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Papatoetoe tornado aid distribution

A destructive tornado hit Papatoetoe Auckland at 8.30 a.m. Saturday 19 June 2021, leaving one dead and two injured, 260 houses were damaged with over 1200 homes affected.

On 20 June at 11.30 a.m. Tzu Chi volunteers together with Auckland Councillor Sharon Stewart visited the affected area to inspect and assess damages. The emergency management staff explained to the group where the worse hit area were on the map.

Tzu Chi volunteers had an online emergency meeting later that day to discuss details of the Tornado aid distribution. Tzu Chi recorded the affected homes by the level of severity assessed by the government building inspector as follows:

- 18 homes were given red placards meaning re-entry is not permitted and is unsafe or no longer habitable.
- 51 homes were given yellow placards meaning there is restricted entry to part of the house, and that there is enough damage for the council to have concerns about the building's performance, but not enough to prevent entry entirely.
- 119 homes were issued white placards meaning the property has minor damage, is habitable and that no council follow up is required.

Outreach and Tornado Aid Distribution

On 25 June, 17 Tzu Chi volunteers visited the affected homes to register their details and deliver information on Tzu Chi Tornado Aid Distribution. The contents of the Tornado Aid Distribution consists of some emergency funds, a Tzu Chi condolence letter, JingSi Aphorism book and some eco blankets.

On 4 July, 14 people from 7 families came to Tzu Chi NZ for Tornado Aid Distribution. Everyone followed the health and safety protocols meticulously. Auckland Councillor Sharon was on the spot personally to hear from the victims about their experiences. Mrs K said that the day Tzu Chi volunteers visited her was her most depressing moment, her grief was relieved when the volunteers hugged her. Boy V, a primary school year one pupil attended the distribution with his mother and grandmother. He had not uttered a word for three days and has been anxious. He finally smiled when the volunteer gave him a stationary pouch and a high five.



Extension of Tornado Aid Distribution

Some families moved out and were put in temporary accommodation as their houses were inhabitable. Because of this reason many people did not do the online registration and did not come for the tornado aid distribution on 4 July. Tzu Chi emergency relief team decided to extend the tornado aid distribution to 31 July.

Three families came to Tzu Chi on 6 July. They shared their tornado experience with Tzu Chi volunteers, Tzu Chi volunteers listened to them with empathy, and in turn, shared Tzu Chi's values with them. Mr. R sadly depicted how the tornado damaged the hearing of his 6 years-old son. He was grateful for volunteers' care and love. Tzu Chi volunteers warmed and calmed his heart immensely that he will always remember the kindness of this group of strangers.

Mr. J and his cousin lives with a relative at the moment as their house was destroyed. They expressed their gratitude and said the blankets were timely donations in the cold winter. An Iraqi couple Mr. & Mrs. K lost everything during the disaster, they were gratefulness to Tzu Chi for the tornado aid distribution and the heartfelt warm hugs they got from Tzu Chi volunteers. Mr. K said, "We are from a different religious background. Tzu Chi NZ helped everyone in need regardless of race and religious differences. I am impressed by your great love."

On 10 July, three affected families came to Tzu Chi for the Tornado Aid Distribution. Mr. M and his wife indicated an interest in Tzu Chi vegetarian cooking class and they signed up for the class on the spot. Mr. W brought two young children to Tzu Chi, they listened attentively to Tzu Chi's story and accepted the blankets politely.

Continual support to tornado affected families

On August 8, 12 volunteers assembled at Tzu Chi NZ at 10:30 in the morning. The volunteers were divided into 4 groups to visit 13 tornado affected families to find out their recent situations. During the visit, Tzu Chi volunteers gave the families a pack of essential supplies for daily use, they also invited them to join Tzu Chi's vegetarianism promotion project called "grow your own lunch".

Update on Covid

New Zealand government announced the country was to enter a nationwide level 4 lockdown starting 11:59 p.m. 17 August following a community covid-19 case. Auckland and Coromandel went into lockdown for 7 days, and the rest of the country for 3 days.

On 23th August government further announced that Auckland will remain at alert level 4 lockdown until 31st August. Genome sequencing results showed that the first community covid-19 case is of the Delta variant, the case is connected to a returnee from Sydney on 7th August.

During the lockdown, Tzu Chi NZ suspended its outreach services, and is temporary closed to the public. Tzu Chi NZ converted some of its activities for members into online activities to comply with the stay-at-home order. Most Tzu Chi members had been vaccinated. After the online study group meeting, volunteer Wang reminded everyone to get vaccinated.

On August 22 Tzu Chi volunteers prepared pandemic prevention supplies- 70 face shields were donated to Mr. King, the principal of Remuera Primary School; 10 face shields for Auckland Hospital cancer sufferers.

New Zealand government provided various scheme to assist people in needs during this pandemic. Tzu Chi home visit team shared the information with low income families so that these families could pull through.

Tzu Chi received a letter from Mrs. S asking for food parcel. Mrs. S is a single mother of three children; her elderly parents also live together with her family. Tzu Chi had helped Mrs. S several times in the past. In considering the family's circumstances, Tzu Chi NZ decided to help Mrs. S despite the level 4 lockdown. Volunteers prepared the food parcel and arrange for a pick up date, they then gave Mrs. S clear instruction for a contactless pick up. Mrs. S expressed her gratitude and she promised to come to Tzu Chi to help with gardening and preparing vegetarian meal after the lockdown.



PPE donation to The Doctors Greenlane

The Doctors Greenlane, a clinic in central Auckland, is currently a quarantine station and also provides Covid-19 vaccination services. There are about 20 medical staff in the clinic, and they are in great need of protective masks.

On 4th of September, Tzu Chi NZ prepared 20 sets of goggles and 80 replaceable plastic masks. On September 4, volunteer put anti-epidemic supplies on the table at the entrance of Tzu Chi NZ Headquarters and donated them via contact-less manner. Tzu Chi is grateful for the opportunity to give and pay tribute to the hardworking medical staff!



The Auspicious Lunar Month of July Celebration

In August, Tzu Chi volunteers prepared for the Lunar Month of July Celebration diligently. On 15 August at 10 a.m. 196 attendees arrived at Tzu Chi NZ. Tzu Chi volunteers welcomed guests at the gate, ensured everyone took their temperature, scanned the QR code, sanitize their hands, and wear a mask.

Jeff Liu, the Director General of Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Auckland gave a speech in commencing the ceremony; he thanked Tzu Chi for its contribution worldwide during the pandemic. After the speech 24 volunteers walked solemnly to the front and made offerings of flowers with reverence. After the offering ceremony, 196 attendees listened respectfully to Master Cheng Yen's teaching on the Lunar July month.

The sutra performance of the prelude of "The Sutra of infinite Meaning" received warm applause. Ten cute and vivid young children from the Chinese class performed painstakingly in delivering the meaning of the Sutra. Venerable master Zhi Guo led everyone to pray in front of the Buddha for the elimination of the pandemic.

A healthy and delicious vegetarian lunch was served to all attendees at noon. Many attendees attracted and supported the idea of vegetarianism. Ms. N and Ms. S originally from Iran participated in Tzu Chi's event for the first time, they are willing to change their diet for the planet sake. Ms. N from the nearby residence signed up for the vegetarian cooking class on the spot. Kitchen volunteer sister Chai said she hope her effort in promoting vegetarian meal would help to bring more people into vegetarian eating, and hopefully may end the pandemic soon. There were 63 people signed up for the "One Vegetarian Meal per Day".



Bond St. Reserve Park Cleanup

Tzu Chi NZ has a commitment to environmental protection, and has organized park clean up and tree planting activities over the years. Thus Tzu Chi NZ has been in regular contact with council park ranger Kara. In June this year, Kara sent an email asking for assistance in cleaning up Bond St. Reserve.

Bond St. Reserve is only five minutes drive from Tzu Chi NZ. Tzu Chi NZ hopes to promote the awareness of 5 R: Refuse, Reduce, Repair, Reuse and Recycle through park clean ups.

On 3 July, 12 Tzu Chi youth volunteer team assembled at Tzu Chi NZ for the Bond St. Reserve clean-up at 1.30 p.m. On arrival, the team noticed three double mattresses under the tree and many household wastes in the creek. At the end of the day, the team collected 4 big bags of rubbish, recyclable rubbish, and some large loose items such as a bicycle, a tyre, and mattresses. The team carefully categorised the rubbish and brought them back for disposal and recycle.

Due to time constraints, the job was only partially completed. More time is needed for restoring the park. Tzu Chi NZ is keen to look after Bond St. Reserve and has decided to propose this to Kara.



Support case - Mrs. S

Mrs. S came to Tzu Chi with her son and her mother to pick up the Tornado relief fund and supplies on 4 July. On that day Mrs. S told Tzu Chi volunteers that her mother needed to replace her spectacles because the frame of her spectacles had broken. Mrs. S's mother came to New Zealand to visit Mrs. S from India in February 2020 and had to stay on due to Covid-19.

On 17 July, four volunteers visited Mrs. S at her house. The house had restricted entry due to tornado damage. The volunteer explained to Mrs. S about how Tzu Chi raises funds from the public and uses the donation with care, Mrs. S wrote a thank you letter to Tzu Chi for helping them during the hardship.

Jammies in June donation to Middlemore Foundation

Every year Middlemore Foundation distributes winter clothes to underprivileged children in South Auckland. This year the target is to distribute 25,000 pairs of pyjamas to keep the children warm. They asked for the general public's help to keep these children warm and to protect them from getting sick in the cold winter.

Tzu Chi NZ decided to donate 200 blankets, 400 pairs of pyjamas, 400 pairs of socks. Tzu Chi volunteers worked many days diligently from checking the price, purchasing, packing to sending donations. On 1 July, 18 volunteers sent 55 boxes of donations in four cars to Middlemore hospital. They were received by Lyle Smith, whanau coordinator for Middlemore Foundation. Lyle encouraged everyone to sing along a Maori song to pray for all homeless people and low-income families to get through the cold winter safely.



台灣佛教慈濟慈善事業基金會紐西蘭分會
Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation NZ:
9 Springs Road, East Tamaki, Auckland, New Zealand | +64-9-2716976
Hamilton Branch: 11 Halcione Cres, Hamilton, New Zealand | +64-7-8541496

 www.facebook.com/TzuChiNZ/

 info@tzuchi.org.nz

 www.tzuchi.org.nz