

Tzu Chi Annual Grant-in-Aid Presentation - A Token to Ease the Burden of Parents

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
Monday, 07 January 2008 00:00

2008 Tzu Chi's grant-in-aid distribution benefitted close to 8,000 primary and secondary students from lower income families in Melaka, Kuala Lumpur, Klang, Muar, Kota Kinabalu, Seremban, Kluang, Kota Tinggi, Kuantan, Tawau, Termeloh and Raub. This had enabled the students to continue with their studies without worry and, at the same time, eased their parents' financial burden.

Tzu Chi volunteers had the opportunity to interact with headmasters, teachers and many families in the community through the issuance of application forms to schools, home visits and presentation ceremonies. Besides witnessing the sufferings, the volunteers also came across many heart-warming stories that brought out the beauty in humanity.



Everyone Does Charity

More than 4,000 students from the Klang Valley's 221 schools, including the children of Tzu Chi care recipients, received the grant-in-aid distributed by Tzu Chi Kuala Lumpur.

There were 13 ceremonies held for the grant-in-aid presentation where students, teachers and parents were invited. As several sessions were held in Tamil Schools for the ethnic Indian recipients, Malay or Tamil interpreters were arranged to ensure all the guests could fully understand the programmes. Volunteers also specially translated and recorded the song of "One Family" into Tamil for the event.

No language barrier

One of the sessions was held at SJK (T) Ladang Coalfields. In June this year, Tzu Chi volunteers received a report that this school needed help and relief was provided immediately after evaluation. The Assistant Headmaster, Anthony, was impressed with Tzu Chi's quick response. As such, he gave the volunteers his full cooperation for the session held in this school. He also invited his friend, Mr Guan, who is fluent in Mandarin and Tamil, to be one of the Masters of Ceremony; and arranged for three of the school teachers to learn the sign language at Tzu Chi's activity centre in Damansara.

Mr Anthony was also impressed that Tzu Chi did not limit the number of applicants, and that they visited all the applicants' homes to understand their actual situation. He thinks the aid truly serves its purpose and because of this, he has decided to be a volunteer too.

32 of 120 students in this school received the grant-in-aid. All of them are from families with income as low as RM500. Hence the money really helps to ease the burden of the parents.

Understand one's blessing

Master Cheng Yen said it is the responsibility of every Tzu Chi volunteer to do charity work.

Volunteers who participated in the evaluation exercise found that there were many families with problems. A member of Tzu Chi Teachers' Association found that a student had performed poorly as he could not cope with his father's demise. Besides this, volunteers also found a

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single mother who self-mutilated her arm, and there were families who were so poor that they did not even have sufficient food. On a brighter note, there were also very hardworking and contented students.

New volunteer Wang Hui Ting said, "When I stepped into the first house, I was shocked to find that there is such a poor family in my community. It is a unit of government flat. We saw children playing on the filthy floor. We later found that the three children are being raised by their grandparents as their father has abandoned them and their mother is staying with a friend. As their grandfather, the sole bread-winner, passed away three years ago, and their grandmother has diabetes, the family of four survives on the subsidy from the Welfare Department."

"I felt sorry for them and thought of my two daughters. My husband and I planned for their education since they were born. As I always wanted them to do better in their studies, I never praised them but always scolded them instead. I realized that I am the cause of my family's disharmony. I also understood when the Master said that one must understand one's blessing, cherish it and cultivate more blessings. I realized that I was very ignorant and kept comparing and complaining. My daughters are actually very obedient and well-behaved." After this round of home visit, Hui Ting began to actively participate in charity work, and even brought along her friends.

More than 2,000 volunteers were involved in the home visits. Out of the 4,800 applications, 405 applicants needed further assistance.

Through witnessing the sufferings, it is hoped that everyone has learned to be more grateful and broad-minded. One must then nurture sincerity and humbleness so that one is free from affliction and ignorance.

The Cycle of Love

Grant-in-aid was given to about 1,400 students from 144 schools in Melaka by Tzu Chi Melaka. About RM430,000 was given out this year. The presentation ceremony was held in two sessions - in the morning and afternoon.

Tzu Chi Melaka began distributing grant-in-aid to poor students since 1998. Volunteers went to 281 schools personally to deliver the application forms and explain its purpose. The schools gave their full cooperation in recommending candidates. They also invited Tzu Chi to give talks on environmental protection and story-telling. Some schools even organized tours to Tzu Chi.



Accepting the test in life

Twelve-year-old Hazman Shahir is a special child. He suffers from spinal muscular atrophy and has to have a tracheostomy tube installed at his neck to help him breathe. Despite this, he still achieved 4As and 1B in the UPSR examination without any tuition.

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On December 7, 2008, Hazman Shahir and his mother, Hazlina, were present to share during the Grant-in-aid Presentation Ceremony.

Hazman said, "I have a great mother who takes care of me everyday. I believe that as long as I work hard, I can still be successful even with my handicap."

Hazlina said, "It is not easy to take care of such a child. I am glad that he is very understanding and hardworking. Dear students, you must study hard because education can change our lives and our families. Children are God's gift, be they good or bad, parents must cherish them!"

Two of Hazlina's four children suffer from spinal muscular atrophy. She has to send them to school personally everyday, and has to bring along suction pipes to help them clear their sputum. Besides taking care of the children, she still has to work for a living; but she does all this without complaints.

Kusihire, a form 4 student said he must learn from Hazman. He attended the presentation ceremony, and learned that there were people whose conditions were worse than his.

Besides being a handicapped, Kusihire's father also suffers from heart disease, asthma and diabetes. Being the eldest in the family, Kusihire had to wash cars during the weekends whenever his father was too ill to work. He also had to pick up recyclables with his parents everyday from about 2 to 5 am.

Kusihire had never expected Tzu Chi volunteers to turn up to help them during their toughest time. He was glad that he could continue his studies with the grant-in-aid.



I can help others

Single mother Vijayarani came with her four children. Her 11 year-old son, Praveen, donated RM50 after receiving the grant-in-aid. Vijayarani supports her son's generous act because she has already found a job and life is better off for her family now.

Vijayarani lost her job a few months ago. When volunteers visited her house, the whole family was surviving on white rice and chilies. Emergency relief was provided to the family.

The family is poor but very contented. The children help out with the housework and are doing well in their studies too. Their house is also sparkling clean and tidy.

When Praveen received the grant-in-aid from Tzu Chi last year, he brought home a bamboo bank. This year, when volunteers visited him, he returned the bamboo bank filled with money he had kept. When he heard that Tzu Chi collects recyclables, he also donated a bag of aluminium cans he has collected. Praveen and his brother also donated the money in the money packets they received when the volunteers visited them during Deepavali. They have truly set a good example for all to follow.

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Kannan and family each adopted a bamboo bank. He said he donated money when he saw volunteers raising funds for disaster victims in Myanmar and Sichuan. He had never expected the cycle of love to form so fast from the time his eldest daughter was given the grant-in-aid.

"Now I know that little money can do great deeds." He told volunteers that he wants to be a monthly donor. Although he makes about RM500 a month, he insists on donating 10% of it.

More than 30 students from SK Bandar Hilir received the grant-in-aid. Their Asst. Headmaster, Madam Tan, attended the presentation and took back 60 bamboo banks for the other teachers in her school and for her relatives. She believes they would be happy to do good deeds through this method.

Through the grant-in-aid presentation, some families found that they are not that poor after all. Many parents and students took home a bamboo bank each as they understood that one can easily do good deeds by accumulating small change everyday. It is hoped that the love from society can help the students study without worry.

They Must Go to School

Volunteers from Tzu Chi Klang visited 1,450 families and approved 1,041 applications from students for the grant-in-aid. The grant-in-aid was given out in five presentation ceremonies.

Nora came with her son, Aidit Lai. She said her husband has two families and he seldom comes home. He works as a wireman but has asthma and is presently on medication. The family of five survives with only RM400 a month given by her husband. Nora said she would rather starve than let her children miss school. Now that she has the grant-in-aid from Tzu Chi to take care of the school opening expenses, she would send her 5 year-old son to kindergarten too.



Parvathy is a single mother. She has a tumor as big as a fist on her neck. Before having the tumor, she could make RM40 by working in the oil palm estate for two days in a month. She has no income for months already.

Ten years ago, Parvathy left her husband with her three children as she could no longer put up with his abusive behaviour after drinking and also because he did not have a proper job. Evidence of her suffering could be seen from the scars on her arms. In addition to this, two of her children ran away from home to be with friends. Rajamah is the only child still staying with her.

Both of them are staying in a room they rent from a friend, and they are three months behind in their rental. They are lucky that the friend still allows them to stay on.

"We ate whatever others gave us, or just skipped the meal..." Parvathy was seen trying hard to

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hold back her tears as she said this.

"I will use the grant-in-aid for my son's education although he is a slow learner. I just hope that he could study a bit more. Thank you!"

Hardworking and contented

Sevalingam contracted polio at the age of 26. He and his wife rear chicken and plant vegetables on a plot of land in the estate to feed their four children. They also receive RM300 monthly from the Welfare Department.

"My children can buy reference books next year with this money. My children are hard working and the teachers always give them free tuition." Sevalingam's eldest son got 5As and 2Bs for the UPSR examination this year. All his children understand their parents' difficulties well.

Sevalingam said, "I always tell them not to worry about money, just study hard!" Although disabled, Sevalingam is positive and very confident that his children will have a bright future if they are allowed to study without worry.

Light at the End of the Tunnel

A total of 171 secondary and primary students, including 27 children of Tzu Chi's care recipients, benefited from the 9th grant-in-aid presentation by Tzu Chi Kinabalu. The presentation ceremony held at Tzu Chi Kota Kinabalu's Office was most touching when the parents and children went on stage to share.

Mohd Shafiq, a standard 5 student of SJK (C) Chung Hwa Likas, Sabah, received the grant-in-aid for the 5th time. He said he always reminded himself to study hard so that he could help his family and the needy when he grew up. The grant-in-aid has helped him to continue with his education without worry.



36 year-old Kham Suan Vong Deuan Pheng came from Laos. Four years ago, her husband left her and their three children for another woman. She was left to fend for the family and had to work as a babysitter and an hourly maid to earn a living. Her income was less than RM300. Luckily she has kind neighbours to help her out. Her case was reported to Tzu Chi and two months ago aid was given to her.

Both 10 year-old Fysouneica and 8 year-old Fshintah were recipients of the grant-in-aid. Kham was extremely touched for she could not believe that such a good thing had happened to her. Fysouneica promised to study hard as she wanted to be a scientist.

Volunteer Ong Tuen Yiok shared the story of "Bamboo Bank Era" to encourage the students to study hard and be a useful person; and more importantly, to be a person who helps others. Tzu

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Chi began with 30 housewives saving NT0.50/day in the bamboo bank to help the sufferings and now it has grown into an international organization with millions of people supporting the benevolent act. So everyone can do good deeds as long as they have the wish.

Many parents and students responded to Brother Ong's call by dropping coins into the bamboo bank. Love was flowing freely at the scene.

Bring Hope to Temerloh

The first grant-in-aid distribution by Tzu Chi Temerloh had benefitted 265 students. More than 20 volunteers took more than a month to visit over 300 families in Triang, Mentakap and Temerloh.

Despite their inexperience, the organizing committee managed to put up a very lively ceremony held at SJK (C) Khee Chee. The parents and students were pleasantly surprised to find so many interesting programmes, such as a movie on environmental protection, dramas and a sign language presentation.

Volunteer Tan See Hoon told the story of Bamboo Bank Era and explained that Tzu Chi's charity fund is truly an accumulation of love from many kind-hearted people. Headmaster Zhuang Zhang Hua thought it was good to tell the students how the funds had been raised so that they would be more appreciative of the aid given to them. All the 230 bamboo banks were adopted after the ceremony.

Volunteers went from house-to-house the very next day to deliver the grant-in-aid to the 13 students who did not turn out at the ceremony. The parents were deeply touched by the mindfulness of the volunteers.



We Should Show More Concern for Our Students

47 students benefitted from the 4th grant-in-aid distribution by Tzu Chi Tawau. Several teachers had been working closely with Tzu Chi in the evaluation process.

Teacher Gu Ni Shan said that the home visits made her understand that some of her students were really having a tough life. She also realized that students misbehaved because of their family background. She said, "If teachers are willing to show more concern towards their students, the future of the students can be changed."

Many teachers were touched by Tzu Chi's spirit of great compassion that they gave their support by joining as Tzu Chi donating members. They also wished to propagate Jing Si aphorisms (Master Cheng Yen's wise words) in their schools.

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It is hoped that teachers, parents, children, and Tzu Chi volunteers can work hand-in-hand to create a world of love.

Grant-in-aid given out by Tzu Chi Muar benefitted 344 students from Muar and Segamat District.

The three daughters of Madam Lin Yu Chun were among the recipients. Second daughter, Cai Zi Ling, thanked her teachers for helping her. She would like to repay their kindness by studying hard to achieve her dream to be a teacher.

Tzu Chi volunteers found that her husband did not have a stable job. They did not pay the school fees for their son who is attending kindergarten for six months. Emergency relief was given to this family besides the grant-in-aid for three of their daughters.

Tzu Chi Seremban's 6th grant-in-aid presentation benefitted 196 students, including 36 children of Tzu Chi's care recipients.

17 year-old Rejina had a small and happy family. However, things turned for the worst when her father suffered a stroke early this year, to be followed two months later by the demise of her brother from a heart attack. The latter left a young wife and three young kids. With the sudden lost of financial income for the family, coupled with her mother having to undergo dialysis, the family has now to rely on her sister to take care of the family. Rejina was glad that the financial aid from Tzu Chi came in very timely for her family.

Tzu Chi Kluang gave out grant-in-aid to 127 students. A boy, who used pins to button up his uniform, caught the attention of many people. He is Huang Wei Cheng, a primary 5 student. He and his sister, Pei En, both received the grant-in-aid. Wei Cheng said, "I will buy a new uniform and stationery with this money." His father works in a recycling factory and he has a family of eight to take care of. The grant-in-aid will definitely reduce the father's burden.