

Scholarships For 212 Typhoon Morakot Affected Students

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
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On July 11, the Tzu Chi Foundation gave scholarships to 212 students from nine schools that were rebuilt in Pingtung in south Taiwan in the aftermath of Typhoon Morakot in August 2009. Most went to members of the Aboriginal tribes who were badly affected by the disaster.

The foundation's Pingtung branch held a ceremony to award the scholarships in the Jing Si Hall of Chaozhou township in Pingtung. Each of the 212 students also received a gift. Three of them – Yue Tao, Wei Yi-jie and Wu Ya-chi – spoke on behalf of the recipients to express their gratitude to people from all sectors of society who had contributed to the scholarships and promised that, in the future, they would give back to the communities in a spirit of gratitude.

Morakot caused catastrophic damage in Taiwan, leaving 461 people dead and 192 missing and more than US\$3.3 billion in damage; the heavy rain triggered enormous mudslides and severe flooding throughout southern Taiwan. Many schools were damaged or destroyed. In the aftermath, the foundation was very active in providing emergency relief and rebuilding schools. It also built permanent housing communities, to enable residents who lived in unsafe mountainous areas to relocate to lower ground. Many of the victims came from Taiwan's Aboriginal tribes.



Yue has just graduated from the third year of senior high school in Laiyi and this year will start Media Studies at I-Shou University. Both his parents work away from home; since he was small, he has lived with his grandmother on the slopes of Laiyi mountain. After the damage caused by Morakot, the two moved into a new village built by the foundation for the Laiyi tribe. He wanted to express his gratitude to the members of Tzu Chi in 52 countries who contributed to build the new village. So he and his classmates set up a volunteer group called Masalu; they used the summer holidays to work as teachers in a nearby primary school and help out in a summer camp. They also went to visit an old people's home.

Yue also took part in a school choir which won a national singing competition; he won a golden medal at a singing contest in mainland China. The reason he chose media studies is that he wants to concentrate on learning his native aboriginal language, of the Paiwan tribe, spread its culture and be with elderly members of the tribe.

Wei Yi-jie is in the third year at National Taiwan University (NTU), studying Social Work; he and his younger brother, Wei Yi-fan, both won scholarships. Since they were small, the two have helped their parents in maintaining the house and have learnt how to give to the family. After he entered NTU, Wei worked to pay his living costs; he also used his own time to study Aboriginal culture and anthropology, with the aim of giving back to his tribe. He wants never to forget his

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roots and know where he comes from.



The third recipient is Wu Ya-chi; she is an outstanding student with excellent grades who is a keen participant in community service. She is the chairperson of her school's Parental Love Society. She uses her spare time to serve elderly people who suffer from dementia. She also takes part in local community activities and spreads her native language and culture among old people and children. She has won an award as an outstanding young person and also community and volunteer awards; she is a model for her classmates. In September, she will become a first-year student in Social Work at Meiho University; she aims to use all her strength to serve and develop herself.

Lu Fang-chuan, head of the foundation's Department of Charity Mission Development, said that they had begun the scholarships for young people in 2007. "All the recipients have faced a difficult environment and through their hard work have becoming outstanding young people. This year, for the first time, the awards have gone to members of the Linali, Changzhibaihe, Wulazuci, Shinlaiyi, Mudangaoshi and Zhongxinglu communities. The students come from the Gaoshu Great Love Village and the Jiu Peng Great Love Village, which the foundation built in Pingtung. We hope that, by providing the scholarships, we will encourage them to work hard and become pillars of their communities after they graduate.

"The name of the scholarships is 'new buds'. We hope that the students will grow like seeds and become a large and solid tree. We encourage them that, even if they are in a position of weakness, they will work hard to become spiritually strong and grow healthy and strong," Lu said.

By Zhong Yi-rui of the Secretariat, Tzu Chi volunteer Dai Dun-ren and Wang Chang-jie of Pingtung