

Today at the Kuressaare Cultural Centre, President Toomas Hendrik Ilves presented awards to the winners of the "Beautiful Estonian Home 2009" contest. Today at the Kuressaare Cultural Centre, President Toomas Hendrik Ilves presented awards to the winners of the "Beautiful Estonian Home 2009" contest, thanking them for their work and the care they have demonstrated in making their homes and neighbourhoods more attractive.

"This requires a lot of work, patience and dedication. Especially now when the economic recession weighs on our minds and every kroon seems dearer and expenditures are more difficult to make," the Head of State said. "Thus I recognize the fact that you have not neglected your efforts to make your homes more beautiful in these difficult times, but on the contrary, have continued this work. We need a sense of ownership that can outlast the economic recession."

President Ilves called upon the promoters of the home decoration movement to look beyond their individual homes and demonstrate the strength of their communities, as have the people of Kolga Village, who restored their old community centre, which had been destroyed by fire, or the family in Kohatu Village that built a bonfire site, village swing and song grounds at their own initiative.

The Head of State encouraged everyone to pay more attention to fixing up older apartment buildings and their surroundings in order to reduce the bleakness, aimlessness and indifference evident around many of the buildings erected during the Soviet era.

"To achieve this, we need capable village elders, active cooperative societies, or just activists to call the people together, and naturally, good people to come and participate in the improvement of their neighbourhoods," President Ilves said.

The winners of the "Beautiful Estonian Home" award, that numbered 83 this year, are chosen by the Estonian Home Decoration Association. The awards ceremony took place for the 12th time. This time in Kuressaare, two special awards were also presented: by the Estonian Olympic Committee for the best sports structure, and by the Union of Estonian Apartment Associations for the most beautiful apartment house.

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