

Senior Olympians from Fauquier to enter pickleball, cycling events

By Robin Earl

FAUQUIER TIMES STAFF WRITER

When the Northern Virginia Senior Olympics kick off Sept. 10, two over-50 athletes will be representing Fauquier County. Stephen Agrati will saddle up for the 10k and 20k cycling races that are being held at Vint Hill on Sunday, Sept. 11. Margaret Sita will be playing pickleball in the singles and mixed doubles (with her husband) competition on Sept. 17 at the Manassas Park Community Center.

Sita, 55, has been playing pickleball for five years and competed in the Senior Olympics in 2021. She said, "I am an avid tennis player and was looking for something that my husband and I could do together because golf wasn't cutting it for me."

Pickleball is a sport that combines elements of tennis, badminton and ping-pong; it uses a paddle and plastic ball with holes. The court is similar to a tennis court, but smaller.

Sita said that she joined Fauquier County Pickleball Association (FCPA) when she moved to Warrenton, "and found a nice group of people to play with."

She has become enamored with the sport. "I would highly recommend pickleball for seniors," she said. "It is a great social game. Beginners and seasoned players can have an enjoyable time playing together. [It's a] great game for families, no experience necessary and it's way easier on your body than tennis."

She touched on pickleball as a competitive endeavor: "Just like anything else around here, pickleball can be very competitive. There are those that take pickleball serious and those that just enjoy the sport. Saying that, it can be rather competitive play."

"There are local clubs that have group lessons, and there are some private coaches that offer lessons in the Warrenton area. Fauquier Pickleball Association holds beginner group lessons most Saturdays during the summer."

Stephen Agrati, 70, has been cycling seriously for 15 years. He rides regularly with a group of retired men and women in a cycling club called the Old Cranks. He said, "We normally ride between 25 and 35 miles four times week out of either Vint Hill, Midland or Remington."

He said, "The Cranks Crew was an invention of my daughter who gathered the family to cheer me on" at an NVSO race.

He added that cycling is great for a person's health and longevity.

40th anniversary of the Northern Virginia Senior Olympics

What: Nearly 800 over-50 athletes from throughout Northern Virginia will compete in 77 individual events.

When: Sept. 10 to 24

Where: Events will be held at 25 different venues throughout Northern Virginia

New this year:

Weightlifting has been added for both men and women in three events: back squat, shoulder press and dead lift.

Other events: Also part of the competition are track, stationary rowing, cycling, swimming, diving, Wii bowling, ten pin bowling, eight and nine ball pool, tennis, scrabble, crossword puzzle, croquet, Mexican train dominoes, Sudoku, handball, Rummikub, football and Frisbee throw, softball hit and throw, jigsaw puzzle, Mah Jongg, bocce, horseshoes, cribbage, cornhole toss, pickleball, table tennis, 5K trail race, basketball field goals and free throw, orienteering, field events, racquetball, Bunco, line dancing, miniature golf, duplicate Bridge, Canasta and badminton.

Eligibility: Adults 50 years of age by Dec. 31 who live in a sponsoring jurisdiction are eligible to participate.

Register: Participants may register online at nvso.us through Aug. 31.

Fee: Seniors who pay the \$20 registration fee may compete in unlimited events, but there are additional fees for ten pin bowling, orienteering and cycling.

Sponsored by: The counties of Arlington, Fairfax, Fauquier, Loudoun and Prince William and the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax and Falls Church.

What's at stake: Winners can go on to compete in the National Senior Olympic Games. This year they will be held in Pennsylvania.

More information: nvso.us

"When you throw the club members into the mix, there is also a sense of belonging and fellowship."

Agrati said about the NVSO, "Speaking for cycling only, there aren't many people who choose to compete after they are 50 years old. That said, those that do choose to compete take it very seriously and train and compete hard. I am my own coach, and I have developed a training plan based on my experiences to date. I also trade training ideas and information with others in my riding group."

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PHOTO BY HENRY WINOKUR

Margaret Sita of Warrenton competes in the 2021 Senior Olympics pickleball competition.

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“During this time of year, we also challenge each other when we are out on the rides. The stronger ones encourage the weaker ones to go faster, longer ... and get better.”

“After the race, we go back to easy 30-mile rides that keep us in generally good health.”

This will be Agrati’s third senior Olympics. He said the race attracts racers across all age groups over 50 and lots of spectators. He added, “The race is very safe because they start each individual racer at 30 second intervals. ... I have never seen an injury during the race.”

The Olympics is a fun once-a-year event, but Agrati is most enthusiastic about the riding club that keeps him healthy and engaged all year. “The Old Cranks Bicycle Club is a very good outlet for retired people to get together for some healthy fellowship. Retired people, especially those living in rural areas, need to find a healthy outlet and pursue it. The Old Cranks is my solution to that challenge.”

“Most of the people I ride with are a few years younger or a few years older than me. One guy is 81 and rode 5,500 miles last year. He is very strong and healthy. Another guy is a year older than me, and he did 8,000 miles last year.”

Reach Robin Earl at rearl@fauquier.com



Stephen Agrati talks with a teammate from The Old Cranks.

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