



NATIONAL VETERANS GOLDEN AGE GAMES

National Competitor Profile

Beverly Smith Inspires Us All!

At the age of 87, Beverly Smith is far from slowing down. She still competes in sports, trains for her events and does her own gardening. She keeps up the same Long Island home she's lived in

since 1949, and recently bought another house in Ohio that she drives to by herself. "Its 600 miles one way, and I've always done it in one day," she says proudly. Attending the past 18 National Veterans Golden Age Games, Smith, who lives in North Babylon, N.Y., has collected an impressive array of winning medals, including the "George Gangi Most Inspirational Athlete" award in 2000.

With a quick wit and a winning personality, the sound of Smith's frequent laughter rings out across crowded gymnasiums and swimming pools at the annual Golden Age Games, where she is a glowing recipient of continuous hugs and handshakes. Her bright eyes shine with a genuine glimmer when she describes the Games. "I think this is just an excellent thing," Smith says. "I hope it continues forever, because lots of older veterans don't have anything to look forward to like this. But with the Games, they can practice all year, come with their teammates and really enjoy themselves. I think it's one of the best things VA (the Department of Veterans Affairs) has ever done."

A World War II Navy veteran, Smith was stationed stateside in Iowa from 1945-46, serving as an aviation machinist mate – an airplane mechanic – for pre-flight crews, accompanying them on long flights across the country. After leaving the service, she moved to North Babylon on Long Island's south shore and started working at the Northport VA Medical Center in 1950. Her VA job obviously suited her well – she retired at age 77, after 47 years of government service.

Smith first attended the National Veterans Golden Age Games in St. Petersburg, Fla. in 1991, after a recreation therapist at the Northport facility told her about the event. There, she fell in love with the Games. Originally from Ohio, Smith has been active in sports since the eighth grade, playing softball and later basketball in high school. Still a member of the Northport Islanders Golden Age Team, she stays fit by swimming and bowling.

For Beverly Smith, enjoying life in one's "golden age" is really not about winning medals. For veterans who have never attended the event, her strong advice is to "get up off your duff and get out there and try! It's not a matter of winning each event you participate in, but the idea is to try. I think that everybody here is a winner. At my age, I hope I can bring some kind of incentive to help others get started." That, she does.

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