

Reaching Out Far and Wide to Needy Students

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
Friday, 08 January 2010 11:13



Tzu Chi Melaka started the Study Grant Scheme in 1997 to help students from impoverished families to further their studies. In the last 13 years, with more Tzu Chi Liaison Offices established in Malaysia, the Scheme has reached out far and wide, benefiting 30,000 students to-date. The number of beneficiaries in the past two years has increased tremendously as a result of the visits made by our community volunteers to primary and secondary schools and homes in both cities and rural areas.

Initially, the presentation ceremony was held at various Liaison Offices. However, for the convenience of students staying in rural areas, the presentation ceremony was held in various communities since 2008.

Although it is just a small sum of money, it represents the best wishes and encouragement from many people.

Frugal but Happy

Liao Ya Qing, Principal of Khai Chee Chinese Primary School, hoped that Tzu Chi will continue with this Scheme as it has really helped children from poor families. Not only has it reduced the financial burden for parents and allowed students to further their studies, but it also gives Tzu Chi volunteers the opportunity to teach the students and parents to be charitable through the [Bamboo Bank Campaign](#).

Last year, the study-grant recipients were given bamboo banks to encourage them to save money for charity or emergency use. This April, the volunteers brought along bamboo banks on their assessment visits and shared its story with the applicants. The volunteers always try to inspire kind thoughts to the people around them.

At this year's presentation ceremony, Mr. Ravisangkar came with a bamboo bank wrapped with newspaper. He said, "My wife and I came by motorbike, and as we did not wish to attract any attention we wrapped it with newspaper. We want the money saved by me and my family to go to Tzu Chi for a good cause."

Breadwinner Retrenched

Tzu Chi volunteers also provide emergency aid to families facing great difficulties during their home visits to study grant applicants.

Luo Ai Wei had just given birth to her fifth child when her husband was laid off as a chef in late September this year. While her husband was looking for a new job, Ai Wei did odd-jobs, making about RM20 (USD5.9) a day, to support the family. Fortunately, her predicament was made known to Tzu Chi volunteers when they visited her for her son's study grant application. The family was immediately subsidized with basic supplies and volunteers will monitor their situation.

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In order to accompany their 8-year old son to the ceremony, Ai Wei and her husband brought along all their other four children. It cost them RM5 to reach the school, but Ai Wei was happy to fork out that money. She said, "It is a special occasion and we must all attend. I want my children to receive a good education and the money will really help us a lot."

Ai Wei is confident that they will overcome their present difficulty soon. With the support given by Tzu Chi volunteers, she has the courage and strength to face the challenges.

Hope of Single Mothers

Thirty-seven year old Kham Suan Vong Deuan Pheng said, "If Tzu Chi did not help me, I don't think I have the strength to move on!"

Kham Suan Vong Deuan Pheng from Laos found out that she was the fourth wife when she landed in Sabah with her Sabahan husband. She chose to stay because she was pregnant.

A few years ago, her husband left her and their three children for another woman. She has to work as a nanny and a helper. But with help from her neighbours and Tzu Chi, she and her children have been quite well taken care of.

"Tzu Chi Sisters always encourage me to be strong and I will. I will not allow my children to give up their education even if I face financial difficulties."

Siri Nurai, who was also abandoned by her husband, said, "If not for my children, I would not have the courage to live on!" She has five children and she wanted all of them to go to school. The study grant not only helped her financially but it has also boosted her morale.

Coalfield Estate Session

Nitthiakalyani from Coalfield Estate met Tzu Chi volunteers on their study grant assessment visit last year. Her husband was in prison, leaving her and their six children in a very depressing situation. Volunteers helped them to move house and provided them with some material aid and comfort. Three of her children were given study grants this year.

Most of the residents in Coalfield Estate are Indians from the low income group. At the parents' and teachers' corner, Puspalatha said in a choked voice, "We are desperately short of money and didn't know what to do. I am really thankful for the study grant." All those present nodded their heads in agreement and many were lost in their own thoughts.

Puspalatha's children received the grant for the second year running. She also inspired other parents when she signed up as a monthly donor of Tzu Chi.

A Bamboo Bank Filled with Gratitude

"This is the bamboo bank my eldest daughter, Li Si Ying, brought back last year. She told me to return it today as a token of appreciation of Tzu Chi's kindness," said Si Ying's mother, as she poured the coins into the urn.

Five years ago, when Si Yin was in standard 6, she received Tzu Chi's study grant for the first

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time. This family has strong affinity with Tzu Chi. This year four out of the nine children in this family received the grant again.

Mother Li said, "Five of my children are in secondary school, each one needing about RM200 when the new school term starts. I always worry because we will be very tight financially. My children were naturally very happy when they were informed of the good news."

Mother Li told her children to study hard and be a Tzu Chi volunteer in the future to repay the kindness they received. The children have all done well in their studies and did not let their parents or the volunteers down.

Selling recyclables for charity

At Tzu Chi Kuala Lumpur, when volunteers found that 11-year old Chen Zi Lin's bamboo bank had many RM1 notes, they asked her how she managed to collect so much money. She replied, "We saved a portion of the money we earned from selling old newspapers and aluminium cans."

Zhi Lin and brother are both grant recipients this year. They are from a single parent family, and their mother works as a cleaner and does handicraft work at home to supplement the family's income. She said that although they are not well-off, they try to help others in their own small ways.

Nanthini - An Admirable Young Lady

On November 1, Nanthini, last year's Study Grant Scheme's beneficiary, put on the Tzu Chi volunteer vest at this year's presentation ceremony. She helped as an interpreter at the reporting counter at Tsun Jin Chinese Primary School.

In January 2008, her mother and youngest brother died in a car accident and her father went missing. As the eldest in the family, she had to take care of her grandmother and four young siblings. She was 19 then and still studying.

Tzu Chi volunteers visited this family through the Study Grant Scheme last year and took her under their wings.

When volunteers conveyed Master Cheng Yen's blessing to her, she said the Master's blessing motivated her when she felt depressed.

Volunteers recorded her story in the [Life Wisdom](#) (Master Cheng Yen's daily Dharma Talk) programme and gave her a copy. She said she wants to keep the Master's love deep in her heart.

After completing her secondary education last year, she started working as a clerk in a bank. She said the small income she earned is sufficient to feed her family and for her to continue studying part time. She requested Tzu Chi to stop the monthly aid given to her and has instead become a donating member.

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"I want to be a volunteer and I hope to see Master Cheng Yen one day. Master, thank you for your love." She will undergo the volunteer training programme shortly.

Because there is love, her life is no longer depressing; and because she gives, her life is no longer empty.

Xiong Mei Shi

Xiong Mei Shi is a 10-year old student of Ting Hwa Chinese Primary School. She lives in a government low-cost house by the Malim River that runs through Pulau Gadong, Melaka.

Her 74-year old father, Xiong Xiu Hua, has health problems and her 50-year old mother, Li Feng Mei, needs medication for her mental condition. The three of them have lived in this house for ten years but they are unable to take care of themselves. Mei Shi goes to school wearing a set of filthy uniforms.

Great Love Mother, Luo Yu Zhen, who conducts regular Jing Si Aphorism Teaching at Ting Hwa School, noticed Mei Shi earlier, but it was still a great shock for her when she visited the girl's home.

Tzu Chi Melaka volunteers was appalled by the condition of the house when they visited this family for the purpose of verifying the study grant application. This family then became a Tzu Chi care-recipient. Volunteers subsidized their living expenses and helped them clean up their home.

Rat, cockroaches and ants were seen running and trying to escape when each item in the house was removed, causing the female volunteers to scream and jump about. The male volunteers did their best to capture the rats before they escape up onto the roof.

After 6 hours of cleaning, the Xiong family finally has a proper home. The whole exercise resulted in two truckloads each of recycling items and rubbish. Mei Shi was given brand new school uniforms and shoes. In addition, both she and her mother were given hair-cuts and a good wash to clear the lice in their hair.

As Kuala Lumpur is densely populated, Tzu Chi Kuala Lumpur always has the highest number of beneficiaries. This year, Kuala Lumpur volunteers held 15 presentation ceremonies at various locations on November 1 and 8 to give out study grants to 4,507 students.

Tzu Chi Melaka has the second highest number of recipients. Volunteers in Melaka held 8 presentation ceremonies at Masjid Tanah, Jasin, Merlimau and Melaka Jing Si Hall in November and December, benefitting 1,715 students.

Other Tzu Chi Liaison Offices which had already given out the 2009 study grants are Muar (795 students), Kuching (701 students), Kota Kinabalu (524 students), Kuantan (506 students), Kluang (285 students), Seremban (235 students), Kota Tinggi (163 students) and Tawau (119

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