

Today, Evelin Ilves presented prizes for young athletes at the Office of the President of the Republic to the power boating world champion Rasmus Haugasmägi, sailor Marie Pihlas and athlete Margit Kalk. The team prize was awarded to the junior group Diamonds of the rhythmic gymnastic club Janika.

The First Lady's sub-foundation of the Cultural Foundation of the President awarded the Young Athlete's Prize in co-operation with **Nordea Bank** for the ninth time. For the first time, the competition was open to team nominations.

According to Evelin Ilves, choosing becomes more difficult each time. "The selected athletes have gone through fierce competition and in addition to their love of sports, they are also great students. This demonstrates that the children have been supported in both their studies as well as in sports. It is wonderful that schools, sports clubs and families are working together and take pride in the achievements of their young athletes together," she added.

In her speech, the First Lady thanked Nordea Bank, which, at a time when sports subsidies continue to decrease, found a way to start awarding a team prize.

According to the head of Nordea Bank's Estonian branch Vahur Kraft, Nordea Bank is happy to be involved in making the great dreams of young athletes come true and help talented athletes to become big players. "There is great force in a healthy body and mind. We hope that each of us can make the living environment better for all in our respective fields and increase competitiveness, both in the Estonian economy as well as in sports," Kraft added.

Speaking on behalf of the winners, Marie Pihlas thanked the Cultural Foundation of the President, Nordea Bank, families and coaches. "It is good to know that you're being supported and people believe in you," Pihlas said.

This year's winners of the Young Athlete's Prize:

Rasmus Haugasmägi (prize 1,800 euros) was born in 1993 and is currently studying public administration at the Tallinn Technical University. Rasmus has been active in sports since elementary school, starting out with track and field and basketball. In 2005, he joined the Tartu power boating club Kalev and has produced great results in Estonia and abroad. He is the 2013 world champion in OSY-400 class and a silver medallist at the European Championship. In the past, Rasmus was the European champion of the junior competition in the JT-250 class and a silver medallist at the 2010 and 2012 World Championships.

Marie Pihlas (prize 1,000 euros) was born in 1998; she is currently studying in the 9th form at the Kuressaare Vanalinna Kool (Kuressaare Old Town School). Marie took up sailing at an early age and is currently training at the Saaremaa Merispordi Selts (Saaremaa Maritime Sports Society) in the ZOOM8 class. For three years, she has been a member of the Estonian junior sailing team. Marie is the 2013 Estonian champion in the female ZOOM8 class and a silver medallist in the overall ranking. At the 2013 World Championship in Norway, she reached 12th place.

The winner of the special prize **Margit Kalk** was born in 1999. She studies in the 8th form at Ülenurme Gümnaasium (Ülenurme Secondary School). From 3rd form, she has focused on track and field under the supervision of Toomas Kivendi. She has achieved great results in various fields, making a new record with 8,181 points in combined events in 2013 in the older age group for girls and leading the overall rankings in her age group in heptathlon, 200 m sprint, long jump and high jump, and pole vault. She leads the girls' B-class ranking in pole vault with a record of 3.71m. The special prize – a new pole – will support Margit's continuing advancement in the pole vault. Margit was also awarded the Gerd Kanter special prize – custom-made track and field shoes.

The junior group **Diamonds** of the rhythmic gymnastic club Janika (prize 3,200 euros) comprises **Marleen Ereline, Marleen Viinapuu, Marleen Kääroja,**

Marian Roomet

,

Anni Liis Hoop

,

Hanna-Liina Sukk

,

Helena Seliste

and

Annela Seliste

, all born between 2000 and 2001 and all studying at Prantsuse Lütseum (Lycée Français). In addition to group gymnastics, all members of the team also compete as individual gymnasts.

They have won the Estonian championships in their age group four times, are the 2013 Estonian champions in the junior group and have won the Miss Valentine competition twice. They have achieved great results in international competitions, won the children's tournament held with the 2012 World Championships and the youth tournament held with the 2013 International Trophy in Barcelona.

The Young Athlete's Prize presented by the First Lady's Foundation of the President of the Republic's Cultural Foundation and Nordea Bank is intended to acknowledge young, under-21-year-olds with very good academic achievements. The prize is earmarked and intended to cover training, competition and equipment costs. All teams that have at least two members (e.g. rowing team, gymnastics team, football team, etc.) may apply for the team bonus.

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