

# ACTIVE AGING



THE LAS CRUCES  
**Bulletin**

**Bulletin**  
HEAL+H

FEBRUARY 25, 2022



# You may not be a kid anymore, but you can act like one

*"Growing up leads to growing older, then to dying. And dying, to me, don't sound like all that much fun."*

- John Mellencamp, "Authority Song," 1983

When John Mellencamp wrote that song in his early 30s, about a decade before he had a heart attack at age 42. Even though he was living the unhealthy life of many a rocker, dying young was not his intent.

The key to the lyrics in his song were the words "growing up."

Aging has a lot to

do with attitude, and if you refuse to grow up, it can keep you from growing old.

We're not talking about acting like an immature kid, we're talking about staying active, engaged and interested in life.

You don't have to be out running marathons, but you should be doing SOMETHING.

You may not think of playing bridge



**RICHARD COLTHARP**  
From the Publisher

or chess with your friends as being particularly active, but you're doing SOMETHING. Exercising your brain and your social skills can be as important as exercising your body.

Ballroom dancing has been shown to be one of the few things to help prevent dementia.

People use the term "a walk in the park" to describe something very easy. But for many, especially those recovering from injury or surgery, taking a walk in the park can be incredibly difficult,

but also more important than ever.

The key is to know your body and your limits, as well as your capabilities.

Doing SOMETHING is almost always better than doing nothing.

The exception is doing something beyond your capabilities. Make sure your assessments of what you can do are consistent with those of your doctor and your family.

The pandemic has curtailed certain activities for many of us. If that's the case for

you, don't fret because you've lost your routine. Get creative and find a new one. You might find you like it even better.

One of the great things about Las Cruces is our weather, which is rarely bad enough to shut down outdoor activities.

So go do something!

To steal the motto from the New Mexico Senior Olympics: "You don't stop playing because you grow old, you grow old because you stop playing."

*Richard Coltharp, publisher*

## THE LAS CRUCES Bulletin

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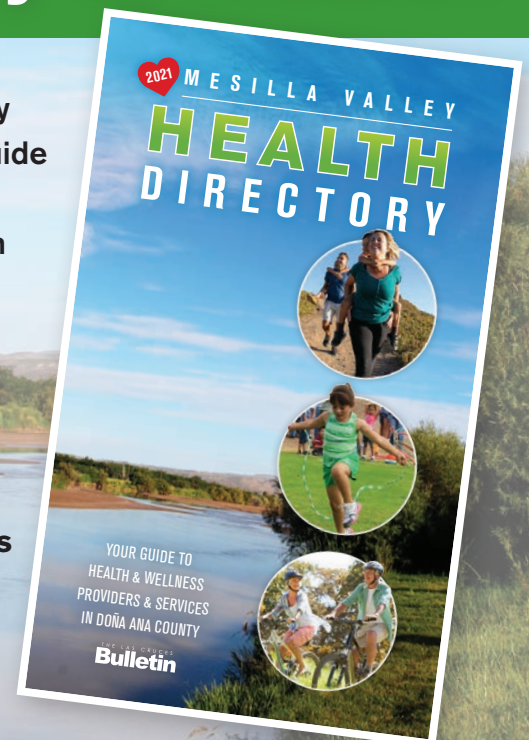


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# New Mexico Senior Olympics

## Ernesto Ramos State Summer Games

### Las Cruces NM

### June 8-11th, 2022

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*FIELD	Shot Put, Running Long Jump, Discus, Javelin, High Jump
FRISBEE DISTANCE	Singles M & W
*GOLF	18-hole M & W
HORSESHOES	Singles M & W
HUACHAS (Washers)	Singles M & W
*PICKLEBALL	Mixed Doubles, Men's Doubles, Women's Doubles
*RACE WALK	5K
*ROAD RACE RUN	5K Run
SOCCER ACCURACY	Singles M & W
*SHUFFLEBOARD	Singles M & W
*SWIMMING	100Y IM, 100Y Free, 100 Back, 100Y Breast, 50Y Fly, 50Y Breast, 50Y Free, 50Y Back, 200Y Free
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*TENNIS	Singles M & W, Men's Doubles Women's Doubles
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# Senior Olympians 'raring to go'

**BY DAVE BURGE**  
Las Cruces Bulletin

After two years of the Covid-19 pandemic, it is time to get active again.

That's the message from organizers of the 2022 Doña Ana County Senior Games.

The games, organized by the Doña Ana County Senior Olympics organization, will run from March 12 through April 30 at different venues across Las Cruces.

This marks the return of the county games for the first time in three years.

The games were canceled after just two events in 2020 and were not held last year, organizers said.

"We've been down for two years and we are excited to get back involved," said Paul Fetterhoff, president of the Doña Ana County Senior Olympics.

Ann McPhee, the organization's vice president, said participating is an excellent way to improve your mental and physical health and socialize while doing it.

Anyone 50 years old or older can participate. There will be 19 different sports, including pickleball, table tennis, road racing, bowling, archery,



PHOTOS COURTESY OF DONA ANA COUNTY SENIOR OLYMPICS

**Runner Eugene Pettes takes part in a past Senior Games in Doña Ana County.**

track and field, race and power walking, golf and air gun shooting.

The cost is \$20 to register and \$5 for each sport you want to participate in. There is a \$10 fee for Fun and Rec, which is a series of four events, and additional fees for bowling and golf.

You don't have to live in Doña Ana County to participate, and they get athletes from west Texas and other states, Fetterhoff said.

You can register online at [dacso.fus-esport.com/registration/1530/](http://dacso.fus-esport.com/registration/1530/). You can also register in person by dropping by the Doña Ana County Senior Olympics office at 2211 N. Main, Suite 1, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Mondays and Wednesdays.

"We want to get everyone back to being

healthy," Fetterhoff said.

"We are raring to go and get people out here, running and having a lot of fun," he said.

All local and state Covid regulations will be followed. Most events are outdoors.

Those who fare well in the county games have a chance to compete against the whole state later in the year, without even leaving town.

The state Senior Olympics will be held in Las Cruces June 8-11. The state games are organized by the New Mexico Senior Olympics organization.

For information on the county games, visit [dacso-nm.org](http://dacso-nm.org) or call 575-288-0750.

For information on the New Mexico State Senior Olympics, visit [nmseniorolympics.org](http://nmseniorolympics.org).

# Aging safely can be a matter of balance, environment

By **ELVA K. ÖSTERREICH**  
Las Cruces Bulletin

A volunteer group in Las Cruces has taken on the job of helping seniors stay safe and healthy through a class addressing “A Matter of Balance: Managing Concerns About Falls.”

The no-cost class is designed to help people become more active by examining obstacles keeping them from being active, said master trainer Kathy Norris. It helps them Look at their homes and other surroundings for obstacles that can af-

fect their safety.

The program also helps individuals start thinking about what will make their movements safe. They learn simple exercises focusing on enhancing endurance, flexibility and strength, Norris said. Exercises are adapted for those with disabilities or handicaps, she said.

“One of the great things about it is when you get a group together and someone comes up with a problem everybody helps,” Norris said. “It creates a little community, gives an outlet to

have someone to work with on questions that come up.”

Matter of Balance has been moving around Las Cruces for about five years now, she said, except for Covid years.

“We are just picking up classes now,” she said. “We are working through May, typically take the summer off and start up again in September.”

Taking place twice a week, the month-long class is free and run by trained volunteers, it moves to a different provided space every time. It has been held



BULLETIN PHOTOS BY ELVA K. ÖSTERREICH

**Instructor Chris Milyard works with the February Matter of Balance Class on their exercises. Participants Gilbert and Vicky Peña work along with her.**

in churches, at the Community Action Agency and the Good Samaritan Center to name a few.

The program is based on “Fear of

Falling: A Matter of Balance,” developed at Boston University in 1995 and the exercises are carefully designed to improve and not harm the user.

According to a program handout, exercise and physical activity can help seniors maintain and improve strength; have more energy; improve balance; delay some diseases like heart disease, diabetes and osteoporosis; and reduce depression.

“It’s very helpful to people just to get them moving, get them thinking,” Norris said. “And it’s open to any senior citizen, ages 65 to up past 90.”

For more information or to sign up to participate contact Norris at 575-642-6122.

# Table tennis a judgment-free zone for active seniors

By **DAVE BURGE**  
Las Cruces Bulletin

You don’t need to buy an expensive pair of running shoes and hit the pavement or purchase a pricey high-tech bike to stay active and in shape.

A group of mostly Las Cruces area seniors gather at the historic Frank O’Brien Papen Community Center, 304 W. Bell Ave., in Mesilla Park at 2 p.m. each Tuesday and Thursday to play table tennis.

It is an informal group, no official club or membership required.

Instead, they meet to chase that little bouncing ball around while working on back spins and top spins. Most important, there is no cost to play.

While the group has some skilled players, anyone can just show up and play. They have players ranging in age from their mid-20s to their late 80s.

“The only way you will get better is if you play and practice,” said Bess Hobson, the unofficial organizer for the group. “We are very nonjudgmental, noncompetitive.”

Hobson said playing table tennis has a lot



BULLETIN PHOTOS BY DAVE BURGE

**An informal group of mostly seniors gathers at the Frank O’Brien Papen Community Center, 304 W. Bell Ave., at 2 p.m. most Tuesdays and Thursdays.**

of benefits.

“First of all, it’s very sociable,” she said. “We take turns and play with different players and as you can see, we move around a lot.”

“We get a lot of exercise; you get a

lot of good hand-eye coordination,” she added. “Then, the most important one, is your brain. Trying to remember the correct score is an excellent mental challenge.”

Dennis Black said he

saw a story in the Las Cruces Bulletin a few years ago and was inspired to pick up table tennis. He is now a regular with the group and plans to play in both singles and doubles during the upcoming Doña Ana County Senior Games, which will run from March 12 to April 30.

“If you watch people playing here, you can see it’s good exercise,” Black said.

For Susan Gutierrez, it is a great way to meet other people her own age and stay active.

“It doesn’t seem like you are working out,” Gutierrez said. “You

are having a good time. I think it is a very accepting group.”

Ernst Bolleter says he burns more calories playing table tennis than he does riding his bike.

Trudy Buck said she finds the game to be “pretty entertaining.”

“You watch everyone chase that little orange ball around,” she said. “You definitely get a good workout.”

Anyone interested can just show up Tuesdays and Thursday afternoons.

You can also email Hobson at [bess.hobson@gmail.com](mailto:bess.hobson@gmail.com) for more information.





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# Martial arts for seniors provides self-confidence, fun

BY MIKE COOK

Las Cruces Bulletin

“You can’t give in to your age,” said John Scagno, 68.

Scagno and his wife have added a martial arts class for seniors to their already active Las Cruces lifestyle, which includes biking and working out.

The martial arts class, called Golden Seniors, meets three times a week at Maximum Martial Arts Center, 415 E. Foster Road, and has members ranging in age from their 50s to their late 70s. There’s also a younger black belt who often joins the class.

“I thought I was doing OK,” said Scagno, who spent eight years as chief of police in El Paso. But after a few weeks of Golden Seniors, he is enjoying increased flexibility, better balance and three more hours of cardiovascular activity every week. Scagno is also learning self-defense moves, and even how to count in Korean.

“One thing I find especially useful is Master (Justin) Castillo’s focus on building flexibility ‘in motion,’” said Scagno’s wife, Laura. “Having worked on flexibility is various ways over the years

I am especially impressed by his philosophy because we seldom injure ourselves in static stretching but rather in simple motions such as reaching for something or bending and twisting. We also practice falling (forward, backward and side falls). While these are traditional martial arts-type falls, they are so practical to modern living. Obviously, I am very excited about this class,” Laura Scagno said. “Today I broke boards with hand strikes and kicks! Very empowering!”

Castillo opened Maximum Martial Arts

in 2010 and moved it to Foster Road — the former home of Rising Sky Pottery — after locations on Amador Avenue, 17th Street and Solano Drive.

Castillo teaches traditional Korean Taekwondo to children as young as 4 and as old as 76. Even older students are welcome if they are cleared by a doctor.

Castillo, 38, started Golden Seniors last summer, and enjoys “working with the older crowd to understand my own self and aging.”

In addition to the health benefits and learning self-defense,



BULLETIN PHOTO BY MIKE COOK

**Taekwondo Master Justin Castillo with his Golden Seniors martial arts class at Maximum Martial Arts Center.**

participants have developed a sense of community, he said. They help each other learn and enjoy social-

izing, even going out together one Friday each month. And, they earn belts, with most moving up several steps in a few months from beginner’s white to yellow belts with green stripes.

Seniors are “not too old to do anything,” Castillo said. “They have the wisdom to know where their limits are,” he said.

The class includes retired doctors, military and law enforcement, he said. Practicing martial arts allows them to “keep enjoying themselves after they’ve had such an impact on our community.”

# Pickleballers celebrate their game and community

DAVE BURGE

Las Cruces Bulletin

A group of pickleball enthusiasts want to spread the gospel about their favorite sport.

Back in 2020, some Las Cruces pickleball players got together and formed the Organ Mountains Pickleball Club.

Their mission is to promote the game of pickleball and “make it totally inclusive and try to engage children and get them playing, too,” said Becky Dominguez, the club’s president.

So what exactly is pickleball?

It’s a paddle sport that’s a combination of tennis and badminton.

“It’s a very social game; it’s not quiet or conservative like tennis,” Dominguez said.

Dominguez also said it’s inexpensive to play — a couple of paddles and ball can cost about \$20. The equipment is also small and light enough for players of all abilities to handle, she said.

“People, especially people over 50, are looking for something that gets them moving,” Dominguez said. “It’s not a sport that is taxing on the body. It’s all about community, socializing and getting

together.”

The club has been working with Las Cruces Public Schools and last fall held its first training session where they met with PE coaches and teachers and introduced them to the sport. The goal is for coaches to then pass it along to kids, Dominguez said.

Apodaca Park, 801 E. Madrid Ave., has become ground zero for pickleball in Las Cruces.

The city government cut the ribbon on refurbished tennis courts that can be used pickleball at the park Oct. 1, 2021 — the same day as the club’s



BULLETIN PHOTOS BY ELVA K. ÖSTERREICH

**Apodaca Park, 801 E. Madrid, has become ground zero for the popular and growing sport of pickleball here in Las Cruces.**

first anniversary.

The courts are lighted so people can play at night, said Dona Cassidy, a member of the club.

“It gives us a whole new opportunity to

meet new people, play new people and have fun day or night,” she said.

To encourage more participation, the club offers free lessons for beginners at 5

p.m. every Thursday, weather permitting, at the park. John Allevi, a trained pickleball coach/instructor, volunteers his time and gives initial lessons through the club. If you want additional lessons, you can arrange with him for more sessions.

“It can be intimidating at first,” Dominguez said. “When you are a beginner, it takes a while to get used to what you are playing.”

The cost to join the club is \$15 a year. Info: [organmountainpickleballclub@gmail.com](mailto:organmountainpickleballclub@gmail.com) or visit [organmountainpickleballclub.com](http://organmountainpickleballclub.com).



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