

Competitor Profile

Kenneth A. Peterson – Always an Athlete!

“I’ve been an athlete all my life,” said Ken Peterson, a U.S Army veteran from Toledo, Ohio, a past recipient of the George Gangi Inspiration Award at the National Veterans Golden Age Games. Peterson, 65, started competing in 1996, as soon as he turned 55 and became eligible to compete. He was chosen as the best male athlete at the Games that year, a selection made for good reason.

Growing up, Peterson played football, baseball, tennis and ran track prior to becoming an accomplished long-distance runner in college. Over the years he ran the Boston Marathon five times, the Detroit Free Press Marathon three times, and nearly 30 other long-distance marathons. 2006 will mark Peterson’s ninth time at the Golden Age Games.

A member of the Ann Arbor VA Classics Golden Age Team, Peterson receives health care at the Toledo VA Outpatient Clinic and the VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System. “Ken is an example of a true athlete,” said Deborah Bray-Arthur, coach of the Classics. “He trains well, competes well and is a great sportsman. It is a pleasure to have him as a team member representing our medical center.”

Peterson competes in many events including bicycling (1/4 mile), table tennis, croquet and the shuffleboard, earning more medals each year. “I was really excited about the medals in bicycling one year, because I broke my ankle about five months before and was still hobbling around only two weeks before the Games,” Peterson said.

Ken Peterson is a survivor in many ways. He has overcome four bouts with cancer, undergoing both radiation and chemotherapy treatments. He firmly believes that staying active and involved with sports aided in his recovery. “It’s saved my life,” he says. “Being active helps you both physically and emotionally.” This year, Peterson is once again battling illness, but is committed to attending the event nonetheless.

Peterson speaks highly of the special camaraderie among the veterans at the Games, in addition to the obvious health benefits that come from competition. “I’ve met a lot of great people at these Games,” he said. “You meet new people all the time. When you go to these events, you renew those friendships. Everyone who competes here is a winner, whether they come away with a medal or not. It’s definitely worth the experience.”

Back home in Toledo, Peterson is an active volunteer in his community, donating time to “Mobile Meals,” as well as a respite program at his church and a bike race for the MS Society. He is also an active member of the Toledo Roadrunners Club, where he helps with races and other local events. Staying involved and keeping active are what keep him going.

Ken Peterson – outstanding athlete, straight shooter, proud veteran, great sportsman. Above all, he remains a true inspiration to us all.

