

Cross-Strait Students Participate in Taiwan Volunteer Service

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In order to demonstrate the development and characteristics of volunteer service in Taiwan and to increase cross-strait student exchanges, the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) entrusted the International Association for Volunteer Effort Taiwan to organize five sessions of "Cross-Strait Youth Volunteer Service Camp", through which may encourage students from both sides of the Strait to jointly experience the spirit of volunteer service and inspire them to care more for society.

The camp sessions were held from October to December of 2012 with a total of 400 students participating from both sides. The study themes of the sessions were "Environmental Conservation/Community Development", "Elderly Services/Community Development", "Religious Culture/Environmental Conservation", "Child Welfare/Community Development", and "Social Welfare/Religious Culture". The camp arranged lecture courses, discussions, visits, and hands-on practices to encourage interaction amongst cross-strait students, while at the same time enabling them to see for themselves the humanistic philosophy behind diversified services and mindset and achievements of spontaneous civic participation in Taiwan.

Young students from both sides were deeply affected by their actual participation in volunteer services such as beach cleaning and elder care. Mainland students felt that Taiwan's volunteer services are well-developed with high-quality volunteers of great passion and perseverance; whereas Taiwanese students complimented the Mainland students on their self-motivated volunteer participation and also for their independent thinking abilities. Some of the students remarked that the experience of the event sparked their enthusiasm for international volunteer service and that in the future they would more actively participate in volunteer service

work overseas and in remote regions. Joint participation in volunteer service by youth across the Strait is not only conducive to mutual exchange and learning, but also strengthens the power of volunteer services, inspires one to care more for society, and while working in the services, participants can also experience the essence of volunteer work in "learning by doing" and "learning by contributing."