

CHARLES WYNDER, SR. — AN ADVOCATE FOR THE GAMES!

“Some mornings, I open my eyes and just pray for rain,” Charles Wynder said, although he doesn’t give in to the wish for more than a moment. Up at 5:00 a.m., he is on his bicycle by 5:30 to ride eight miles in 32 minutes or less, before most people are awake. “If I don’t make that time, I just ride another lap,” he said.



Wynder trains year round. An alumnus of the last five Golden Age Games, he has claimed 10 medals for Hampton, winning gold in golf, bicycling and croquet; silver in shuffleboard and bronze in the pentathlon.

A native of Hampton and now living in Williamsburg, Wynder, 65, retired from the Army in 1995 as a Colonel, with more than 30 years of service. Since then, biking became his passion, keeping him exceptionally fit. “I’ve always strived to exercise. Living is a constant process of deciding what you are going to do, whether it is eating or drinking certain things, sitting on the couch or staying active. I decided to do what allows me to live most and serve best.” Although he trains for the competition, he says the greatest benefit comes while training and preparing for daily life.

For Wynder, the National Veterans Golden Age Games are a life-altering experience and he wants other veterans to know about the event. Helping people is a way of life for Wynder, who volunteers with Hampton’s Healthy Families Partnership as a trained facilitator in the “Dynamic Dad’s” program. One year, his efforts raised funds from local veterans organizations to make sure all his team members could travel and participate in the Games.

He looks forward to the therapeutic value of competition and camaraderie among fellow vets year after year. While racking up medals is nice, the camaraderie is what brings Wynder back to the Games each year. He is so concerned about some of those friends who are trying to get to Hampton this year, that he spearheaded an effort to raise funds for veterans who were hit hard by Hurricane Katrina in the Gulf Coast states. The funds will help pay for their expenses associated with competing in Hampton in 2006. Understanding that their need to attend the Games in 2006 is special, Charles Wynder is committed to helping. Watching Wynder on his bike, whether it is at 5:30 a.m. in the middle of winter or at the track during the Golden Age Games in May, it is clear that this is one veteran who always does his best, to help others whenever he can along the way.