

## Tzu Chi Holds New Year Events For 17,000 Families in Taiwan

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation  
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Since January 26, members of the Tzu Chi Foundation have organized Chinese New Year feasts and winter distributions for 17,000 disadvantaged families across Taiwan. It is a tradition that began in 1969 and has been followed every year. The Lunar New Year is the most important festival in the Chinese calendar, a time for family meals and celebrations.

On February 3, the volunteers held an event at the Jing Si Abode in Hualien. They invited 300 disadvantaged families, a total of 460 people, to celebrate the New Year. The event included a free clinic, free hair cuts. At noon, the guests gathered and sat at 46 round tables to enjoy the vegetarian feast.

The free clinic was provided by doctors of Tzu Chi Hospitals; professional hair stylists performed the hair-cuts. There were other stands – a calligraphist writing Jing Si Aphorisms on Spring Festival paper and tables for children to hand-paint their bamboo banks. The whole area was full of guests and volunteers; it created a festive atmosphere in which everyone had a happy face.



The volunteers guided the children to present a cup of tea to their parent or great- parent, to show appreciation for taking care of them. Many of the parents were touched and burst into tears when they received the tea.

The vegetarian lunch was served on 46 tables; more than 500 volunteers took part in preparing the six dishes, with a hot pot in the center of the table to bring warmth to everyone. The masters of Jing Si Abode also prepared traditional Chinese New Year delicacies -- rice cake, radish cake and steamed sponge cake.

Dr. Lin Chin-Lon, CEO of Tzu Chi Medical Mission, Dr. Kao Ruey-ho, Superintendent of Tzu Chi General Hospital, Hualien, Dr. Wang Pen-Jung, Principal of Tzu Chi University and their staff dressed as chefs and served the dishes to the guests. Dr. Lin said that Tzu Chi's Charity and Medicine Missions shared the same principle of caring for the weaker members of society and that their members were very happy to serve the public.



During the feast, Master Cheng Yen arrived and greeted all the participants. She said that, since everyone belonged to one family, they were all welcome to the Chinese New Year reunion

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feast. She wished everyone a peaceful and healthy new year.

Among the guests was Madame Li Chun-jin, 55. Her heart was full of gratitude to the Tzu Chi volunteers who have helped her and her family for many years. In 2008, she underwent surgery on her spine, which left her unable to do full-time job. Her family lived off the income earned from part-time work by her husband. Fortunately, their two sons have grown up well and both went to college; the younger one is in Tzu Chi University's medical school.



“No matter how difficult our life was, my husband and I had to let our children finish their studies,” she said. “With support from Tzu Chi, I am very grateful that my younger son can continue medical school. I wish that he can be a good doctor to pay back society.”

Since January 26, the volunteers have held events such as that in Hualien all over Taiwan; 17,000 disadvantaged families have taken part. Some were unable to attend; volunteers visited those families in person to offer them blessings and wish them a happy new year.