

Vegetarianism and Recycling Promoted at Care Centre

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
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Tzu Chi volunteers assisted Aspiration Care Centre in promoting vegetarianism and recycling to their students. A series of activities were organized in conjunction with this campaign and the result was encouraging.

Aspiration Care Centre, which is located at Sri Kembangan, Serdang, Malaysia, has more than 200 students ranging from 7 to 12 years of age. This Centre is like a second home to the students who are there everyday after school. At the Centre, they will have their meals, bath, rest and tuition.

Last year, the Centre's Principal Chong Mei Foong, Deputy Leong Wan Yin and Teacher Koh Chee Kar attended a Tzu Chi activity where they learned about recycling and vegetarianism. They thought it would be a good idea to promote these concepts in their Centre. After obtaining a general consensus from their other fellow teachers, they started the vegetarianism campaign by allocating every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday as their "vegetarian day". On May 25, 2010, they had their first "vegetarian day".

The students disliked the first vegetarian meal they were served as the female cook was not familiar with vegetarian cooking. The Principal and teacher then contacted Tzu Chi volunteers for tips on how to prepare delicious vegetarian food that can satisfy the children's palate.

Tzu Chi volunteers discussed the menu with the Centre's teachers, parents and the cook. Besides taking the latter to the vegetarian supply stores to buy the necessary ingredients, volunteers also turned up to help with the cooking initially.

The children gradually accepted the vegetarian food, and some even began to like it!



A lesson on respecting lives

In order to get the children more interested in vegetarian food, the teachers brought them to an organic vegetable farm on June 10. There the students learned about the work of a farmer and the advantages of eating vegetables and fruits.

When the Centre held a holiday camp for its students from June 16-18, Principal Zhang again invited Tzu Chi volunteers to give a talk on environmental protection. The volunteers presented a drama showing the ill-treatment of animals and their suffering when slaughtered just to fulfill our appetite. After that they were taught to make vegetarian sandwiches which turned out to be a favorite with everyone.

At the end of the lesson, it was pleasing to note that everyone had pledged to go vegetarian

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either for a few days, a month or long term. Ting Kai Ying said she used to dislike the taste of vegetables, but now she loves the fried rice with egg served at the Centre. She will also eat more vegetables and less meat from now on.

At lunch time, some students refused to take the chicken meat served to keep to their promise. They managed to control their desire because of their love for animals and this is indeed admirable.



It is time to change our lifestyle

Some 150 parents came to the closing ceremony of the holiday camp on June 18. Tzu Chi volunteer, Zhang Xiu Hua, was invited to give them a talk on the subject: "Co-exist with the Earth" to the parents.

The parents were informed that we can help to stop the climate change by changing our lifestyle. The Chairman of IPCC encouraged people "to go vegetarian, to cycle instead of driving and spend less to save our Earth". Xiu Hua explained to the parents the nutritional values and advantages of vegetarian diet.

She also explained why meat is no good for children as many chemicals are fed to the animals. In actual fact, human beings can get all types of nutrients their bodies needed from grains, vegetables and fruits.

After listening to Xiu Hua's explanations, Madam Huang Bao Lin said that she would not object to her children going vegetarian and would try to cook what they like.

Create more merits for ourselves

On June 26, 2010, the children were given a recycling lesson at Tzu Chi's Serdang Recycling Station. Volunteer Luo Jin Xing was on hand to teach them about recyclables and non-recyclables.

Madam Ou Yu Mei brought along her 9-year old son and 15-year old daughter. After listening to the talk on June 18, she has started collecting recyclables at home and at her shop. She even brought them here on this visit. She said that this recycling lesson is a good activity for her children. Another mother, Madam Zheng Mei Yuan, has also started recycling and reducing meat consumption in support of the environmental protection campaign. By so doing, she noticed that her home's rubbish have been reduced tremendously.

As we are part of nature and need to co-exist with the Earth, we must respect all living beings. The teachers deeply felt that they have the responsibility to pass this message to their students. After a series of activities, we can already see positive results. Besides the children, the parents are also beginning to do their part in saving the Earth.

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