

Malaysian Volunteer Overcomes Illness to Set Up Recycling Centre

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A woman in the northwest Malaysian state of Kedah was diagnosed with a disease that nearly took her life. Undaunted, she has devoted herself to the Tzu Chi, establishing a recycling centre in 2004 that has attracted a growing number of young people.

Luo Shuhua has lived in the small town of Kuala Kertil for the last 50 years. She first fell ill at the age of 10 but doctors could not diagnose the cause. In 1992, she nearly died, before they discovered that she suffered from a rare condition, pancreatitis. This means an inflammation of the pancreas which cannot absorb the nutrients it needs; so she had to go to hospital to receive nutritional supplements and suffered acute pain. "It hurt so much," she said. "The only thing that did not hurt was my hair. The pain was so bad that I could not get up. The doctor said the disease could recur at any time and, when it did, I could only take liquid food. I was feeling down and thought I was not going to live for much longer. I had no goals and no tomorrow."

At this nadir in her life, she made contact with Tzu Chi, which enabled her to find a new direction and purpose. She gained spiritual nourishment from reading the [Jing Si Aphorisms](#) and devoting her time to volunteering for the environment. "After working for Tzu Chi, every activity is hard for me," she said. "I always manage to overcome the hardship."



In 2004, she established a recycling centre, in the grounds of a Buddhist temple. The first Friday of every month is recycling day in Kuala Kertil. Under a warm and friendly sun, a group of children and teenagers walk next to a truck through the neighborhood, picking up items that can be re-used. When the truck is full, the volunteers drive up back to the centre, where volunteers are waiting. Most of them are young people. "People said that they were still small and asked what they could do," said Luo. "I said 'do not worry, they can go there to eat and carry things around. When they get older, they will get the hang of it.'" Among the youngsters are two aged four and six, the children of Madame Lai, a volunteer. "If they were not here, they would run everywhere and go to fight with other children, which is not good," she said. "Here they can move things and learn together with many other friends." Li Junjian, 18, has been working there for four years. "Before, I used to swear a lot," he said. "After coming here, Auntie Luo taught me and I gradually stopped. When I see people, I am respectful and greet them. Before, I used to ignore them." Parents can see how their children grow up and mature in such a setting; they learn both recycling and lessons about life.

Volunteer Hong Lingfeng praised Luo, saying that she volunteered even though she was unwell. "We are very moved that, as a patient, she can still do that. So we healthy people should work with her." Luo said that she takes each day as it comes. "I want to use what time I have on earth to give back to the community, with thought of reward. While we are still able to, we should hurry and volunteer. When you are not capable, you will not be able to do anything, even if you want to. So, even when I am very weak, I remain active. I hope I can volunteer until my last

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