

## **The Ristola Community**

The Ristola Community is an alternative growing environment for disabled young persons. In the community, they will learn basic skills of life and also to live together.

The functions of the Ristola Community are based on curative education and social therapy inspired by Rudolf Steiner. The basis is an anthroposophical wide perception of a human being.

In the Ristola Community, there are 36 student places for young persons from age 16. The education lasts for five years. The youngsters are taught traditional handicrafts and theoretical and artistic subjects and they practise independent life by living in the Ristola Community.

### **The teaching develops and supports the personality of the student**

The education in the Ristola Community is based on active and versatile teaching aimed to support the young person's own personality.

In the lessons of traditional handicrafts - knitting, wood, clay and metal works, domestic skills - the student will learn the working methods of all different work shops. The work experience will help the youngsters to mature into self-respecting adults.

### **The handicrafts promote personal growth**

The handicrafts are not only about producing things; they also have effects on the worker.

The handicrafts promote organisation, increase skills, precision, co-operation, independence and responsibility. Furthermore, every piece of work includes valuable knowledge about the traditional working methods. By the repetition of work phases and the use of different methods students with more special needs will also obtain the information.

We try to avoid too early attachment to one particular work in order not to restrict the students' development. It is important especially to students with more special needs to let them develop with time and learn the right working methods that will later be the basis for real work.

Along the work education the youngsters receive theoretical and artistic education. Work and theoretical education support one another. The artistic subjects - music, painting, drawing, eurhythm and acting - are an essential part of the education.

### **What are anthroposophical curative education and social therapy?**

The curative education and social therapy based on the ideas of Rudolf Steiner are based on understanding the human being as a mental, spiritual and physical entity; as an individual that develops into full humanity via childhood and youth. The basic assumption of the curative education is that the inside of the person is always healthy and only the external ways of expression can be restricted. Therefore, there is nobody whose life is unsuccessful or worthless. A person with special needs has a different mission in life. The curative education will help and support his physical, spiritual and mental growth so that he can fulfil his destiny despite the disability.

The work carried out among adults with intellectual disabilities and other kinds of special needs is called social therapy.

### **The building has an effect on its' user**

The school building should support the education and the development. The architectural entity of the school improves the spiritual flexibility. It creates joy, mental images and well-being.

The outer and inner structures, colours, lighting, shadows and materials of the building have an effect on learning and well-being. All these are taken into account in the school building.

The rooms with many corners create the sense of security.

The colours have a strong effect on person's soul. That is why the walls are painted with plant dyes using the glazing technique. The walls look translucent and lively.

Also the light and shadow have a major role in the entity. The shape and position of the windows are carefully planned to ensure positive natural light. The light coming through a round window has a different effect to that from a square or many-cornered window. The light creates shadows. The shadow and light create an atmosphere that has a deep effect on person's mental life.

The quality of electric light is also carefully planned. Colours, shapes, lights and decoration have a healing and soothing effect and they create mental images.

### **Towards independence with the living practice**

The young persons practise independence and living together in the living practice. The practice is carried out by living at the school with the teachers. The students feel safe and independent.

During the practice the students carry out domestic tasks. This increases their activity and strengthens the self-confidence.

Each student lives in the community for one month per semester, and participates in the winter and summer camps. This education creates the basis to live outside the childhood home in later years.

### **The staff is the striving force of the community**

The instructors and teachers in the Ristola Community are well acquainted with the curative education and social therapy. Together with the students and the trainees of the pedagogic basic education they form a community that strives to develop and to be open for new ideas and where everybody can find the meaning of their life.

### **The co-operation with the curative pedagogy seminar**

In Helsinki, there is a curative pedagogy seminar that offers basic education for those who are interested in the profession. The basic education lasts for three years and includes both work experience and studying.

The fourth year to obtain the qualification of a curative pedagogy teacher cannot be studied in Finland at the moment. The nearest training is in Sweden.

### **The parents and friends influence through the support organisation**

The function of the Ristola Community is actively supported by the supportive organisation consisting mainly of the parents and the friends of the students. The organisation supports the functions financially with donations and fairs, and also by sharing information about the community.

### **The Ristola Foundation takes care of the finances and administration**

The task of the Ristola Foundation is to support and improve professional education based on Rudolf Steiner's ideas for persons with special needs. It also supports the work in the area of social therapy and scientific research and artistic activities.

The Ristola Foundation is also the owner community of our school. It makes the decisions about the amount of student places and such with the City of Helsinki and neighbouring municipalities. The foundation also takes care of matters concerning the properties of the Ristola Community.