

# NEWS

## WHEN DEVELOPMENT IS PART OF TRADITION

Roger Kuratle gives insight into the organizational development of the KURATLE GROUP AG.

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## ARK ANGELS KINDERGARTEN CAPE TOWN

On 14 January 2019, the long-awaited kindergarten in Cape Town, South Africa, was finally inaugurated.

More about it on pages 8-9

## THE BERNESE PROFESSIONAL COLLEGE HOLZ BIEL ON VISIT IN NIEDERBIPP

We were able to introduce twelve students to the topic of logistics and trade on the basis of our company background.

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2018 Schweiz



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### What's the company magazine NEWS is about?

For more than 10 years, the monthly edition of the KURATLE GROUP NEWS keep employees, customers and partners informed about actual activities and running projects of all the KURATLE GROUP companies.

KURATLE GROUP Structure:



Dear Employees,  
 Dear Customers,  
 Dear Suppliers,  
 Dear Friends,  
 Dear Readers,

It would be nice to know if everyone could start the new year as they wished, in good health and full of joy – I sincerely hope you did. Given my present feelings, winter is far away because I was able to experience the beginning of the year with warm sunbeams and blue skies. For all our employees, winter conditions are often associated with additional workloads. As far as leisure activities are concerned, there are many who love and enjoy the snow and the cold – why not? For my part, I consider myself lucky to spend this (to me) unpleasant winter time in the warmth of Cape Town, even with business to be done as a matter of course. Thanks to modern means of communication and on the basis of my experience, I am able to make decisions where I bring in my own ideas. The CEOs of the KURATLE GROUP AG companies are in weekly contact with me. I have also discussed current projects several times with my family junior staff, Roger, Corinne and Fabian. I am proud to be able to place my fullest trust in all my leading colleagues and am convinced that their decisions will benefit the employees. I would like to thank everyone very much for this.

On 14 January 2019, after a construction period of two years (here everything goes a little more leisurely), we were able to inaugurate the «Ark Angels» kindergarten in one of the larger townships. Around 300 people took part in this opening ceremony. The Mayor of Cape Town, the Consul of Switzerland and several other prominent personalities from politics and business addressed greetings to all those present and thanked the Wood Student Foundation for being one of the major sponsors. Thanks to the fire protection permit relevant for wood, we were able to implement the entire project with wood and wood-based materials. About 30 percent of the trades were imported and 70 percent of the work could be outsourced locally – from architects and engineers to all facilities. The kindergarten now serves over 100 children, aged between four and six years, as a day care centre with a pleasant environment, which is looked after by trained and educated kindergarten teachers. In the respective township live about 3000 children who, if they cannot go to a kindergarten, have to spend time on the street with little prospects for the future. We are proud and happy to have provided targeted help for children with this realized project. Thanks to sponsors from our community, the maintenance and daily costs are also secured for the next two years. Admittedly, it was a challenging project, but in the end everyone was and is happy. In a following article about the opening, you can see happy children's eyes. On behalf of the children I would like to thank all sponsors from Switzerland. Without their financial commitment this challenge would not have been possible.

Currently we are organizing the 9<sup>th</sup> WOOD Conference in Cape Town. This specialist event is intended to contribute to bringing people closer to the natural material of wood; it is intended to show what can be achieved constructively and creatively with this building and material. We have succeeded in attracting large numbers of Cape Town architects (two-thirds of all speakers) to give lectures; the remaining third is divided among speakers from Europe. Just two weeks after the announcement, we were able to register over 300 participants, which gives us hope that the number of 750 participants can be reached.

Further information is available at:

**[woodconference.co.za](http://woodconference.co.za)**

By the way: You can follow the conference on Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram. As the initiator and sponsor of this conference, I am proud to be able to expand the timber industry in South Africa in the long term, with encouraging results: It is becoming apparent that there is already some interest on the part of the state and investors in setting up production facilities for timber construction in the foreseeable future. You will be able to read more about this in the March issue of KURATLE GROUP AG NEWS.



Far away in an environment of pleasant warmth, I wish everyone a winter time which will allow you to keep tabs on every which difficulties there may be and I thank you all for your personal commitment under frosty conditions.

Yours,  
 George Kuratle

Dear Readers,

Preparations are in full swing for the 9<sup>th</sup> WOOD Conference to be held in Cape Town on 26 February 2019. The organizers on site, under the direction of Zaida Davids, will take care of the final preparations and details to conduct the congress in the usual professional setting. Hundreds of experts from the construction industry as well as representatives from politics and the economy will follow the invitation to learn interesting facts about «Modular Timber Construction» at first hand. The varied programme will be rounded off by speakers from Europe and South Africa with a contribution from Warren Papier. As responsible architect of the WSF project kindergarten «Ark Angels Educare» in the townships of Cape Town, he informs in detail about the origin of the building in robust wood construction. On 14 January 2019, in the presence of all sponsors, builders and promoters, the kindergarten was handed over to its intended purpose and gives over 100 children a place where they can feel comfortable and develop.

The many other realizations implemented or planned under the motto «Do Something with Wood» are best represented by the Mitgel Bijou House, a beautiful masterpiece made of aged wood, or the presentation at the Suisse Floor in April 2019.

In January, we were able to give two different visitor groups an insight into the extensive range of services offered by the KURATLE GROUP. The students of the Bernese Professional College Holz Biel were introduced to the logistics process in retail in Niederbipp and the participants of the Entrepreneur Of The Year – Alumni Meeting were introduced to the domains of activities and the companies in Leibstadt.



Silvia Furlan  
Head of MaKo & QMS  
Member of the Management Board of KURATLE GROUP AG

# ENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR – ALUMNI MEETING IN LEIBSTADT



*The tour gives the participants an insight into the KURATLE GROUP AG.*

Due to the award Entrepreneur of The Year 2018 (EOY), the KURATLE GROUP was chosen for the annual network event this year. And so the members of the EOY Club met on 23 January in Leibstadt.

All entrepreneurs who have ever been candidates for the competition are represented in this network. The members regularly exchange ideas, attend events and inform themselves about relevant business topics, both nationally and internationally. This year's traditional meeting was held under the motto «Company Succession».

After Roger Kuratle and the gentlemen from EY, Heinrich Christen (Partner in charge) and Sascha Stahl (Mid Market & Family Business) had welcomed the approximately 40 participants, they were given an insight into the KURATLE GROUP AG by means of a company presentation and company tour.

Roger Kuratle then presented the already initiated process of succession planning within the Kuratle family. Roger, Corinne and Fabian together answered the questions that were then asked.



*Roger Kuratle welcomes the guests.*

Silvia Furlan  
Head of MaKo & QMS  
KURATLE GROUP AG, Leibstadt

# WHEN DEVELOPMENT IS PART OF TRADITION



*The company is characterized by a family spirit, which is compliant and curious about challenges and in constant development. (Excerpt from the mission statement of the KURATLE GROUP AG)*

**Dear Readers,**

**«Tradition lasts where it permits change.» This tenet describes our corporate philosophy perfectly. In this article, I would like to give you an insight into what this means in concrete terms in the area of organizational development.**

Every development we have made in recent years is a commitment to the market and to Switzerland as an economic centre. We are committed to the needs of our customers with regional specifications. Based on the values of the family business, we plan sustainably and are aware that our success is primarily due to our committed employees.

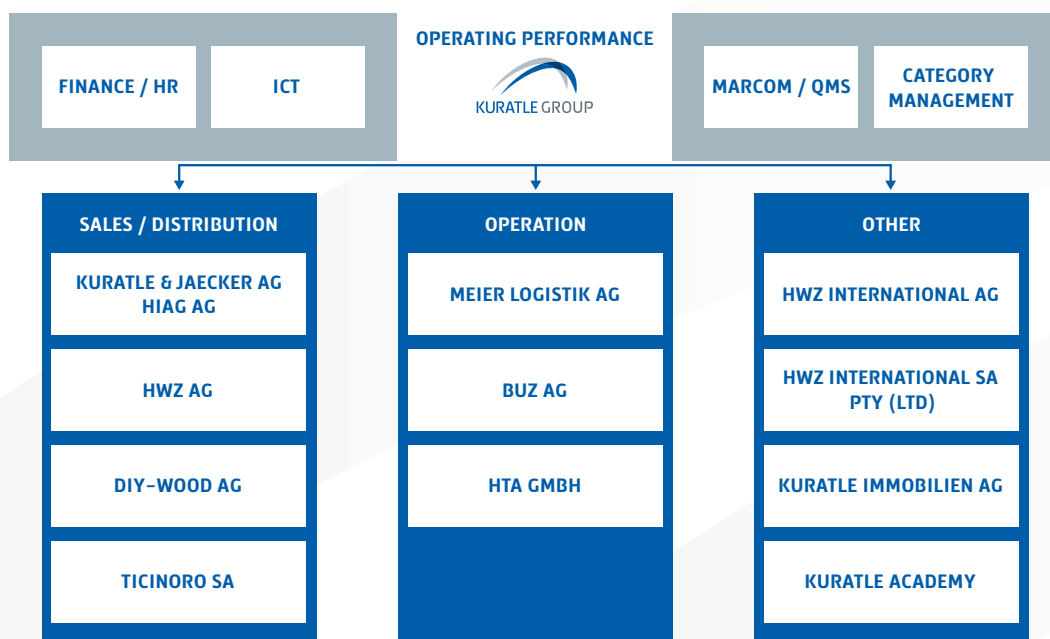
When I talk to my father and his friends about «old times» today, I realize that many things still work in the same way as they did ten years ago. And yet we have constantly adapted, developed and reinvented ourselves.

The reasons for this are the increasing process and transaction speeds, the demands on accessibility

(24/7) as well as the necessary digital support for further development, just to name a few. The challenge for the organization is to keep up with the infrastructure, and that, I am convinced, includes the organizational structure. Digitalization in particular offers great potential for our Group. However, this requires high investments, which must be economically justified.

As a result, we made organizational adjustments in autumn 2018 and in January 2019, taking into account the succession arrangements to be made in the coming years. With category management for the Group and the created sales and operations divisions, we define clear areas of responsibility, allow a focus on the respective core competencies and enable mutual use of synergies. We want to make targeted use of group synergies and centralize them only where it makes sense. Sales is and remains a regional activity associated with the customer in the front line of business.

The KURATLE GROUP AG has grown strongly over the past ten years and is currently a medium-sized Group comprising more than 15 companies. The



individual companies act independently as SMEs in their respective customer segments. In this way, we provide an organizational structure that enables the individual companies to act autonomously and in a market-oriented manner while at the same time remaining scalable for the Group. This scalability refers at the same time to the synergy benefits, the independent development of the individual business segments and growth at Group level.

It is an ongoing task of management to implement the Board of Directors guidelines and to constantly scrutinize the market environment and the company to ensure that we remain agile and actively shape market changes as a driving force. The aim is to provide the Group's companies and their employees with an effective and efficient infrastructure so that they can master their respective tasks in day-to-day business in the best possible way.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our employees, customers, partners, banks, friends and suppliers for the trust they have placed in us. I am aware of the responsibility that promotion to

management means and would like to thank you for your support. Without these and the personal accompaniment of many of you, I would not be in the same place today.

Thank you and best regards  
Roger Kuratle



Roger Kuratle  
Corporate Development, Head of Key Accounts  
Member of the Management Board of KURATLE GROUP AG

# OPENING CEREMONY «ARK ANGELS EDUCARE» OVERCOME HEIGHTS



*The opening ceremony took place right in front of the kindergarten.*

Long-awaited by many, in particular by the promoters of the project, Marlis and Elke from SEEDS TRUST/SA as the builder and sponsor, the new «Ark Angels Educare» kindergarten was inaugurated on 14 January 2019 and officially opened. Bright blue skies, bright children's eyes and bright curious parents as well as neighbours waited patiently in front of the area decorated with colourful balloons. The tension increased and the numerous guests and sponsors also waited in front of the «Ark Angels Educare» project, which was «secured» with a red ribbon and bow.

The Mayor of Cape Town, Dan Plato, and the Swiss Consul General, Andreas Maager and George Kuratle, HWZ INTERNATIONAL SA, who have confirmed their participation, also attended the opening ceremony. Then the time came and the city mayor, together with Marlis in red and Elke in turquoise, cut the red ribbon and declared the kindergarten open: All invited guests and participants as well as numerous employees, parents and some children streamed into the beautiful new building: they were all overwhelmed by what they saw. A perfect but practical building with four classrooms was presented. There were brightly coloured toys everywhere and colourful walls painted with laughing children.

The solid wooden construction conveys confidence, and ultimately the entire site is secured, because

the huts of the neighbourhood already provide a certain contrast to this oasis and could arouse certain desires.

Only smiling faces, all officials were enthusiastic in no time and were happy with the parents and sponsors about this beautiful place for the little ones.

Marlis and Elke were deservedly the (silent) stars of the day; the enormous hardships, efforts and also the small and big obstacles as well as disappointments had disappeared from their faces – they were now justifiably proud: «We congratulate and thank them for everything from the bottom of our hearts and in the name of the children and parents!»

The happy group of rather numerous participants then moved into a large open tent on the neighbouring property and took a seat to hear the official greetings, thanksgiving and introductory speeches. Pastor Prosper of the «Ark Angels» had staged the event with careful direction, everyone had a short speech, but first of all the mayor, who – surprisingly for a politician – addressed himself very personally to the sponsors, then to the parents and the community: He appealed to them to take care of the new kindergarten, to take responsibility for it and to ensure at all times that this gem will be available to the children of the township for a long time and remain unchanged. The mayor and other officials such as



*Interior view of the classrooms.*



*The mayor of Cape Town, Dan Plato, was also present at the event.*

the Swiss Consul thanked and rejoiced with the children singing and dancing. There was a particularly touching moment: six children appeared in different work clothes, symbolic for the hope that the education of them, which begins here, opens up great opportunities in their later lives: as a doctor, judge, cook, teacher, fireman or policeman!

A big thank you goes to all the sponsors, to those present and to those who could only be present mentally. But the greatest thanks go to Marlis and Elke (and her husband in the background), because they did a mammoth job and carried it out very successfully and consistently: Congratulations!

At the end of the celebration, the two of them seemed somewhat exhausted, but very happy. Together with the sponsors, the contractor, architects and many other helpful spirits, they had indeed created something great: a beautiful home for more than 100 children, thanks to which they can really enjoy their childhood. It is also a home meaningfully designed – for the future of all of us!

Further information about the kindergarten can be found here:

**[arkangels-educare.com](http://arkangels-educare.com)**

*Text:  
Manuel & Martin Theisen, Cape Town*



*More than 100 children can now play and learn in the new kindergarten. This is Elke Zwicker, George Kuratle and Pastor Prosper Torchere.*

# THE BERNESE PROFESSIONAL COLLEGE HOLZ BIEL ON VISIT IN NIEDERBIPP



*The class of the Bernese Professional College Holz Biel (FH) on the tour through the halls and offices in Niederbipp.*

On 18 January 2019 we had the pleasure of welcoming a class of the University of Applied Sciences of Biel (HF Biel) specializing in carpentry/interior design at the KURATLE ACADEMY in Niederbipp. The trained carpenters attend the almost three-year full-time study course at HF Biel to qualify for further functions such as project manager, team leader, work scheduler, etc.

We were very pleased to receive the request to introduce the topic of logistics and trade to the twelve students on the basis of our company experience. Corinne Kuratle introduced the group of companies and Roland Kalt, CEO of Meier Logistik AG, showed the logistics process and guided through the company afterwards. Finally, the students were able to take a look around the KURATLE & JAECKER exhibition and fortify themselves for the afternoon.

We thank Mr Hubert Bernard, lecturer at the Bernese Professional College Holz Biel (FH), for being at our disposal to answer a few questions.

## **1. Why do you make these excursions with the class?**

As an introduction to a project week, we always visit an industrial partner (this time a kitchen furniture

factory) with whom we then cooperate more closely. In order to deepen the knowledge gained, solutions are then worked out for the company and presented to management. Of course, this also requires an insight into the logistics and skills of a renowned trading company. What could be more natural than to make use of a longstanding, good contact and to ask for a visit to Niederbipp.

## **2. What impressed the students the most?**

Our students were impressed by the size of the company, the capabilities in warehouse logistics (readiness to deliver) but also by the achievements of the trade today (including the huge variety). In addition, the will for close cooperation with customers (CRM) was/is felt in all phases. In other words, customer benefit is considered very, very important here.

## **3. What are the students plans for the future?**

Considering the future plans of the students, I can say that I see them fully motivated. Our students generally want to make better use of their personal potential in the professional context of the «world of wood». They are aware that this world of activities will not stand still as it is today. In order to master the future better, we need knowledge,



*Our products are neatly presented in the KURATLE & JAECKER SHOWROOM.*

up-to-date knowledge. In addition to conventional specialist knowledge, students are increasingly interested in topics such as digitization, BIM, industry 4.0 and the like. Many see this as an opportunity to work in an attractive wood technology environment in the future.

facility for the industry. Thank you for this mutually inspiring cooperation.

Corinne Kuratle  
Head of Personnel Development  
KURATLE GROUP AG, Leibstadt

#### **Internships:**

In February 2019 we welcome two students of the University of Applied Sciences of Biel (HF Biel) and the Bernese Professional College Holz Biel (HF) to our company. Samuel Halter (HF) will start as a sales/marketing intern and Damian Leubin (FH) will support category management as an intern. Both interns will be stationed in Niederbipp and will complete various stages in Leibstadt during their internship year in order to get to know the entire company.

On 3 April 2019 we will also be represented at the Entrepreneur Day Wood in Biel. We look forward to seeing the students again and making new contacts.

The partnership with the Bernese Professional College Holz Biel (FH) is important to us, which is why we are very happy to support this unique training

# MY EXAM PREPARATION IN LEIBSTADT



*Serena Corso had the opportunity to spend six days getting to know various departments at the Leibstadt headquarters.*

**After almost two and a half years as an apprentice in the sales department, last December I was able to learn more about the Kuratle Group AG during six days in Leibstadt. I spent two days each in Purchasing, Accounting and Marketing and gained hands-on information. At this point I would like to express my thanks to all those who took time for me and stood by my side.**

The first two working days in the accounting department were very helpful for me to better understand some interfaces and processes. Especially important for my daily work were the customer data, the registration of new customers as well as adaptations of existing customer files. The entries in the accounts payable and accounts receivable departments gave me a practical insight into the school subject matter. Although the daily business was in the foreground, my questions were answered. What I have learned will give me a more comprehensive understanding of my day-to-day business and serve as preparation for my qualification process.

In the purchasing department it was particularly important for me to gain a better look at things, since I work closely with the people there for my daily work in sales. The buyers were able to answer all my open questions competently. I was very surprised by the

amount of time they invest every day in stock control.

The marketing was a positive surprise for me, as I would never have been able to estimate the variety of work in advance. I was allowed to deal with a variety of topics, which made these two days very interesting and entertaining. Also here my questions and concerns were explained by means of practical examples. I very much appreciated the program that was created especially for me. I was also impressed by the number of interfaces with which marketing communicates and cooperates. I could well imagine working for marketing in the future.

I found these six days in Leibstadt very important for my education. This gave me a better understanding of the interrelationships and allowed me to get to know my colleagues on the phone every day personally. I look forward to further cooperation.

Serena Corso  
Trainee, Sales ID  
KURATLE & JAECKER, Märstetten



# "MODULAR TIMBER CONSTRUCTION"

Please diarise our upcoming event!

It will take place on the 26<sup>th</sup> February 2019 at the Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC).

The 9<sup>th</sup> WOOD CONFERENCE presents a unique platform for the exchange of ideas, information and inspiration on the topic of wood, its various states and applications, and as a technologically advanced and sustainable high tech material.

A varied program full with information, emotions, visions and knowledge has been put together for the upcoming event. Representatives from SA and Europe will present their buildings, developments and solutions. Anyone interested in sustainable building is invited.

## Get inspired – join the 9<sup>th</sup> WOOD CONFERENCE

Location:	Cape Town, East Ballroom, CTICC Convention Center
Date:	26 <sup>th</sup> February 2019
Registration:	<a href="http://www.woodconference.co.za">www.woodconference.co.za</a>
Registration by:	18 <sup>th</sup> February 2019

For more information and applications, please contact:  
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