

## In California, Tzu Chi Volunteers Give Nutritious Food to Families in Need

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation  
Thursday, 26 April 2018 15:13

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On April 8, Tzu Chi volunteers in Cerritos, southern California distributed nutritious food to about 170 poor families, to improve their health and eating habits. It was the ninth such distribution to families in Huntington Park, in Los Angeles County, since June 2017. They gave out the food at the Miles Avenue Elementary School.

More than 90 per cent of the residents of Huntington Park are low-income families; among them, 53 per cent of the children are fat or obese, the highest percentage of such over-weight children in the state of California. The reason is that the city does not have good public transport and most of the residents do not have their own cars. So they buy most of their food in local convenience shops which have little fresh fruit and vegetables; and what they have is expensive. To save money and satisfy their hunger, the residents regularly buy already cooked food – making people over-weight.

It is for this reason that the volunteers have organized the nine distributions, in cooperation with schools and the local Food Bank. Each distribution provides for 160-180 families, who can obtain 20-30 pounds of food. The choice of items was made by volunteer Tsai-Chiung Tsai, a social worker and nutritionist. Each time the volunteers provide different fresh fruit and vegetables, dried beans and canned beans. They hope that these foods can replace meat and fish in the diet of the residents.



April 8 was a warm spring day. In the sunshine, the volunteers unloaded all the cans and boxes from the truck. They laid out the food on tables in the canteen of the elementary school – more than 20 different types. They included white rice, wholegrain noodles, cereals, dried grapes and different kinds of melons, beans, potatoes, carrots, asparagus, pitaya, avocado, mangoes, pears, canned foods and dried mixed grains. They were all provided through the gratitude of the Food Bank and paid for by the contributions of good-hearted people.

The volunteers considered the convenience of the residents. They placed the heavy items at the front, such as the tins, milk, rice and noodles, so that the residents would put them at the bottom of their bags or cases. Then they put the lighter items that could be crushed higher up – such as fresh fruit and vegetables. They also considered those older and less able; the volunteers helped them put the items in a box and assisted them in taking it out if they were unable to do it themselves.

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