

The President, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, today acknowledged the best volunteers at Pärnu Concert Hall.

The Head of State described third sector activities as a normal component of modern Estonia: "What first begins as voluntary activities may later become an official attitude."

He also discussed the relations between the state and voluntary activities, emphasising that opposing the state and voluntary activities is senseless.

"Without voluntary activities the state would be cold and harsh and the countries where citizens take no voluntary initiative often lack democracy," President Ilves told.

The Head of State invited people to observe and acknowledge the capabilities of our fellow citizens more often.

This year's best volunteers are:

Heinar Kalam, NGO Flight Club Viljandi, Sakalamaa Aviation Affairs Partnership.

Ene Tigas, Veriora Think Tank, Veriora fair, Pahtpää Village Partnership.

Andrus Saliste, Muraste Village Partnership.

Lela Lõhmus, Lehtse Evangelist Voluntary Congregation.

Marek Reinaas, Federation of NGOs EMSL, guardian of good election practice.

Hermann and **Pille-Riin Kalmus**, Pilistvere Congregation, NGO Pillistfer, NGO Hoia Oma Tervist (Take Care of Your Health), partnership Pilistvere Noored (Youth of Pilistvere).

Tatjana Klimenko, Narva Youth Parliament (NNP), Narva Youth Centre.

Siiri Sisask, NGO Saagu Valgus (And Let There Be Light).

Mati Johanson, voluntary rescue worker of Puurmani rural municipality.

Triin Mäger, Youth Assembly of Pärnu, movement "Older Brother, Older Sister", Pärnu Region of 4H Estonia, Student's Body of Pärnu College of University of Tartu.

Ingeldrin Viljak, NGO Pärisea Seltsimaja (Pärisea Community House), Pärisea Voluntary Rescue Society.

Margus Sinimets, NGO Saaremaa Sõjavara Selts (Saaremaa Military Assets Partnership).
Ülle Varik, youth association 4H Estonia. Pärnu region, clubs Lavassaare and Jõõprekad, Board of Trustees of Lavassaare Kindergarten – Elementary School, NGO Lavassaare Arenguselts (Lavassaare Development Partnership), NGO Lavassaare Village Partnership
Marge Kohtla, NGO Saadjärve Vabatahtlik Järvepääste (Voluntary Lake Rescue), Tartu Kalev Yachting Club

Enterprise or institution that facilitates participation of its employees in third sector organisations:

Saku Rural Municipality Government, Harju County. County Governor Kuuno Rooba.

Third sector organisations or people who have guided volunteers, involved them or maintained their participation and inspired them:

Christel Sogenbits, NGO Pane oma meeled proovile (Test Your Senses).
Rainer Eidemiller, Paide Sustainable Renovation Information Centre (SRIK).
Serve The City and their leader, Lauri Luide.
Erika Tiganik, NGO Õppe- ja arengukeskus ME (Learning and Development Centre), Maardu Food Bank.
Harro Aitai, NGO Eesti Abipolitseinike Kogu (Estonian Assembly of Assistant Police Officers).

A national event to acknowledge volunteers has been organised since 2005; the first to hold the event was Open Estonia Foundation. In the subsequent years, the organisational tasks were fulfilled by Voluntary Service Development Centre. This year, the task was given to Estonian Village Movement Kodukant.

In total, 267 people have been acknowledged as volunteers and presented with the respective badge.

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