

Model Natalia Vodianova's Jet-Setting Ways Help Others

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Natalia Vodianova holding her DVF Award in New York last week.

NEW YORK — Model Natalia Vodianova was honored as an inspiration to women at the annual DVF Awards, in part because as a globe-trotting jet-setter, she has not forgotten her roots in Russia.

Actually, her around-the-world lifestyle, rubbing shoulders with fashion's glitterati, is what allows her to help back home, the 31-year-old model said.

Vodianova founded the [Naked Heart Foundation](#) in 2004. The charity started as a project to build a playground for the surviving children of the Beslan school massacre. It has now grown to 90 play parks in 68 Russian towns.

"I conduct most of my fundraising in the fashion industry. It's very international, and we have a lot of events outside of Russia, and even those in Moscow or St. Petersburg bring

international celebrities and performers," she said. "I activate all my resources."

The DVF Award was presented to Vodianova last week at the United Nations by designer Diane von Furstenberg as part of The Diller-von Furstenberg Family Foundation that honors leadership and courage.

Vodianova said it was particularly special because it was the first time she has been celebrated outside of Russia for her charity work. Plus, von Furstenberg is more than a business acquaintance.

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Natalia

Vodianova

Model,
philanthropist

"It's so hard to put into words our relationship so it doesn't sound cheesy. I love her. She's my role model, my confidante, someone I share vacations with. We are friends, and I consider her a part of my family," Vodianova said.

The designer returned the compliment, saying in an e-mail: "Natalia is a beautiful, strong and determined young woman. I was first drawn to her beauty and then I discovered her enormous heart when she came to me in 2004 wanting to help the children who had suffered from the Beslan tragedy. I saw that she was a woman who could make things happen."

Vodianova's now a veteran of the runway, having walked in more than 175 fashion shows, from Calvin Klein to Yves Saint Laurent, but she said a von Furstenberg show was the first one she ever opened and closed.

"My English at the time was really poor, but she made me feel really good about myself," she said. "She made it very personal. It was more than I fit her 'look.' Diane said she liked my personality."

Vodianova makes Paris her home with her three children. She went to modeling school in Paris and lived there in her teens after being "discovered." She has also lived in London and New York.

Travel is part of the modeling gig, and even though she doesn't like being away from home so often, she's thankful to have work and to be successful at it, she said. Vodianova has been the face of many ad campaigns, including Stella McCartney, Givenchy and David Yurman.

She is very active on social media and is "always available on my Blackberry."

"I very much continue my day job that pays my bills, and it gives me the constant exposure that I need to be good for Naked Heart. It's tough when I have to go film a commercial for a

week in India — that's a week away from my family — it's what I like to do, love to do and have to do."

The key is not to think too much about it or look too far ahead on the calendar, she said. "Stopping makes for more jet lag. Keep moving, and I do keep moving generally in life, with just little stops to say hello to myself."

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