

In south Taiwan, Students Give up Computer Games for Recycling

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation

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In south Taiwan, July and August are stiflingly hot -- the heat makes people dozy and their eyes blurred. But, in the Annan recycling education centre of Tainan, you can see several students at work – they are not hiding from the summer heat at home by sleeping and playing on their computers but have come to the center to sort rubbish and crush plastic bottles. Their bodies are caked with sweat – and they are happy and not tired.

Mother and son work together for society

Wang Yue-tao is a volunteer at the center; she regularly drives a large truck back and forth through the streets and alley of the district to collect waste. Her son Wu Zong-ting felt that it would be a terrible waste of his precious time to spend the summer eating, drinking and hanging out, so he comes every day with his mother to do the collections; he has become her most important partner. When other volunteers see the two working together, they are full of praise and admiration; they have become a tower of strength for the center.

When they see Wu working like this, the volunteers cannot help but ask him: “why not spend the summer holidays relaxing? Why come home and make yourself so exhausted?” He replies frankly: “recycling is different to relaxation; it is more meaningful and gives you a special feeling.” The volunteers stop and say: “is it like to be filled with joy of the Dharma?” It is as if he has met a close friend and often nods his head in acknowledgement.



Coming every day to the center, Wu sees the volunteers giving to protect the earth. It has silently created a wish in the bottom of his heart to join the Tzu Chi Collegiate Association during his time at university and continue to work for the good of society.

Recycling is the best recreation

The plastic bottles hit the floor with a thud. Some are large and some small; with a little effort, the fat bottles suddenly become thin, as Li Guan-wei presses his body against them; he feels a new and interesting sensation. He is about to go to middle school; the chubby expression of a child is changing into the slender face of an intellectual. During the summer holiday, his mother Qiu Hui-zhu was uneasy about leaving him alone at home and decided to take him to the recycling centre to make a contribution. Initially, he was not enthusiastic and did not want to be forced. But he discovered that the center was very interesting; it became his place of entertainment for the summer holiday. He said: “I have played computer games and slept as much as I want. But to spend the holidays at home is really very boring. Coming here I can do recycling. I can enjoy the sunshine and get a good feeling from doing exercise. In addition, I can

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reduce the amount of waste.”

Within the center, he helps not only to sort the rubbish and crush the plastic bottles but also to cut the plastic strips. He also goes in the car to go around the district to collect the waste. “Sitting in the car, you travel through the big roads and the small lanes and see everything. At the same time, you help the volunteers lift the heavy items and do things which you cannot do in the center,” he said.

A single word ended the habit of 30 years

Li is an intelligent and a well educated young man; but one thing he lacks is patience. He does not like other people chattering. If his parents talk too much, he can easily lose his temper. Every day, he will get angry even over a trifle. His father, Li Ying-shun, often says to him: “did you not say that you would change?” On one occasion, his son snapped back: “are you not just the same? You keep saying that you will stop smoking but you still have not done it!” It was a sharp warning for his father, a blow to his self-respect.

For years, Li had been trying to kick the habit. He has tried and failed many times. But this time he accepted the challenge of his son and decided to start using chewing gum to replace tobacco. While he was breaking the habit, his temper became worse, things he ate had no taste and he could not concentrate. But he was determined not to turn back. After a year of challenges, he was finally able to end a habit of more than 30 years.

As a result, his breathing greatly improved, as did his energy and temper. Most important was the fact that, because of his smoking, he could not follow the ten precepts of Tzu Chi and so could not take part in the classes of the volunteers. But, after changing his habit, he was able to register and in 2011 received his certificate as Tzu Cheng. Whenever he looks back on the period when his father was giving up, Li says to his mother: “you told dad to give up many times but he never did. One word from me and he did.” The truth of a child became the turning point in the life of his father.

During the summer holiday, the recycling center has become the best place for young people to burn up their energy. It was also the best place for parents to come closer to their children.

(Article by Huang Hui-zhu, Annan district of Tainan, August 30 2012)