

Volk has mission in life:

Senior Olympian advocates, enjoys healthy lifestyle

By REBECCA WELLS

A man in his 50s was recently able to place in the Senior Olympics after spontaneously jumping into a race without even training for the event, due to his health-conscious lifestyle.

In 2002, health specialist Paul Volk found himself in Utah during the Senior Olympic Games, with elder athletes representing more than 40 nations.

Volk said he started sizing up the athletes and he thought, "You know, I think I can take these guys."

Then and there, he decided to compete in two of the distance races and ended up walking away with two silver medals for his age division.

"IF YOU DON'T take time out to stay well, you will take time out to be sick," he warned. "Exercise is the hardest one to get people to consistently stay with."

But he is living proof that it is possible to exercise consistently. Almost every morning, he starts the day off by bouncing on a little trampoline for five minutes. Later, he does a 30- to 45-minute routine on the trampoline, plus doing pushups and several hundred crunches. At the end of the day, he winds down the same way he started, with five more minutes on the trampoline. Volk's trampoline is able to fold up so he can take it with him when he travels and use it indoors or out, rain or shine.

Surviving a drug overdose at age 23 initially led Volk to revolutionize his lifestyle and eventually become the teacher he is today.

"I made God a promise that if he let me live, then I would make some changes," Volk explained, adding with a laugh, "And he did and I did."

VOLK THEN became a Christian, and in the process, he began to see principles on how to better care for his body.

"That was my breakthrough. I needed to know how to take care of this system here," he gestured to his torso. As the son of a world-renowned cake decorator, Volk said he had bad eating habits in his youth.

"I did not enjoy good health as I could have, which is why I enjoy so much going into the high schools," he said. Encouraging students to establish good dietary habits at an early age is what Volk loves to do. His sister died of morbid obesity in her early 50s, and by that time, his mission in life was already clear: advocate a healthy lifestyle.

After his own near-death experience from the drug overdose, Volk began studying human anatomy, physiology and biochemistry to try to figure out how to improve his personal health. In 1973, he started changing his eating habits, slowly working cho-

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When the weather's nice, he also enjoys power walking. In fact, Paul has stayed in shape enough to run a marathon in Port Townsend, where he used to direct a health clinic in the late '90s. Doctors at Enton Medical Center in London, England, once scored Volk's physical fitness and rated him on par with Olympic athletes.

"And they couldn't believe it, because I was so old," Volk, now in his mid-50s, said with a grin. Another doctor tested his immune system with laser technology on his skin. His immune system scored at 34,000, though anything at 25,000 or higher is considered optimal and only found in vegetarians, he said.

VOLK IS A VEGAN, eating no meats, animal products, processed foods or refined sugars. His blood level has also been gauged and found to be perfectly normal, he added. Volk said he can only recall feeling mildly sick twice in the decades since he changed his diet, and both of those illnesses were due to jet lag.

But Volk wasn't always this healthy or this disciplined about staying healthy.

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lesterol and refined foods out of his diet over the next few years.

"I JUST HAD more energy, a lot more energy, and I slept really good at night," he described. "I was becoming a lot more positive and constructive in my attitude."

Now he balances his nutritional needs by consuming an array of naturally color-coded beans, fruits, grains, nuts and vegetables.

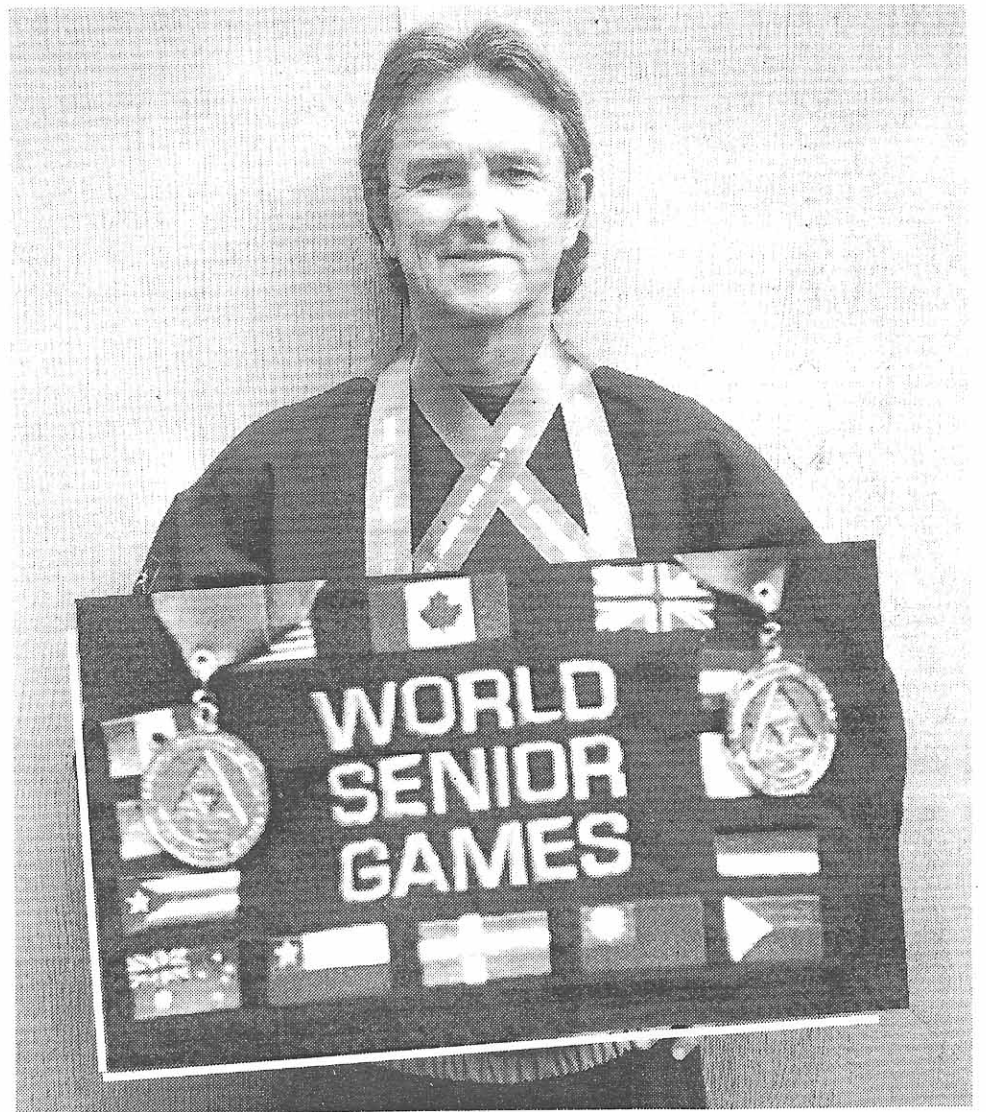
"If you eat all the colors, that will do it," he said.

A certified health instructor, Volk has a bachelor's degree in religion and two health certifications, after attending seven colleges and universities in six different states. He changed majors four times before settling with religion.

"It was the most interesting and rewarding, both for myself and others, because it helps people to be complete. I believe people are mental, they're physical and they're spiritual. So my seminars try to deal with all those areas," he said.

HE EARNED one health certification from Weimar Institute in California, near Lake Tahoe. His other certification is as a nutrition vegetarian instructor, which he earned from the General Conference in Washington, D.C.

It was at Weimar that Paul first began helping out with health talks for the institute's guests, before he was asked to speak on his own. Teaching health seminars has taken



DECKED OUT to represent America while racing in the 2002 Senior Olympics, Mason County's Paul Volk is ready to run. He wound up with two medals from the international competition.

Volk around the world, to countries as far away as Russia and Barbados and as close as Shelton High School.

But he chose to call Mason County home this year. While visiting locally for a health talk, a family invited him to stay in their cabin located in rural Mason County. The cabin's quiet, rustic atmosphere offers him a place to rest between tours.

His health seminars include a series of lectures on zero-cholesterol cooking, stress management, personal hygiene and weight loss. Using videos, handouts and PowerPoint presentations throughout his talks, he concludes his seminars with a banquet of recipes he recommends. People tell him these meals taste so good, they can't believe they're actually healthy, he said.

HE CITES credible medical institutions such as Johns Hopkins Uni-

versity and Harvard Medical School in his lectures. Because his approach is preventative health and he isn't a medical doctor, he doesn't prescribe or diagnose anything.

are independent of any specific church program.

"I MAKE IT very clear and very simple," he said, acknowledging that he is still learning more himself. "If you try to do too much all at once, then you get discouraged."

"The most important thing about this seminar, the last one of course, is the trust," Volk noted, referring to trust in God. "With out that, it's hard to follow through."

Trust in God, he continued, provides both the ability and the desire to follow the other seven principles.

"Otherwise, I would just let the Red Cross go in and teach," he remarked. And he continues to study and learn more himself all the time. His lectures also promote tips for a stress-free life.

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"That's not my department. Mine is prevention, so that you don't do these things, rather than dealing with it afterwards," he commented.

Since the late '70s, Paul has also taught clinics for people wanting to quit smoking.

"The same principle used with cigarettes can be used with any bad habits," Volk noted. "The system really works."

He added, "It's kind of what Alcoholics Anonymous brings out: You've got to tap into a power outside of and bigger than your problem."

Titled **NEWSTART PLUS**, which stands for "nutrition, exercise, water, sunshine, temperance, air, rest and trust," with the "plus" meaning "Paul likes to use simplicity," his lectures

WHILE TRAVELING the world with his health message, Volk has spoken at the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles, California, he has lectured before government officials, at universities, churches, schools, on various TV broadcasting stations and via satellite.

"So I've been to places I've never been to," he remarked of being internationally broadcast on television.

He has even been invited as guest speaker at high-school graduations for four years in a row in Port Townsend, where he was also named Most Outstanding Kiwanian one year.

"I think the most rewarding this for me is when I go back to some of these schools or countries and I see how they've changed for the better, which means they have become better citizens, which leads to a better nation," he reflected.

More information about his seminars is available at www.newstart-plus.org.