

## Trigg woman to be in National Senior Games

By Tonya S. Grace Cadiz Record staff writer

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A year before the top blew off, Toni Martinazzi climbed the well-known Mount St. Helens volcano in Washington state.

It was one of seven mountains she had scaled by 1980, when she joined a group hiking from San Francisco to Washington, D.C.

HikaNation has just had its 42nd reunion.

“It totally changed my life,” said Martinazzi, an Oregon farmer’s daughter who now lives in Canton, of the time she spent more than a year hiking across the U.S., through 14 states.

Martinazzi has always been athletic.

She’s participated in “many, many” 5Ks and half-marathons through the years, has gone skydiving and has been a runner for years.

From 2006 to 2012, she organized the Reindeer Run, a fundraiser at Trigg County Middle School that supported Bright Life Farms, a non-profit group home in Princeton.

Now 86, Martinazzi takes part three times a week in water aerobics at the Lake Barkley State Resort Park fitness center, and following knee surgery, she has taken up swimming.

The Trigg County woman is competing this weekend in the National Senior Games in Fort Lauderdale, marking her sixth year with the games but her first as a swimmer in the event.



excited about being in the senior competition.

Son Michael Leber is driving up from Texas, and together the two are flying to Florida.

The 2022 senior games began on Tuesday, and the event continues through May 23.

Martinazzi, who has had both of her knees replaced and last competed as a runner in 2012, says swimming has no impact on her joints, is good cardio and uses all her muscles.

“I feel really self-confident,” she notes of her upcoming participation in the games.

Martinazzi says she gets a thrill and a sense of accomplishment when she takes part in athletic events, whether it’s swimming in the senior games, skydiving, running or hiking.

“The biggest thing I did (is) I backpacked from San Francisco to Washington, D.C.,” she notes of her participation in HikaNation, the more than 4,000-mile trek which kicked off on April 12, 1980, and ended on May 27, 1981.

The hike vanquished all her fears, and today Martinazzi says she is no longer afraid of anything — snakes, heights and “all that stuff.”

She recalls that a ranger had a baby snake during the hike and urged her to touch it.

The great big snake felt silky, she said.

Martinazzi had previously dreamt of snakes coming out and not being able to get away from them; but all of those feelings “totally” went away with her hike across the nation.

“I can sleep behind a bush,” she says now. “I’m just fine.”

Martinazzi notes that one of the biggest honors she’s ever gotten is having the backpack she used during the HikaNation hike on display in the Appalachian Trail Museum in Pennsylvania.



At the time, she had placed patches from all the event’s 14 states on the backpack, and t

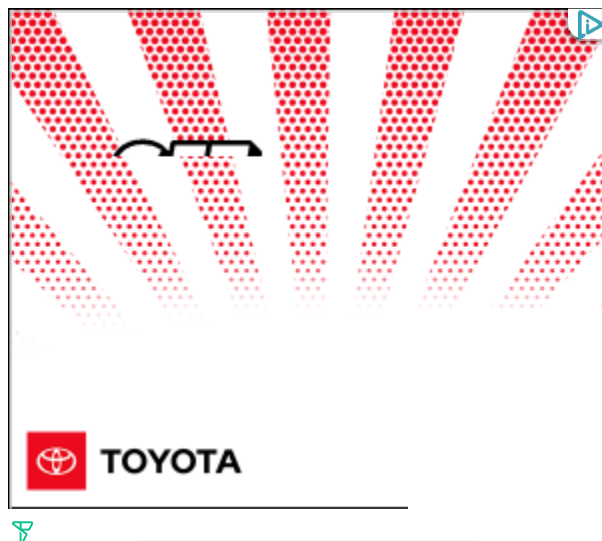


American Hiking Society asked if they could use it, she said.

Following her participation in the upcoming Florida games, Martinazzi says she plans to keep on being active, and she encourages activity in others.

“There’s always something you can do,” she says. “Just (put) one foot in front of the other.”

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