

Dear friends who have taken trouble to make your home and neighbourhood beautiful!

Today, we have cause for a small celebration. It was, in fact, ten years ago, in 1998, that the first Beautiful Home Awards were issued on President Lennart Meri's initiative.

Congratulations to us all! And of course, many thanks to all of you who have, throughout all those years, been the organisers and supporters of the home decoration movement.

I am very happy that there are so many people, all over Estonia, who wish and can make their homes and neighbourhood beautiful. Thank you!

A beautiful country starts from a beautiful home. A country where young oaks grow instead of thick alder bush. A country without garbage dumps in the forests. A country where picket fences are straight and do not wobble. A country where nice bus stops and village signs invite even casual passers-by to take a look at the village centre. A country where village centres bespeak of the villagers' care and consideration. All this shows your resolve to be the real master of your house, your city or village, your country.

And to highlight this resolve, we shall from now on bestow the Home Decoration awards in the municipalities, villages or cities that have been recognised as the most beautiful. The citizen's resolve to take action, characteristic of the civic society, the care for one's close and remoter environment, is a force that can move mountains. We have seen that.

The major campaign "Let's Do It 2008", which brought thousands of volunteers, is one of the best examples of civic initiative. Another example is the Kolga community centre, which burnt to the ground and was restored with the help of local people and the local government. Such examples are more and more numerous in Estonia, and this is delightful.

A country free of rubbish and ruins makes better people of us too, and brings us inner clarity.

Among today's award winners there is also an apartment house at Vee Street 23 in Pärnu. This is wonderful! I think that apartment houses and newly built districts on the outskirts of cities should participate much more in the home decoration movement. The children growing up there need a nice neighbourhood too, and it is the duty of adults to provide it for them.

A beautiful home is not just a lovely garden and a freshly painted house.

A beautiful home is something more. It is a home with a warm heart and a warm hearth, where several generations join their efforts to ensure its welfare and permanence.

Let us care for Estonian homes together.

Long live Estonia!