

Arch Dispatch

Thursday, May 31 2012 | The 26th National Veterans Golden Age Games, St Louis MO

Welcome From the Director

Dewayne Vaughan, National Director of NVGAG

Hello, and welcome to the “Gateway to the West” and the 26th National Veterans Golden Age Games.

Now the largest of VA's six National Sports Programs and Special Events, the Games have come from humble beginnings of about 150 competitors to now over 900 Veteran athletes in this year's competition.

In 1983 the medical centers in Canandaigua, New York; Topeka, Kansas and Palo Alto, California decided they would organize an adaptive sporting event to help get our Domiciliary and Nursing Home veteran's active. These early Golden Age Games included many of our present sports with an eye on rehabilitation at all levels of ability.

The event started sporadically as it was held in 1985, 1987 and 1988 with about 150 veterans participating. At that time, In order to qualify to attend the now National Veterans Golden Age Games you had to first win a Gold, Silver or Bronze medal at one of seven Regional Golden Age Games held across the United States.

In 1989 a call to locate a host site for the National Veterans Golden Age Games was sent throughout the VA system so it could become an annual event. It wasn't until 1990 when the Sam Rayburn Memorial Veterans Center located in the northeast Texas community of Bonham stepped up and hosted the event at a small liberal arts school called Austin College in Sherman, Texas, 30 miles away. It was also the first year the NVGAG picked up a co sponsor to help ensure a steady supply of funding would be available. Veterans and attending therapists stayed in college dorm rooms, and ate in the cafeteria and the total budget for the 1990 Games was \$50,000 dollars. No one could have guess how much the event would grow.

Here we are in 2012 with dorm rooms traded in for four and five star hotels, 150-thousand square feet of convention center space to be used for meals, Opening and Closing Ceremonies as well as other events and competition venues that are rated as some of the best in the United States. Participation has surged with an expected total of around 1,300 Veterans, coaches and family members attending. The 2012 NVGAG also adds its 15th athletic event in Javelin.

The Games have grown at a rate of nearly five percent a year since 2000. While the growth of this event speaks volumes about the importance of these Games to our Veteran population, it also presents numerous financial challenges to VA and our great co sponsors Help Hospitalized Veterans and Veterans Canteen Service.

Looking to the future, the Games will most certainly face a number of challenges, but will remain the pinnacle of sports competition for Veterans 55 and up who strive to lead healthy active lives.

his year, on behalf of the National Veterans Golden Age Games team I want to thank our host the VA St. Louis Health Care System and the wonderful volunteers who have worked tirelessly to make this event possible. Special thanks also to all of our sponsors, especially our co-sponsors — VA, Help Hospitalized Veterans and Veterans Canteen Service — along with the many corporate and community sponsors who have made this event so successful.

And last but not least thank you and welcome to all of our Veteran athletes — Let the Games begin!

Competing for Gold Under the Silver Arch

Sandy Franks, Public Affairs Officer, Overton Brooks VAMC

Jake Johnson is putting on his “game face” in preparation for the stiff competition he expects at this year’s National Veterans Golden Age Games. This is Johnson’s second trip to the Golden Age Games and he is looking forward to competing and seeing the friends he met last year in Hawaii. “The athletes were tough last year and I know it’s going to be more competitive this year. You meet a lot of nice people but when it’s game on, they mean business, Johnson said. Jake, who served in the Army from 1972 to 1984, was born in Ferriday, Louisiana, home of “The Killer, Jerry Lee Lewis, and entered the Army at age 19, just after graduating from high school. He was in telecommunications and served at Army bases in the states and overseas. While on active duty Jake began to have problems with his vision and was eventually medically retired. Although now legally blind, he volunteers at Overton Brooks VA Medical Center in Shreveport, LA and helps other Veterans who are visually impaired. He heard about the Golden Age Games from another Veteran and decided he would check it out. Last year he competed in checkers and bowling and will compete in bowling and swimming in St. Louis. One of his goals is to attend the National Veterans TEE Tournament in Iowa which provides legally blind and eligible disabled Veterans an opportunity to develop new skills through adaptive golf and bowling events. Johnson, who has been bowling for years can’t see the pins, he bowls by feel. He said, “I know where to stand on the approach and know how my curve is going to roll and I do pretty good. When asked about the Games Johnson said, “I really enjoyed the Golden Age Games in Hawaii and I am looking forward to competing again in St. Louis. It was awesome the way we were taken care of by the VA and the volunteers. It was so much more than I expected. I met some great people and formed lasting friendships. I keep in touch with several guys I met and we’re making plans to meet this year in St. Louis. I enjoyed the competition, it got my adrenaline flowing. It was fun to sit around in the evening and talk to the other guys about our time in the service and talk a little trash. I was especially impressed with the 100 year old Veteran who competed last year. If he can do it, any of us can do it,” said Johnson. “I encourage Veterans to get involved in the Golden Age Games, you’ll have a great time.”

Connect With the Games!

Be a part of the conversation!

There’s a new way to keep in touch with information about the National Veterans Golden Age Games and it’s called a hashtag. It allows you to post your own photos, videos, stories and experiences about the Games on Twitter! All you have to do is create a Twitter account, and then write a post about the Games and write #goldenagegames at the end. After you post you can click on #goldenagegames to see what everyone is saying about the Games. Post your experience for everyone to see, and follow @VAadaptivesport for great updates and fun photos.

To sign up go to: <http://www.twitter.com>

The Golden Age Games on Facebook

You can also find the Games on Facebook. Just search for 2012 National Veterans Golden Age Games, and click like.

Have a smartphone?



Then keep an eye out for this symbol in the newsletter. It’s called a QR, or quick response code. These codes will take you to extra content throughout the week. Search your Android Marketplace, or App Store to download one of the free apps listed below, and then use the app to scan these codes wherever you see them.

Hint: Scan the code above to see where it takes you!

QR Code Scanner Apps:

Iphone, Blackberry and Palm:

Neo Reader

<http://getneoreader.com>

Windows Phone:

Microsoft Tag

<http://tag.microsoft.com>

Android:

Barcode Scanner

Go to Android Marketplace and search for “Barcode Scanner”

WELCOME TO ST. LOUIS

The VA St. Louis Health Care System is proud to be the host of this year’s National Veterans Golden Age Games. The volunteers and staff members are excited to greet our “Athletes at the Arch.”

St. Louis is known as the Gateway City. This week’s festival will provide the opportunity for you to travel throughout the greater metropolitan area of St. Louis and cross the gateway into Illinois. The athletic events and the alternate activities are planned so you can enjoy the best of both Missouri and Illinois. We have events and activities that showcase some of our most popular tourist attractions including Anheuser-Busch Brewery, Busch Stadium, Gateway Grizzlies and the Gateway Arch.

No matter which activities you select, we hope that this week will be a positive one filled with great memories!

On behalf of everyone involved with the 2012 National Veterans Golden Age Games, I thank you for your service to our nation and for sharing this week with all of us. We in St. Louis are honored to be a part of this outstanding event.

The End of Hometown News and How to Get Photos

Hometown News is a thing of the past. The public affairs team will no longer be able to provide individual news releases and photos, but now you can get better photos faster. Every day, the public affairs team will load a selection of photos onto VA’s Flickr account. Find it by clicking the Flickr icon on the www.va.gov main page or www.veteransgoldenagegames.va.gov, then search for the Golden Age Games set.

You can also share your own photos with one another easily on Twitter by posting them with the hashtag #goldenagegames.

Stay in touch with your VA during the Games!

With My HealtheVet VA Patients can stay in touch with their home VA, while attending this year's Golden Age Games in St Louis, Mo. My HealtheVet is VA's awarding winning online Personal Health Record.

VA Patients can use My HealtheVet to:

- Store personal health information
- Get reliable health resources and tools
- Refill VA Prescriptions online 24/7
- See VA Chemistry/Hematology Lab Results online
- More!

My HealtheVet even allows VA Patients with upgraded accounts to talk to their VA health care teams online. Secure Messaging is My HealtheVet's web based messaging tool. VA Patients can send secure non-urgent messages to available VA Services.

Secure Messaging can be used to:

- Request, cancel, and/or change VA appointments
- Ask non-urgent health related questions
- Get information about medical procedures
- And More!

With an upgraded My HealtheVet account you can stay in touch with your local VA wherever you go. All you need is a computer or mobile device with internet access.

Visit the My HealtheVet Booth near the Internet Café in the America's Center. My HealtheVet Coordinators are available to help you register, upgrade, or use My HealtheVet during the Golden Age Games.

If you are a My HealtheVet user already visit the booth to share how the program helps you manage your health.

Thank you and good luck in the Games!

Odds and Ends

Medical: Medical assistance will be provided 24 hours a day. First aid will be provided at the events and activities. Emergency medical treatment will be available at the America's Center – Room 122 and at the Renaissance Grand Hotel – Room 1922.

Prosthetics/DME & Wheelchair Repair: Located at Renaissance Grand Hotel –Parkview Room and America's Center – Room 121

Schedule, Thursday, May 31, 2012

Time	Event	Location
5:30 a.m. – 8 a.m.	Breakfast	Renaissance Grand Hotel – Landmark Ballroom
8 a.m. – 5 p.m.	Registration/Check-in	America's Center Hall 4
11 a.m. – 1 p.m.	Lunch	America's Center 2 nd Floor Atrium
4 p.m. – 5 p.m.	Coaches' Meeting	America's Center – Room 261 & 262
5 p.m. – 7 p.m.	Dinner	Renaissance Grand Hotel – Landmark Ballroom
6 p.m. – 7 p.m.	Pre-Opening VIP Reception	America's Center – Room 220
7 p.m. – 9 p.m.	Opening Ceremony	America's Center – America's Ballroom
9 p.m. – 11 p.m.	Dance and Ice Cream Social	America's Center – America's Ballroom

*Please note that this schedule is subject to change.
Watch the message boards for up-to-date information.*

OPENING CEREMONY

Kick off the 2012 Games!

Be sure to come to the Opening Ceremonies of the 2012 National Veterans Golden Age Games this evening in the America's Center - America's Ballroom. Seating and musical entertainment begin at 6:30 p.m. This year's Master of Ceremonies is retired St. Louis Cardinals' short stop, Baseball Hall of Famer, Ozzie "The Wizard" Smith. Also presenting remarks are The Honorable Mike Galloucis, Executive in Charge for the Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs; Rima Nelson, Director, VA St. Louis Health Care System and other VA officials.

Following the formal ceremony, stay for a post-ceremony performance by Starlifter. The Starlifter Band of Mid America is one of the USAF's most popular bands. They will entertain with hits from pop to country to classics.

Enjoy tonight's festivities!