

"A school can be large or small, in the country or the city, but it must be one's own," President Toomas Hendrik Ilves said today at the Pühajärve Basic School, where he presented the award for "Estonia's Beautiful School 2007". "It is good to study in school when you understand that this is your school."

According to the Head of State, the Pühajärve Basic School not only provides its students with an education, but also provides the skill to see and create beauty.

"Estonia must be beautiful and full of vitality. I do not reiterate this because a winter with no snow can be tiring. I say so because I believe that one should not have a tired and weary attitude toward one's country—as if an after-school program had boringly dragged on," President Ilves said. "Independence is not a remedial instruction class; one must act every day to preserve independence, now, without ever tiring. Thus, the preservation of independence is creative learning with one's mistakes being corrected, or even better, avoided. What is important is that we have to do everything ourselves. If we let someone else do our school assignments, this is called cheating. In school, one will get a grade of "unsatisfactory" for such a "trick". However an "unsatisfactory" grade in independence means the loss of independence and being deprived of one's country. Therefore, we must be brave and energetic now, every day, without tiring."

The Head of State gave the Pühajärve Basic School a gift of a woven rug by artist Anu Raud, entitled Church Rooster-Primer Rooster.

The Pühajärve Basic School, which has operated for over 230 years and currently has 128 students, won the Beautiful School Award with a project entitled "Green Schoolyard: Good Idea and Worthy Deed in a Green-Thinking School". The most emotional part of the project to improve the school's surroundings and learning environment was the installation of a web camera in a bird nesting box, which allowed the entire student body to observe the activities of a titmouse and flycatcher.

The President of the Republic has presented the award for "Estonia's Beautiful School" since 1999. The award is given to schools where the students have developed and implemented projects to improve the upkeep and learning environments of their schools. The best school is chosen by the Estonian Home Decoration Association and the Estonian Teachers' Association.

President Ilves presented the Beautiful School Award to the Pühajärve Basic School

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The schools that have received the title in the past include the Vara Basic School, Konguta Primary School, Ülenurme Upper Secondary School, Pala Basic School, Raudna Basic School, Illuka Basic School, and Lohusuu Basic School.

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