

## Thick-Skinned Volunteer Builds Recycling Team

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation  
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The persistence of one volunteer who did recycling work for three years on her own in a small town in east Taiwan has succeeded in building a thriving environmental community. It took hard work, dedication and a thick skin.

In 2000, Lin Yuehua began the work under a large umbrella on an empty plot of land next to her house. She used an old scooter to collect re-usable items in the town of Fenglin, a conservative farming town in Hualien county, east Taiwan and store them in a tent. It was no easy task – she was suffering from lupus and the incomprehension of her family to what she was doing.



"This is me, I do not ever give up," Lin said. "I take aim and make sure I get there. I put more than 100 per cent into it." She worked on her own for three years and, finally, inspired others to join her. One was Liu Dingchang: "back then, it was beyond dirty. There were all sorts of bugs, not to speak of the stench. I said that I wanted to give up because it was so unhygienic." Lin also inspired Chen Xiuyuan, who owns a grocery store in the town market. Every day she keeps spare cardboard boxes for her. "I keep them for Tzu Chi in the basement, so that no-one can steal them. They are highly valued in our business and are in great demand."

Another recruit was Lai Lizhen. "The recycling volunteers were very dedicated to their work and I could not bear to see them working under the baking sun," she said. So, in 2005, she paid out of her own pocket to replace the tent with a tin shed. The number of volunteers grew and, with it, the volume of goods. Transporting them became a problem. Another volunteer, Jiuhe, decided to provide a truck. "She was so kind," said Lin. "She thought it was very dangerous for me to carry the rubbish around on my motorcycle, so she obtained a truck and transferred it to my name. When she delivered it to me, it had a full tank. I was so grateful." Jiuhe said that Lin was very passionate about the work: "she mobilized many people in the community to participate in the work."



Another convert was retired teacher Xiao Chunying. "At the beginning, I was not at ease with the work. I could not get down to scavenging on the streets. I was afraid that people would think I was going through a post-retirement depression. It does not bother me any more. Now I even go collecting in the night market because there is a lot of used paper there!" Doing right by the earth requires courage, humility and a thick skin.

The bravery and persistence of a single woman has built a thriving team, from a leaky tent to

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the security of a tin shed and from a motor cycle to a truck. Over the past decade, the recycling station of Fenglin has become a landmark to Lin Yuehua and her team of dedicated volunteers.