

The Philippines-Clean up the Beach

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
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Around a two-hour drive from central Manila, there is a neighborhood called Dreamland situated right next to a landfill. The residents there live in illegal shacks built with discarded materials. Most of them are unemployed. They scavenge useful materials from the landfill and live without electricity or clean water. It was not until 2007, when a typhoon devastated this area, that Tzu Chi volunteers discovered this place and began holding regular distributions and free clinics for the residents.

On May 3, over 300 Tzu Chi volunteers, more than 500 local residents, staff from the local government as well as a volunteer fire brigade teamed up to clean up the local beach as a way to protect the environment.

Under the scorching sun, the participants picked up litter scattered all over the beach. They took care not to miss any garbage. Even if only a corner of a plastic bag was sticking out from the earth, they would dig the whole bag out instead of just leaving it there. With everyone's hard work, seven tons of garbage were collected from the 500-meter beach in an hour's time.

A villager said that since she moved there in 1999, the place had never looked so clean and beautiful, and she was very happy and grateful to Tzu Chi volunteers for organizing such an event. The leader of the fire brigade also observed that he was impressed by how everyone's efforts, when pooled together, could make such a difference, and that if there were any other Tzu Chi event in the future, he would be very happy to take part.

At the end of the event, the volunteers and residents planted some saplings near the beach. Also, as it was May, a special time in Tzu Chi for gratitude and for vegetarian fasts, the volunteers took the occasion to call upon the local people to abstain from meat as a way to care for the planet we live on. Altogether 309 people responded and pledged to eat vegetarian for a variety of time spans.