

Ayer Keroh Environmental Education Centre is Now Open

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
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Tzu Chi Melaka, Malaysia, officially opened its 4,374-sq. metre Ayer Keroh Environmental Education Centre on May 27, 2012. The official ceremony was marked by sound of crushing aluminum cans, cheerfully carried out by 300 Tzu Chi volunteers.

A red "giant firecracker" hanging high in the air, coupled with the smell of the festive seasons, gave some indications that there was a celebration taking place.

"Tzu Chi Ayer Keroh Environmental Education Centre is now officially open," the Master of Ceremony announced.

The "giant firecracker" (made out of a jumbo bag) was released, with aluminum cans cascading down from it. Lim Geok Choe, CEO of Tzu Chi Melaka, and Deputy CEOs, Loh Siew Cheng and Wah Jiing Min, led 300 volunteers in happily crushing the cans to create the effect of a firecracker.



Following that, the music of a Tzu Chi song, "拉拉拉拉 (Pulling the Carts Forward)", came on air. "Hei yo, hei yo, hei hei yo, hei yo, hei yo, hei hei yo..." they sang and out came eight trolleys, symbolizing Tzu Chi's Four Missions and Eight Dharma-Prints (Charity, Medicine, Education, Culture/Humanity, International-Relief, Bone Marrow Donation, Environmental Protection, and Community Volunteers) pulled by the volunteers in tow. They sang joyfully along the way, revealing their love for Master Cheng Yen and their promise to continuously promote Tzu Chi's Missions.

Creative environmentally-friendly "firecracker"

It was really a test of the volunteers' creativity in their preparation for a truly environmentally-friendly opening ceremony. The entrance signboard was made of plastic lids, while the main entrance door was adorned with a piece of recycled red cloth. The main attraction, however, was a stunning 4ft (L) by 3ft (W) "Giant Firecracker", which amazed all present and raised the question of its significance.



Volunteer Tan Tin Kiang was the one who came up with the idea of creating an environmentally-friendly firecracker, which is a significant enhancement to any opening

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ceremony or celebration. He used a recycled jumbo bag and placed a rectangular wooden structured frame inside, before stuffing it up with aluminium cans. When created, the "Giant Firecracker" was not perfect so one volunteer suggested writing Tzu Chi slogans on it. With that, the "Giant Firecracker" had finally come to a completion in line with its initial purpose.

In order to increase the sound effect of the aluminium cans being scattered from a height, a latter brainstorming session suggested that on the day of the ceremony, the "Giant Firecracker" was to be pulled, and the aluminium cans scattered on the floor would be crushed by volunteers' feet to signify that environmental protection is everyone's responsibility. It was a festive atmosphere that did not cost a penny, and the sound was realistic, all thanks to the efforts and wisdom of the planning team.

Strength from volunteers



Despite her cardiovascular condition, volunteer Yo Bee Kiow, is still willing to shoulder her responsibility as chief coordinator of this new Centre. She had encountered numerous challenges turning a huge shabby factory into the first Environmental Education Centre in Melaka. Claiming herself a novice without much experience, she took her first move to promote the recycling classifications. After months of challenges, the intense vulnerability developed.

Witnessing the moment when the "Giant Firecracker" was scattering the aluminum cans to the floor had brought tears to her eyes. She said, "When volunteers stepped on the aluminum cans, the scene created a kind of 'harmonious' energy; and I deeply felt that the strength is here! And how to combine the strength, I have to be more focused!" She has achieved her ambition in getting the Environmental Education Centre accomplished. Now, and in the near future, she aims to establish a Treasure Zone (Xi Fu Qu), arts/crafts corner, vegetable garden, rainwater recycling, enzyme production, kitchen wastes and so on, in order to be a model for the communities.

"When I step into this shabby, dilapidated, leaking and dusty factory, I told myself that this was a real arduous project. The first thought that came into my mind was the need for a massive clean-up," remarked Saw Bee Tin, a member of the planning team of the Environmental Education Centre. She always recalls these words of wisdom from Master Cheng Yen: "If you do not take the time to do environmental protection, you are wasting the lives of materials." Without any procrastination, she showed great determination in kick-starting the recycling classifications project on May 1, 2012.



Before the opening, she gathered more than 60 community volunteers to help out in the very

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first clean-up on April 17. This was followed by another clean-up on the eve of the opening; and after a month of hardwork, there was great improvement.

The Centre opens from Monday to Saturday (9am to 1pm) for recycling collection and sorting activity. Volunteers Tan See Kew, How Yong Soon Pang and Chu Pak Meng from Bukit Baru Zone; Ng Kuek New, Lai Jin Shun, Choo Nyok Choon, Chan Leng Huay, and Lai Yoon Ying from Bukit Katil Zone, are station masters on their assigned day. Tan Kim Kiak, Gan Yoke Hwa and Koo Liong will take charge of the meal preparation.

With exhortation and encouragement from the CEO and Deputy CEOs, the simple and solemn opening ceremony was successfully organized. This Ayer Keroh Environmental Education Centre will be shaped as a community model, conforming to the spirit of "Self-discipline", "Diligence", "Frugality", and "Endurance", and passing on Tzu Chi's humanities and the "Jing-Si" spirit.