

Former Drug Addict Finds New Life with Tzu Chi

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation

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Chang Ming-zhi was a drug addict who served several terms in prison. Now he has found a new life without drugs, after meeting members of the Tzu Chi foundation and becoming a volunteer himself. He lives in Taichung, in central Taiwan. One of his duties is to visit prisons and describe his experience to the inmates, hoping to inspire them in the same way.

"I grew up in a broken home," he told them. "I felt neglected by my mother because she had to raise four children single-handedly. At the age of 17, I turned to drugs. During one six-month period, I used to spend about US\$300 a day. When I ran out of money, I committed robberies." For over 10 years, he was in and out of jail. "I would take injections. I did not know what to do. I lived an aimless life. My sister said that I was a person without a soul, like a zombie."

Then he encountered volunteers from Tzu Chi who were very supportive and helped him find a job when he came out of prison.

"I was able to face society because of Tzu Chi. Otherwise, how else would I have improved? If you want to change and are not in the right environment, it is impossible to become better. Now, in the real world, I do not worry much." As part of his personal reformation, he has stopped taking drugs as well as smoking. He has become a vegetarian and keen member of the foundation. He wants to atone for his past sins through volunteer work. He plans to take training courses and at the end of the year to receive a certificate as a Tzu Cheng, one of the ranks of the foundation. He wants to follow in the footsteps of [Master Cheng Yen](#) .

Volunteer Cai Tiansheng is one of those who has helped Chang. "It is in his personality to be giving toward those who are less fortunate. He shows his concern very well. During the past one or two years, he has been to the recycling centre often. He is both persistent and considerate."