

Tzu Chi Volunteers Give Children First Experience of Photography

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
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In the northwest Taiwan city of Hsinchu, volunteers of the Tzu Chi Foundation held a summer program to give children their first experience of photographs. It introduced them to a new world of recording people and the beauty of nature.

The man who devised the program was Lin Yi-bao, an IT teacher at the National Open University in Hsinchu. He had gone to the Ren Ai Children's Home to help install computers and taken students from his university there to guide the children on how to use them. They come from families who are unable to look after them properly. Lin wants to provide long-term care for them and hopes to dispel the shadows in their hearts. So he invited Tzu Chi volunteers from the documenting team in Hsinchu to donate cameras to the children and arrange a summer program that would enable the volunteers to teach the children how to use the cameras and allow the two to interact and come closer to each other.

The mission of documenting team is to record the history of Tzu Chi as a living sutra. The members are volunteers who write article, take photos and videos. They record the truth, goodness and beauty of our world.



The team agreed with Mr Lin's request. Its first task was to collect and prepare cameras. Volunteer Wang Nai-wen went on the Internet and asked people to donate second-hand cameras. She asked for everyone to show their love and promote the interests of the children. The program would give them a happy summer holiday and promote a spirit of 'appreciate, cherishing our blessings and creating a good karma', as well as making the best use of the second-hand cameras.

She succeeded in collecting 40 cameras. The volunteers checked them carefully and found that some had defects and could not be used. Finally, they chose 16. Lin Yi-bao emphasized: "the cameras we give to the children must be useable, because they will be their first cameras."



The volunteers prepared the cameras carefully, wrapping each up and putting it into a box with a note of blessing. On the outside was written a Jing Si Aphorism; this was to give each child a sense of blessing and hope. After they gave the cameras, they told the children that they could photograph the teachers and the grass and flowers in Ren Ai Children's Home. "In this way, when you leave the home, you will be able to remember everyone."

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For the last section on the program, on August 3, the volunteers took the children on an outing to the Jing Xin Lake in the Hsinchu Science Park to practice taking pictures outdoors. “You can capture the harmony of sky and the water of the lake very well,” a volunteer said. “You are very talented!” Each child had at least one or two volunteers with him or her, to guide him how to shoot people, building and scenery. The volunteers helped the children pick three of the best ones; then they picked one, for them to share the reason of picking the photo and thoughts of photograph learning experience on stage.

“This was the first choice of photograph by the children and will be a good souvenir for them,” said the volunteers. They specially prepared a high-quality printing machine which could make a copy at once. With the children, they hang the photos on a board in the children’s home. It was both an opportunity to show the results of their efforts and also a precious historical record.



The Ren Ai Children’s Home has a nursery, to prepare children for primary school. For the last more than eight years, its principal has been Chen Yun-ying. She is extremely grateful to Tzu Chi for its care for the children: “The volunteers give them goodness, knowledge and great love. This gives them positive energy and builds their self-confidence, helping them to face other people and develop themselves.”

Lin Yi-bao said: “although the program is over, the volunteers will continue to walk forward with the children. There is a plan to go at least once a month, to help them with their studies and give them a sense of warmth and concern for their families.”

By Yan Fu-jiang, Hsinchu