

## Students Graduate From Foundation Academies in North America

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation  
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June is the season for graduate ceremonies at Tzu Chi's academies in North America, an opportunity for the students to show what they have learnt over the year. They sang, performed plays and sign-language songs and recited [Jing Si Aphorisms](#) -- ways to celebrate the foundation's wisdom and humanity culture.

The academies provide lessons in Chinese and humanities at the weekends. Students come from different background. The Academy at San Dimas in Los Angeles, where the foundation has its U.S. headquarters, has 240 students, five times when it opened its doors in 2006. "The student population is increasing steadily," said its principal Tao Cimiao. "Before, our uniforms were all sloppy but this year they are neat and orderly." Manners and personal appearance is one of the things taught at the academies; people are judged by what they wear. Students at the San Dimas academy celebrated graduation by turning over the savings they had accumulated in their coin banks; charity is part of the lessons. The students thanked the teachers for all the knowledge they had passed on to them. In return, the teachers said: "keep your dreams practical and your thoughts in the clouds. Give your ideals wing, so that they will fly."



At another academy in Los Angeles, the students put on a musical play, a way of showing gratitude for the opportunity to study Chinese abroad. "We are so touched," said Mu Citao, executive director of the Educational Foundation. "After so many years in the humanities, even the teachers are saying that we do not have enough time." Xu Hongyu is principal of the Los Angeles academy and leads by example. He told his father to return to Taiwan and promised to go there every other month to help look after his grandmother. "He is a model of filial piety," said one volunteer. At the academy in Chicago, the teachers reminded the students of the importance of their unfinished work in Haiti.

[Master Cheng Yen](#) said one reason for the academies in the U.S. was that manners were neglected in its mainstream education system. She explained the philosophy of the humanities classes. "To bring good manners into the daily life of students, teachers of humanities there gather the students together to study the Jing Si aphorisms. They also make proper speaking part of their life. We hope that, encouraged by the aphorisms, students will be led toward the correct path in life."

She said that, in Thailand, the United States, Canada and New Zealand, volunteers used the education of humanities to teach Chinese culture, filial piety, good manners and a spirit of gratitude within western society. "At the graduation in different countries, the children do not understand how to bow correctly to their teachers and their understanding of manners is

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incomplete. But the parents can already see a change in their children; they are moved and grateful. Our humanity and education together aim to change the thinking of children and the whole family, so that children themselves learn good manners. Humankind returning to his proper path – that is a successful education!”