

Senior Living

FALL 2016

Phil Case does his best Michael Phelps pose as he stands with five of his six gold medals won on the day. The Springfield resident came in first in all six events that he competed in for the 85-89 age group at the Claude Moore Recreation Center in Sterling on Sept. 16.

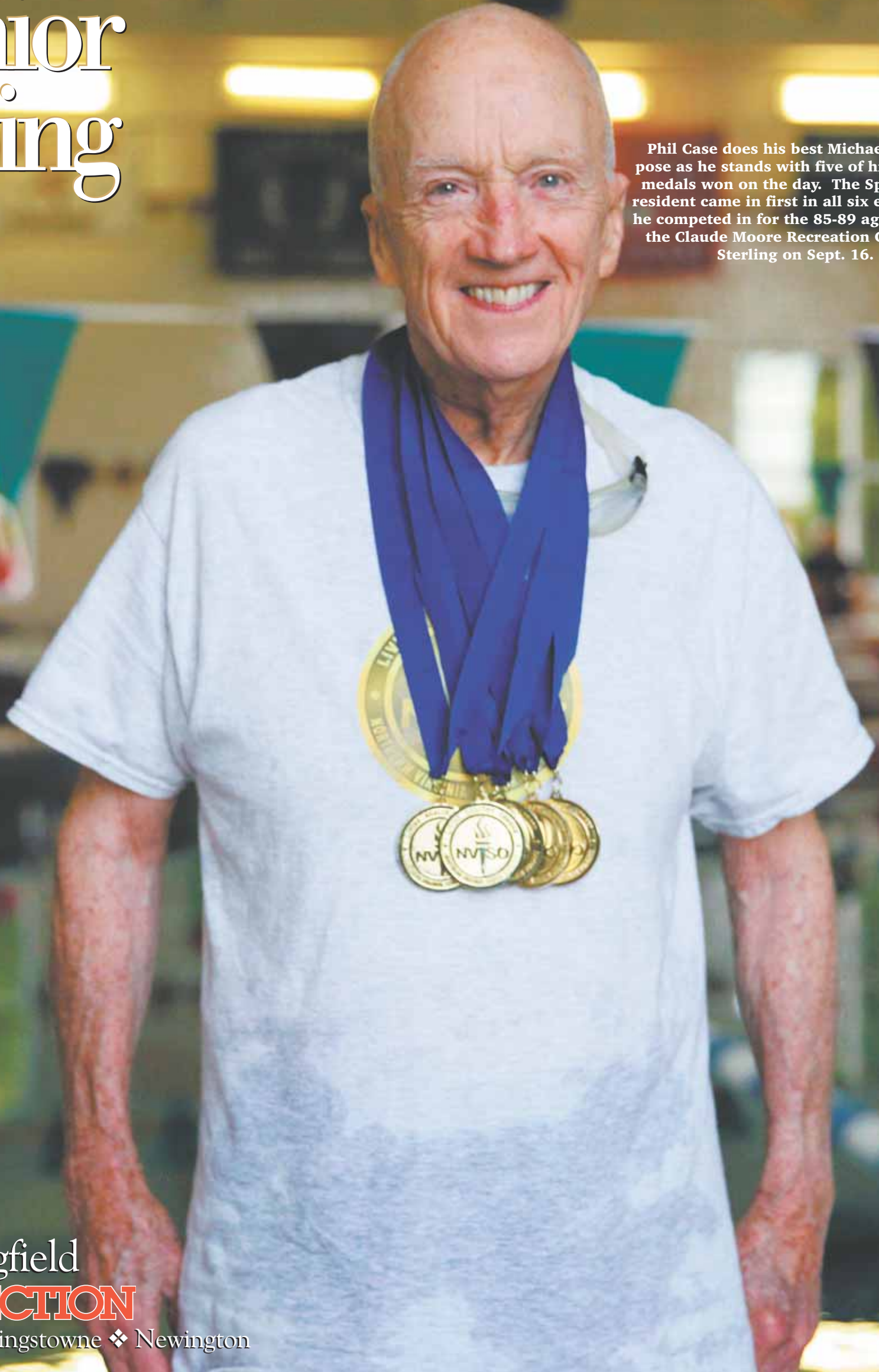


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Senior Living

Regaining Mobility

Local orthopedic surgeons offer keys for successful joint replacement surgery.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

Tired of the limited mobility and pain that have thwarted her love of foreign travel and fall hiking, Lynda S. Johnson, 72, scheduled a knee replacement surgery for later this month. She chose a doctor, found a pet sitter to watch her Cairn terrier, and enlisted her sister to live with her while she recovers.

"I had been debating for months about whether to have it," she said. "I was in so much pain, though, that I don't really think I have anything to lose."

For Johnson and approximately 7 million other Americans living with a hip or knee replacement, the decision to undergo such a surgery is fueled by a quest for less pain, more mobility and an overall boost to their quality of life.

Nearly 90 percent of patients who have knee replacement surgery experience less pain and 85 percent of the replacement joints still work after 20 years, according to the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases. Most patients will feel better, and feel better quickly.

Addressing overall health issues like high blood pressure, diabetes and obesity can boost the chances that a joint replacement surgery will be successful, says Dr. C. Anderson "Andy" Engh orthopedic surgeon, Anderson Orthopedic Clinic at Inova Mount Vernon. "Work on both your overall health and conditioning," he said.

Patients should be up and out of their hospital beds as soon as possible. "Patients are walking with assistance hours after their surgery. The reason patients do better when they get up and move around is that they decrease the risk of pneumonia and blood clots," said Dr. Mark P. Madden, an orthopedic surgeon with OrthoVirginia. "We start out with patients using a walker and having someone assist them in walking, and they generally progress to become fully weight bearing without any assistance at all."

Also, have a support system in place prior to surgery, whether it's a significant other, grown child or close friend. Often dubbed coach or advocate, that person might at-

tend medical appointments with a patient prior to surgery, serve as their point of contact the day of surgery and provide morale support throughout the recovery process.

"The more eyes and ears in addition to the patient's, the better," said Engh, explaining why it's so helpful to have someone with the patient at appointments and throughout the recovery. "We approach things that we have to do with set expectations, and sometimes those expectations can keep us from hearing other things. Having another person there is a good reality check and note taker."

The coach should be able to spend a significant amount of time with the patient during the early recovery period. "That person can expect to be with you 16 hours a day for two to five days after surgery," said Engh. "I don't want someone alone by themselves all day during work hours. The coach or advocate is like a safety marshal who keeps the patient safe and reminds them to take their time during their recovery."

Dr. George Aguiar, an orthopedic surgeon at Reston Hospital Center, advises patients to determine how they will get help with grocery shopping, transportation, pet care and house cleaning in advance. "Having these types of things handled before you go into surgery can only help the recovery process."

Patients should plan ahead to safety-proof. "Do everything you can do to avoid a fall within the first two to three months after your surgery," said Engh. "Have clear pathways and be aware of rugs that can catch your feet. Have good, secure handrails on stairways to help prevent falls."

Timing also plays a role in the success of joint replacement surgeries. "Some patients ask if they're too old to have surgery," said Engh. "Don't wait until you're home bound to have this surgery because the recovery will be quite long."

To decide whether joint replacement surgery is the best option, says Madden, work with a physician and weigh the effect the pain is having on one's quality of life.

"There's no right answer for every patient," said Madden. "The real answer is to work with your doctor to find the right treatment."

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Medicare Open Enrollment Nears

Medicare beneficiaries preparing for open enrollment this month may want to consider their current health needs and the many preventive services covered by Medicare.

Pam Smith, the Virginia Insurance Counseling and Assistance Program state director, has these tips for older Virginians looking to prepare for the enrollment period, Oct. 15 - Dec. 7. New insurance will not take effect until Jan. 1, 2017.

"Just as your health needs can change, so can the coverage and costs of health plans," Smith said. "Your health care provider and medications may be covered this year, but that does not necessarily mean they will be covered next year when your enrollment takes effect. Plans can change the list of covered drugs, premiums may increase and providers may leave networks, making this annual evaluation critical."

Things to consider when evaluating a plan: Have health needs changed? Will the plan cover the services that are needed? Are the

beneficiary's medications still covered? Is the health provider still in network? Are premiums or out of pocket costs increasing?

Update the list of medications, preferred pharmacies and health care providers, and then consider contacting trained counselors through the local Area Agency on Aging for free, confidential assistance in making the best decision for this enrollment period. These counselors can also help determine if the beneficiary is eligible for low-income subsidies which may help pay some premiums and prescription costs.

Call your local AAA in advance to schedule an appointment as time slots fill quickly. A complete list of Virginia's AAAs and their contact information is online at www.vda.virginia.gov/aaalist.asp.

Medicare's benefits include a number of preventive and screening services designed to detect health problems early when they're easier to treat.

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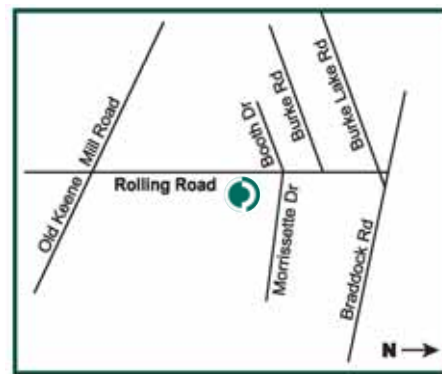
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Senior Living



PHOTO BY SHIRLEY RUHE/THE CONNECTION

Marge McNare from Fairfax bowls in the Senior Olympics at Bowl America Shirley on Edsall Road on Sept. 12 in the 90-94 year old age group.

PHOTO BY TOM MANNING/THE CONNECTION

Springfield resident Kathy Wilson sports a Bryce Harper jersey as she competes in the Softball Hit event in the 55-59 age group at Wakefield District Park in Annandale on Sept. 14. Wilson hit the softball 97' 10" to take home a silver medal.



Phil Doherty from Burke and his doubles partner Neil Lane from Reston won bronze medals in the men's doubles semi-finals match in the 80-89 age group held on Sept. 15 at Wakefield District Park in Annandale. They lost their match 9-7 (8 game pro set) after battling back after a slow start.



PHOTOS BY TOM MANNING/THE CONNECTION

From the Beginning to the End

982 participants signed up for 2016 Northern Virginia Senior Olympics.

The Northern Virginia Senior Olympics (NVSO) opened Sept. 10 and ran through Sept. 21 with another record registration of 918 participants. Saturday opening day ceremonies were followed by track and rowing events at Thomas Jefferson Community Center in Arlington and diving competition at Yorktown High School Aquatic Center.

Fifty events were held at 25 different venues across Northern Virginia including horseshoes and bocce at Fairfax Senior Center-Green Acres, field events at Stone Bridge High School Stadium, swimming at Claude Moore Recreation Center, tennis mixed doubles at Wakefield District Park and Wii Bowling at Greenspring Retirement Community Center in Springfield. There were two 100+ age group entries this year, Vera Punke from Arlington and Hilda Gross from Burke entered in the duplicate bridge competition held at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Arlington.

— SHIRLEY RUHE



PHOTO BY TOM MANNING/THE CONNECTION

Phil Doherty from Burke playfully uses a towel to fan Bob Shellhouse from Alexandria and Wayne Bell from Annandale during a changeover during their 80-89 age group championship match on Sept. 14 at Wakefield District Park in Annandale.

TJ Student Creates 'HeartScribe' for Seniors

Mobile app helps manage health data.

BY TIM PETERSON
THE CONNECTION

When Vienna resident Rohan Taneja's grandfather experienced heart failure last year, he was inspired to create a mobile application that would help senior citizens to better manage their health metrics and share them with caregivers and doctors.

When a "Shark Tank"-style assistive technology challenge for Fairfax County High School students came across his radar, Taneja

decided it was the perfect opportunity to develop his app.

In March of this year Taneja, now a senior at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, presented his project called HeartScribe to the challenge judges as a finalist.

"Many seniors have to measure their blood pressure, glucose and other things every day, and write all that down," Taneja said. "This makes that job a whole lot easier. In a matter of seconds, you can record all that data on your phone and bring it to your doctor. It's an

electronic way of doing what they were already doing."

Using the app saves seniors time and the stress of losing their documentation, he said.

Taneja won first place in the competition, along with around \$1,300 in prize money. He used the money to make informational flyers, buy devices to demonstrate the app and help launch it.

Taneja wanted to take the project further. He started visiting several senior centers and talking with elderly people about his app, what they liked and didn't like.

"That's when I realized it could be really helpful," he said.

Though he wrote the app by

himself, he's also reached out to the tech world for advice, including the Refraction co-working space in Reston.

From his senior feedback, Taneja has made numerous tweaks to the app, including making the buttons significantly larger and simplifying the interface to make it easier to use.

The app is live and available for free in the Google Play store, and works with any Android device. Taneja makes no money from it. "I guess you could call it one big service project," he said. "It was fun making it."

The TJ senior chose Google to start because he learned the Java



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

When Vienna resident Rohan Taneja's grandfather experienced heart failure last year, he was inspired to create a mobile application that would help senior citizens to better manage their health metrics and share them with caregivers and doctors.

coding language for Google in a programming class. However he's currently working on versions for iPhone and web browsers.