



**Department of
Veterans Affairs**

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News Release

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Premier Veterans Sports Competition Draws 500 to Virginia

WASHINGTON – More than 500 veterans from across the nation, aged 55 and older, will test their mettle in competition at the nation’s largest sporting event for senior military veterans. The 20th National Veterans Golden Age Games, a national sports and recreational competition, will take place May 7-12, 2006 in Hampton, Va.

The event includes competition in 14 different sports, such as swimming, bicycling, discus, shot put, bowling and golf. It is open to all U.S. military veterans age 55 or older who are currently receiving care at any VA medical facility.

"America's veterans have shown us the real meaning of patriotism, self-sacrifice and heroism," said the Honorable R. James Nicholson, Secretary of Veterans Affairs. "Now, many of them are showing the way toward healthful living with habits defined by interests, not years. The determination and grace shown by these participants is a testament to their character and spirit."

The National Veterans Golden Age Games are sponsored by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the Veterans of Foreign Wars and Ladies Auxiliary (VFW), and Veterans Canteen Service (VCS).

“The National Veterans Golden Age Games are a life-changing event for both spectators and athletes alike,” said Jim Donahoe, Director of the Veterans Canteen Service. “You will be inspired by the courage, drive, and determination shown by the athletes. It is really the sense of brotherhood and mutual support, however, that will leave a long-lasting impression and serve as an example for all of us to follow.”

The Games bring together veterans from all branches of military service who served in times of war and peace. Participants compete in open, wheelchair and visually impaired divisions in specific age groups. Veterans who served during the war in Vietnam now make up the largest group of competitors, although there are also large numbers of men and women who served in World War II and the Korean War.

Golden Age 2/2/2/2

“We are proud to once again be a national co-sponsor of the Golden Age Games,” said Jim Mueller, commander-in-chief of the 2.4 million-member VFW. “Everyone should take great pride in what military veterans have accomplished, whether in defense of our nation or on the field of friendly competition. They are the foundation on which our great country was built.”

For the second time, the National Veterans Golden Age Games will serve as a qualifier for the National Senior Olympics, to be held June 29 – July 14, 2007 in Louisville, Ky. The National Senior Olympics is a community-based member of the United States Olympic Committee.

The event begins with a gala opening ceremony on Sunday, May 7 at 7:00 p.m. at the Hampton Roads Convention Center. Festivities include music, a color guard, the parade of flags from participating states and a ceremonial lighting of the torch. Closing ceremonies will also be held at the Convention Center, on Friday, May 12 at 7:00 p.m.

For more information about the National Veterans Golden Age Games, visit the event’s web site at www.veteransgoldenagegames.org.

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