

## “The Caring Community” Visited On October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2012

On October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2012, members of Banciao District Prosecutors Office (BDPO), including Chief Prosecutor Tsai Pi-Yu, Head Prosecutors, along with Banciao District Court judge and intern judges and prosecutors, visited “The Caring Community” in Linkou.

All the staffs in the Caring Community were busy preparing for the upcoming of this visit. It is beyond our imagination that the Caring Community, which is now a warm and comfortable place equipped with an organic vegetable farm, a sheep ranch, flourishing plants, neat and tidy houses, and vocational classrooms, was once a wasted land. For years, the staffs have been working hard on the construction and operation of the Caring Community.

Huang Mei-Ying, Director of the Taipei County Volunteer Association, indicated that, “The Association has participated attentively in providing services for the homeless people in the hope that they may one day return to their family and the society. At first, the Association was authorized by the New Taipei government to build a contemporary shelter, the Caring Community, to provide daily care, counsel, medical care and referral for the homeless people.” Later, Director Huang talked about her goal to the probation officers in BDPO, which has been assisting the Association in building the Caring Community by providing sufficient labors since then. As a result, the environment of the Community has been improved significantly.

Director Huang shared some stories about how the offenders grew to learn the value of laboring and contribution. In the beginning of the construction, there were no enough buildings in the Caring Community which can be used as vocational classrooms. Just in time, Pu-Hsien Temple donated two container houses. The probation officers chose several offenders with special techniques to help the construction. One of the offenders, Mr. Chang, was convicted of drunk driving. He repaired the power distribution of the Community and installed the electric system of the vocational classrooms. Another offender, A-Hsiang, who violated the Act Of Military Service System, was a talented carpenter. He decorated the classrooms and rebuilt the gate of the Community. The truck driver, Mr. An, helped carrying cargos and the sick people to the hospital. While he was not in service, he mowed the lawn and maintained the sanitary environment. Moreover, Dr. Huang, who was in violation of the Pharmaceutical Affairs Act, went to the Community on weekends to provide medical services and pharmaceutical advices for the homeless people.

After he finished his term, he promised to continue providing his services on a regular basis.

Chief Prosecutor Tsai Pi-Yu said, "In order to give those offenders being sentenced to imprisonment up to six months opportunities to turn over a new leaf, the punishment may be transformed into community treatments by prosecutors. Consequently, the society may obtain substantial compensation and the prosecutors' function as the spokesmen of public welfare may be highlighted. At present, the labor enforcement institutions selected by BDPO no longer confine the community services to traditional cleaning works. On the contrary, they intend to add more diversity in community services to help the offenders become volunteers and contributors of the society, a process in which their egos can also be found. By way of community services, the society will accept these offenders more willingly. This is also, in a broader sense, restorative justice. Homeless people are the disadvantaged minorities of the society. The causes of homelessness are relative to social structure, which includes the government policy, economic environment, social welfare and job market. However, for the time being, the social welfare department mainly provides emergency assistances and overlooks social and professional reconstructions. The Caring Community provides constructive and stable services to help those who are homeless yet possess professional skills and are willing to work to start over. The cooperation among BDPO and the Caring Community is based on humanity. We must keep in mind that people need to be respected. It is our goal to help the offenders to accept the punishment willingly and to benefit the enforcement institutions at the same time."