



GUARDIANS OF THE FUTURE

The Antoine de Saint-Exupéry Youth Foundation, named after the father of *The Little Prince* and the real-life hero of the history of aviation, is ensuring that the voices of the next generation get the chance to be heard.

Text Y-Jean Mun-Delsalle Photos Antoine de Saint-Exupéry Youth Foundation

The world needs responsible young citizens" is the Antoine de Saint-Exupéry Youth Foundation's motto. With an increasing number of young people living in unfavourable conditions, the need to teach them to be responsible for their actions, to live together and be a part of a community, to find fulfilment through their work and to become engaged model citizens has never been more evident. The Foundation's objective is to offer youth tangible support by helping them build better futures for themselves so that they participate actively in society and contribute to enriching the world.

Established in Paris in June 2009 by the Saint-Exupéry-d'Agay Estate (the heirs of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry), the Foundation's mission is to

engage, select, manage, finance and promote projects on a long-term basis—in domains including art, culture, education, health, and sport – and help young people develop self-confidence and understand the need to give meaning to their lives and their futures, which stem from local initiatives in favour of marginalised youth worldwide.

François d'Agay, President of the Foundation and nephew and godson of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, declares: "The creation of the Foundation is the culmination of a long journey of reflection, where the main idea was to not remain inactive before so much physical and moral misery, of which numerous young people have been victim. Why a foundation? Because it's an efficient means of action in the spirit of the message contained in the collected works of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, a message that shows us



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“THE IMPORTANT THING IS TO TAKE A STEP, THEN ANOTHER STEP, TOGETHER. AND IF EACH OF THESE STEPS GIVES A BIT OF HOPE AND PERHAPS ONE DAY THE DESIRE TO SERVE, THEN IT WON'T HAVE BEEN FOR NOTHING.”

the path to follow, and we didn't have the right to diverge from it. We have committed ourselves to serve in the long term, (even) the path will be long. The important thing is to take a step, then another step, together. And if each of these steps gives a bit of hope and perhaps one day the desire to serve, then it won't have been for nothing. Create bonds between people throughout the world because we are inhabitants of the same planet, all standing together." For Saint-Exupéry once said: "Where there is no tie that binds men, men are not united but merely lined up."

The Foundation's activities are based on the universal humanist values of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, award-winning author and World War II reconnaissance pilot best known for writing *The Little Prince*, a pocket-sized book of poetic and philosophical significance with planetary appeal (having been taken into space by French, American and Russian astronauts and credited as the most widely-known French work of literature) that has been translated into over 250 languages and dialects, and for being a pioneering aviator in the early days of international postal flight, discovering new flying routes in canvas-skinned biplanes lacking instruments, while confronted by the forces of nature, technical difficulties and poor communication links. Born in 1900, he disappeared in 1944 over the Mediterranean while on an Allied flying mission. Internationally-renowned during his lifetime, he became a legend after his death.

Saint-Exupéry's life reads like an adventure novel. He started as an airmail pilot on the France-Spain

route, then later on to Morocco and Senegal, before crossing the Atlantic to South America. He piloted legendary early-model aircraft, like the Breguet XIV, and lived out incredible experiences in the Spanish Sahara as station chief of the Cap Juby postal stopover, as well as in Argentina, where he set up the first functional airmail service over the snow-capped Andes from Buenos Aires to the southernmost tip of Patagonia and inaugurated night-time flights to beat ships and trains in the race against time. Called up by the French Air Force in 1939, he resumed active service before his exile in the US from 1940 to 1943, where he set about trying to convince the Americans to enter the war against Nazi Germany. At the same time, he interwove many of his personal experiences and flying adventures into his literary works. Today, such is his enduring fame that there are two private museums dedicated to him in Japan and Korea, with another set to open in a few years' time in his childhood home near Lyon, France.

Nicolas Delsalle, the Foundation's Secretary-General, remarks: "The Foundation puts the needs of youth around the world at the forefront, particularly those who have been isolated, forgotten and ignored. We aim to reintegrate youth who have been excluded from society and provide them with the skills required to regain a sense of dignity,

ABOVE Antoine de Saint-Exupéry.

BELOW *Le Petit Prince* remains one of the world's most famous and best-selling novellas.



thereby replacing their despair with hope. In the words of Saint-Exupéry: 'Each man must look to himself to teach him the meaning of life. It is not something discovered; it is something moulded.' It is a great honour to be able to contribute modestly to such a noble cause and I am fully committed to help the Foundation achieve its goals and develop internationally, while conveying, in a useful manner; the memory and philosophy of Saint-Exupéry. To support an increasing number of projects, we need important support from corporate sponsors that will find here an opportunity to make a difference in the lives and futures of youth worldwide, while offering their employees the chance to participate in a great adventure inspired by the life and achievements of an exceptional man."

The Foundation relies on an important international charity network already working on the ground carrying out local projects, which comprises hundreds of committed members, often volunteers, in approximately 30 countries, who have assembled spontaneously around the emblematic figure of Saint-Exupéry and his humanist thinking, which has the interests of mankind at heart. Saint-Exupéry believed that people shared common ground and addressed everyone regardless of age, gender, race or religion, including the young – the citizens of tomorrow. His values – responsibility, hard work, camaraderie, a spirit of sharing and respect for the other – are revealed in his books and actions, providing guidelines for adolescents on their journey to becoming socially-responsible adults. "When you give yourself, you receive more than you give," wrote Saint-Exupéry.

An example of the projects the Foundation has championed is the launch of the Cap Juby Sports Academy, a training centre for young underprivileged Moroccans selected within the framework of the Courier Sud athletic race that follows the traces of Saint-Exupéry in Morocco, organised by the Cap Juby non-profit organisation since 1995, which will train and accompany them in careers in tourism and sports. In France, the Foundation advocated the development of Centre Ressources Théâtre Handicap (CRTH), which contributes to the social and professional integration of marginalised individuals. Last year, it supported the final construction work of the learning spaces of O Clair de la Lune, CRTH's theatrical training school and an exemplary venue for cultivating social harmony among youth, especially disabled youth, through theatre and culture.

Saint-Exupéry's works of literature played an important role in the Foundation's creation. "Au centre du désert" is the central chapter of *Wind, Sand and Stars*, one of his most important books that marked the first time he united major humanist themes with the human condition and is filled with some of his most beautiful writing depicting a decisive episode in his life – his crash in the Libyan Desert in 1935 during the Paris-Saigon air race, his long walk in the desert and his rescue. By acquiring this 1936 original handwritten manuscript from the Saint-Exupéry-d'Agay Estate for €312,750 at a 2009 Sotheby's auction, Gérard Lhéritier, President and Founder of the Museum of Letters and Manuscripts in Paris, as well as collector, investor and lover of history and objets d'art, allowed the Saint-Exupéry-d'Agay Estate to turn the idea for the Foundation, dreamt up two decades ago, into reality.

Lhéritier says: "The manuscript's purchase represents not only an addition to the Saint-Exupéry collection owned by the museum, but also an important contribution for the Foundation. The general public of all ages may view it today at the museum. The Foundation is an excellent initiative; it is in keeping with all the great projects undertaken by the Saint-Exupéry-d'Agay Estate and its team. We not only stand behind [the Foundation] but play an active role. I was present at the Foundation's official launch in the grand nave of the Collège des Bernardins. We are going to participate as a sponsor in the setting up of the



LEFT Francois d'Agay, de Saint-Exupéry's nephew and president of the Foundation.

future museum or, rather, of the Saint-Exupéry family home, in the coming months."

As the Foundation's development depends on partnerships with companies sharing the same values, it is hardly surprising that the Saint-Exupéry-d'Agay Estate teamed up with the world of horology in 2005 through a unique collaboration with Swiss watchmaker, IWC Schaffhausen, known for its signature pilot's watches. Both guardians of a distinct heritage, they were brought together by a mutual passion for aviation and both have played a part in its development. The partnership represents a tribute to aeronautics and IWC's 75-year pilot watch tradition, having launched its first pilot's watch in 1936. Fascinated with technology and engineering, Saint-Exupéry had registered around 15 patents for aviation-related inventions in his lifetime, echoing the hunger for technical innovation present at IWC.

The name "Antoine de Saint-Exupéry" thereafter appeared alongside that of IWC through a series of aviation-focused projects, which debuted in 2006 with the opening of the IWC-Saint-Exupéry Space at the Museum of Air and Space in Le Bourget, near Paris, and an exhibition on time, aviation and pilot's watches. Since then, IWC has paid homage to Saint-Exupéry's life's work as an aviator and writer by creating different limited-edition and single-piece pilot's watches. The first four models were associated with his literary oeuvre and, each time, one unique example was created in platinum, then auctioned with an original manuscript, or autographed or first-edition copy of the book, whose entire proceeds went to finance a charity project jointly chosen by IWC and the Saint-Exupéry-d'Agay Estate.

In 2006, the first auctioned watch helped impoverished Argentine children who were the victims of violence and at risk of dropping out of school. The following year, the funds collected led to the construction of a school for Tuareg children in the middle of the Malian desert. The third timepiece benefitted SIPAR, which combats illiteracy in Cambodia by providing 10,000 children access to reading materials and literary activities every month, publishing books in Khmer (including *The Little Prince*), setting up libraries and educational centres, and operating mobile library buses serving remote areas. The 2010 model financed Enfants du Monde/ Droits de l'Homme, which works worldwide to protect children and their rights, developing major socio-educational projects and providing psychological help to the most vulnerable



children and their families. The fifth and latest tribute is the limited-edition *Big Pilot's Watch Perpetual Calendar Edition Antoine de Saint-Exupéry*, which marks IWC's renewal of its partnership with and commitment to the Foundation and is a true vote of confidence in its humanitarian work.

CEO of IWC, Georges Kern, notes: "IWC Schaffhausen is a partner of the Foundation because too many young people in the world grow up in difficult, often hostile, environments, where they are confronted daily with conflicts up and into adulthood. We are happy to help provide efficient assistance for young people in need and give them prospects for the future. We believe that any help given to the youth of today is also a service to mankind in general in all its cultural diversity. We support an organisation that fully deserves our trust. No one buys an IWC watch because we are committed to social causes. But our commitments are credible and in line with our corporate philosophy."

Saint-Exupéry wrote in *Wind, Sand and Stars*: "To be a man is, precisely, to be responsible. It is to feel shame at the sight of what seems to be unmerited misery. It is to take pride in a victory won by one's comrades. It is to feel, when setting one's stone, that one is contributing to the building of the world." The Antoine de Saint-Exupéry Youth Foundation is following in the footsteps of this man who was as great a storyteller as he was an impassioned pilot, continuing on its path to empower youth across the globe, all in the name of Saint-Exupéry. **IB**

For more information, visit: www.antoinedesaintexupery.com.



ABOVE IWC Schaffhausen has teamed up with the Antoine de Saint-Exupéry Youth Foundation as a mark of their partnership and commitment to humanitarian work.