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Never Too Old

by Dawnya Pring

Lifelong Redondo Beach resident Mike McCann brought home the gold.

The 57-year-old competed in the Senior Olympics in Palm Desert Feb. 22 and won the gold medal for the 400-meter dash. His time was an impressive 1 minute and 13 seconds.

"It really feels good to work for something and accomplish it," McCann said.

Even though McCann has been an athlete his entire life, he said it took him almost a year to build up the courage to compete in his first Senior Olympics competition last year in Pasadena.

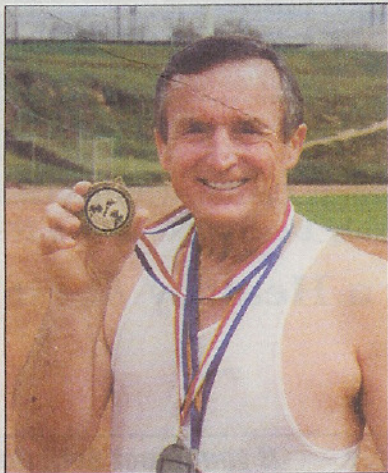
"I remember arriving at the Pasadena City College track for my first meet and I could hear the announcer introducing a former Olympian," McCann said with disbelief. "I said to myself, what am I doing here?"

But he thought, "I've come this far, I can't quit now," and at that meet he won the bronze medal for the 50-meter dash and finished fourth in the 100.

"I was shocked. It inspired me so much," he said. "That's when I really started working out and looking forward to the next event."

The Senior Olympics are organized by the National Senior Games Association and are part of the United States Olympic Committee's community outreach program. The Senior Games Association's mission is to promote healthy lifestyles for people older than 50.

The Palm Desert games are just the first in a series of games to be held throughout the year. Both men and women older than 50 are eligible to compete in five-year age groups for each event. The medal winners can go on to



Mike McCann

(photo by Chris Miller)

compete in state-level competitions, and eventually can make their way to the national and then international level competitions.

McCann competes with other men between the age of 55 and 60.

"It's great to see everyone out there,

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Senior

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staying competitive and alert," said McCann, who told of an inspirational 90-year-old man competing in the long jump event.

"The man said, 'I just want to do one jump,' and his jump was a little more than 3 feet. It was great. I hope I can do the same at his age," McCann said.

McCann went to Redondo Union High School where he played football, was on the wrestling team and ran track and field. But even though athletics and fitness have always been an integral part of his life, he says he was never a star athlete.

"I didn't break records or anything like that," McCann said. "But there probably wasn't anybody who worked harder than me. I developed a lot of discipline back then and athletics became an important part of my life."

McCann wasn't good enough to play at the college level, so to keep physically fit he started running 10Ks and has run and finished two marathons.

"I think it's important to have something to train for, to look forward to," McCann said. "It keeps you alive. I think every senior should be active. The feeling of accomplishment I achieve from these games, I take back and use in every aspect of my life."

Last year's World Senior Games were held in St. George, Utah, and 6,547 people participated in 86 sporting events. Athletes from all 50 states participated and there were more than 46 countries represented. In addition to track and field events, there are numerous other events including softball, volleyball, tennis, racquetball, bowling, archery, basketball, golf, lawn bowling, swimming and, of course, there are also a host of social events, McCann said.

To learn more about the Senior Olympics, log on to its Web site at www.nationalseniorgames.org.