

Tzu Chi Volunteers in Argentina Serve Food in Soup Kitchen

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
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Tzu Chi volunteers in Argentina have for the last four years been serving food in a food kitchen once a month. Initially, the recipients did not like the vegetarian food they prepared – but they have adjusted the menu and now everything is eaten.

The soup kitchen is held in Ituzaingó, in the urban area of Buenos Aires and about 30 kilometers from the city center. In 2002, a kind person donated a house to San Judas Tadeo church. It uses the house to host a free meal program four days a week.

Four years ago, while she was visiting a doctor's office, a Tzu Chi volunteer named Silvia met Raul, a church volunteer. Mr. Raul asked her if she knew of any charity organization that could cook and help the meal program. Since then, Argentina Tzu Chi volunteers have taken part in the program one day a month. They have studied and prepared vegetarian food that fits local tastes.

On the appointed day, volunteers gather in the Tzu Chi office and prepare five large pots of beans, rice and mixed vegetable tomato soup. All recipes are designed for local people.



In the beginning, there was always food left over. People did not like the taste of the vegetarian food the volunteers prepared. So they kept adjusting the recipes. Today, there is almost nothing left in the food tray. Some people even ask for second helping. The volunteers increased the number of servings from 60-70 to a hundred. Some residents bring plastic containers in order to take home food to share with their families. Raul told the volunteers that the vegetarian meal is now attracting more people to come.

It was about 20 minutes before noon – there were already people waiting outside. After the volunteers brought the food, Raul quickly warmed the rice, beans, and vegetable soup. He also prepared cups and juice which he put on the table.

Before the meal, Tzu Chi volunteers invite people to make a donation, a way to spread their kindness to others in need. The amount does not matter -- but the sincerity of a good deed does.

At noon, volunteers began to serve at the tables, passing out the plates. They were happy to see everyone enjoying their food. In the dining hall, everyone at the table has their own story. Some come from a different city and took three buses to get to the dining hall. Someone will continue to sell cleaning supplies on the street after the meal. Some earn a few tips by watching parked cars on behalf of the owners. Some have no job at all.

