



VA Medical Center
510 Butler Avenue
Martinsburg, WV 25405
www.martinsburg.va.gov
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NEWS RELEASE

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Contact:
Mike McAleer
304-264-4482
Cell: 304-596-7198
michael.mcaleer2@va.gov

Local Veterans prepare for Golden Age Games at first Mini-Games

MARTINSBURG, W.Va. – Spirits were high as the Martinsburg Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC) hosted the first Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 5 Mini-Games Saturday, April 12.

“This was an outstanding event,” said Timothy J. Cooke, associate medical center director. “Our great Veterans, staff and volunteers pulled together to help our local athletes as they prepare to compete in this year’s National Veterans Golden Age Games.”

Veterans from Martinsburg; Perry Point and Baltimore, Md.; and Washington, D.C., competed in a series of athletic events, including bowling, ping pong, shuffleboard, shot put, discus and javelin.

“The Veteran athletes who participated today continue to inspire and amaze me,” said Darren Yowell, VA 2013 Golden Age Games Coach of the Year and graduate of the Martinsburg VAMC’s Center for Addictions Treatment (CAT-5) Program. “As a CAT-5 alumnus, it was really awesome to see younger Veterans who are inpatients in our Domiciliary programs helping our senior Veterans prepare for this year’s Golden Age Games.”

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The National Veterans Golden Age Games are part of VA's comprehensive recreation and rehabilitation therapy programs that encourage the importance of physical activity, health and recovery to improve overall quality of life for Veterans. The national competition is open to Veterans who receive their health care at a VA medical facility and are 55 years of age and older. This year's National Veterans Golden Age Games, one of the largest senior sports events in the nation, are scheduled June 28 - July 2 in Fayetteville, Ark.

According to National Veterans Golden Age Games Director Carla Carmichael, the Games serve as a showcase for the rehabilitation value that wellness and fitness provide in the lives of older Americans. "After Veterans attend the National Veterans Golden Age Games, our goal is for them to continue to stay active year round," Carmichael said. "This event will serve as a model for other VISNs to create opportunities for our senior Veterans to participate in sports and recreational events to reach their full potential, improve their independence, achieve a healthier lifestyle and enjoy a higher quality of living."

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The Martinsburg VA Medical Center mission is to honor America's Veterans by providing exceptional health care that improves their health and well-being. Located in West Virginia, the medical center offers a comprehensive range of services, including internal medicine, ambulatory surgery, audiology and speech pathology, dental, nursing home, nutrition, podiatry, prosthetics, women's health, mental health, and rehabilitation medicine. With a service area of nearly 125,000 Veterans in West Virginia, Maryland, Virginia, and Pennsylvania, the medical center operates seven Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOC). Four of the clinics are VA-staffed and are located in Cumberland, Hagerstown and Fort Detrick, Md., and Stephens City, Va. Three of the clinics are contracted and are located in Petersburg and Franklin, W. Va., and Harrisonburg, Va.

Photo 1 caption: Ralph Watson, 85, competed in the horseshoe event and took home the silver medal at the VISN 5 Mini-Games. He has participated in numerous National Veterans Golden Age Games.

Photo 2 caption: Celestine Nelson, left, competed against Ricky Barnes for the gold in the ping pong competition at the first VISN 5 Mini-Games.

Photo 3 caption: Veterans from Martinsburg; Perry Point and Baltimore, Md.; and Washington, D.C., VA Medical Centers bowled against one another at the medical center's newly renovated bowling alley during the VISN 5 Mini-Games.

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