

Evelin Ilves and Olympic decathlon gold medallist Erki Nool paid a visit to Kuusalu High School today, among whose students numbers Tanel Paabo – the recipient of the Young Athlete of the Year 2011 award of the Sub-fund of the Spouse of the President of the Republic.

The visitors met with students from Grades 7-9, who had a lot of questions for them about the life of a top athlete and balanced nutrition.

“It’s tight at the top, whatever the field – getting there and staying there takes a lot of hard work!” Evelin Ilves said. “And you shouldn’t forget that if you step back from it, you still need to do a lot of work to be able to get on in life. That’s why you need a good education, and to be as enterprising as you can be!”

Erki Nool, who told the students about his life as an athlete, stressed that ‘having what it takes’ on its own is not enough. “Talent is something you develop by constantly working at it, as part of an everyday routine – and that’s as true in studying as it is in sport,” he explained. “A good education gives you a decent head start; the rest is up to you, and how much work you want to put into it.”

Evelin Ilves presented the school with a copy of the Biographical Lexicon of Estonian Sport and its home economics class – which at the time of the visit was preparing lunch for the students – with a copy of her cookbook.

It has become something of a tradition for Evelin Ilves to visit the schools of the recipients of the Young Athlete of the Year award, accompanied by an Estonian sports star, thereby recognising not only the young athlete themselves but also their school.

Tanel Paabo (born 1996) practises karate at the Budo sports club in Tallinn. He took up the martial art at the IVL sports club in Kuusalu in 2006 and is currently in Grade 9 at Kuusalu High School. Since changing clubs in 2008, his desire and determination have not deserted him, and he now trains six times per week in Tallinn. In that short space of time he has recorded some remarkable achievements in the sport, while still doing very well at school. He was the 2009 and 2010 junior champion in karate (kumite) in Estonia, is a two-time Finnish champion and holds

the European title in Shotokan karate for 2011. He has also competed with great success in a number of international competitions.

The Young Athlete of the Year award of the Sub-fund of the Spouse of the President of the Republic is presented to young people up to the age of 21 with outstanding study results. The prize money that comes with the award is designed specifically to cover the cost of training and competitions. The prize is sponsored by Nordea Pank and is awarded twice annually. The value of the award is up to €3195 per recipient. To date the prize has been shared between three athletes.

The recipient of the prize is selected by the board of the sub-fund, who seek advice from experts in the field where required. The board members are Anu Kaljurand (from the Estonian Olympic Committee), Õnne Pollisinski (from Kalev Swimming School) and Heli Suvi (from the Office of the President of the Republic).

Joining the board this year is Olympic discus gold medallist Gerd Kanter, at the request of Evelin Ilves, who says that since more and more deserving youngsters are nominated each time, the board needs the input of a professional athlete in deciding who to award the prize to. "The board needs someone who will set an example for young athletes, and inspire them," she explained. Former board member and Olympic cycling gold medallist Erika Salumäe was unable to continue in her position because she is out of the country.

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