



**Department of
Veterans Affairs**

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News Release

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Oklahoma City Hosts 2005 National Veterans Golden Age Games

WASHINGTON – From across the nation, more than 500 veterans age 55 and older will test their mettle in competition at the nation’s largest annual sporting event for senior veterans. The 19th National Veterans Golden Age Games, an exciting national sports and recreational competition, will take place May 21-26, 2005 at the University of Oklahoma in Norman and other area venues.

Hosted this year by the Oklahoma City VA Medical Center, the 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 currently receiving care at any VA medical facility.

“Those friends and neighbors who stood tall for freedom 30, 40, and even 50 years ago in the military 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 Ladies Auxiliary, and Veterans Canteen Service (VCS).

The games bring together veterans from all branches of military service 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.

“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.

Golden Age Games 2/2/2/2

“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 at 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. Festivities include music, a color guard, a parade of flags from each participating state and a ceremonial lighting of the torch. 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.

For more information about the National Veterans Golden Age Games, visit the VA's Web site, <http://www1.va.gov/opa/speceven/index.htm>.

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