



NATIONAL VETERANS GOLDEN AGE GAMES

National Competitor Profile

Jack Collins - Avid outdoorsman seeks new adventures in life

Jack Collins, a 63-year-old Army veteran of the Vietnam War era, has been a self-described avid outdoorsman for as long as he can remember. Currently residing in Metamora, Indiana, he loves hunting, fishing and anything and everything outdoors.

He knew from an early age that he would spend a majority of his time outdoors. Beginning at the age of seven, he began managing the family garden. The garden fed the family of seven for the majority of the summer months. "Mom was pregnant that year and so it was my job, and I guess I was so good at it that it became my permanent job," said Collins. Not having a garden is not an option for him, and even though he can not see the garden himself, people tell him that his "garden is the prettiest they have ever seen." Collins tenderly cares for his vegetable garden daily, using his white cane as well as the other "senses" to compensate for the loss of vision.

Collins unfortunately developed macular degeneration and the resulting loss of vision forced him to redefine his definition of recreation and outdoor life.

He was able to learn how to hone into these senses during an eight week stint at Hines VA, rehabilitation center in Illinois last year. During his stay at Hines he worked on mobility independence and non-visual skills, and met a few friends along the way. "The guys and I got to talking one day when I was at Hines and they told me all about the different games," added Collins.

After his rehabilitation, Collins went to the Blinded Veterans National Tee Tournament in Iowa City, Iowa last year to compete in bowling, golf, and horseshoes. He medaled in each of these events.

Success in sports is not new to Collins, who was eligible to participate in the Senior Olympics in softball previously. Let's hope Collins is able to find similar success in this year's National Veterans Golden Age Games being held in Indianapolis. The success to him will be defined not by medals, but in terms of the camaraderie and socialization that he hopes to gain, and as he says, "there's a bunch of us out there. I'm just looking forward to that!"

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