

President Toomas Hendrik Ilves acknowledged Estonia's volunteers today at the House of the Black Heads. The Head of State is the patron of the event. Fifty volunteers from across Estonia received badges and certificates of honor for their volunteer work.

The President of the Republic recognized that volunteer work is primarily a duty. "It involves accepted responsibilities and spent time. Hopefully, this is compensated by the joy reflected in the eyes of those needing help and by the satisfaction gained from the accomplished work. Moreover, the thanks of all of us, of the entire society," said President Ilves.

"As the President, I am proud that there are more and more people in Estonia whose thoughts and actions promote not only their own well-being, but whose voluntary contributions enrich us and make us into better people. You are citizens in the noblest sense of the word," said the Head of State.

The recognition of Estonia's volunteers was begun in 2005. It is meant to thank those who have helped others and done something for the good of society. It is important that the candidates have acted of their own free will and not received compensation, as well as that they have acted outside the circle of their close friends and relatives. Private individuals, associations, central and local governmental agencies, as well as companies, were able to submit candidates.

The event is organized by the Baltic-American Partnership Program of the Open Estonia Foundation and the Tartu Volunteer Center, in cooperation with several partner organizations. The acknowledgement of volunteers is supported by the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

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