

## REGINA STEWART



Regina Stewart ran for fun. She ran for freedom, for speed, for the wind in her face. She ran to be part of something, to be one of the boys.

Surrounded by seven brothers, it was no surprise that Stewart was a tomboy. Track wasn't an option for her growing up, but she spent much of her childhood pounding the pavement on roads all over town.

"Running was an outlet for me," Stewart said. "It was natural for me. I was good at it and I enjoyed it. I became one of the boys and felt a part of the group when I was running."

Today, the 62-year-old Norman resident still finds comfort and community in running, despite the discomfort it sometimes causes.

Stewart tore her anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) at the 2011 National Senior Games that eventually led to surgery. Doctors recommended that she find a new sport, one that was kinder to her joints. But Stewart went right back to running.

After the Oklahoma Senior Games began losing steam, Stewart joined the effort to revive the competitions. She continued to compete and has qualified for nationals every year since 2011.

In 2017, Stewart raced at the National Senior Games in Alabama despite some pain in her healthy leg, which was deteriorating due to the additional strain she was putting on it after surgery. Stewart's pain barely slowed her down. Her relay team took second that year.

After two leg injuries and several lessons learned, Stewart's training focuses on mechanics in an effort to prolong her running career.

And last summer, Stewart found a burst of motivation -- her new grandbaby, Elara. Family has always been important to Stewart, but since losing her mother and two older sisters Stewart has taken on the responsibility of keeping her large family together.

"It's kind of fallen on me now to carry my family and my mother's legacy," Stewart said. "I want to show them what they can do. I want them to have a model for what they can do and be. Maybe if I stay healthy and keep competing, then they'll see what's possible and do the same."

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](http://www.okseniorgames.com) or call (405) 821-1500.