

«PURA VIDA» – *We are doing well! We are healthy and happy!*

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**The Ecole is known as a village. A village within a village. A village for learning, for school and for living. An international village, a multicultural and multigenerational village. And this village once again was unexpectedly generously bestowed. Up on the mountain, we are simply that much closer to heaven...**

Many people have supported the Ecole quietly, for years, humbly staying in the background, where they prefer to be because the focus is the Ecole and not their personal profile.

This is certainly the case with François Chappuis, the founder of the “Pura Vida” foundation. Since 3 decades he works as a child and youth psychologist, beginning at the University of Zürich Clinic for Child and Youth Psychiatry. Today he’s independent in a community health co-operative. In this quiet way, François Chappuis has now decided to hand over the “Pura Vida” Foundation, established in 2002, to the Ecole d’Humanité, following a decision by the Canton of Zürich to forego working with the foundation.

### **The benefits of a bitter pill**

The goal of Pura Vida was to create an alternative for youth coming out of psychiatric clinics: rehabilitation where one could live and go to school, as well as get continued additional support should it be necessary. The Board of Trustees, shortly after establishing the foundation, worked out several possibilities, and even went so far as to look at prospective properties. Although the Canton of Zürich acknowledged that such a place for youth was not available and would be important to offer, and despite long negotiation towards working together, the Canton decided against involvement in the project on the basis of needing to save money.

The good news: The Ecole d’Humanité can now take over the Pura Vida Foundation. Two houses - Blatti and Alessia – were purchased by the foundation quite a long time ago, and made these houses available to the Ecole for a nominal rental fee. Now, these houses will officially make the Ecole village a little bigger.

Why exactly the Ecole? How did such a large and generous gift come about? What motivates François Chappuis to support the Ecole?

### **“I am a staunch fan of the Ecole d’Humanité”: Excerpts from a stimulating exchange**

“The Ecole d’Humanité”, explains François Chappuis, “has convinced me especially through its family concept where teachers are also family heads. At the same time, youth are given a high degree of personal responsibility through having the leadership of the school assembly, choosing their own courses, as well as being able to offer courses of their own. Such social co-existence creates stable personalities that think alternatively. I am convinced that someone who is at Ecole for two or three years will have another take on life – one based on one’s own experience and not just on hearsay.

Today’s way of life is determined by the economy. It compels arbitrariness, exchangeability, flexibility. That’s why people are no longer rooted, and lead unstable lives, affecting the

personality as well. Such conditions inevitably lead to personality disorders, meaning upheaval in personality development. However, nowadays, several such conditions are considered normal because so many people experience them. And that is also how today's world likes it.

At this moment, the economy and its monetary system have the say. The main goal is profit and the maximizing of profit – as fast as possible, in the short term. Such demand for fast money compels great sacrifice: ethics, morality, culture and education, which all cost money and bring no (financial) profit. Therefore, these receive less and less funding.

This trend goes exactly in the opposite direction of that which the Ecole d'Humanité strives for in its educational and humanitarian goals. Here it is about reflective, independent and decisive individuals. Exactly because of this, the Ecole d'Humanité is extremely important today. Contrary to economic development and the maxim of acceleration, it conveys fundamental values.”

### **Crises can be avoided**

In his work as child and youth psychologist, François Chappuis has long observed their development as well as that of their environment.

“Young people today are quickly in crisis when no one is there to provide support”, he says. “The Ecole I see as a preventative measure, because prevention is important and can mitigate crises. It is not necessary to go into crisis when one is well supported. Crises are part of adolescence because growing, puberty and adolescence are themselves challenges to the development process. As well, parental support or other adequate support is often missing.

Today, the risk of youth in crisis has actually increased. Adults are often no longer able to accompany youth through such times. Adults themselves are often overwhelmed with their own life situation. The increased acceleration brings additional stress for everyone, and simultaneously our affluent society continually boasts higher living standards. People are challenged less on the basis of foregoing, waiting, and assimilating.

Many parents, in a misunderstanding of parenting, attempt to give the child all it wants. This does not help children and teens. However this also comes from the economy of affluence with its dictates of brands and the resulting group pressure. To help young people create and practice the ability to tolerate frustration – in good company – is important.

The Ecole is strong on this point. Clear rules, and a definitive ‘no’, now and then, are good. Young people often support one another and ‘parent’ one another among themselves. Additionally, the intercultural dimensions of the community as well as the breadth of courses on offer in the arts – handicrafts, theatre, dance, and music – is rarely lived to such an extent in other institutions, and in Switzerland.

And lastly, the effect of being ‘away’, being in and with nature, is not to be underestimated. It means less consuming. Many students experience outright consumer withdrawal at the Ecole. And learn to relax. This leads to happy and healthy living: Pura Vida!”

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