



**Department of
Veterans Affairs**

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News Release

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Record Number Register for Veterans Golden Age Games

WASHINGTON – A record number of veterans aged 55 and older have registered to compete in the nation’s largest annual sporting event for senior veterans. More than 550 participants will take part in the 19th annual National Veterans Golden Age Games.

This year's program will be held May 21-26, 2005, at the University of Oklahoma in Norman, Okla., as well as other local venues.

Hosted by the Oklahoma City VA Medical Center, this year's event includes competition in 14 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 receiving care at any VA medical facility.

“Those friends and neighbors who stood tall for freedom 30, 40, and even 50 years ago are now among our most distinguished veterans,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson. “They earned our respect and gratitude when they were in uniform. They continue to inspire us today.”

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

The games bring together veterans from all branches of the military who served in times of war and peace. Participants compete in open, wheelchair and visually impaired divisions in specific age groups. Although many of the competitors are veterans of World War II and the Korean War, Vietnam era veterans are increasing in number each year in this annual competition.

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Golden Age Games 2/2/2/2

“We are pleased to be a part of this excellent program and take great pride in what veterans can do, whether in defense of their country or on the field of friendly competition,” said John Furgess, VFW Commander-in-Chief.

“The Veterans Canteen Service is honored to serve once again as a co-sponsor of the National Veterans Golden Age Games,” said Jim Donahoe, VCS National Director. “As we watch these veterans take on the challenge of competition, we are reminded of the same determination and courage they showed during military service many years ago. They continue to face life head-on and remind the rest of us that we are never too old to stop trying.”

The majority of events will be held on the campus of the University of Oklahoma, beginning with a gala opening ceremony on Saturday, May 21, at 7:00 p.m. at the Gaylord Family Oklahoma Memorial Stadium. Closing ceremonies will be at the Lloyd Noble Center on Thursday, May 26, at 7:00 p.m.

Roy Gantt, a 70-year-old Army and Air Force veteran, has competed in the Golden Age Games for several years. “You’ve got to stay active to keep in shape,” Gantt said. “Participating in these events helps us stay fit and live longer. It not only gets you in great physical shape and helps you feel better about yourself, it also gives you the chance to catch up with old friends and make some new ones. Competing keeps us young.”

For the second year, the National Veterans Golden Age Games will serve as a qualifier for the National Senior Olympics, a community-based member of the United States Olympic Committee. Celebrities in attendance to cheer on veterans and hand out medals include Academy Award winning actor Jack Palance and former Dallas Cowboy and Air Force veteran, Chad Hennings.

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

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Golden Age Games 3/3/3/3

Media Inquiries:

Contact the Golden Age Games Media Center from Friday, May 20 – Friday, May 27 at (405) 325-3553.

After May 27, contact Jenny Shafer Tankersley, VA Public Affairs at (757) 728-3450; or Joe Davis, VFW Public Relations at (202) 543-2239.