

In Philippines, 632 Students Receive Scholarship From Tzu Chi

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
Wednesday, 24 July 2013 17:14



June 2 was a special day for 632 students in the Philippines, two weeks before the start of the new academic term – all received a scholarship from the Tzu Chi Foundation. For many of them, it means the difference between completing their studies and dropping out of school.

A presentation ceremony was held at Jing Si Hall in Quezon City. Of the 632, 63 were given distinctions for their outstanding academic performance; they included 35 college graduate students. In addition, 200 needy students from Dreamland, Cavite will be given scholarships in the coming weeks. The scholarship not only means financial aid; it allows the recipients to cherish the educational opportunities given to them and grow up as responsible students who become a role model and inspiration to other children.

Several went on stage to express their gratitude to the foundation. They included two young men, both 20, who earned their college degree thanks to the assistance they received -- Denver Encinas and Wilmar Mabag. In his speech, Denver recounted how the Buddhist group paved the way for him to fulfill his dreams of finishing college. He lives in Dreamland, Cavite where the family home is situated near a dumpsite with no electricity, water supply or toilet. Despite these obstacles, he studied diligently until he finished his course in Information Technology at Cavite State University. “Do not waste the chance given to you by Tzu Chi in order to study,” he said. “Cherish every opportunity to develop your potential so that you can also succeed later on.”



Mabag is a graduate of Business Administration, majoring in Finance Management, at Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Marikina. He encouraged students to take on the hurdles of life, including the challenge of studying. “Sometimes, it is difficult to study and we might make some mistakes along the way,” he said. “But what is more important is to correct and learn from them. We should have faith in God and stay on the right path of persevering so that (you) can finish your studies and help your families.”

Another person who addressed the audience was new scholar John Paul Rumbines; he thanked the foundation for giving him the chance to continue studying. “I will study hard in order to repay Tzu Chi’s goodness. (Given the chance to volunteer), I will also prove that, even if we are poor, I can also help others in need.” He will soon start his first year at Marikina Polytechnic College, studying Electrical Engineering.

His mother Mildred is a cash-for-work recycler in TCMERC; she expressed her gratitude for the charity group’s educational assistance. “If not for Tzu Chi’s scholarship, one of my two children studying in college might be forced to stop,” she said happily. “Because of their help, it is a big

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relief to know that this will not happen. With this, I promise to do better in my recycling work.” Her husband works as a barber who earns about 7,000 pesos (US\$ 161 a month). The amount, she said, is not enough to pay for the education of their four children, especially now that John Paul is entering college.



Another speaker was Aaron Karl Opiana – it was the first time he learnt about Tzu Chi; he looks forward to getting to know the Buddhist group in the future. He is about to start his second year at Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila, studying Mass Communication. Opiana’s father is the sole breadwinner in the family; he works as a warehouse checker. As their savings had been used up, Opiana and his three siblings were unable to go on studying in a private school and transferred to a public one. “Sometimes I walk to school or skip eating breakfast just to save money,” he explained. But now, the newly-accepted scholar is on his way to helping his family lighten their burden. “I am thankful to Tzu Chi for this opportunity to become their scholar. My parents’ burden for buying books and other fees will be lessened. I hope to be able to return this favor in the near future. Of course, I can start this by studying well.”

In addition to their speeches, several first-time recipients presented a performance entitled “Da Di He Feng Kung Fu”; the graduate and college scholars performed “Colorful Wings” which encourages the scholars to be steadfast in achieving their dreams.

Several members of Tzu Chi and of its youth division gave a display of Tai Chi.



Nurturing more educated children

As they saw the group of scholars coming onto the stage to receive hope for their future, couple Robert and Fely Sian were filled with joy. They have been supporting the foundation’s education mission for many years. “This is a very meaningful endeavor and I am thankful to Tzu Chi for inviting us to witness this ceremony,” said Robert in Chinese, adding that it is a great encouragement for them as donors to see how scholars attain a brighter future through the educational assistance program.

During that day, he was not only able to hand over the certificate of the scholarship but also hug the Tzu Chi scholars like a member of his family. He said that it was very rare for organizations to acknowledge every scholar and witness such “personal attachment” between scholars and their donors. Speaking during the same interview, his wife Fely said that she wished the scholars to finish their studies and become productive. “I wish they could be successful and be of help for the betterment of society.”

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In his talk, Tzu Chi volunteer Michael Siao emphasized how each person can impact the world by guiding a child, particularly at the age of 12. "Given the right guidance, we can change a child's life in a cycle of (one) generation. Education is something that we can pass onto them and their future," he said. He also encouraged the scholars to be inspired to pursue their education that will lead many families to end their own cycle of poverty.