Patricia Shecter didn’t realize her swimming talent until she reached her 80s. Although she taught water safety and swim lessons throughout her life, it wasn’t until she moved to Independence Hill Retirement Community eight years ago that she began to participate in the Senior Games. Since then, she has won 12 swimming medals and looks forward to competing next year, when she will qualify as a 90 year old.

The independent octogenarian keeps active. Just last month, Patricia was busily downloading a playlist by the Beatles for the water aerobics class she would teach the next day. Afterward she headed to a line dance. A high-tech great-grandma, Patricia dedicates a room in her “tree-house” cottage to her hobbies and philanthropic efforts. She’s part of the Military Officer’s Association of America and serves as webmaster and past president of the Society of Military Widows. Patricia annually attends the group’s convention and has lobbied the U.S. Congress for 21 years to change a regulatory loophole and increase benefits for widows of WWII and Korean War veterans.

Back at the Hill, Patricia runs a competitive poker game in the clubhouse on Mondays. The group plays wild card games like Follow the Queen and Cincinnati, she said. The social butterfly has established great friendships in the community. She and several ladies created a shared patio in their breezeway complete with a garden table and planters full of flowers. They love to meet in the evenings for a cordial while they admire the wildlife in the greenbelt. They’ve seen deer, possums and even a bobcat!

Patricia and daughter Diane, who lives in Shavano Forest, enjoy creating intricately beaded jewelry. She also paints and often attends Independence Hill’s art workshops.

Patricia joined the Air Force at the age of 18. Only a few years into her career, she met and married her first husband and spent 21 years traveling the world as an Air Force wife. She eventually ended up in Panama City, Florida, where she raised three children. She tried her hand at many occupations including running a shell shop on the beach and airbrushing t-shirts, but her love of the water led her to teach sailing at a marina. She shared this passion with her second husband, Fred. The two crewed sailing vessels together off the Florida Coast and throughout the Keys. They were married in 1988 and had 12 wonderful years together. Their last adventure was to explore the United States in an RV.

Widowed twice, Patricia began traveling with friends she met when living in Arizona. She discovered she loved cruising and has since been to Antarctica, Tahiti, Australia, New Zealand, Europe and South America. She enjoys it so much that she treated her family to a cruise vacation to celebrate her 80th birthday. Patricia’s next venture, a cruise to Alaska this month.

For more information call (210) 764-5260 or go to www.independencehill.com.