



National Senior Games Association

Post Office Box 82059 ★ Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70884-2059
225-766-6800 ★ Fax 225-766-9115 ★ nsga@nsga.com

★ www.nsga.com



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

94 Year Old Senior Olympian Astounds Audience at New Mexico Conference on Aging Presentation

ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO, August 19, 2014 – When 94 year old senior athlete Larry Johnson of Albuquerque received a national "Personal Best Award" recognizing him as an inspiration and role model for active, healthy aging, he decided to demonstrate his vitality by standing on his head.

The award was presented by the National Senior Games Association (NSGA) in front of 1,200 delighted attendees of the opening session for the New Mexico Conference on Aging held at the Isleta Resort and Conference Center in Albuquerque. Johnson has over two dozen marathons to his credit and has earned numerous medals in running and cycling at New Mexico Senior Olympics and the National Senior Games going back to 1987.

Johnson has also become something of a local legend by hosting a 100 mile bike ride on his birthday for the past four years. "As my 90th birthday approached, one of my grandsons suggested that I ride 90 miles on my bike," Johnson recalled. "I was hesitant to make that ride outdoors so we decided to do the ride in the spin room at my gym. I went on to make it an even 100, and people now join me every year for my birthday spin."

The award presentation highlighted a senior fitness theme given to the opening plenary session of the 36th annual conference organized by the New Mexico Aging and Long-Term Services Department. Hosted by Cabinet Secretary Gino Renaldi, the program also featured keynote presentations by noted cardiologist Dr. Barry Ramo and NSGA CEO Marc T. Riker. In addition, Shellie Pfohl, executive director of the President's Council on Fitness, Sports and Nutrition, assisted Riker in presenting the award and conducted a workshop session later in the conference. Riker also presented a recognition award to Ernesto Ramos, who founded New Mexico Senior Olympics in 1979 and served as NSGA's national board chair for several years.

Riker told the gathering that the Personal Best program showcases National Senior Games athletes around the nation and that Johnson was the first to be selected from New Mexico. "Larry as an example of the benefits one can derive from maintaining exercise, nutrition and a positive attitude throughout life. He is an inspiration for others to also be active and live longer, better quality lives. This is what truly represents everyone's personal best."

"When New Mexico Senior Olympics was asked to prepare the opening session program, we felt it would be good to involve the National Senior Games organization to help people understand that our games are available for everyone, not just elite athletes," said Cecelia Acosta, executive director of the New Mexico games. "The Personal Best message represents the heart of our mission. While we have many great senior athletes who have set records and won many national medals, Larry's story seemed to be the best fit to help inspire others to get moving."

An extended profile of Johnson and other featured athletes can be found on the [Personal Best page](#) at www.NSGA.com. "This program sends a message out to aging adults to 'get in the game' and enjoy an active, healthy lifestyle and the rewards it brings," said Riker. "Senior games offer fitness, fun and fellowship, but even if people don't want to participate in sports we want to encourage everyone to get up and be active in their own way."

NSGA governs the biennial National Senior Games, the largest multi-sport event in the world for seniors. New Mexico Senior Olympics hosts the sanctioned state event for people 50 and over to qualify to compete at the national games. The 2015 National Senior Games Presented by Humana will be held July 3-16, 2015 in Bloomington/Minneapolis/St. Paul Minnesota.

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CONTACTS: Cecelia Acosta, New Mexico Senior Olympics 575.623.5777/ cacosta@nmseniorolympics.org
Del Moon, NSGA Communications 678.549.4444 / dmoon@nsga.com