

One in Chance of 35 Meeting

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The love of bone marrow donors is beyond any boundaries. Completing over 1,200 cases, Buddhist Tzu Chi Stem Cells Center has aided China in bone marrow match and donation, where 48 cases are located in Jiansu Province, and out of those 48 cases, 35 of them live in Suzhou. While attending the inauguration of Tzu Chi Health Promotion Center in Suzhou, a staff from Tzu Chi Medical Mission coincidentally ran into a Tzu Chi's marrow stem cells recipient at the hotel. To find the 35 bone marrow recipients in a city of 1.5 million residents is not an easy task, especially under such an unexpected circumstance. The recipient's vibrant health and sincere gratitude are a witness to Tzu Chi's effort over the past 19 years to promote bone marrow program, igniting the hope for patients in every corner of the world. It is like water, appears mundane, but can nourish life.

Hold His Chance to Express Gratitude

Sister Ching-Fang Tseng and colleagues from Tzu Chi Medical Mission in Hualien, Taiwan flew to Suzhou to help the inauguration of Tzu Chi Health Promotion Center. Because dormitory for ladies in Jing Si Bookstore were full, she had to stay alone in the Green Tree Inn a minute away.

During the 3-day schedule from May 23 to 25, 2012, Sister Tseng trafficked back and forth between Jing Si Bookstore and the Suzhou Volunteer Center, and did not pay any special attention to this small hotel. When checking out on the 25th, the front desk clerk asked her, "Does Tzu Chi disallow donor and recipient to meet each other?" Since, for business purposes, Sister Tseng requested the hotel to specify "Tzu Chi Foundation" on the receipt, the clerk was, she assumed, inquiring Tzu Chi's policy regarding the meeting between marrow donor and recipient.

It turns out that this clerk Wei Wei, a 20 years old young man, was actually a bone marrow recipient in 2008 from the Tzu Chi Stem Cells Center. He was only 16 years old at that time and since then has always hoped to have a chance to thank his donor.

Balance Between Life and School Work.

Back in 2007, Wei, living in his hometown Chanshu, was preparing for the high school entrance exam like his classmates. The burden for a 9th grader was enormous. Everybody wanted to attain a grade to attend the best high school in town and eventually to their dream university. Wei's dream was to apply for medical school and become a life saving doctor.

During the second semester of 9th grade, Wei was bothered by the frequent fatigue. At first he and his family blamed the prolonged study, but in June 2007 the abnormality was overwhelming, and the family took him to the hospital for checkup. To their surprise, Wei was diagnosed with Acute Myelogenous Leukemia (AML_M2a).

With the entrance examination only a week away, Wei was forced to forfeit his academic dream and began treatment. His mother quit her job to take care of him and turned the family's priority to "finding bone marrow for the child".

Wei was, however, rather fortunate. Four Chinese donors with half matching (Matching HLA [Human Leukocyte Antigen]) bone marrows were found from Chung-Hua Bone Marrow Center. The risk of transplanting half matching bone marrow is high, but Wei's father wanted to give it a try. With the help of Dr. Wei-Rong Zhang of the First Affiliated Hospital of Soochow University, they contacted Taiwan's Buddhist Tzu Chi Stem Cells Center. Unexpectedly, two completely matching donors were found in Taiwan. One of them was in his/her 40s, and the other in his/her 30s. The final candidate, who agreed to donate, was scheduled to transplant in 2008.

Father's Love Broke Through Snow Covered Road

Diagnosed with leukemia in June 2007 and found a match in less than half a year, Wei appeared to be lucky than most, but the transplant procedure was met with difficult challenges.



Meeting the youth revealed a story of love by bone marrow donation.

In the winter of 2008, Southern China experienced severe snowstorms. Not just the airport and highways, the train stations were closed. Many passengers were trapped inside airports, while others were forced to travel on foot through the icy storm.

Wei was already waiting inside the isolation ward of the hospital. The original plan was for the courier to land in Shanghai, but it was altered as the Putong Airport was closed. The courier finally arrived, after transiting airports in three cities, at Hangchow Shiaoshan Airport.

However, the highway between Shiaoshan Airport and Suzhou was closed. The hospital ambulance could not go to the airport to pick up the precious bone marrow. Finally, Wei Wei's father and his friend took turns driving in the snow through country roads and spent more than 10 hours bringing the bone marrow from Hanchow to the Suchow hospital. It was already 1 a.m. at night. Every doctor remembered Wei Wei, the boy who waited in the isolation ward for a long time and almost lost the hope of transplant. The primary physician, Dr.



Zheng-Zheng Fu, said: “Wei Wei truly is a lucky boy. He was not only found a matching donor within six months, but also he did not show signs of rejection afterward and did not have to take anti-rejection medicine. In the past four years, he has been very healthy. There is no recurring of the disease.

In the course of delivering the bone marrow to the destination, Tzu Chi volunteers encountered various difficulties: the airport was closed down due to severe storm; they were forced to transfer from broken down airplane to another; they were very nervous on a congested freeway. They even had to extract the bone marrow from the donor during the 921 Earthquake and delivered bone marrow in time. The efforts and blessings of many individuals were stored in this small bag of bone marrow, and it witnessed the love and mercy of Tzu Chi.

Heartfelt Thanks to Tzu Chi

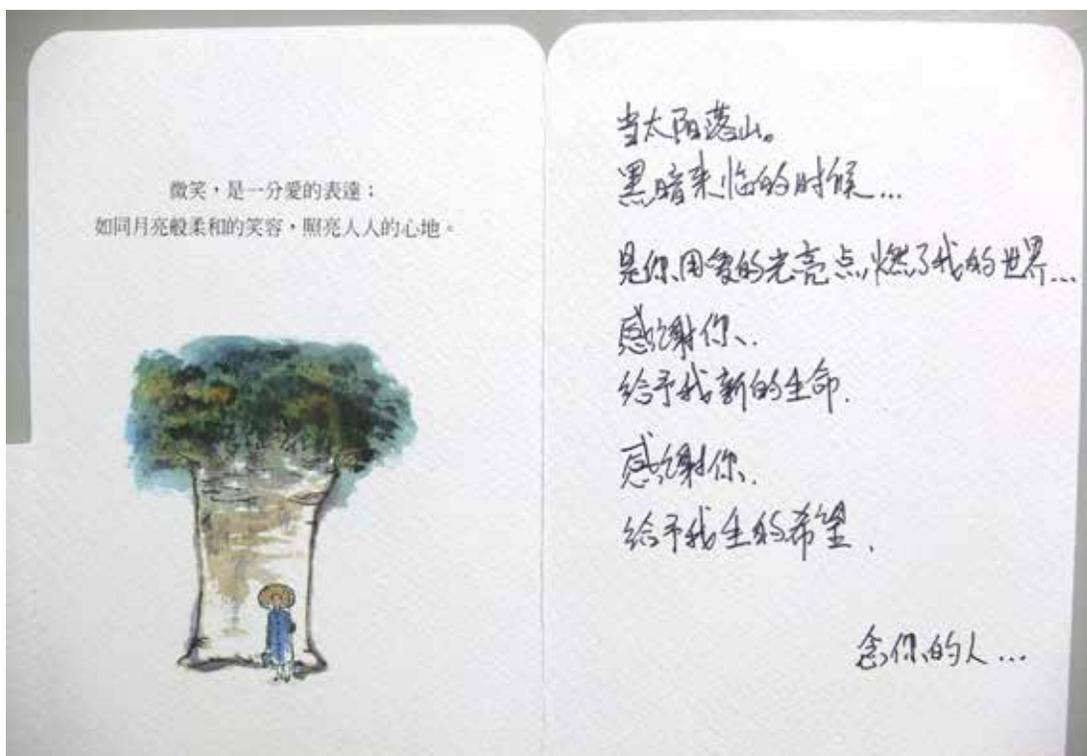
Wei Wei is thankful to his father and the volunteers who escorted the bone marrow to the hospital so that he can have a transplant and regain a healthy life. He is also grateful to the bone marrow donor. Afterward, he went to the hospital and told the doctor that he wanted to thank this donor in person. However, he was told that he had to wait for at least one year before he could see his savior. On the second year, he went to the hospital again, but he still could not get his wish. Four years went by, until a Tzu Chi member came along.

Sister Tseng went back to the bookstore and bought a thank-you card for Wei Wei to write down whatever he wanted to say. She reminded him not to write his real name and contact information; otherwise she will not be able to deliver the card to the bone marrow donor.

Receiving the card, Wei Wei did not write the thank-you note right away. He needed more time. He said: "I cannot express my gratefulness of saving my life in just one word..."

In China, people born in the 90th are called "the After 90" and considered to be lack of manners. However, this young man was calm and behaved more mature than his age. He wrote:

"When the sun disappeared in the horizon,
And dark night is here,
It is you, who use your love to brighten my world,
I thank you,
For giving me a new life,
I thank you,
For giving me a new hope.
From someone thinking of you."





His poetic verse moved everyone present there. He is a drop-out from a middle school, yet he was able to write such a beautiful letter! It is everyone's regret that he was not able to continue school because he got an infection after the surgery and had to stay home afterward. He said: "I did not go back to school because my memory became very bad after the illness." Until a year ago, Wei Wei started to work outside, but none of his job lasted long because he lacked the physical strength to work. He got the current job in the hotel about three months ago, but because of long night working hours, his parents were worried that it might affect his health.

Became Outgoing After Transplant Tzu Chi Encouraged Him to Continue Study

Sister Tseng, who had served at Communication Department in Hualien's Tzu Chi University as "Yi-De mother(students' voluntary mother) before, encouraged Wei Wei to go back to school to study. She told Wei Wei a story about a girl who was born handicapped without part of left arm, and lost her right leg at seven due to bone cancer. She was once depressed, but later overcame all the handicaps and studied hard. Finally, she graduated from Tzu Chi University, passed the examination for civil service and got a job in her hometown.

Wei Wei said he was a quiet and introvert boy when he was young, but after the transplant, his hair became softer, and maybe because of age, he became outgoing and likes to talk to people and to help others. He wanted to serve people in the future.

In a few days, he and his family will move back to their hometown Yancheng City in Jiangsu Province. He then will work in his father's waste water recycling company. Wei Wei said, although he is 21 this year, he is still a child in his father's eye. He still remembers the care he got from his father after his illness; especially the day his father escorted the bone marrow from the airport under such a severe snow storm. His father's hair became white on one night. That is why he listened to his father's wish to help him out in the family business.

This young man who is reborn has rare quality in "After 90" youth. He is mature and a dutiful son to his parents. His father has promised him that they will go back to Suchow one day to visit Jing Si Booksore and Tzu Chi Mission Park to express their gratitude and to understand more about Tzu Chi.



A person with a generous heart and compassion for all beings leads the most blessed life.

Jing Si Aphorism by Master Cheng Yen