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Warrior Transition Command

## **Throwing for gold: Seasoned field athletes and rookies come together to train in shot put and discus**

**West Point, New York** — Athletes gathered in the Gillis Field House for their third day of discus and shot put practice. It is almost difficult to tell who the official field coaches are, as a number of the seasoned athletes took time out of their practice to guide the many newcomers through the training.

One star athlete is Sgt. Monica Southall, who began as a civilian trainer in 2005 at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. During her time as a trainer, Southall took five Soldiers to San Diego to participate in a paralympic camp - her first experience with adaptive sports. Upon returning to Walter Reed, Southall began a sitting volleyball program for wounded, ill and injured Soldiers recovering there.

A few years later, Southall deployed and became injured herself. She had seen the power of adaptive reconditioning activities in the Soldiers she worked with before her deployment and began participating in seated volleyball and shot put during her recovery.

"I played three sports in high school and four in college, so adaptive sports are helping me to keep going, keeping me active," Southall says. She was an obvious fit for competition, so in 2010, the inaugural year of the Warrior Games, Southall competed and took home gold in sitting volleyball and seated shot put.

In 2012, she relocated to the Community Based Warrior Transition Command in Virginia Beach, Virginia and again participated in the Warrior Games, taking gold in sitting volleyball and standing shot put. She continued, "I went back in 2013 and took the gold again in standing shot put and also discus. We got the silver in sitting volleyball that year, but I still have six gold medals."

Cpl. Kyle Kohnke of the Marine Corps, on the other hand, is brand new to track and field. Having participated in this year's Marine Corps trials in cycling and swimming, Kohnke decided to come to the 2014 U.S. Army Warrior Trials to improve on those sports and also learn about track and field. "It's great to be at West Point for the first time," he explained. "There is so much history here, and the architecture is amazing."

Kohnke began his career on Guard and Reserve in the Air Force 2004. He realized after his first deployment to Kuwait that he wanted to try something new and go on active duty, so he enlisted with the Marine Corps in 2011 as Military Police. Kohnke deployed to Afghanistan in 2012 and took mortar fire while patrolling the forward operating base. He sustained shrapnel and a traumatic brain injury.

"I am still in the Marine Corps, but not actively, so sports help me occupy my time," Kohnke said of his recovery at the Wounded Warrior Battalion (WWB) East in Jacksonville, North Carolina. Although he was not selected to go to the Warrior Games this year, he hopes to participate as a Veteran in future games. Currently, he is going through the medical boards to be able to transition out. Following the Army Warrior Trials, Kohnke will attend Coastal Carolina Community College for engineering.

Kohnke is one of the few athletes whose parents are coming to watch him compete. "I love my parents and they support me in everything I do, especially when it aids my recovery," he said. "They know how much sports help me and that seeing them cheer me on adds to that." Kohnke's parents are travelling from his hometown in Wisconsin.



**CUTLINE:** A newcomer to track and field, Marine Cpl. Kyle Kohnke trains for the shot put and discus events for the 2014 U.S. Army Warrior Trials at the U.S. Military Academy, West Point, New York, June 12, 2014. More than 100 wounded, ill and injured service members and Veterans from across the United States joined are at West Point to competing in the 2014 U.S. Army Warrior Trials, June 15-20. The event is hosted by Warrior Transition Command and includes athletes from the Army, Marines and Air Force who will face off in archery, basketball, cycling, track and field, swimming, shooting, sitting volleyball and wheelchair basketball. Participants in the trials include athletes with spinal cord injuries, traumatic brain injuries, visual impairment, serious illnesses and amputations. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. James McCann)



**CUTLINE:** Sgt. Monica Southall has her eyes on a fourth gold medal in shot put while she trains for the 2014 U.S. Army Warrior Trials at the U.S. Military Academy, West Point, New York, June 12, 2014. More than 100 wounded, ill and injured service members and Veterans from across the United States are her at West Point competing in the Army Warrior Trials, June 15-19. The event is hosted by Warrior Transition Command and includes athletes from the Army, Marines and Air Force facing off in archery, basketball, cycling, track and field, swimming, shooting, sitting volleyball and wheelchair basketball. Participants in the trials include athletes with spinal cord injuries, traumatic brain injuries, visual impairment, serious illnesses and amputations. (U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Anna Jordan)



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Warrior Transition Command (WTC) is a major subordinate command under the U.S. Army Medical Command (MEDCOM). WTC's mission is to develop, coordinate and integrate the Army's Warrior Care and Transition Program (WCTP) for wounded, ill and injured soldiers, veterans and their families. For more information on WTC, visit the new WTC website, [www.WTC.army.mil](http://www.WTC.army.mil), follow on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/armyWTC> or join Facebook at <http://facebook.com/armyWTC>.

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