



Teacher takes time for people in need

FLEEING PERSECUTION: For Elaine Carton, an English teacher from Ireland, living at a Myanmar orphanage at first took a while to get used to, especially the local diet

BY **NOAH BUCHAN**
STAFF REPORTER

Elaine Carton recalls a picture drawn by Kuang Site, a Karen refugee boy, in one of her art classes.

"It was a picture of a dog ... [accompanied with] a short story about its life. The dog didn't have any mother or father and nobody in the world. It was really lonely and had no hope and no future," Carton said.

The gloomy image reveals as much about an ethnic group as it does about the young artist who drew it. But if the drawing tells the boy's recent history — and that of a displaced people — Carton said she hopes her art class will provide some respite from the sadness that the picture reveals.

"It's a kind of release for the children ... just a little bit of fun," Carton said. "I try to do a lot of art and games [in the classroom] — things that can distract them from their everyday lives."

For a few months every year, Carton, 30, trades the upscale classrooms of a Banqiao school,

where she teaches English, for the verdant rice fields and a makeshift orphanage and school on the outskirts of Mae Sot on the border of Myanmar and Thailand. There she lives and eats with the children, whom she teaches English and art.

A resident of Taiwan for five years, the Irish national spends the rest of the year in Taipei teaching, fundraising and collecting toys, books and clothes for aid organizations and relief workers that help Myanmar's Karen refugees fleeing poverty and persecution in their homeland.

"It's an area of the world with so much pain and so much poverty. And there is something about being a teacher [in Taiwan]; you make a lot of money and have a lot of time. It's a skill we have and there is a need over there," she said.

The list of organizations and individuals that Carton supports is difficult to keep track of because there are so many. The independent relief worker gives money to the Mae Tao Clinic, an aid organization that provides

free medical care to Karen refugees, and Sister Joy, a woman who cares for Muslim street children (Carton currently supports five children at a cost of NT\$5,500 for each child per year).

The majority of her fundraising efforts, however, go to Pipi, an elderly Karen woman who operates Hwy Ka Loke (named after the region of Mae Sot where its located), an orphanage and school that provide aid to some of the thousands of refugee children flowing over the border. The camp has a school that provides basic education, sleeping quarters and a kitchen.

"The [Myanmar] army ... will go into an area and burn the schools down. And a member of the family will bring the children over the border to refugee camps or send them to migrant schools," she said.

But the problem the refugee camp currently faces has little to do with Myanmar's military junta.

Five months ago, Cyclone Nargis devastated the camp's infrastructure leaving Pipi without a school to teach her children. Additionally, more refugees than normal are streaming over the border to escape starvation, which adds stress to the camp's basic infrastructure.

Through three fundraisers Carton collected 30 boxes of toys, clothes and books and raised



Karen refugee children learn their ABC's in a school on the outskirts of Mae Sot, Thailand.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ELAINE CARTON

NT\$220,000, enough money to purchase materials and rebuild the destroyed school — a building that is now complete and sturdier than the original.

For Carton, living at the orphanage and school at first took a while to get used to, especially the local diet, which included "snail stew and strange leaves."

"I've never gotten sick but living amongst cockroaches and lice

is hard to get used to," she said. "I've had some pretty interesting [insect] bites."

When asked why she doesn't sign on with an international aid organization, Carton chooses her words carefully.

"I guess I'm dubious about where all the money goes. For me I just want to make sure it makes it to the right place. And I want the freedom to work with different



Elaine Carton poses with Pipi, an elderly Burmese woman who runs a refugee camp for children fleeing Myanmar.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ELAINE CARTON

kids," she said. "[Institutional] aid organizations usually want you to go over for a year and for me that's too much. I can see why they would stipulate this ... because the kids get attached and are really sad to see [us] go."

Having worked with refugee children, Carton plans to return to her native Ireland next year and begin studying child counseling so

that she can turn her humanitarian work into a career. But first she plans to travel to the camp after Christmas and spend another two months teaching and helping out.

"It's changed me ... and when I come back [to Taiwan] I always feel a little sad because I miss the kids," she said.

Those interested in donations or inquiries, please send an e-mail to elainedimples@hotmail.com.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

ICRT 'serves' the community

International Community Radio Taipei (ICRT) is operated by the Taipei International Community Cultural Foundation (TICCF). The ICRT Web site states, "Our primary mandate is to serve the expatriate community in Taiwan." Last Sunday and Monday from 9pm to 6am, during the height of Super Typhoon Jangmi, ICRT served the expatriate community by repeating the same typhoon report nine times. ICRT's funding is no doubt reliant on fulfilling its primary mandate. Unfortunately, for Taiwan's expatriate community that does not appear to extend after 9pm.

JEFFREY CAMPBELL
Taipei County



IF YOU HAVE SUGGESTIONS FOR EVENTS, INTERVIEWS OR TOPICS YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE COVERED ON THIS PAGE PLEASE SEND YOUR IDEAS TO:

community@taipeitimes.com

AIT Kaohsiung director honors 'Angel of Penghu'

STAFF WRITER, WITH CNA

The director of the American Institute in Taiwan's (AIT's) Kaohsiung Office paid homage to late US nurse Marjorie Bly in Makung City (馬公市), Penghu County, last Wednesday, honoring the US citizen's life devotion to caring for patients with Hansen's disease (commonly known as leprosy).

Christian Castro laid a bouquet of flowers at a statue of Bly, known locally by her Chinese name of Pai Pao-chu (白寶珠).

In his address, Castro honored Bly for her lifetime of patient care on Penghu, where she lived for 54 years before passing away on April 8 this year. He said the devotion she showed not only won her the respect of the public but also inspired others to care for the needy.

He expressed appreciation to the Penghu County Government for giving the nurse the assistance she needed to do her job, and expressing hope that the spirit of

Bly's selflessness would be passed down through the generations.

Bly, born in 1919 to a US missionary family, came to Taiwan at the commission of the Lutheran Church on Nov. 17, 1952, to provide care for leprosy patients and their families through an outreach clinic.

In 1954, she moved to Penghu. She performed follow-up care and treatment for all Hansen's disease patients in the county and advocated their inclusion in society.

Because of her great love for the island's residents, locals called Bly "an angel sent by God to Penghu."

In April last year, she received the country's highest civilian award, the Order of the Brilliant Star with the Violet Grand Cord, from former president Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁).

Out of love for the place she called home for 54 years, Bly asked in her will that her remains stay on Penghu.



Christian Castro, director of the American Institute in Taiwan Kaohsiung office, lays a wreath at a statue of Marjorie Bly on Penghu last Wednesday.

PHOTO: CNA

St Christopher and Nevis celebrates a quarter century of independence

BY **JENNY W. HSU**
STAFF REPORTER

Twenty-five years after gaining independence, the Federation of St Christopher and Nevis remains the smallest country in the western hemisphere, but has grown in stature with a 97.8 percent literacy rate and free education for children until the secondary level. Jasmine Huggins, the Charge d'Affaires of the Caribbean country, said last Wednesday at a reception celebrating the country's birthday.

The occasion also marked 25 years of diplomatic ties between Taipei and Basseterre.

"Twenty-five years ago, Taiwan was the first country to establish diplomatic relations with the Federation of St Christopher and Nevis and over the period, the Republic of China [ROC] on Taiwan has proven a friend to our country," she said.

“Taiwan was the first country to establish diplomatic relations with the Federation of St Christopher and Nevis.”

— Jasmine Huggins, charge d'affaires of St. Christopher and Nevis

The reception, held in Taipei last Wednesday, was adorned with the flags of the ROC and the Federation. Five Kittian students studying in Taiwan sang the St Christopher and Nevis national anthem to begin the festivities.

Among the guests were Kittian Attorney General and Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs Dennis Merchant, Taiwan Minister of Foreign Affairs Francisco Ou (歐鴻鍊), Jacques Sawadogo, the ambassador from Burkina Faso and the dean of the diplomatic corp, and other heads of diplomatic missions.

"When I was in St Kitts last week to attend the national independence celebration, I felt the vitality, optimism and diligence of the people. It is a country with unlimited potentials," Deputy Foreign Minister Javier Hou (侯清山) said.

Last January, St Christopher and Nevis opened its first embassy in Asia, choosing Taiwan as the location.

Taiwan move can be hard with special needs kids

RESOURCES: International schools in Taiwan play a prominent role in providing support for parents and children with special needs in the expatriate community

BY **FLORA WANG**
STAFF REPORTER

Moving halfway around the world is never an easy decision. The decision is especially complicated for families with children of special needs because they are faced with the uncertainty of whether their children will be able to enjoy the same support network abroad as they did in their native countries.

Charles Garrett had similar concerns when he decided to take the offer to become deputy director of the British Trade and Cultural Office in Taipei in 2005.

"With our children, the main concern was education and whether they were going to be happy and settled," Garrett said during a recent interview with the *Taipei Times*. "We have five children and it was the concern for each of our children. But it was more difficult to provide for our second child, who has Down syndrome."

To make sure his teenage daughter would enjoy all the educational support she needed in Taipei, Garrett and his wife began looking into schools very carefully.

"The fact that the [Taipei] Euro-

pean School (TES) here would be able to integrate a child with Down syndrome was a very important factor. It meant I could take the job in Taipei," he said.

UNKNOWN NUMBERS

The size of the special needs population within the expatriate community in Taiwan is not known, nor is the number of specialists working within the special needs programs in Taiwan's international schools, partly because some schools — TES for example — are concerned about confidentiality.

"We won't give out that information [regarding the number of students with special needs or special education teachers]," said Zoe Gare, coordinator of special needs programs at TES. "There are some [special needs] children and the percentage of [the] children would be what we expect in any school in England or the United States."

Other schools, like Taipei American School (TAS), are equally discreet.

"TAS treats all of our special needs' children's programs and situations with the utmost discretion. We do not believe that

publicly discussing our students' needs is beneficial to them," TAS community relations personnel Frances Yu said in an e-mail on Sept. 8 in response to the *Taipei Times*' inquiries.

Nevertheless, international schools in Taiwan, like TES, play a prominent role in providing support for parents and children with special needs in the expatriate community.

"We try to be as inclusive as possible," Gare said, adding that most of the children follow regular curriculums with other students in class.

"We might have special needs teachers or assistants helping them in different ways to access the curriculum," she said, adding that the curriculum is adapted for them according to the needs of the children.

Ruth Martin, head of TES' British Infant Section, said the school would sometimes give the children special one-on-one sessions if they got upset or obstructed other children from learning.

In Taichung, schools like Morrison Academy offer programs

targeting students' learning needs in accordance with each student's individual education program.

NO SPECIAL EDUCATION

In Kaohsiung, Kaohsiung American School, for instance, offers "enrichment programs and/or differentiation of instruction" for its students, but as the school's Web site states, there is no formal special education program provided at the school.

Despite the schools' offer of resources, for parents and children with special needs, obtaining help and support in their native languages in Taiwan may sometimes prove difficult.

"If Chinese is their first language, of course they can access all the specialists. If Chinese is not their [native] language, then [they would have] this difficulty," Gare said.

"We also have Dutch parents who might need a speech and language therapist or German or French or Spanish [parents] ... it's a complexity of the number of the languages the children speak," Martin said.

Gare and Martin both mentioned difficulties met by the school to recruit specialists who have English

as their first language in Taipei. Garrett also observed similar language barriers from his daughter's experience in developing her social support network in Taipei.

"Socially, it is more difficult for a child with Down syndrome, and in fact that's one area quite difficult in Taipei," Garrett said.

A deeper relationship, Garrett said, often comes when his daughter is surrounded by people who have similar needs.

"But here in Taiwan, children in that situation, they speak Chinese, not English and automatically there is a barrier there and [it's] more difficult to provide that support for her," he said.

OUTSIDE HELP

But Garrett made an effort to help his daughter, now 15, obtain support from outside the expatriate community, for example, by having her participate in a swimming club for people with special needs in the Wuchang Junior High School on Fuxing N Road.

"One of the other concerns of bringing in a child with Down Syndrome is the general reaction of the society," he said.

The public often feels uncomfortable with the presence of children with Down syndrome because

