

Evelin Ilves and Nikolai Novosjolov, double world champion in épée fencing, today paid a visit to Tartu Descartes Lyceum to acknowledge the Diamonds gymnastics group, which was last year awarded the team bonus of the Young Athlete's Awards by the First Lady's Foundation of the President of the Republic's Cultural Foundation.

Evelin Ilves expressed her pleasure with the fact that the money the team was awarded helped the Diamonds gymnastics group from Janika gymnastics club win second place at an international competition last month in Bulgaria. "This shows that the Young Athlete's Award is necessary and will help our good athletes to achieve better and better results," she added.

The First Lady admitted that the development of youth sports and the success of our young athletes depends largely on physical education lessons at schools, as well as good teachers and coaches. "If we do not have youth coaches, the youth sports will not develop and will always remain at hobby standard," told Evelin Ilves, also adding that we cannot oppose education and sports.

"It depends on teachers and family as to how and whether children can combine both activities; when we look at the award winners, we can see that the children have been supported in both studies and sports," said Evelin Ilves.

The First Lady emphasised that the foundation for a child's health is laid during the formative years. "What you eat now, how much you exercise – these are all the construction blocks for your body and brain. Do not think that small amounts of weak alcohol will do no harm; alcohol has a major impact on your brain cells, limiting their development and, as a result, you will never know what you would have been capable of," she stated.

Tartu Descartes Lyceum and the gymnastics club have been working together for approximately ten years, co-ordinating the timetables and training schedules of the athletes to allow them to enjoy the best possible daily routine that would also leave some time for other activities.

The double world champion, Nikolai Novosjolov, said that success is not something one will achieve immediately; it is a long process that requires lots of work and a great desire. "Like

everything else, we experience both lows and highs in sports. Don't stop at half way; otherwise, you will never know where you may have ended up. Spend more time with your friends, exercise in nature, and spend less time at computers. Think of what you want to do and be in fifteen years," Novosjolov said.

The Diamonds youth group of Janika gymnastics club consists of Marleen Erelina, Marleen Viinapuu, Marleen Kääroja, Marian Roomet, Anni Liis Hoop, Hanna-Liina Sukk, Helena Seliste and Annela Seliste, all born in 2000-2001 and studying at Tartu Descartes Lyceum. This year, Trinity Liisa Lotta Kannus, Katrin Fessak and Gled Airiin Tärn also joined the group.

Apart from group gymnastics, all the group members are also involved in individual gymnastics. They are four time holders of the title of Estonian champion in their respective age group, Estonian champions of 2013 in the youth group category and three time winners of the Miss Valentine competition. They have also achieved good results in international competitions; they won the children's tournament of the world championship in 2012 and the youth tournament at the world championship finals in Barcelona in 2013. They took second place in an international competition in Bulgaria in March of this year.

Evelin Ilves gave Tartu Descartes Lyceum, which is also a member of Health Promoting Schools network, some stuffed balls for physical education lessons. The First Lady also took a look at the school cafeteria and sampled the school lunch offered there.

Traditionally, a top Estonian athlete accompanies Evelin Ilves to the schools of the winners of the Young Athlete's Prize to acknowledge both the winners of the prize and their schools. To date, she has been accompanied during her visits by Gerd Kanter, Heiki Nabi, Erki Nool, Allar Levandi, Toomas Tõniste, Jaak Mae and others.

This spring's application round for the Young Athlete's Prize of the President of the Republic's Cultural Foundation and Nordea Bank will end tomorrow, 4 April (including the date on postal stamp). The amount of the Young Athlete's Prize is up to 3,200 Euros per recipient. Applications are also welcome the team bonus, which is also 3,200 euros.

The prize is intended to acknowledge young, under-21-year-olds with very good academic achievements. The prize is earmarked for training and competition costs or to purchase the

required equipment. All teams that have at least two members (e.g. rowing team, gymnastics team, football team, etc.) may apply for the team bonus.

The Young Athlete's Award has been given nine times. Applications for team bonus have been awarded since 2013.

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