

Encouraging creative impulses not to die out

In January, 'Spiritual Revival' awards and special Presidential prizes are traditionally given to figures of culture and arts

The special state awards recognise the contribution towards the cultural life of the nation, made by bright and talented people. Our moral standards, spiritual kinship, the legacy of our glorious history and deep respect for traditions bind us, creating a nation in the fullest sense. The value of cultural achievements is inestimable.

Mr. Lukashenko addressed those awarded, saying, "Man cannot live by bread alone. Even the powerful empires of ancient times fell once they lost the ideals, morals and faith which bound them. Such treasures turn a population into a nation and their place of residence into a homeland. The Belarusian people have survived historical drama, yet have retained a strong legacy of tales, monuments, traditions and songs. Our nation has not dissolved in the sands of time but has kept its identity by cherishing heroism and honouring its ancestors. Our spirituality, art and culture are our lifeblood, giving us strength to live. As such, the state has always supported creativity and talent and will continue on this path, nurturing new generations, so that our creativity never dies. We wish to help each of you, the few endowed with a special gift, making your dreams come true." Here, we introduce the 'Spiritual Revival' award winners and those given the special Presidential prize for culture and arts. Their self-sacrifice, sincerity and modesty are an inspiration to us all. They are our contemporaries and Belarus is proud of them!



Revived nunnery

The Mother Superior of Grodno's St. Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Stavropegial Nunnery, Gavrila, tells us that her work to revive the Orthodox church on the site of the St. Prechistsenskaya's Church, which existed in the 12th century, is the result of her divine calling. In the early 1990s, as an ordinary nun, she did the seemingly impossible in persuading the region's leadership to transfer the nunnery into believers' hands.

Mother Gavrila recalls, "In the 1960s, the nunnery's possessions were expropriated and the building used to house a branch of DOSAAF (Volunteer Society for Co-operation with the Army, Aviation, and Fleet),

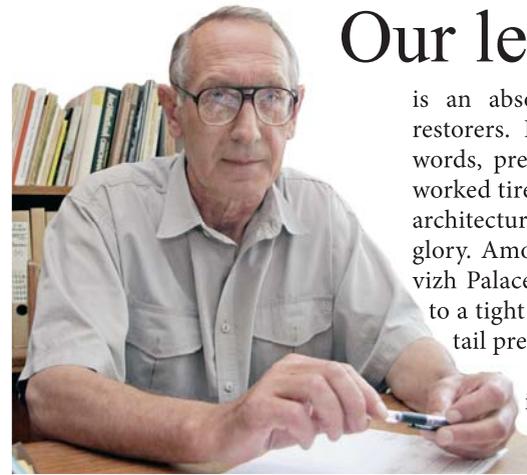
where motorcycles were repaired. In 1977, the building was transferred to the Republican Museum of Atheism, with concerts and exhibitions held inside. A piano stood at the original altar place. Twenty years ago, we received the opportunity to restore the community. The first Christmas mass was attended by just 15 people, including the priest and choir but, this year, there was not a spare seat to be had. At present, 16 nuns live at Grodno's St. Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Stavropegial Nunnery. We've opened Grodno's first Sunday school, teaching around 100 children. I accept the 'Spiritual Revival' award with gratitude and joy and will con-



tinue to place other's needs above my own. For a nun, the most vital aspect is to pray and assist others."

By Katerina Charova

Our legacy



The Deputy Director of Belrestavratsiya JSC, Sergey Drushchits,

For the sake of future generations

Over the last five years, the child mortality rate from birth defects has fallen five-fold in the Gomel Region, largely thanks to the work of Gomel's Regional Medicine and Genetic Diagnostics Centre, which also offers advice on marriage and family matters. Chief doctor Oleg Krivolapov admits that reducing the mortality rate is the Centre's foremost aim.

"It's a huge honour to receive the 'Spiritual Revival' award, since it recognises the work of all Belarusian doctors in reducing child mortality and disability. It particularly recognises our own staff, whose institution celebrated its 20th birthday in 2012. With state funding, we've been able to modernise, using both simple and high-tech methods to ensure babies' health. Our key task is to provide families with the

is an absolute authority among restorers. He is a person of few words, preferring action, and has worked tirelessly to restore various architectural sites to their former glory. Among these pearls is Nesvizh Palace, which was completed to a tight schedule, with each detail preserved authentically.

"The unique project is a credit to our creative team of builders, engineers and artists, who share the 'Spiritual Revival' award. It's vital for the state to fund the restoration of

cultural monuments, despite difficult economic conditions. Nesvizh Palace has been registered on UNESCO's World Cultural Heritage List, putting Belarus on the map. Last year, it was visited by almost 500,000 people. Naturally, the inflow of tourists opens up new opportunities for the further development of the town's infrastructure, while bringing jobs and additional revenue for the budget. We still have works to complete, such as the landscaping of the grounds around the palace," notes Mr. Drushchits.

By Viktor Andrejev



most complete and exact information on the future health of their child, at the earliest stage. We've seen much success, since our region's level of infant mortality from birth defects is one of the lowest in the country. We plan to introduce mass biochemical screening of birth and chromosomal defects for each mother in the Gomel Region, to allow them access to full genetic knowledge on their baby," notes Mr. Krivolapov.

By Vera Dromova

History interlaced with fates

Several years ago, Anatoly Cheboganov was known as a successful entrepreneur and a patron of arts. Now, he's also known as a serious researcher, being a member of the Union of Writers of Belarus and a corresponding member of the Academy of Russian Philology. His Presidential prize is perhaps the crown of his career.

After compiling his own family tree two decades ago, he continued his research, looking at several noble families from Belarus, revealed across volumes of his *I am Your Son* series. These explore the country's history over the last five centuries, through the lives of certain people. He spends all his free time in such research, such is his enthusiasm.

By Ivan Ivanov

At soul's dictation

Since 2003, Igor Dyatlovsky, who comes from a family of teachers, has headed Radoshkovichi boarding school for orphans and children left without parental care. He followed in his father's footsteps, graduating from the Minsk Pedagogical Institute in 1991 (named after Gorky and now called the Maxim Tank Belarusian State Pedagogical University). By 2005, he'd turned the school into a full secondary establishment and had removed the dormitories, installing a new boiler house and medical block with swimming pool and sauna. Keeping the children fit and healthy is, of course, a priority. On site is a dentist, as well as physiotherapy and



massage rooms, a phyto-bar, facilities for therapeutic exercise and a steam room. There are even ski and cycle tracks, an ice hockey rink and tennis courts. According to Mr. Dyatlovsky, his aim is to make the children feel at home. Accepting our congratulations, he noted briefly, on his way to a meeting, "This is a great honour for me but don't ask me about my merits. I simply love what I do and put my soul into it..."

By Alla Martinkevich

Vocation to do good

Vitaly Kulpeksha, Director of the Caritas Charity Catholic Society religious mission of the Roman-Catholic Church's Vitebsk Eparchy, has two degrees: one agricultural and one legal. In 2003, he was invited to Vitebsk to become the Eparchial Department's administrative assistant. Then, in 2007, the Bishop of the Vitebsk Eparchy, Vladislav Blin, appointed him director of the Caritas religious mission (translated from Latin as 'mercy'). Mr. Kulpeksha is a secular believer but is convinced that the most important quality is a desire to do good.

"We don't even ask our volunteers whether they are followers of any particular faith. We have just five paid employees in the Vitebsk Region, who ensure that donations by individuals and organisations reach people in need of assistance: those who are unwell, the elderly and orphans. We hold summer camps for handi-



capped children and their parents as well as recuperative trips for children to Poland and the Czech Republic. We also search for foster carers for children from Belarusian families on low incomes. It's lovely to have our work praised at such a high level. The restoration of the tradition of charity work in Belarus is wonderful, since it's far more satisfying to give than to take," asserts Mr. Kulpeksha.

By Sergey Golesnik

Old fame likes new one

Natalia Neifeld, 25, has been the director of the Dribin District Local History and Folk Museum for just four months so modestly gives credit for the special Presidential prize to her whole staff and, especially, her predecessor, Yelena Rebkovets. It's easy to see that she is devoted her job, as she tells us, "Dribin has been long known for its felt making. Since the 19th century, our felt makers have created hand-

made felt boots for sale locally, as well as to neighbouring districts and the Smolensk Region. The secrets of the craft were passed down from generation to generation and a secret felt-making language was even invented. Over time, the number of master craftsmen has dwindled, as it's no easy task to create felt boots. Accordingly, we're restoring knowledge of this unique craft at our museum.

By Olga Kislyak

