

"Committed, good teachers represent one of Estonia's greatest treasures," told the President, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, in the Office of the President, where he presented this year's educational awards to the Director of Studies of Hugo Treffner Gymnasium, Aime Punga; pedagogue and author of educational literature, Toom Õunapuu; and the teacher of gymnastics at Tallinn Nõmme House of Youth, Urve Keskküla. The President's Physical Sciences Award went to the physics teacher at Pärnu Koidula Gymnasium, Elmu Mägi.

"Thanks to education, educated people and a constant desire to learn something more and new, we have become a nation capable of maintaining and developing our culture, and one that has established an independent state," told President Ilves.

"And, in the same way, by treasuring education and looking bravely forward, Estonia can keep moving ahead. This is why we have to value the contribution of teachers as we think of the future of education, as only good teachers can deliver good education. We must do this in both a moral sense and take this into consideration when preparing the state budget," added the Estonian Head of State.

Elmu Mägi, who took the floor on behalf of the award winners, stated that there are many great teachers in Estonia. "Citing Peeter Kreitzberg, a good teacher loves children and knows their subject well," summarised Mägi.

The 2012 Educational Awards of the President of the Republic were awarded to the long-time Director of Studies and maths teacher at Hugo Treffner Gymnasium, Aime Punga; pedagogue, methodology specialist on teaching the Estonian language and author of educational literature, Toom Õunapuu; and the gymnastics teacher at Tallinn Nõmme House of Youth, member of the artistic groups of several gymnastic and dance festivals, and author and producer of gymnastic routines, Urve Keskküla. The President's Physical Sciences Award went to the long-standing physics teacher at Pärnu Koidula Gymnasium, Elmu Mägi.

The winner of the Educational Award, **Aime Punga**, has worked at Hugo Treffner Gymnasium since 1976. Ms Punga began her career as a maths teacher but was promoted to the position of Director of Studies in 1985. Apart from her work at school, Aime Punga has shared her experiences and knowledge in the sphere of education as a consultant and expert in Estonia, such as the city of Tartu and many local schools; she is one of the developers and

implementers of the several educational reforms that have influenced Estonian education in general. She is a major contributor to the successful course study (periodical study) system that was created and launched by Hugo Treffner Gymnasium. Several Estonian schools have introduced similar period study systems based on this shared experience. These changes, initiated by Aime Punga, can be described as some of the most important milestones in the history of Estonian education and important steps in shaping school culture in the 21st century. The Five Schools Competition in physical sciences, begun by Aime Punga and the physical science teachers at the school, has been held for 47 years; she also initiated the Meeting of Three Schools in humanitarian sciences (with Tallinn 21st School and Pärnu Sütevaka Humanitarian Gymnasium).

The winner of the Educational Award, **Toom Õunapuu**, is a pedagogue and methodology specialist on teaching the Estonian language; he has published 54 books and 700 various publications, and he is the author of the only methodological manual on how to systematically teach the Estonian language, "Reference to the Art of Teaching" (Õpetamiskunsti viidad). His books represent a good source of educational literature about the Estonian language for both Estonians and non-Estonians; his articles focus on the protection of the Estonian language. Toom Õunapuu is a prolific researcher and a lecturer in high demand, a creator and initiator of innovative didactics, and has developed the ideas and visions of Johannes Käis; he has also made a significant contribution to the development of school education in Estonia. He is also one of the founders and board members of the Association for the Protection of the Estonian Language.

The winner of the Educational Award, **Urve Keskküla**, has been a teacher of gymnastics at Tallinn Nõmme House of Youth since 1985 and works with students aged from 5 to 26 years. Urve Keskküla has shown herself to be a creative teacher of dance who attracts and loves children, while remaining very demanding, specific and showing good organisational skills. Apart from her everyday work with her students, Urve Keskküla still has the time to organise several all-Estonia events – for 12 years, Urve Keskküla has been a board member of the National Club of Gymnastic Trainers, Katrek, which has initiated both national gymnastics festivals and events organised in the capital city. Urve Keskküla was elected Teacher of the Year in 1994 and 2008. She is also one of the producers of the XV Tallinn Festival of Gymnastics that is to take place next year and a member of the production group of the XIX Song and Dance Festival of 2012, assistant to the gymnastics groups cast manager, and author-producer of the festival routine for women.

The President's Physical Sciences Award went to the long-standing physics teacher at Pärnu Koidula Gymnasium, **Elmu Mägi**, who is seen as a valuable asset to the gymnasium family. Mägi has significantly contributed to the popularisation of physical natural and engineering sciences in the Republic of Estonia. Many of the graduates of Pärnu Koidula Gymnasium have

gone on to third level studies in the specialties of physical and other engineering sciences and the students of the gymnasium have elected Elmu Mägi the most popular teacher. He teaches physics in both standard classes and in classes of physical sciences, according to a more substantial curriculum; he has also developed the physics syllabuses for the school. Thanks to his committed efforts, his students have achieved remarkable results in various local, national and international Olympiads and competitions. For many years, Elmu Mägi has been a mentor to the International Physics Olympiad (IPhO) team members and runners to the team; he has also prepared and mentored students who have participated in national physics Olympiads and open competitions for solving tasks in physics. Elmu Mägi also leads the subject section of physics teachers in Pärnu, and he is actively involved in providing guidance and instructions to physics teachers from other schools in Pärnu, acting as mentor to a number of physics teachers.

The value of the awards is 4,800 (Aime Punga), 3,500 (Toom Õunapuu) and 2,900 (Urve Keskküla) euros and the awards are funded by Sampo Bank. The President's Physical Sciences Award (Elmu Mägi) is awarded by Skype Estonia and the award money is 3,900 euros.

For additional information about the Educational Awards, see: <http://www.president.ee/en/president/institutions/146-cultural-foundation-of-the-president-of-the-republ/5065-educational-award/layout-institution.html>

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