

MICHELLE SINKLER



The first time Michelle Sinkler competed in the Senior Games, it was an accident.

Last year, Sinkler, who is leading efforts to encourage healthy habits for adults 50 and older in Carter County, attended the Wichita Falls games to see what the hype was all about. She was greeted by a man in his 80s who offered to show her around.

The next thing she knew, Sinkler was on the track participating in her first power walking competition.

He was 30 years her senior, so Sinkler decided not to walk as fast as she could and keep pace with her new friend.

“We were talking and then I asked if he had a strategy for the end,” Sinkler said. “He said, ‘ya, just stay with me,’ and then he said ‘go’ and he took off. He’s in his 80s and he beat me by at least two or three steps.”

Now, the 52-year-old is training and competing in power walking events, and for the first time, she’s bringing the Oklahoma Senior Games to her hometown.

Ardmore will hosted its senior games for the second time on weekends in August and September with events in archery, track and field, bowling, pickleball, horseshoes, cornhole and basketball.

Sinkler, program officer for the Ardmore Institute of Health, said she hopes the games will provide a starting point for aging adults who aren't taking care of themselves, or who are looking for ways to increase their activity.

"People are more likely to say, 'sure, I'll do a physical activity,' because it's fun then to give up food," Sinkler said. "We hope this will be an easier way to get people started and that will eventually lead to other healthy habits."

Sinkler said the games are an encouraging and supportive environment for seniors of all ages and abilities, which is something that her county desperately needs as the area's aging population continues to grow.

Competitors age 50 and older from across the state can find more information or sign up by visiting okseniorgames.com.

Oklahoma Senior Games competitions occur annually in September and October. This year, competitions will be held in Oklahoma City, Tulsa, Shawnee, Norman, Yukon and Warr Acres.

Events include three-on-three basketball, track and field, golf, swimming, water walking, 5K and 10K runs, 5K power walk, 5K race walk, bowling, tennis, table tennis, golf croquet, shuffleboard, cycling, cornhole, badminton, archery, pickleball, racquetball, softball and triathlon. Participants age 50 and older will compete in categories by age and gender.

Oklahoma Senior Games qualifies athletes for National Senior Games competition held every two years. About 300 athletes who qualify in 2020 will represent Oklahoma in the National Senior Games competition November 5-18, 2021 in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

For more information visit www.okseniorgames.com or call (405) 821-1500.