

Arch Dispatch

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George Gangi Award Winner

World War II Army Veteran Wayne Field of Colorado Springs, Colo., started swimming 31 years ago at the tender age of 55. Today, at 86 years of age, he has won more than 200 medals in 23 appearances at both the National Veterans Golden Age Games and the National Veterans Wheelchair Games. He also competed in the National Senior Games five times where his best finish was fourth in the 100 meter.

While this Purple Heart recipient's athletic ability and accomplishments are outstanding, what is really amazing is that he has achieved these feats with no feeling below his knees. Shortly after the Battle of the Bulge, Field's platoon was shelled knocking him unconscious. His legs froze in the snow resulting in peripheral neuropathy in both extremities. After the war he walked with forearm crutches for many years before finally requiring use of a wheelchair. His wife, Marie, believes swimming is one of the main reasons he still has both legs.

Field is this year's recipient of the George Gangi Inspiration Award that recognizes the "most inspirational" athlete of the National Veterans Golden Age Games.

His coach Recreation Therapist Adeline Velasquez said, "It's an inspiration to see him progressing even as he ages. I use him as an inspiration to the team. He's been through so much and he sees his physical limitations as just a minimal hurdle."

This year he helped mentor two new swimmers on his VA Eastern Colorado Healthcare System team. "What better tutor could you have than someone who's been swimming for so many years and is in a power wheelchair?" added Velasquez.

Field, who speeds around the venues in a motorized wheelchair compensates in the water by adjusting his arm strokes to power through to the finish. He follows a strict practice regimen swimming three days a week and doing water aerobics on his off days.

"Whomever I beat, it's probably not because I'm better than him," he said, "it's because I practice more."

Competing has become even more challenging for Field in recent years. In addition to his peripheral neuropathy, he has also overcome rotator cuff surgery in one shoulder and ligament surgery in the other.

Velasquez, who has known him for 12 years, added, "He has gained independence through his therapies. I just love to watch him in the water."

VCS 2012 Challenge Award Winner

Since 2004, the Veterans Canteen Service (VCS) has awarded the Challenge Award to a first-time participant in the Games who demonstrates the characteristics of a true athlete. The winner exhibits determination, sportsmanship, camaraderie and strives for personal bests whether or not they go home with a medal.

This year's 2012 Challenge Award Winner Harold "Lee" Uhey Jr., 56, of Grand Junction, Colo., wishes he could compete in all of the sports at the Games.

"Come one time and you're hooked," the former Navy Seabee said. "It brings back years of playing sports showing that an old guy can still do it."

And do it, he did. Instead of playing cards, he is playing sports. In his first competition he threw a javelin 22.88 meters and won a gold medal.

His coach Henry Bullock said, "He's like a kid in a candy store." He supports other team members at events when he's not competing. "You can't come here expecting to win without putting forth effort," said Uhey. "There is a lot of camaraderie in being a soldier and an athlete. It's great to feel young again!"

HHV 2012 Coach of the Year

What state has the largest team of athletes in attendance? The answer California, what else does California have? The Coach of the Year! Toni Lopez, VA Fresno Coach.

Toni has been coaching Veterans for the Golden Age Games for 23 Years. When asked why does she coach? Toni answered with a smile, "I love watching the Veterans get so much excitement out of the Games. The Games help keep the Veterans in shape which means I need to keep in shape along with them."

Toni states that it is an honor to serve the Veterans; they truly deserve all of my time and effort for all that they have done for our country.

Toni's team consists of 36 Veterans, one who happens to be her brother who served in the Marines during Vietnam. All of her Veterans have shown significant improvement in their health using recreation therapy.

Toni stated that the Veterans Golden Age Games shows recreation therapy at its best!

HHV Outstanding Volunteer Award

Partners John Berry and Linda Smith have been involved with the Golden Age Games at St. Louis from the beginning.

Linda, a former VA employee, has been supporting the local Games for the last two years, and when she found out that the national event was going to be in St. Louis, she jumped on board to help. She entered and won the local competition to choose the event slogan "Athletes at the Arch."

She and her companion John have worked long hours with the site set up team even before the event started. Rain caused damage to NVGAG equipment stored in a warehouse, and the couple spent countless hours cleaning up.

They both have been at the Games every day, before 4 a.m., helping out with anything and everything that they can assist with. Their hours of hard work, drive and dedication truly make this this year's Outstanding Volunteers.

William “Bill” Givens Award

She is the ultimate can do person, she always has a smile, she never says no. These statements are from the co-workers of Karen Wait, this year's Bill Givens Award winner and the local Meet Co-Chair. As recent as six weeks ago Karen assumed the lead role in recruiting over 2000 volunteers. Karen, who is a St. Louis native, launched a huge campaign in the community. She said, “I think I talked to everybody I could find; friends, family members, community leaders, civic organizations and our VA Voluntary Service. Everybody was on board.”

Karen has coordinated over 12,000 hours of volunteer coverage for the Games and when someone didn't show for their assignment, Karen stepped up.

Amy Wills, Meet Director, National Veterans Golden Age Games said, “Karen has a great positive attitude and is absolutely a pleasure to work with. She is the go-to girl. Her work with the National Veterans Wheelchair Games and the Creative Arts Festival brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the Golden Age Games.”

Karen is known not only as a strong leader but a good follower. Not one for the spotlight, she prefers to work behind the scenes, however, the 2012 Bill Givens Award winner is a shining star.

Shuffle off to Buffalo

Make plans now to be part of the 27th National Veterans Golden Age Games in Buffalo, NY, May 30 - June 4, 2013. Buffalo known as the Queen City, due to being the second largest city in New York or the Nickel City, as named in the early part of the 20th century from having the appearance of a bison on the back of the [Indian Head nickel](#), is one of the top cities in America for architecture, home to the world renowned Albright-Knox Art Gallery, sports teams and a beautiful waterfront. Enjoy the architectural works of Frank Lloyd Wright, Olmstead park system and great fishing on Lake Erie and the mighty Niagara River.

Also known as *The City of Good Neighbors*, Buffalonians are friendly, helpful people. It was the first city in America to have electric street lights because of the plentiful hydroelectric power made possible by nearby Niagara Falls.

The region is rich with Native American history and a melting pot of ethnic cultures.

Get ready for great competition, festivals, and food. Shuffle off to Buffalo with your family and friends in 2013!