

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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25th Anniversary Florida Senior Games begins Saturday

CLEARWATER - The Florida Senior Games begins a nine-day celebration of its 25th Anniversary Saturday with over 2,600 athletes, age 50 and over, competing in 24 sports in various locations in Clearwater and Pinellas County.

Such an occasion is the Silver Anniversary of the Florida Senior Games, athletes from 379 Florida cities from Alachua to Zolfo Springs will be in attendance. Also on the guest list are athletes from 41 states besides Florida including, Puerto Rico, Canada and The Bahamas.

The only states not in attendance are Colorado, Mississippi, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Washington and Wyoming.

The guest list includes 1,742 male athletes and 862 female athletes who range in age from Jessica Franzini, a tennis player from St. Augustine who turns 50 on Wednesday when she competes in mixed doubles, to 96-year old Ralph Blackford, a bowler from Lakeland.

The two guests traveling the furthest to the 25th Anniversary of the Florida Senior Games are registered from Alaska and Hawaii. William Hutton, traveled 3,225 miles to the Long Center in Clearwater from Sitka, Alaska to play men's singles and men's doubles pickleball next weekend. Hutton is dual resident between Sitka, where he works as a school administrator, and the Tampa Bay area.

Michael Donahoe, of Hilo, Hawaii, is on the roster of the 65+ Venice Lime 3-on-3 Basketball team and came 4,538 miles to lace up his sneakers at the Ross Norton Recreation Center next weekend.

The first of nine days of competition begins Saturday with eight sports in action at the following locations and times.

Archery – Joe Dimaggio Sports Complex, Clearwater, 9:00 a.m.

Bowling – Seminole Lanes – Men's and Women's Doubles, 12 Noon; Mixed Doubles, 4:00 p.m.

Team Bowling – Seminole Lanes – Mixed Team, 9:00 a.m.

Racquetball – Richey Racquet, Port Richey, 9:00 a.m.

Shuffleboard – Clearwater Lawn Bowls and Shuffleboard Complex – Singles, 9:00 a.m.

Swimming – The Long Center, Clearwater, 10:00 a.m.

Tai Chi – Ross Norton Recreation Center, Clearwater, 8:30 a.m.

Tennis – Innisbrook Resort and Golf Course, Palm Harbor, 9:00 a.m.

Prior to the start of the Swimming competition at the Long Center, Rudy Vazmina, of Sarasota, will be presented with his 2015 Florida Senior Games Male Athlete of the Year Award.

During two days of competition at the 2015 Games, Vazmina won six gold medals in the 65-69 age group and set records in four events (50, 100 and 200 breast and 100 fly). In three of the record setting performances, he finished 10 seconds or more ahead of the second place finisher. In the 200 breast, he was the top finisher of all swimmers.

Since he began swimming in the 2012 Florida Senior Games he has dove into the pool 24 times and won 24 medals (19 gold, four silver and a bronze). In the five races he did not finish first, he was a combined 15 seconds behind the winner.

Across the hall from the 200 swimmers at The Long Center Pool will be 10 men's volleyball teams in action beginning at 9:00 a.m.

At the mixed doubles bowling competition, Carol and Gerald Teel, of The Villages, will be looking to add their name to the record book in the 60-64 age group. The Teel's set the mixed doubles 55-59 age group record and recorded the highest overall mixed doubles mark with a combined score of 1495 in 2011.

A record 128 archers will pull back their bow strings at the Joe Dimaggio Sports Complex beginning at 9:00 a.m. Archery participation increased 62 percent from 79 archers at the 2015 Games.

The Games continue through Sunday, December 11 and serve as a qualifier for the 2017 National Senior Games, to be held in Birmingham, Alabama, June 2-15, 2017.

The Florida Senior Games is presented annually by the Florida Sports Foundation, the state's lead sports promotion and development organization and are held in conjunction with the City of Clearwater and the St. Pete/Clearwater Sports Commission. The 2016 Florida Senior Games is the second year of four years the Games will be held in Clearwater/Pinellas County. The 2017 and 2018 Florida Senior Games will also be held in the Tampa Bay area.

Florida Sports Foundation Director of Communications, Nick Gandy, is in Clearwater and available to assist with any media opportunities. Please feel free to contact Gandy at (850) 322-3404 or nganduy@flasports.com.

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