

The 10 Years of Great Love in Zamboanga

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation

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Tzu Chi Foundation, Philippines Zamboanga Liaisons Office celebrated its 10th anniversary on October 10, 2010. The ten years of practicing "Great Love" had eased the suffering of the sick and the poor dwelled in this war-torn city, Zamboanga.

A musical banquet, A Night of Gratitude, was held at the Convention Center of Garden Orchid Hotel, Zamboanga. Around 6:00p.m. there were 1200 participants including religious leaders, the donors, beneficiaries, local government officials, supporters, Tzu Chi volunteers and members of [Tzu Chi International Medical Association](#) (TIMA) gathered together to look back on the passed years and make vows to serve for the next decades to come.

The program was Tzu Chi Zamboanga's way of thanking all the people who, by sharing their resources and blessings, have fulfilled the charity works in Zamboanga with Tzu Chi foundation through the years.

In 1998, TIMA doctors from Manila came to Zamboanga to start holding free clinics to help people lived in remote areas. The inspiration brought out by this effort spurred the establishment of the local chapter of Tzu Chi Foundation in 2000. From then on, the office has been providing medical care to the indigent residents of the city through free services on ophthalmology, surgery, rehabilitation medicine, prostheses, and VP Shunting Operation for hydrocephalus, among others.



Tzu Chi office Zamboanga has then built the Tzu Chi Great Love Eye Center and Tzu Chi Great Love Physical Rehabilitation and Jaipur Foot Prosthesis Manufacturing Center. It has conducted 49 free medical clinics that benefitted more than 21,000 people.

Mayor Celso Lobregat expressed his appreciation at the banquet, "On behalf of the 800, 000 people in Zamboanga, I would like to express my sincere gratitude for your dedication to benefit generations of Zamboanguenos." The Mayor has been very grateful to Dharma Master Cheng Yen, founder of Tzu Chi Foundation, for the great love she extends to his fellow citizens. On August 26, 2006, Mayor Lobregat declared August 26 of every year be the official Tzu Chi Day.

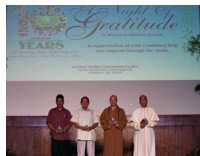
Outpour of love and gratitude

The musical banquet commenced with a prayer for a world free of disasters was led by four religious leaders: Ustadz Jeff Kimpa of the Muslim community, Christian pastor Paulino Ersando, one local Buddhist master and Archbishop Romulo Valles. The prayer also went to a Tzu Chi volunteer, Richard So, whose unexpected death in September brought extreme sadness to his fellow volunteers and people he had helped.

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Anthony Lu, a Tzu Chi volunteer from Taiwan, read a letter written by Master Cheng Yen to the audiences. On the letter, the Master expressed her gratitude to the volunteers of Tzu Chi Zamboanga for their keeping in mind to nurture a Buddha's heart and for carrying out Tzu Chi's missions.



On the letter, Master Cheng Yen also praised the goodness brought by the Tzu Chi Great Love Eye Center and Tzu Chi Great Love Physical Rehabilitation and Jaipur Foot Prosthesis Manufacturing Center. "With the services that the centers have provided and the great love of volunteers, every single day of the beneficiaries will be filled with brightness and hope." the Master remarked.

Dr. Romeo Ong, head of the Zamboanga City Medical Center (ZCMC) which includes the above-mentioned centers, also voiced his gratefulness to the founder of Tzu Chi by saying, "With deep gratitude, I, would like to thank Master Cheng Yen and Tzu Chi Foundation for trusting us to run the two projects of ZCMC. Also, with all Tzu Chi volunteers' efforts, we will continue to restore hopes and rebuild the lives of the local people in the next 10 years."

Pushing through missions with dedication

A sign language program of Tzu Chi song -"The Path of Compassion" was then performed by Tzu Chi Sign Language Team and TIMA members, among them Dr. Isser Yao was in vocals.

Walking in "The Path of Compassion", Tzu Chi volunteers eliminate all sorrows and heart aches, including children with different eye problems in Zamboanga. The attendees saw a life-changing undertaking of Tzu Chi Zamboanga, as some beneficiaries of "Angel of Sight", a project of sight-saving, graced the event by presenting a dance.

Tzu Chi volunteers and doctors then paid tribute and gratitude to the nurses of the Department of Education for their looking for the children with eye problems in impoverished areas ,and bringing them to Tzu Chi. The children therefore were be able to receive proper treatment early on and live trouble-free lives as they grow up. The nurses and beneficiaries, in return, handed the volunteers a token of appreciation for all the love and care they have given.

Alex Paredes, the Nurse Supervisor of the Tzu Chi Great Love Eye Center, expressed his happiness, "I am so happy that we have now reached 10 years of giving aid here to those in need . Sometimes we don't even notice that it's a big deal especially for those who cannot afford to medical care. It's also a way of sharing and prolonging people's lives."

Dr. Josefino Qua, the TIMA Consultant for Zamboanga said," With just small number of volunteers and limited resources, they have made big achievements. It is my pride and privilege to be part of it.

Dr. Raymond Sator, another TIMA member who has been with Tzu Chi Zamboanga since the

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beginning, said, " When we started the construction, there were many objections around but we knew that we were not working to please everyone but to help people. What we do is for the good of people and if we think it's right, even if some resistance may occur, we'd still go on." he said.



Meanwhile, Dr. Milagros Fernandez and Dr. Victor Liozo, Jr., officials of the local chapter of Red Cross, awarded Tzu Chi Zamboanga a Resolution of Thanks for the generosity and benevolence of the volunteers and the members by donating over two million PHP (46,366 USD) worth of apparatuses to the organization's blood bank.

To cap off the event, the Tzu Chi Kids performed the Tzu Chi song "Happy Face" which brought joy to all the attendees. Later, joined by the Tzu Chi volunteers, Tzu Chi youth and other guests, the performance of the kids lightened up the mood of everyone.

By the end of the program, Dr. Anton Mari Lim, the local coordinator of Tzu Chi Zamboanga said, "We hope there won't be any disasters occur and as the Master said time is running out, we therefore would need everyone's support. ."

Moving forward to the 11th year, Tzu Chi volunteers in Zamboanga, Philippines hoped that they can face different tests of life with more strength and wisdom.