

Yesterday in Tallinn, President Toomas Hendrik Ilves presented the prizes to the winners of the "Beautiful Estonian Home 2008" contest.

The Head of State said that he is very glad that there are so many people throughout Estonia who want and know how to make their homes and environs more beautiful.

"A beautiful country starts from beautiful homes," President Ilves said. "A country with oak trees growing instead of underbrush running rampant. A country without rubbish heaps sprawling on the forest floors. A country where fences are straight, not falling down. A country where attractive bus stops and village signs entice passers-by to turn into village centers. A country where the village centers show that local people care and notice. This all demonstrates a desire to be the true master of one's home, one's hometown, one's country."

A civil society, which is characterized by the desire to accomplish something, to care for one's near and far surroundings, is a force that can move mountains, the Head of State said, bringing two examples, "The "Let's Do It 2008" campaign that involved tens of thousands of volunteers this spring is one of the best examples. The Kolga Community Hall, which burned down and was restored with the support of local residents and the local government, is another. And the number of similar stories in Estonia is increasing."

A country that is devoid of waste and scorched ruins also improves us, clarifies us internally, President Ilves stressed.

He recalled that an apartment building at Vee Street 23 in Pärnu is among the current prizewinners and added, "I think that apartment buildings and the new developments being built on fields could be increasingly active in the movement for home beautification. The children growing up there also deserve beautiful surroundings and it is the duty of adults to provide them."

The Head of State said that a beautiful home is more than just a nice garden and a painted building. "It is a home with feeling that radiates the warmth of a hearth, and a home where several generations together care for its future and survival," President Ilves said.

A total of 83 awards were presented. In addition to beautiful homes and local governments, the most attractive amateur sports structures, industrial landscapes, State Forest Management Centers were recognized along with the best new initiatives.

The winners of the "Beautiful Estonian Home 2008" prizes were chosen by the Estonian Home Decoration Association.

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