

Evelin Ilves and former decathlete Erki Nool today visited Tallinn University of Applied Sciences to acknowledge Jorgen Liiv, a track-and-field athlete with a hearing disability, who last year won one of the Young Athlete Awards issued by the sub-fund of the spouse of the President of the Republic of the President of the Republic's Cultural Foundation.

Evelin Ilves and Erki Nool were asked numerous questions about the life of a top athlete, hobby athlete and balanced nutrition at a meeting with students of the Departments of Physical Culture, Architecture and Environmental Technology.

Evelin Ilves said that all the athletes who receive the Young Athlete Award are twice as capable as others – both in the sports of their choice and studies. "But a person with special needs must triple his/her efforts and outdo himself, just like Jorgen Liiv, who has been doing well in regular school, both with his studies and track-and-field achievements, despite his hearing disability. Such an achievement is worth recognition one thousand fold," told Evelin Ilves.

Erki Nool, who spoke to the students about the highs and lows of his athletic career, also said that one can only reach the highest summits with a lot of hard work and self-confidence. "Practicing in every field, and not only sports, is the foundation of achievement," told Erki Nool, emphasizing that not everyone can make it to the top; but it is important to participate in some form of sport to ensure good health and attitude.

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.

Jorgen Liiv (born 1990) is a highly committed and persistent track and field athlete, who is also hearing impaired. Jorgen has been involved in track and field since 2001. He joined the Estonian Sports Association of the Deaf and Talkur sports club in 2009, getting the opportunity to train and compete with athletes with similar special needs. He won first place in the championship of the Estonian Sports Association of the Deaf in 2010; he has also secured high places in other Estonian track and field competitions and represented Estonia in the European Championships for the Deaf. Jorgen is severely hearing impaired, but he still graduated from a regular class in Pirita Economic Gymnasium with excellent academic grades and is currently studying applied architecture in Tallinn University of Applied Sciences. Jorgen will use the

award for training and to participate in international championships.

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 academic results. The prize money that comes with the award is specifically designed 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 €3,200 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).

This spring's Young Athlete Award competition will be announced this week.

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