

Arch Dispatch

Friday 1 June 2012 | The 26th National Veterans Golden Age Games | St. Louis, MO

GOLDEN POET

Golden Age Competitor Finds News Skills On and Off the Field

Laura Schafsnitz, Public Affairs Specialist, Marion VAMC

U.S. Army Veteran Jack W. Collins knows he is 67 years old. He knows he was the youngest soldier involved with the Cuban Missile Crisis. He knows that he has been married to Mary for 45 years, and that they have six children and 11 grandchildren. What he didn't know, was that he was a poet.

"I quit school when I was 14 so I could help take care of my family and then I joined the Army when I was 17," Collins says. "When my insurance ran out in '06, I started going to the VA so I could get a physical so I could go to the Hines Blind Rehab, but then they told me I had cancer. So I started making up these little poems. They're kind of like little jingles."

The first poem Collins wrote was called *The Truth*.

Life is a gamble
And you play the cards your caught
You try and play by the golden rules
Or whatever rules you were taught
You have good days
And you have bad
But that's no reason
To be depressed or sad
Have faith in god
Until the end
For you can believe
You have one true friend

This is Collins' fifth year participating in the Golden Age Games. Last year, he won gold medals in golf, bowling and horseshoes. This year, Collins plans on winning medals in those events again, and "...the javelin, because this is the first year that it's an event," he says.

Being legally blind doesn't stop Collins. The retired carpenter from Indiana says he practices every day because he, "can't go anywhere and it gives me something to do."

"I kayak too," Collins says. "240 strokes a day...on a carpenter's bench in my front yard. Neighbors don't say much...I live in the country. It's something I do to keep active. My wife complains every day when I play horseshoes at night. It don't matter to me, I can't see any way!"

Collins credits the chance to compete in the National Veterans Golden Age Games with motivating him to lead such an active life-style.

“It really keeps me going. When I went to the Hines Blind Rehab in ‘07 it got me started playing golf because I never played before. My wife Mary says it really saved my life. It’s what keeps me moving because I enjoy the competition and the camaraderie of being at the games.”

Collins also credits the Golden Age Games with inspiring his latest lyrical prose aptly titled The Golden Age Games.

The Golden Age Games

It’s a friendly competition

Where old vets go with medal intentions

They show up and are brave and bold

With all intent of winning the gold

The people you meet they are really great

To get to the next one, I can hardly wait

Although you know that we will soon have to go

I will see you next year

In Buffalo

Interested in Creative Arts?

VA medical facilities nationwide use the creative arts as one form of rehabilitative treatment to help Veterans recover from and cope with physical and emotional disabilities. Across the country each year, Veterans treated at VA facilities compete in a local creative arts competition. The competition includes 53 categories in the visual arts division this year that range from oil painting to leatherwork to paint-by-number kits. In addition, there are 120 categories in the performing arts pertaining to all aspects of music, dance, drama and creative writing. A national selection committee chooses first, second and third place winners among all of the entries. Select winners are invited to attend the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival each year. For more information go to <http://creativeartsfestival.va.gov>.

FRAME of MIND

Peggy Willoughby, Public Affairs Officer, VISN 15 & Marion VAMC

World War II Navy Veteran Robert Rexanne came to this year’s Games to prove a point.

“I’ve had a lot to overcome,” he says, “but I’ve got a lot to look forward to.”

85-year old Rexanne suffers from acute lumbar trauma, and has to work hard to stay in shape and to stay in the right frame of mind.

“It’s more than physical training; it’s about reframing all your negative thoughts into positive ones.”

He’s positive about earning a gold medal this year, and he’s signed up for two events today that will throw him more challenges—shot put and discus.

“I have learned that if I can’t do it, I can adapt. It’s all in the way you look at it.”

The shot put and discus events are intricate and complex events that require great power. The wind up is on the of most important aspects of the throwing events, and Rexanne will have to adapt his movements due to his back condition.

“The wind up is both mental and technical. It is mental because the wind up sets you up for the rest of the throw,”
Rexanne remarks.

This is the 20th year that Rexanne has attended the Golden Age Games. He sets himself up each day with some good advice—to start each day with a “heart-full of smiles.” Let’s hope that positive attitude helps him prove his point, win some gold and keep him moving forward.

Question of the Day:

How does coming to the NVGAG help you stay active throughout the year?

Bob Erff, 79

US Navy, USS Oriskany, during the Korean Conflict, West Haven, CT

“The best thing is coming to the games and hugging the same lady every year. I hope to be back next year!”

Michael Coplan, 69

US Army, 66-68, Thailand, West Haven, CT

“Our group has meetings and bake sales to raise money to come. It (the games) gives us the sticktuitiveness, and there are some very heated discussions, and we have wonderful coaches that keep us from stabbing each other between the 3rd and 4th rib.”

Pierce Smith

US Air Force, Inventory Management Specialist, 1966, Martinsburg, WV

“ I work out. I’m retired. I’m 100% disabled. It’s the comraderie...meeting people and going various places with the group from the VA.”

Octavia Mitchell, 55

US Army, 76Y (Supply), 88-90, Chicago, IL

“I have come so far. They gave me 24 hours to live eight years ago. To be 55 and present...I am in awe.”

Jack W. Collins

US Army, Army Intelligence Scout, 62-65, Metamora, IN

“It’s what keeps me moving because I enjoy the competition and the comraderie of being at the games. I’ve met some of the best people in the world over the past 5 years from all over the country.”

DON'T MISS: UNION STATION

St. Louis Union Station, once the largest and busiest passenger rail terminal in the world, is now one of America’s great marketplaces. Union Station first opened in 1894, but ceased operation as an active train terminal in 1978. Union Station reopened in August of 1985 as the largest adaptive re-use project in the United States.

Today, this 114-year old National Historic Landmark has been dramatically restored and redeveloped as a dynamic mixed-use project that includes great shopping, delicious dining and fabulous entertainment.

St. Louis Union Station houses a hotel, offices, a lake and a plaza for festivals, concerts and other special events. St. Louis Union Station is truly a shopper’s delight with over 80 shops and restaurants to choose from.

The “Memories Museum,” features “O” Gauge model trains, railroad china and silverware, uniforms, timetables, a working model railroad and other artifacts and memorabilia from St. Louis Union Station’s glory days as a major rail

hub are exhibited in the museum, along with a video theatre that showcases the restoration of St. Louis Union Station. Admission to the Museum is free to the public.

IF YOU GO

Catch the Westbound Metro Link leaving every 10 minutes from 8th and Pine

(go out the Renaissance Grand Hotel main door, make a right and head south on 8th toward 8th and Pine).

St. Louis Union Station offers guided tours by appointment. For more information or to schedule a tour, please call 314-421-6655. Hours are from 10 am to 9 pm Monday through Saturday and 10 am to 6 pm Sunday.

Teams from Across the US Search for "Gold"

Excitement was in the air as the 882 participants registered for the 2012 National Veterans Golden Age Games being held in St. Louis. Participants from this year's games range in ages from 55 to 101 years young and represent 40 states, the District of Columbia and the US Virgin Islands. The distance from the US Virgin Islands to Honolulu is 9440 miles, representing the total mileage covered for teams participating in this year's games. The team traveling the farthest is Team Hawaii (pictured) with 26 athletes, 10 family members, 5 coaches and 1 national official. Last year Team Hawaii was the largest team represented in the games with 100 athletes and served as the host site in Honolulu, HI. This is the first year Team Hawaii has traveled to the games and it was not without an 8 hour flight delay in Los Angeles. Rick Velasquez, Team Hawaii Coordinator, states, "that the team is very honored to be a part of such a prestigious game with so many of "America's Heroes"." Another team that served as a host site in 2009 was the Birmingham Team (pictured) being represented this year by 3 athletes, 2 family members and 2 national officials. The Birmingham Team states that they are going for the "Gold", as declared by their coaches (both wives). The breakdown of participants for this year's games is as follows:

Ages

55-59	135 athletes
60-64	253 athletes
65-69	255 athletes
70-74	106 athletes
75-79	81 athletes
80-84	65 athletes
85+	57 athletes

Females 92

Males 790

The largest group of athletes this year is from the Greater Los Angeles VA Medical Center with 53. This year's host city of St. Louis is represented by an impressive 46 athletes. Congratulations to the athlete with the largest number of years participating in the National Veterans Golden Age Games, Melanie Downey who has participated in 23 games and is 84 years young from Santa Monica, CA. The oldest participant this year is Jack Faust at 101 years young from Hayward, CA.

TODAY'S MENU

JUNE 1

Breakfast Buffet
Renaissance Grand Hotel

LUNCH

America's Center
2nd Floor Atrium

Taste of Mexico Buffet

Salad

Fiesta Chicken or Steak Fajitas

Cheese Quesadillas

Refried Beans

Spanish Rice

Cookies, Brownies, Fresh Fruit

Coffee, Decaf, Iced Tea

Dinner at the Ball Park
(or on your own)

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com>

#GoldenAgeGames

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/2012NVGAG>

VIEW PHOTOS ONLINE: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/veteransaffairs/sets/72157629983679426>

TODAY'S WEATHER

Friday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 70. Northwest wind between 9 and 13 mph.

Friday Night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 53. West wind between 3 and 8 mph.

INTERNET CAFÉ

The America's Center Internet Café is located on the first floor in the Plaza Lobby and is free to all Golden Age Games participants. Email and Internet access is available from 8 am to 5 pm.

MEDICAL INFORMATION

The Medical Room is located at the America's Center Room 122 and at the Renaissance Grand Hotel Room 1922

Please let your team leader know of any medical concerns. They will help you.

Medical personnel will accompany each group on activities throughout the week.

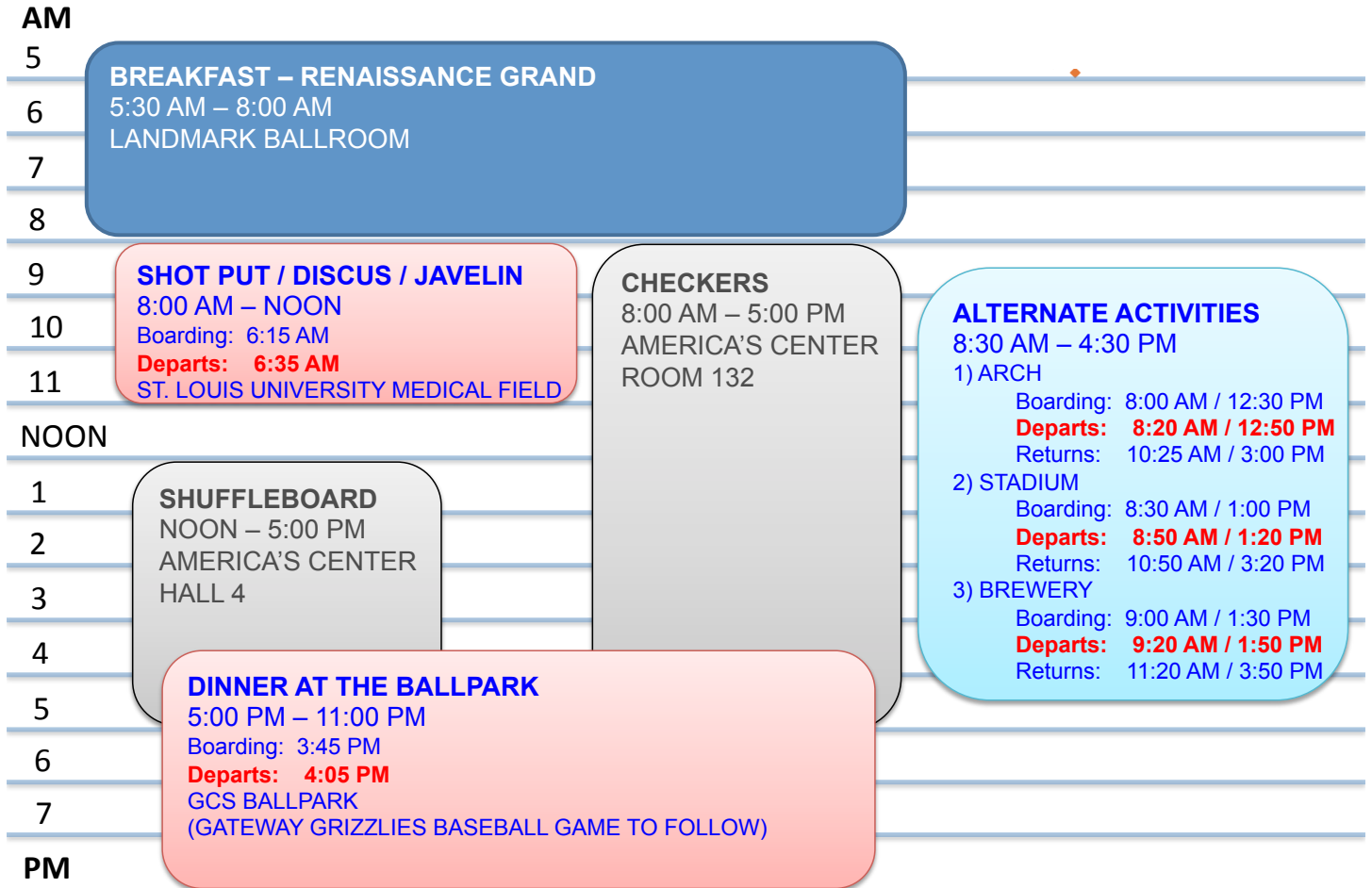
PROSTHETICS/DME/WHEELCHAIR REPAIR:

Located at America's Center Room 121 and at the Renaissance Grand Hotel Parkview Room.

MY HEALTHeVET

Visit the My HealtheVet booth near the Internet Café in the America's Center to register, upgrade or use My HealtheVet. If you are already a My HealtheVet user, stop by and share with us how the program helps you manage your health!

Schedule for Friday, June 1st, 2012



Birthdays

Several of our Veterans are celebrating their birthdays with us this week! Everyone at VA's National Golden Age Games wishes a Happy Birthday to:

May 31

Glenn Coplin
Wayne Field

June 1

Robert Damaso, Jr.
Thurman McKnight

June 2

Bernard Eble
Jay Bard

June 3

Fred Schuring
Sammie Crofford

June 4

Blair Fraser

June 5

James Flanders
James Smith
Louis Moller