

Arch Dispatch

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NVGAG a Family Affair

Tonya C. Lobbestael, Public Affairs Officer, Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center, Charleston, SC

Father and daughter Pete and Lori Falzarano of Stirling, N.J., have a lot in common ... a strong family resemblance, pitching the first no-hitter at Watchung Hills High School (Pete in baseball; Lori in softball) and coaching each other in athletic competitions. They also live next door to each other in what they both laughingly describe as Italian family tradition.

Pete, a former football player at N.C. State and Army Veteran, coached Lori for years teaching and pushing her to excel as a pitcher in fast-pitch softball. Now Lori, a recreation therapist at Lyon's VA Medical Center, coaches her dad in shot put, discus, checkers and croquet to compete in the National Veterans Golden Age Games.

It took a little convincing from Lori to get Pete involved in the Golden Age Games. But finally Pete agreed to compete.

"She became the coach and I became the student," Pete said with a smile. "The best comparison is your parents raise you and at some point you raise your parents. She pushes me the way I pushed her."

Lori, who has coached the Lyon's VAMC team for 11 years, credits her dad for her success as an athlete and sees her role as a natural next step.

"The reason I was so successful (as a pitcher) was because of him," she said recalling Pete was at all of her games as she grew up. "What I'm doing is the same thing he did for me." For years Pete came to all of her games, caught for her when she practiced, arranged travel for tournaments and all the other things parents of athletes do to make the sport possible for their children. Now Lori says it's her turn.

The truth is, though, both coaches had to learn sport techniques too. Pete had to master the underhand fast-pitch technique as he coached Lori. And Lori had to learn proper technique for shot put and discus to coach her dad who has won gold in discus in eight of his nine appearances at the Golden Age Games. Pete has also competed twice at the National Senior Games and hopes to qualify again for their 2013 events.

"She's the best coach I've ever had," said Pete who was a teacher and high school athletic director after leaving the Army. "What I forget, she remembers. What I don't do, she sees. She has insight and knowledge that have made me a better athlete in the field events and all around."

Lori has high expectations for the nine athletes on their team. She demands they work hard, train regularly and exhibit good sportsmanship while supporting each other.

"When you play sports at any age it really teaches you about life," Lori said. "Somebody wins; somebody loses ... you're part of a team and you have to work together to win."

Pete and Lori have learned those lessons well. He won gold in both discus and shot put in the men's 70 – 74 age division at the 26th National Veterans Golden Age Games.

Bowled Over

John Farrell, Voluntary Service Specialist, VA St. Louis Health Care System

Army Veteran John Schneck bowled a 300 game in 2002 before he lost both his legs to diabetes. But that didn't stop him from continuing to play the game he loves. Now 70, Schneck bowls from a motorized scooter and does just fine, scoring a two-game total of 296 at St. Clair Bowl during Saturday's bowling competition.

"I started out trying to stand up so I could maybe sub on a league if my average was decent, but now I do it all from the chair," Schneck explained. Shortly after moving to the chair full-time, Schneck adapted his game to fit his physical abilities. These changes included using a lighter ball that he says is really paying off.

In his hometown of Chicago, Schneck bowled for 28 years in a Friday night league so he is no stranger to the sport's competitive side. And although this is his first Golden Age Games, Schneck has competed in the National Veterans Wheelchair Games, bowling well enough to earn a medal last year.

"I practiced my bowling to be sharp for the Golden Age Games. I won a gold medal at the 2011 Wheelchair Games and that inspired me to see how I could do here."

Volunteer Lyn Clarke handed 61 year-old Navy Veteran George Davis his bowling ball. Davis carefully approached the foul line, drew his arm back and let his "Scooby Doo!" ball roll down the lane, knocking down seven of the 10 pins. You would not think anything remarkable about this until you learn that Davis has been blind since 2000.

Here with his wife Linda and service dog Sanford from Spokane, Wash., Davis is competing in his first Golden Age Games. He has only been bowling for about a year, but managed to post scores of 75 and 90 in his two games.

"I just have to get better and I'll win," said Davis who exercises three days a week at the VA and bowls every Thursday at Lilac Lanes in Spokane. Davis also started a support group for visually impaired Veterans and is president of Spokane Blind Bowlers.

Besides bowling, Davis enjoys kayaking with Team River Runner and cross country skiing. Linda says she likes to see her husband getting enthused about things and not just sitting around the house.

Davis said they are having a great time here in St. Louis and he is enjoying the competitiveness of the Golden Age Games. In addition to bowling, he is trying his hand Monday at the horseshoes competition, an event he has never really played before, all the while keeping everything in perspective.

"If you don't win a gold medal, you're still a winner, because you're here."

Taking Health Into His Own Hands With My HealtheVet

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

Air Force Veteran Ramon Myers never thought he'd find a way to manage his health while saving time and money at this year's Games.

"I signed up for My HealtheVet so that I can refill my medications online and use secure messaging to communicate with my health care team. This program is going to help so many Veterans manage their health."

Myers, 76, isn't one to take his health for granted. This is his second year back at the Games after being diagnosed with cancer four years ago. He spent his recovery time gearing up for the swimming and cycling competitions.

"I started coming to the Golden Age Games when I was 60," Myers said. "As I got older, the Games challenged me to regain and maintain my physical strength."

Myers rides his bicycle six miles round trip at least three times a week to the Central Texas Veterans Health Care System Olin E. Teague Veterans Center. His routine includes strength training and cardio exercise.

"I took 10 pounds off to get ready for this week's competition," Myers said. "I worked with kinesiologists at my VA to create an exercise program that worked for me."

Myers said that his VA health care team expects him to come back with some medals. "They have really helped me prepare, and now I can use My HealtheVet's secure messaging to let them know how I am doing at the competition."

Myers also plans to use My HealtheVet to refill all his prescriptions.

"After my cancer diagnosis I was given more medications. I have to call VA's Prescription refill line and enter each medication number separately. Now I can sign in to My HealtheVet, check the boxes, and be done with it. This will save me time and money so that I can do the things I love; like swimming and biking."

Myers competes on Monday in the 25-yard backstroke and Tuesday in the .25 and .5 mile cycling competitions.

HOW YOU CAN GET STARTED WITH My HealtheVet

You can become an active partner in your health care when you register with My HealtheVet. Remember, by working with your health care team and knowing your health conditions, you can learn to make healthy choices and better manage your health. Take time to register at www.myhealth.va.gov and then get your upgraded account the next time you visit your VA facility.

Question of the Day:

How Did The Golden Age Games Inspire You To Improve Your Health?

George Wyman, 63

Marine Corps

Wilton, Maine

“I’m fighting cancer and overcoming chemo right now... I had to work hard to increase my practicing for the games...my main goal is to be here every year.”

Katrina Sangillo, 59

Army/Air Force

Windham, Maine

“The games are the inspiration to just keep going. Our team bought a javelin to practice with and I have my own shot put so I can practice at home.”

Charles Zimmer, 61

Army

Port Huron, MI

“I’m fighting blindness and lupus and I am fighting to stay active. The games help me to stay motivated to get off the couch and to be more active.”

Michael Andes, 57

Army

Lancaster County, PA

“All I wanted to do was be competitive and to do that, I had to be more active in sports, eat better and take better care of my health.”

Richard Colvert, 65

Army

Harper Woods, MI

“I’m a diabetic and I exercise on a daily basis for myself and for the games. This helps me with my diabetes and keeps me healthy.”

Croquet: A Game of Strategy & Skill

As the ball stealthily slides through the short blades of grass of St. Louis University Medical Field, Army Veteran Sam Sansone holds his breath. He hopes to avoid a roquet, which is an error in the game of croquet where one ball hits another. The seconds feel like centuries until finally, his ball ends its roll with a kiss right into his opponent’s.

“That’s not what I want to happen,” Sansone sighs.

Sansone’s not giving up, though. This 79 year-old Chicago native plays to win.

“I am hoping to win a medal this year,” he says. “This is my eighth year, and I have won both the gold and bronze medal once.”

Sansone has a strategy. If he doesn't medal in croquet today, there's always tomorrow when he competes in dominoes. Or Monday, when he plays 9-ball.

And that's only one of his strategies. Sansone says he works multiple angles in order to achieve victory. His most important strategy didn't start when he arrived at this year's Golden Age Games; he's been working his most important strategy by honing his skills for years. Sansone says he keeps it simple by practicing, breathing, and stretching on a daily basis.

“Playing croquet keeps me physically and emotionally fit throughout the year. Every morning when I get out of bed, I start off with breathing and stretching exercises,” he says.

As the game proceeds, Sansone picks up his mallet, taps his croquet ball, holds his breath, but doesn't worry. He's been practicing his strategy for years.

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.

Do You Know What This Is For?

These collapsible water bottles (found in NVGAG Welcome Kits) are taste-free, easy to fill, and weigh 80% less than conventional hard-plastic bottles. Collapsible design allows you to roll the bottle up for easy, compact storage. Fill up at any water fountain – and stay hydrated!

ODDS and Ends

Swimming Event Clarification

The swimming competition will take place at the St. Peters Rec Plex on Monday, June 4 from 3 p.m. – 6 p.m.

Medal Results

Visit the National Veterans Golden Age Games website at www.veteransgoldenagegames.va.gov/ for medal results.

Competing In Both The Air Rifle & Golf Competitions?

Any athlete who is registered for Air Rifle and Golf on Sunday morning will be permitted to shoot in the first round of the Air Rifle competition. Please register at the Air Rifle desk by 7:30am on Sunday morning. This will ensure you can get to the golf course on time for your competition.

Sunday Weather

Mostly sunny, with a high near 87.

Saturday Night: A 30 percent chance of showers and thunderstorms. Partly cloudy, with a low around 66.

View photos online at <http://www.flickr.com/VeteransAffairs>

Schedule, Sunday 3 June

5:30 a.m. – 8 a.m.	Breakfast	Renaissance Grand Hotel – Landmark Ballroom
8 a.m. – 5 p.m.	Dominoes	America's Center - Room 132
8 a.m. – 5 p.m.	Air Rifle	America's Center Hall 5
9 a.m.-10 a.m.	Worship Service	America's Center - America's Ballroom
11 a.m. – 1 p.m.	Lunch	America's Center 2 nd Floor Atrium
Noon – 4:30 p.m.	Alternate Activities	Brewery/Stadium/Arch
Noon – 5 p.m.	Visually Impaired Golf	Spencer T. Olin Golf Course
1 p.m. - 6 p.m.	*Ambulatory Golf	Spencer T. Olin Golf Course
3 p.m. – 5 p.m.	Medal Ceremony	America's Center – America's Ballroom
5 p.m. – 7 p.m.	Dinner	Renaissance Grand Hotel – Landmark Ballroom
7 p.m. – 9 p.m.	VCS Bingo	Renaissance Grand Hotel – Majestic Ballroom
9 p.m.-Midnight	Coaches' Reception	Renaissance Grand Hotel – Crystal Ballroom

Today's Menu – June 3

Breakfast

Renaissance Grand Hotel

Landmark Ballroom

5:30 a.m. – 8:00 a.m.

Lunch

America's Center

2nd Floor Atrium

11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Taste of Creole Buffet

Salad

Jambalaya

Blackened Chicken Breast
Red Beans and Rice
Roasted Cajun Corn
Corn Bread
Cheesecake – Fruit
Coffee, Decaf, Iced Tea

Dinner

Renaissance Grand Hotel
Landmark Ballroom
5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Salad
Pot Roast and Gravy
Oven Roasted Potatoes
Glazed Carrots
Three Bean Salad
NY Cheesecake
Cherry Pie
Rolls and Butter