

Tzu Chi Volunteers Give Winter Goods to 1,955 Households in North China

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation

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On November 30, nearly 300 Tzu Chi volunteers gave daily necessities to 1,955 needy families in the north China province of Hebei. It was the start of the foundation's annual winter distribution in mainland China which it has conducted for many years. Some volunteers made a journey of 1,000 kilometers, from Inner Mongolia and Shanxi, to reach the distribution venue.

The event was held in Niugang village in Yi county in Hebei. It was a bitterly cold day, with temperatures below freezing and a northerly wind piercing the bones. But the spirit in the village was very warm, overcoming the cold. Among the people there were the volunteers who had made such a long journey and sick and elderly farm couples who only eat bread buns and drink clear soup every day; they were delighted to receive food that will help them to welcome in the Chinese New Year.

The villagers stood in an orderly line with their forms to collect their goods. When they held out the form to be stamped as they took the items, their hands were shaking with cold. The volunteers said to them softly: "do not worry, I will hold your hand."

Three years ago, an elderly farmer named Wang Jingtong had a blockage in a blood vessel in his brain; as a result, his eyes do not see clearly and his hands and legs are unstable. Life became very difficult for him and his elderly wife. "Each day we eat four bread buns and drink one bowl of soup," he said. A volunteer asked: "do you eat vegetables and have a vegetable garden in front of your house?" "No, we almost never eat vegetables," he replied. "There is no water. There is a drought."

This year the foundation is distributing rice, noodles and other grains, to enable the elderly people to keep warm ahead of the Chinese New Year. After he had collected his goods, Wang Jingtong said: "I am so happy. You are all good people, you are so good. I cannot find the words to thank you."



At the distribution site, the volunteers shared with the recipients the kind words of Jing Si Aphorisms. One volunteer, Shi Xiu-hong, told the villagers: "The Jing Si Aphorisms teach us that to speak one sentence of kind words is like a lotus coming out of your mouth. But to speak a sentence of unkind words is like a poisonous snake coming out of your mouth. So, if you say kind words every day, then you will be a Bodhisattva."

There were so many moving stories to tell that day. Volunteer Shi Xiu-hong had come 1,000 kilometers from Shanxi to reach Yi county in Hebei. Her responsibility was to spread the good

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habit of speaking with kindness. She gave each villager an Aphorism that suited his or her age. She shared with the villagers one proverb: “if every day your heart is content, then every day will be a happy one.”

The volunteers took special care in preparing the goods to be distributed. They included packets of salt held together by a plastic string. Volunteer Xiao Yun-li said: “distributing salt is not simply handing out six packets. Our experience has taught us that six packets together make a set. Taking them is like taking a basket of dim sum. That makes it easy for the villagers to carry.”

The most distant place from which volunteers came was Inner Mongolia; they knew that, if you have the will, the journey is no hardship. They were delighted to interact with the villagers. There was also a farm machine that brought the goods to 12 families who lived away from the distribution point. From dawn until sunset, 287 volunteers completed distribution to 1,955 families, bringing warmth in the middle of the bitter cold.

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