

Aphorisms Take Roots In School

Written by
Sun, 09 Oct 2011



June 15. Though only early winter, temperature was below 10 degrees in the morning and night. Despite the chill, 17 Tzu Chi volunteers merrily started the journey to Brassall State School in Ipswich for voluntary work. Upon arrival, as in the past, they took out the cleaning tools they brought along and began tidying up.

Gradually, school children arrived and started to fill every corner of the school ground. As one volunteer was picking up rubbish, she saw a student sipping from a soft drink can. She took the opportunity to talk with him the importance of environmental protection, how we should love the earth and how he could help by not throwing the can away but instead put it in the recycling bin. That student responded favourably. After the tidying, our volunteers proceeded to the library to continue with the covering and organizing of books. They came three weeks ago but there were still over 20,000 books to be taken care of. In his office, the school principal introduced the new president of the PTA, Mrs. Sanders, to the volunteers. Being a Christian, she was naturally curious about the visit by a Buddhist group. Unperturbed, the lead-volunteer explained the founder of Tzu Chi Foundation often reminds her overseas followers that they should be grateful of the benefits offered by the host countries and in return, they should reciprocate and contribute back to the society. She also frequently reminds them that by respecting others' religions, others will respect yours. Tzu Chi offers its help irrespective of race and religion and expects nothing in return. That volunteer herself has lived in Australia for 23 years. With her children all grown up and their study finished, she found herself now able to help others.

Peter Doyle, the school principal, added that he had also heard about Tzu Chi from Sister Angela of a catholic missionary. She related to him that when Tzu Chi came to help in the Mater Hospital 22 years ago, she also had similar doubts. But in hindsight, her concern was proven unnecessary and she had been deeply impressed with Tzu Chi's way of broad love, extending the helping hand without expecting anything in return. He further explained why they were invited to introduce Tzu Chi Aphorisms to the school. After his visit to Jing Si Hall on the Gold Coast, he was so impressed with the ubiquitous aphorisms that he recommended them to the teachers. To illustrate, one volunteer picked one and shared with Mrs. Sanders the meaning of "Forgiveness is like kindness to yourself". Touched by the explanation, she welcomed the volunteers to return and promote environmental awareness and earth care at the end of year activities.

Class 3 R was one of those to be visited. On entering the classroom, the volunteers were

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thrilled by the salute from the students led by their teacher. At Class 6S, the class teacher suggested the aphorisms be displayed somewhere high up.



Without hesitation, 2 volunteers climbed up the bookcase together and got them done.

On that day three classes opted for the aphorisms experience. They were explained with simple and interesting stories telling so that the students could easily understand the meanings. All the students were very enthusiastic in their participation and recital of aphorisms. As encouragements, some small gifts were given out.

At the end of the session the volunteers were approached by two parents who, after observing the sharing of aphorisms, would like the same be done for their classes. Our volunteers suggested that it would be more appropriate for the requests be through the class teachers. They were quickly arranged with the Year 3 teachers. In fact, the president of the high school student's association also expressed interest in having the same for the high school.

All in all, we are most thankful for this wonderful opportunity, allowing us to introduce the aphorisms of Master Cheng Yen to the school.