

American Acupuncturist Helps Tzu Chi in Haiti

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A towering Caucasian with a white wide-brimmed hat stands out among the faces at the foundation's free medical clinic in Port-au-Prince – an acupuncturist from Seattle. It also continued its aid distribution, of food, blankets and tarpaulin sheets, at two locations in the capital.

Jordan Van Voast used to earn a lucrative living as a banker before he decided to switch to Chinese medicine and learn the ancient art of acupuncture. He also studied Buddhism, which led him into contact with the Tzu Chi; he decided to join its [Tzu Chi International Medical Association](#) (TIMA). Since the start of the foundation's work in Haiti after the earthquake, TIMA has organized six free clinics and Van Voast joined them.

The clinic accepts everyone. Among the patients one day were four American peace-keeping soldiers who have been on duty in Haiti for a month. Every day they carry large packs, weighing 16 kg (35 pounds), on their backs, whatever the weather, pouring rain or sweaty heat. When they heard that acupuncture was available at the clinic, they decided to try it, in the hope of relief from the strain of the packs. Van Voast asked one, Matthew White, if he was nervous to have a needle stuck in his face. No problem, he said. He is used to having people put a gun in front of him; why fear a small needle? Another, Julian Romo, said that he felt very relaxed with the needles. "It helps to relieve the fatigue," he said.

Van Voast's head is too large for the standard white baseball cap which Tzu Chi gives volunteers. So he bought a new white hat with a wide brim, which his mother stitched to make it like a Tzu Chi hat. "Most hats will not fit me. I have had this problem for a long time," he said. "Through each day of service in Haiti, I have gained much more than I have given," he said. "Most people are very friendly here. When you smile at them and say some simple words in their language, it lets them know that you care about them and want to help them. It is like being with close family and you realize the whole world is like your family."

Whether it is U.N. peacekeepers or Haitian earthquake survivors, Van Voast places his needles with the utmost care. His mind is focused on easing the stress and fatigue of people in the disaster zone.

In addition, the foundation held aid distributions on February 24-26. On the 24th and the 26th, nearly 4,500 families received aid at the parish of Croix des Missions. On the 25th, 653 households from the tent cities in the Tabarre municipality collected rice, blankets and tarpaulin sheets at the base camp of the Jordanian U.N. peacekeepers.

□ [Tzu Chi Haiti Relief Operation \(as of 2/26\)](#)