

Area Agency on Aging *Connections*

Seniors Games provide fun atmosphere for athletic older adults

By Daniel Casciato
For *Pittsburgh Senior News*

To enhance the healthy lifestyles of seniors in Allegheny County, the Pittsburgh Citiparks' SeniorInterests program offers the biannual Senior Games.

"The Citiparks' SeniorInterests program promotes health and wellness on a year-round basis," said Ray Fisher, Citiparks program supervisor and Senior Games chairperson. "The Senior Games were started to provide area residents with an opportunity to compete in an athletic event against others in the same age bracket and also to provide a social outlet. Many of the seniors who compete against each other have become friends over the years."

That's one of the reasons why Anne and Bob Horton from Ross Township enjoy participating in the games. "The thing I enjoy most about the Senior Games is the fellowship," said Anne, 83. "We've met so many people who we would not have met otherwise, and I enjoy their company."

During the Summer Senior Games, Citiparks offers archery, basketball, bocce, bowling, darts, golf, horseshoes, pool (8-ball), track and field, shuffleboard, softball toss, table tennis and walking (1/2 mile). The summer games were held this year from June 1 to 15. The Winter Senior Games are held during the last three weeks of January.

All of the senior games events are individual competitions. None are co-ed; men compete against men and women compete against women.

Anne, who has been playing for about 18 years, participates in archery, bocce, bowling, darts, horseshoes, shuffleboard and table tennis. "It's a lot of fun," she said. "It's a wonderful way to get some exercise and it helps keep you healthy and stronger. That's a great advantage to it."

Her husband agrees. "If you compete, you're a winner," said Bob, 86. "You're getting exercise and seeing people. You get something out of it. And there are no losers. Everyone wins."



Chuck LeClaire/Pittsburgh Senior News

Bob Horton enjoys throwing darts.



Chuck LeClaire/Pittsburgh Senior News

Anne Horton has participated in the Senior Games for the past 18 years.

According to Ray, nearly 500 seniors participate in the games each year. This is the 26th year for the Summer Games. The Winter Games have been held for 14 years.

Bowling is the most popular event. "We usually have 200 seniors register for bowling," said Ray. "Some of the other popular events include shuffleboard, darts and the walk-a-thon. At the Winter Games, the ice hockey shootout at the Schenley Ice Rink also is a popular event."

Gold, silver and bronze medals are awarded to the first-, second- and third-place finishers in each age group in each event. The medals are presented to the seniors at an awards banquet usually a month after the completion of the games. The top overall medalists also are honored at the banquet.

The Senior Games are open to Allegheny County seniors ages 60 and older. Those are the two basic requirements to sign up for the games, and it costs only \$2 to sign up.

Different events are held at different sites, such as:

- Archery - Clairton Sportsmen's Club
- Basketball - Lawrenceville Senior Center
- Bocce - Frick Park
- Bowling - Princess Lanes, Whitehall
- Darts - Schenley Ice Rink
- Golf - South Park (9-Hole) Golf Course
- Horseshoes - West End Senior Center
- Kooshball - Schenley Ice Rink
- Pool (8-Ball) - Breakers, Dormont
- Shuffleboard - Greenfield Senior Center
- Softball Throw - Schenley Oval Sportsplex
- Walk-A-Thon - Schenley Oval Sportsplex
- Table Tennis - South Park Table Tennis Club

"Although most of the participants are City of Pittsburgh residents, the Senior Games are open to any resident of Allegheny County who is 60 years of age or older," said Ray. "If you'd like to test your athletic prowess in a non-pressured setting, you might want to try competing in the Senior Games. They are competitive but fun."

"I would encourage everybody who is 60 years of age to get into these games," added Anne. "You don't have to be the best and you don't always have to win a medal. Just get into it and have fun."

For more information, call Pittsburgh Citiparks' SeniorInterests at (412) 422-6405.
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