



# 2007 George Gangi Award Winner

During the quarter mile bicycling event on Tuesday, Frank Renteria, a 60 year old Navy and Marine Corps veteran from Fresno, Calif., crashed and fell hard to the ground. So hard in fact, his helmet cracked. "Amen for the helmet," Renteria said later with a chuckle.

Despite his scrapes and bruises, Renteria decided to finish his race after a short rest and some cold water, a decision that ended up earning him a gold medal. In the half mile event, he came away the silver. It is that kind of determination and commitment that have earned him the 2007 George Ganji Inspiration Award.

Renteria's actual intent on Tuesday wasn't really on placing – he just wanted to finish his race. Still bleeding with sore ribs turns out he had broken three, he mounted his bike and pushed off. "I don't know what happened

I guess the Marine Corps' *can do* attitude and my training kicked in," he says. Fellow veterans on the sidelines provided much needed encouragement. "They really banded together and cheered me on. When I



2007 George Gangi Award Winner, Frank Renteria, embodies the spirit of the National Veterans Golden Age Games.

got on the bus afterwards, everyone started cheering and clapping. It was a great feeling."

Describing his sudden crash he says, "It was like someone just

yanked the tires out from under me. Normally when you go to fall, the bike starts to wobble, but not this time. The next thing I knew I was on the ground. I don't even remember falling." The medical staff asked about bringing a stretcher to carry him to the ambulance, but Renteria feared that if he got on that stretcher, the Games might be over for him. He politely refused the offer.

In January 1964, Renteria entered the Navy, just two weeks after his 17th birthday. A short time later he found himself on the way to Vietnam. In 1967, he left the Navy and saw his life tumble into a downward spiral. He found himself partying more and working less, only maintaining a job long enough to sustain his lifestyle. "Luckily, I still had enough sense to say to myself, 'I need to get out of here,'" he remembers. At age 29, 11 years after leaving the Navy, he enlisted in the Marine Corps. "It was the beginning of a new life for me," he says. "The Marines changed my whole attitude."

After his military service, Renteria enrolled at Fresno State Univer

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## Dedicated Volunteer Keeps on Giving



2007 Volunteer of the Year, Patrick Kuykendall (center), with Games participants Ben Brown (left) and Cleveland Rose (right).

Caring for others especially veterans is a way of life for Patrick Kuykendall, the Help Hospitalized Veterans HHV Volunteer of the Year for the 21st National Veterans Golden Age Games. With a true heart for veterans and a lifelong commitment to serving our nation's heroes, Kuykendall, 36, has played an integral role in

supporting this year's Games. From helping the event chairpersons with pre event planning, to sweeping sand at horseshoes, making deliveries and helping out in the dining room until late in the evening, Kuykendall was all about doing whatever it took, without being asked, to make sure the competitors were taken care of. When

asked to help, Kuykendall's typical response was, "Sure, no problem. What do you need me to do?" He is described by those who know him as having a modest, unassuming, humble character, a soft spoken nature and a genuine spirit of giving and certainly Kuykendall's service behind the scenes this week reflects those traits.

Kuykendall's day to day life reflects a personal passion for serving veterans. Working as a home care aid under contract with VA, his job entails caring for spinal cord injured veterans. Beyond his vocation though, he has volunteered at the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center in Houston for 16 years, donating nearly 11,000 hours of service. Patrick Kuykendall inspires his medical center colleagues, who describe him as "warm, giving, dependable, motivational and all about giving to veterans." That makes him an excellent choice for HHV's Volunteer of the Year, indeed! 🌟

## Veteran...? Check! Service...? Check! Challenge...? You Bet!

This year's Veterans Canteen Service VCS Challenge Award winner embodies not just the literal meaning of this award, but more importantly, the spirit.

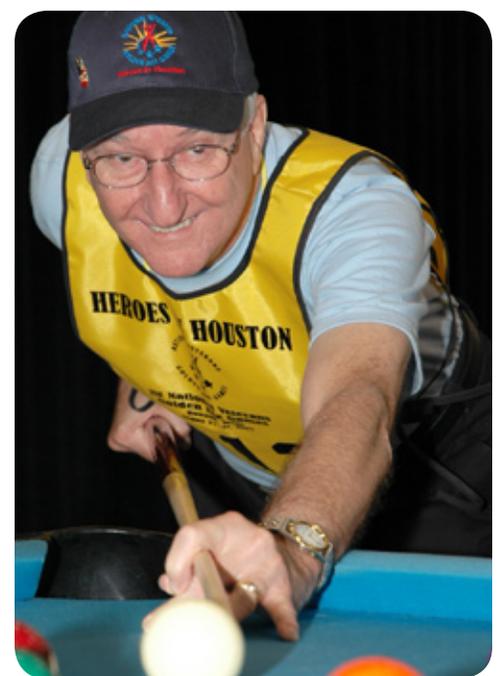
The VCS Challenge Award has been given to one National Veterans Golden Age Games competitor since 2004. The award recognizes a first-time competitor who demonstrates the fundamental nature of the Games, exemplifying good sportsmanship, camaraderie with the other veterans and strength of character.

This year, with 176 first-time competitors, was fierce. Having nearly one third of the attendees eligible, it is truly an honor to be chosen. August Gonsoulin, a 69 year old Air Force veteran, has won this distinction.



Although Gonsoulin is a Golden Age Games newbie, he is no stranger to VA. He's been a long time volunteer at the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center in Houston. A resident of Beaumont, Texas, Gonsoulin regularly drives veterans from his area the nearly 90 mile stretch to Houston for their medical appointments.

Gonsoulin lost half his left lung when he developed cancer about five years ago. It didn't stop him from competing in bowling, nine ball and table tennis this past week, though. He even aspires to become a National Senior Games Olympian. As a veteran, a volunteer, a competitor and a comrade, Gonsoulin truly shows us all what the Golden Age Games are all about! 🌟



2007 Veterans Canteen Service Challenge Award Winner, August Gonsoulin.

## 2007 Bill Givens Award Winner – Mick Aguilar

Logistically speaking, he's been everywhere this week. You've seen him at all hours of the day and night setting things up, taking things down and making sure all event venues and equipment are ready for the competitions. His name is Mick Aguilar, who served as the local organizing committee's chairperson of logistics.

Being responsible for logistics at the National Veterans Golden Age Games means making sure all necessary sports equipment is available and in good form for competition. It means setting up the sports court until 3 a.m., then returning a few hours later to prepare the horseshoe pits. It means reviewing computerized drawings of the venue locations, helping design the room layout and making sure equipment is leased, transported, moved and returned. "With so many of the events taking place inside this year, we had some additional jobs to take care of," Aguilar said. "We have a great team though, and they made sure we were ready for the veterans."

That was clearly Aguilar's priority. Carpenter Shop Supervisor at the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center, Aguilar's praises were sung loudly by Ed Tucker, Direc-



2007 Bill Givens Award Winner, Mick Aguilar (right) with Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center Director Edgar L. Tucker.

tor of the facility. "He's worked like a Trojan all week to make sure we were ready," Tucker said. "He and his team laid the flooring for the sports court, arranged for tents, put down planking, filled up the sand in the horseshoe pits and then converted it all for the shot-put, discus and air rifle competitions. All week, Mick made sure that when the veterans showed up for their events, everything was good to go."

Dewayne Vaughan, Director of the Golden Age Games, readily agrees. "Mick is always on an even keel," he said. "He never seems to

be upset, and just asks 'what do you need, and when do you need it?' He never says no if he can be of help, and his contributions this week have been tremendous."

Each year, the Bill Givens Award is presented to a member of the local organizing committee who has demonstrated an exceptional commitment to the National Veterans Golden Age Games, who embodies the qualities of dedication, a strong work ethic and an unquestionable commitment to the veterans who participate. Unfailingly, Mick Aguilar has met these criteria. 🌟

## Help Hospitalized Veterans' Coach of the Year 2007

Help Hospitalized Veterans has selected Ellen Berman as the top coach of the 2007 National Veterans Golden Age Games. A recreation therapist from the VA Healthcare System in San Diego, Calif., Berman was selected for her strong ability to lead, nurture and exemplify the spirit of these Games.

"Some coaches really do an exceptional job and Ellen is one of them," said Dewayne Vaughn, Di  
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Ellen Berman (right), 2007 HHV Coach of the Year, with Games participant James Moore.

## Important Info

### Saturday Morning's Menu

#### Early Bird Breakfast

A special "Early Bird" continental breakfast is being made available by the hotel for travelers who are scheduled to leave before the regular Saturday morning breakfast buffet. Early travelers may pick up a boxed continental breakfast and coffee in the Hyatt's Decafe Coffee Shop before 6 a.m. The staff at the Hyatt Regency hopes you enjoyed the Games, and your stay.

#### Breakfast Buffet, 6 to 8:30 a.m.

Assorted Chilled Juices  
Fruit, Danish, Muffins, Coffee Cake  
Scrambled Eggs, Grits, Breakfast Potatoes, Bacon, Flour Tortillas, Cheese, Picante Sauce  
Starbucks Coffee and Herbal Teas

*No lunch or dinner will be provided on Saturday.*

### Medical & Emergency Information

Medical staff remain available in Room 3030 and on site in bright red shirts. If you experience a medical emergency, please do not wait to find a medical team member. Call 55 within the Hyatt Regency Hotel. Give the nature and exact location of the accident or medical emergency. To prevent further injury, do not move the injured/ill unless necessary.

### Durable Medical Equipment and Wheelchair Repair

Veterans with loaned medical equipment should leave the borrowed items in their hotel room. VA staff will collect the items after check out.

Veterans can contact the medical staff directly at extension 3030 or 3031 to request wheelchair repair services while you are at the hotel.



## HHV Coach of the Year continued from page 3

rector of the National Veterans Golden Age Games. Vaughan has known Berman for years. "One of the requirements is keeping track of the veterans, making sure they are at their venues on time, are prepared to compete and ready to go. Her team members all love her and if there is something amiss, she doesn't hesitate to speak up on their behalf. She's been nominated before but this year is her year!"

For Berman, serving as a coach

is a true labor of love. Attending the Games for the 18th time, her team this year includes 23 veterans, 11 being first timers. "I tell people to treat these veterans as if they were your family," Berman said. "I think that's why they come back. I treat them with the same respect I want to get." We know that the San Diego competitors share in the joy of Ellen Berman's selection as the 2007 Coach of the Year. ★

## 2007 George Gangi Award Winner continued from front page

sity, working any job he could to pay for his schooling, from collecting aluminum cans to mowing lawns. He went on to make the Dean's list, eventually earned his master's degree in social work and won recognition as the Fresno County Social Worker of the Year. "It's amazing what the Marines have done for me," he says. Eventually, he went on to become a teacher but now serves as a college counselor at Fresno State University.

According to Renteria, he has an even more important job now, and that is being a father. He is the proud single parent of two daughters, Tonalla, age 11 and Sarcee, 14. "They're my coaches," he says. "They swim and ride with me. They're an inspiration." Demonstrating the point, he carries with him two drawings that Tonalla gave him for motivation and proudly shows them off. "Being a parent is the busiest job I've ever had."

Before the National Veterans Golden Age Games in Hampton last year, he became ill with a lung infection, causing him to lose 12 pounds before the Games. He credits his ability to compete last year to his daughters. "They willed me back to health. They wanted me to compete and they wanted me to win. They took care of me."

Frank Renteria loves the Golden Age Games, which he learned about in 2004 when they were held in Fresno. He was too late to register so he volunteered instead. After seeing the veterans compete and witness the camaraderie they shared, he knew he just had to be a part of it. He competed the following year and has been hooked ever since, consistently winning medals in bicycling and swimming.

"It's a great feeling competing with other vets," he says. "Just the effort some of them have to go through to compete is amazing. When I see an amputee pushing through, my bumps and bruises can't even compare." Seeing old friends and making new ones draw Renteria to the Games and he enjoys hearing others' stories. "Sharing and caring with one another, that's what it's about."

After you get to know Frank Renteria, his getting back on that bike and pushing through the pain to win is really no surprise. His life has been full of overcoming and bouncing back, always with a positive attitude. He says, "Life is too short. Don't dwell on the bad just enjoy it all." In his signature white Panama hat, he sits back, gives a slight nod and quietly says, "It's been a good life." ★