



September Issue 2018



## Lunar July Blessing Ceremony

In the past year, there have been many countries affected by natural disasters. We are blessed to be in New Zealand, a peaceful country less affected by disasters. During lunar July, volunteers took part in the musical adaptation of the sutras to express gratitude to the Buddha for his teachings and pray for the disaster victims.

On Sunday 9 September, the last day of lunar July, Tzu Chi NZ held the annual lunar July blessing ceremony. The ceremony started with blessings and prayers to Buddha through the offering of flower, fruit and candle. Through a video, Master Cheng Yen reminded everyone that lunar July is not an unlucky month in which the spirits walk on our land but a month of filial piety and gratitude.

There were a total of 267 community members attended the ceremony, from various charities, groups, council departments and families. 20 volunteers aged 18-75 years old participated in the sutra adaptation, with practices in the weekends to suit those working. For many of the participants, it was their first time so despite feeling nervous and a little timid, they practised diligently and became confident and excited to share with the community.

### #Promoting environmental protection

During the lunar July blessing ceremony, Tzu Chi handicraft class, flower arrangement class and vegetarian cooking class set up stalls in Jing Si Books & Café. The handicraft stall was selling beautiful handmade household items from recycled materials made by their students. At another stall, visitors experienced tea tasting with volunteers explaining the meaning of the Jing Si tea culture. The vegetarian cooking class also prepared delicious vegetarian snacks made from Tzu Chi's instant rice.

## #Community work

Tzu Chi NZ promotes helping and supporting the community. Kevin, Asian Liaison Officer from Counties Manukau Police commented that the event promoted mutual understanding and interaction in the community, contributing to community safety.

2016 Tzu Chi Scholarship recipient, Te Rongopai, came to the blessing ceremony with her parents. She thanked Tzu Chi for the scholarship and giving her encouragement. She hoped to understand more about Tzu Chi and would like to participate in Tzu Chi's activities more often. Her parents said that the encouragement and love that their daughter received continuously from Tzu Chi meant more to her than the scholarship award money that she received two years ago.

City Council Representative Li Y. Z attended the blessing ceremony with his children. He commented that if each person becoming a vegetarian is equivalent to planting 82 trees so each little step can pool together to become a big deed. Regardless of our religion, we love the earth and want to protect it.

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## 2018 New Zealand-Australia Tzu Chi Collegiate Leadership Conference

From 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> of July, Tzu Chi NZ hosted the New Zealand Australia Collegiate Leadership Conference for the first time.

Over sixty Tzu Chi members from Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth and Adelaide arrived in Auckland, arriving throughout the week. The groups consisted of Tzu Chi collegiate (Tzu Ching) and Tzu Ching alumni accompanied by Tzu Chi senior volunteers. New Zealand Tzu Chi welcomed all participants with cheerful greeting and warm hugs.

The camp started with a traditional Maori blessing, a Maori Haka and a welcome ceremony. Tzu Chi NZ CEO Mr Chang encouraged Tzu Chings to walk on the path of dharma and spread the spirit of Tzu Chi to more people.

W. Cockerall from Melbourne, a Tzu Chi volunteer accompanying Tzu Chi youths to Auckland, was touched by the perseverance and courage of the youngsters. One of the staff said "this was the first time attending the conference

for many youths and they have been looking forward to the activities and lessons." As the host region, Tzu Chi NZ family was in charge of the living necessities of the conference, divided into several groups to take care of meals, transport, cleaning and assisting with areas of the media team. The group effort ensured the smooth running of the conference.

The accommodations group carried out their duty diligently, providing a comfortable and clean environment for the attendees. The culinary group cooked up delicious international cuisines, making sure that everyone was well nourished and full of energy.

At the end of the conference, Tzu Chi NZ camp organizer T.Tu thanked Tzu Chi aunties and uncles for their help and loving care in providing Australian Tzu Chi family a warm and memorable experience in Auckland. He also encouraged local youths to participate in the International Tzu Chi Leadership Conference held in December in Hualien, Taiwan.

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## Counties Manukau Police visit

Each year, Counties Manukau Police organises new graduates from the police academy to visit various organizations of different ethnic groups to help these junior police officers better understand their community.

Although some migrants may have been living in New Zealand for many years, they still preserve their own unique cultures and customary practices. Counties Manukau police Justin Zeng used this opportunity to introduce traditional Chinese and Taiwanese culture and values to the officers.

On the morning of 17<sup>th</sup> July, eleven police officers arrived at Tzu Chi branch in East Tamaki. Volunteers introduced the principles and philosophy of Tzu Chi and shared Tzu Chi Jing Si tea ceremony with the officers. While tea was served, volunteer talked about the history and meaning of each Jing Si tea.

Volunteer shared the history of the Bamboo coin bank and its philosophy touched the officers, each putting coins into the bamboo coin bank to show their support to help those in need.

R.Duke, a student of Master Lin was invited to the event to perform Shao Lin martial art (ba duan jing). He taught the officers the art of the breathing techniques which is useful in relieving stress. The half day event was concluded with a vegetarian lunch.



## Follow up caring cases: Sena

Tzu Chi NZ received an email from the Otara social workers regarding a young family of 9 people. The sole provider of the family is the father but after paying for rent, electricity and car, there was not enough for food and other necessities. Given their migrant status, they are not eligible for benefits and are waiting for reply for other means.

On 21<sup>st</sup> July, nine Tzu Chi volunteers visited the family with beds, mattresses, duvets and heater to Sena's rented home which only had one bed. The five young children had worn short sleeves t-shirts with no shoes. When volunteers helped the children into their new woollen hats, the children wore big smiles. Sena thanked Tzu Chi volunteers and returned the big hug.

Volunteer shared the spirit of the bamboo coin bank with her, how one can help each other and a small money saved each day can go a long way. This story encouraged Sena to be strong and brave.

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## **Vegetarianism: Saving animals, protecting Earth**

Climate change has made natural disasters increasingly more frequent and more severe around the world. What can we do to protect our Earth? We can help by reducing the carbon output which can be achieved by eating less meat. By becoming a vegetarian or simply eat less meat, fewer animals will be killed for human consumption meaning less farming, a high contributor to carbon output in New Zealand. As such, our compassion for the animals can help to protect our Earth.

Every year during lunar July, Tzu Chi NZ promotes saving animals and protecting Earth by providing free vegetarian lunch every Saturday to the community. We have had some positive feedback from the community with some saying that they will eat less meat and more vegetables from now on.

We also brought awareness to environmental issues such as plastic waste by encouraging more people bring their own dining ware instead of using the disposable ones, and using the recyclable bags instead of plastic bags.

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## **Follow up caring cases: Christina**

Tzu Chi volunteers visited Christina's home in Otara with two sets of primary school uniform, a bed and a mattress on the morning of Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> July. Christina is a single mother of three who also helps to look after her older brother's child. Christina shares a house with her sister who has two children. The subsidy she gets was only enough for food after deducting the rental and electricity bill.



The social worker at the school referred the case to Tzu Chi NZ after learning that two of Christina's children could not afford the school uniform. During their first

visit, Tzu Chi volunteers observed the thin mattresses on the floor and after evaluating, had donated a bed and other furniture and clothing.

Volunteers also encouraged Christina to help others when she has the ability through bamboo coin bank story and to be positive. Christina was so touched and thanked Tzu Chi for helping her family during their most difficult time.

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### **Visiting Howick Rotary Club**

On 1<sup>st</sup> August, five Tzu Chi volunteers attended Howick Rotary Club's (HRC) monthly meeting on invitation of Savvy Him. S. Him, a volunteer that helps with Tzu Chi City Mission cooking fortnightly, is also a member of HRC invited volunteers to introduce Tzu Chi to its members.

Steve Hsieh, a Tzu Chi volunteer, introduced Tzu Chi's four missions and its activities in New Zealand. With a shared and common philosophy and objective, to serve the human society and to promote world peace through selfless service, members of both organisations quickly engaged in conversations for potential future collaboration. Hopefully, Tzu Chi will soon be able to run an activity in partnership with HRC!

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## **Jing Si seminar: Domestic Violence**

In New Zealand, 70% of homicides are related to domestic violence. According to statistics, domestic violence of new immigrants usually gets worse after two years of migration with victims choosing to be silent for a number of reasons.

On 18<sup>th</sup> August, a seminar by guest speaker Mr Justin Zeng on domestic violence was held in Jing Si Books and Café. Justin hoped that through the promotion and seminar, they are able to increase the awareness of domestic violence and prevent family homicide.

Justin explained that domestic violence can include all types of controlling behaviours: physical, financial, sexual or psychological abuse. It can happen in various relationships such as couples, parents and children, siblings and elderly family members. Migrants are also particularly susceptible to major environment changes. Justin also advocated that a timely intervention may change the fate of the outcome with many organisations providing support such as: Asian Family Services, Chinese New Settlers Trust, Vogue's Centre, Shakti Women's refugee and Age Concern.

For the non-English speaking audience who encounter emergencies Justin introduced an easy to remember 3-steps solution, first dialling "111", asking for "POLICE" and saying "Chinese". Practising these 3-steps, Justin reminded the audience that in times of danger to be calm and follow the steps.



## **Follow up caring cases: Pani**

Pani is a mother of seven children. She had moved three times before settling down in Auckland with her children had changed schools each time. She received government subsidy, but there is little money left after paying for the necessities. The case was referred to Tzu Chi foundation by the school's social worker because her two children could not afford school uniform and stationery.

On 25<sup>th</sup> July Tzu Chi volunteers visited Pani, they observed the children were wearing thin clothing and kept themselves warm by wrapping their bodies with blankets. Tzu Chi volunteers will follow up and evaluate this case further.



## The Taiwan Youth & Oversea Expatriate Bridging Program

The Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission (OCAC) hold its Taiwan Youth and Overseas Expatriate Bridging Program as a way to broaden the horizons of Taiwan's youths, providing opportunities to interact with overseas expatriates and promoting understanding of the importance of OCAC's role. This year, 200 University students aged 20-26 were selected and travelled in teams to each of 25 countries during the summer holiday.

On 4<sup>th</sup> August, 6 university students from the Bridging Program and their host families came to visit Tzu Chi Foundation in Auckland. They were warmly greeted in a Maori greeting ceremony and haka (traditional Maori war dance) performed by Tzu Chi collegiate and alumni.

Morning tea was served as volunteers introduced work of Tzu Chi Foundation in New Zealand. After the introduction, the visitors visited Jing Si Chinese class to observe their teaching. They also visited the educational recycling centre, where the visitors participated in a small craft activity, promoting environmental protection awareness.

## Follow up caring cases: Ana

On 7<sup>th</sup> September, Tzu Chi volunteers visited the single mother, Ana. She has 5 children age from 9 months to 7 years old. Five months ago, the family moved into a three bedroom house but the condition of the house was poor. There were clothes piled on the bed as she could not afford basic storage.



On 22<sup>nd</sup> September, Tzu Chi volunteers visited with beds and five boxes for each of the children. Each child was gifted a box with his/her name written on it to encourage the children to take good care of their property and help them to maintain a clean and tidy living environment.

Each child was also given a bamboo coin bank to encourage them to lend a helping hand and do small good deeds every day.



## Jing Si seminar: Taxation and financial planning

Financial planning is an important topic of interest to many. Tzu Chi NZ organized a seminar on taxation and financial planning on 28 July with guest speaker Jason Kuo, a senior financial expert, and Bill Yang, a New Zealand accountant with around 70 community members attending.

Kuo has been working for a notable bank since 2003, providing financial services such as savings and investments to New Zealand and overseas clients. With the convenience of the internet, many people now prefer to do their financial transaction and investment monitoring online. Jason shared the safe use of bank websites and how to use these services effectively. He also talked about protecting oneself in making financial transactions.

First home buying was a hot topic at the seminar, with many community members looking to settle into the community. Jason cautioned everyone to find out all the relevant information to be prepared and affect their home buying plans. The audience at the seminar were mostly first generation migrants who still keeps close contact with their home country. Jason warned the audience of keeping one safe from money laundering scams and being vigilant about overseas money transfers.

New Zealand accountant B.Yang talked about the new policy on taxation of overseas income. People with overseas income will need to update their personal information and review their financial plans and make sure that community members are abiding to all the laws and regulations in both countries. He then made a detailed introduction about family trusts and how it is important to have savings.



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