



NATIONAL VETERANS GOLDEN AGE GAMES

Competitor Profile (National)

Carole Atkinson – You Never Know What You Can Do Until You Try!

As a Navy corpsman during the Korean War, Carole Atkinson performed many duties. “Sometimes they had us dress as nurses so people would be more comfortable, but other times we just did the job as military corpsmen. They were crazy times,” she remembers. Serving from 1952-1955, Atkinson says that she “flew in and out” of Korea, but was primarily stationed stateside. Now 72, this Woodbury, N.J. resident has held onto her spirit of adventure.



After military service and a brief marriage, Atkinson returned to her native New Jersey where she attended an engineering design school and later became a draftsman. Later, from 1985-1998, she opened and managed several halfway houses serving individuals with drug and alcohol addictions, both in St. Petersburg, Florida and Indianapolis, Indiana. She performed those duties from her wheelchair, which she started using full time some 30 years ago, the result of a childhood bout with polio.

In 1997, Atkinson first learned about the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) national rehabilitation special event programs, and competed for the first time in the National Veterans Wheelchair Games. “It was a wonderful experience,” she says. “I wish I had known about these events when I was younger!” A few years later, Atkinson signed up for a second VA-sponsored program, the National Veterans Golden Age Games. “Since I was a ‘golden ager’ myself by then, I figured I’d better accept it,” she laughs. Now, she’s glad she did. “It is so much fun. There is even more competition at this event for those of us who are older.”

Although two years ago Atkinson’s health required that she start using an oxygen pump, she isn’t ready to stop competing. “I had to miss the last few Golden Age Games and I really missed it,” she says. “This year, I’m anxious to get back.”

Interested in sports her whole life, she will compete this year in air rifles, bowling, table tennis and checkers. “I really like swimming but I can’t do that one this year because of the oxygen. I hope next year I can get back to that.” At the events, Atkinson sets her own goals and tries to improve her results each time. “I compete against myself,” she says. “This time, I am trying some different events so I feel like I’m starting all over. Attending the Games keeps your mind younger – even when you are older. It’s very therapeutic to get out there and see what you are able to do. You never really know until you try.”

