

Celebrating Stories

Northern Virginia Senior Olympics' Power Couple Living Healthy Longer Together



A month before the 2017 Northern Virginia Senior Olympics began Joyce Tobias emailed friends updating them on her husband Tom, 84, who had just been in a serious cycling accident. Joyce told friends Tom had returned home after a brief hospital stay. "He is fine, but bruised up and has a lot of road rash and a broken rib." She added, "He definitely won't be riding in the NVSO this year." BUT! "Definitely won't" turned to "maybe" and then to "probably" and finally to "definitely will" as the September 10 ride date loomed. It seems time and determination can work together in mysterious ways. On September 10, 2017, Tom and Joyce, dressed in full cycling regalia, stood at Vint Hill, waiting for the starter's gun at the NVSO 10K, overcoming the odds once again. "Never a dull moment even when you are 84," says Joyce.

Tom not only rode...he won Silver medals in both the 10K and 20K cycling race. Joyce earned Gold in the 10k, setting an NVSO record for her age group. She sat out the 20k as she did not want to push her luck. Did we mention the battery on Joyce's pacemaker was on the fritz?

The following Friday, still with a bad pacemaker battery, Joyce won four Golds and a Silver at the NVSO swim meet. She set an

NVSO record for her age group in the 100 yard freestyle.

Don't bother talking with Joyce and Tom about the "horrors of aging." They won't have it. They are not discouraged by doctors' diagnoses, nor will they let a bike accident or a bad battery on a pacemaker keep them from competing.

Joyce, 80, puts it this way, "I am in chronic fibrillation and have a pacemaker. But at my cardiologist's office, they wait to see my medals each year. They approve and encourage me to do what I do." Tom, her husband of 57 years, nods in agreement.

Joyce and Tom, long-time residents of Annandale, moved to Haymarket 12 years ago. They enjoy the competitive, social and fitness aspects of the NVSO. When she is not engaging in athletic endeavors, Joyce enjoys Mahjong and quilting. Tom is in the local acting club and sings in the community chorus.

"It (being involved in the NVSO) improves your quality of life," Joyce says. "I keep doing it because I don't have all the aches and pains that all my peers have. I don't have the arthritis that everybody around seems to have."

Most mornings, Joyce has already biked 12 miles before 9 a.m. On days she is not cycling, she can usually be found at the community pool going for a mile long-swim. Tom follows an equally rigorous schedule cycling about 200 miles a month.

Joyce became involved in the Senior Olympics in 2009 after hearing about the NVSO's swimming competition from a neighbor. Since then she has competed in the annual event for those 50+ each year. This year, 2018, she has signed up

for five swimming events that take place September 21 in South Riding. She plans on racing in the NVSO cycling event too, Sept. 16.

The year after Joyce entered her first NVSO swim meet, cycling was added to the NVSO and she added it to her repertoire. Tom took up competitive cycling with the NVSO at the tender age of 79. He also earned a bronze medal in cycling at the 2015 National Senior Games in Minneapolis.

Tom has also medaled in swimming. But after ingesting river water from the Potomac while swimming in the 2016 Marine Corps Triathlon, he decided to stick to cycling.

Tom and Joyce have earned so much hardware that during a recent family reunion Joyce handed out some of her NVSO medals to nephews, nieces and grandchildren.

“I want to be a role model for my grandchildren, to show them that old people can have fun and be fun,” she says. The Tobiases have seven children and 14 grandchildren. Joyce says it is very important to set a healthy example for young people and being in the Senior Olympics is a great way to do that.

The Tobiases truly epitomize the NVSO’s motto of *Living Healthy Longer*.

Don’t miss the Games scheduled for September 15-26! Come out and cheer for our Northern Virginia Seniors! All activities are free and open to the public. For a schedule of events, visit www.nvso.us.

Inspired? The Northern Virginia Senior Olympics take place every September with athlete registration beginning in early summer. To register for 2018 games, go to www.nvso.us. Deadline is August 24.

*RSVP, a program of Volunteer Fairfax, Volunteer Arlington and Volunteer Alexandria, is the official NVSO partner responsible for volunteer recruitment to support the Games. To register for this family-friendly volunteer opportunity (16+), contact volunteer specialist Carly Hubicki at 703-403-5360 or click [register](#).
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