

The Baytown Sun

Registration still open for Senior Olympics

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For the more than 400 participants scheduled to compete in next week's 32nd annual Greater Baytown Area Senior Olympics, age is nothing but a number.

Each year, Lee College partners with Baytown Parks and Recreation and the Harris County Precinct 2 Senior Citizens Program to host the event — which is open to participants 50 years of age or older — at the college campus and local community centers.

As in previous years, this year's competition will offer both physical activities and less strenuous events, said Lee College senior citizens program manager Lynne Foley, who has helped to organize the event for the last 17 years.

“It's a great opportunity for anyone over the age of 50 who lives in the surrounding area to meet new people and to enjoy good competition,” she said. “We'll have activities for everyone, from volleyball to tennis and bridge to dominoes.”

Although opening ceremonies at the Lee College Arena will officially kick off the competition Tuesday, events will begin Monday with a washer toss at the Barrett Community Center as well as a bowling contest at Max Bowl East for Baytown Senior League bowlers.

Tuesday's events will be held at the college, making use of the wellness center, tennis courts and pool, while competitions Wednesday will be at the Crosby Wellness Center, San Jacinto Community Center, Highlands Community Center and J.D. Walker Community Center.

Activities will wind down Thursday with a crafts contest, golf putting playoffs, a dance contest, a spelling bee and a talent show, all held at the Baytown Community Center, before an awards luncheon.

A highlight of the event, Foley said, will be the basketball shoot-off at 9 a.m. Wednesday at Highlands Community Center. Introduced to the Olympics four years ago, the contest pits Baytown Sun columnist Jim Finley against the current city mayor and state representative to see who can score the most baskets out of 10 free throws.

This year, Finley will battle one familiar face — Rep. Wayne Smith — and challenge another opponent — Mayor Stephen DonCarlos — for the first time. After handily

defeating the competition two years in a row, Finley lost to Smith last year.

“It was a fluke,” Finley said. “I was injured but didn’t say anything at the time because I play when I’m hurt. If the state representative and his colleagues in the legislature think school finance was tough, he may not want to show up.”

Although Finley and Smith may have more experience in the event, DonCarlos said he isn’t intimidated.

“I was very embarrassed when (former mayor) Calvin Munding lost the competition last year,” he said. “He’s 6-foot 2(-inches tall) — he should have won.”

Standing at what he calls a “feisty 6-foot tall,” DonCarlos said he’s prepared to take the title from last year’s winner, Smith.

“Have you seen Wayne Smith?” he said. “I’m a free-throw shooter from way back in grade school. I have to do this for the city. I have to protect our turf.”

Some events, including a morning walking competition Tuesday and a beanbag baseball contest Wednesday, should also draw similarly spirited participants, Foley said.

“The walking competition gets pretty fierce,” she said. “There are numerous people that walk hundreds of laps, while there are others who stroll at their own pace. It’s a fun but very competitive event.”

Athletes will be separated into age groups by 10-year increments — 50 to 59 years old, 60 to 69 years old and 70 years old and up. After each event, first- and second-place winners will be awarded gold and silver medals, respectively, to wear for the rest of the week, Foley said.

“There are many people who compete in several events,” she said. “So there are multiple people who wear multiple medals all week long.”

For the fourth year, Texas HealthSpring will provide all participants with souvenir T-shirts. Outback Steakhouse will also cater Thursday’s awards luncheon.

Other sponsors include San Jacinto Methodist Hospital, State Rep. Wayne Smith, Crespo Jirrels Funeral Directors, Krisher-McKay Realtors, TSO-Chris Warford, Brian Stephens Certified Public Accountants, Mendelovitz Urban and Associates Certified Public Accountants, Remington Park Assisted Living Center, TSO-Richard Hutto on Garth Road and Community Resource Credit Union.

Transportation between venues is provided by the Harris County Precinct 2 senior program. Those who need help with transportation to neighboring cities should call the county at 281-452-7598.

Registration will be open until 8 a.m. Tuesday. All events are free. For more information, contact Foley at 281-425-6416.

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