because of a rare disease had a very low self-esteem. After TIMA arranged surgery and glasses for him, he became optimistic and cheerful. Another girl with an enormous skin tumor on the top of her head that appeared as if the brain had swollen beyond the size of the skull had her tumor removed by TIMA, which gave back her adolescence. Our Medical outreach had found them and changed their lives.

I am grateful towards the accomplishment of TIMA in the Philippines.



Many large scale medical outreaches were held in the past two decades, servicing countless people. Many patients suffered from eye diseases or minor tumors received operation on-site. The operations by TIMA can be tremendously helpful to the locals, since a cataract surgery may cost a local 20,000 Philippines Peso, an amount not affordable to people in poverty with an average daily income of 200 Philippines Peso, a wage that can barely sustain their own lives. It was fortunate for them to have met these TIMA bodhisattvas who brought light back to them.

Medical outreaches are held regularly by TIMA chapters worldwide. TIMA chapter in Perth, Australia collaborated with the Red Cross and conducted medical outreaches in areas of poverty, brought joy to the elderlies and children. In Brazil, medical outreaches of Chinese and western medicine are held every month in rural areas, providing medicine and food supplies to people in need. In Jordan, Brother Chi-Hui offered his own home for the free clinic open to Syrian refugees, so the refugees can feel our love and warm embrace.

Our strength grows in number. The more bodhisattvas in the world, the more can be saved. The humane doctors of Tzu Chi are great in numbers. As long as opportunity permits, they can utilize their professions to rebuild the lives of those in suffering.

Do not look down upon love that is small. Like spinning weaving, strings of silk spin into a yarn, and strands of yarn can be woven into a cloth. The Tzu Chi members always spin together strings of love and weave them into clothes and ropes. When strength continues to accumulate, it can form a mighty rope strong enough to pull a ship, allowing the ship of compassion to sail forward.

Every year when I see many doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and medical volunteers come home and reunite, I always express my gratitude to everyone. Although some of them lives far away, their hearts are close to mine. Just like what Dr. Josefino Qua from the Philippines said, "If you ask me what blood type is, it is not type O, type A, or type B. It is type Tzu Chi. Since blood type never changes, I will follow our Master life after life." I believe our hearts will remain close forever, and keep on devoting to our cause of providing relief to people in suffering and benefit the world.