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U.S. Army Soldier and Veterans use Adaptive Reconditioning as Foundation for Success at 2014 Paralympics Winter Games

Alexandria, Va. — Army Sgt. Jen Lee of San Francisco, Calif., and seven Army Veterans proved adaptive reconditioning activities remain beneficial after injury at the 2014 Paralympic Winter Games in Sochi, Russia March 6-23.

“When you’re going through therapy, the last thing on your mind is that you’ll become a professional disabled athlete,” Lee said in a U.S. Paralympics interview. “I was participating in these sports because they helped my rehabilitation, but I did not know I could be on a national team, at the national level, traveling around the world and playing these sports against other countries.”

Lee is currently assigned to the U.S. Army World Class Athlete Program, and served as backup goalie for the USA sled hockey team in this year’s Paralympic Winter Games. Along with Army Veteran Rico Roman, of Portland, Ore., Lee helped Team USA earn gold in the men’s sled hockey competition.

Currently, there are 29 Warrior Transition Units and nine Community Based Warrior Transition Units with capabilities for wounded, ill and injured Soldiers to participate in various adaptive reconditioning activities, including sports tailored to their physical abilities post-injury.

“It is important for wounded, ill and injured Soldiers and Veterans to know they can still participate in sports and other physical activities after facing an injury or illness,” said Lt. Col. Keith L. Williams, Adaptive Reconditioning Branch Chief, Warrior Transition Command. “All Paralympians demonstrate this, but our population can relate more to the Army Veterans who have incurred injuries similar to Soldiers in Warrior Transition Units or in the Army Wounded Warrior Program.”

Army Veteran Patrick McDonald of Madison, Wis., who earned fifth place in the wheelchair curling competition, turned to adaptive activities for rehabilitation after losing the use of his legs during a training accident in South Korea in 1991.

"I worked hard to wear a uniform and in representing my country during my military career," McDonald said in an interview with American Forces Press Service.

After sustaining his injuries, McDonald started his rehabilitation at the Palo Alto Veterans Affairs hospital in northern California, where he was introduced to adaptive activities.

“Being a Paralympian means a lot," he said. "Learning about wheelchair sports, that's where I knew I could represent my country again, but this time in sports."

In addition to Lee and Roman winning medals at the Paralympics in Ice Sledge Hockey, Army Veteran Heath Calhoun of Clarksville, Tenn., earned the silver medal in the men’s SC slalom super combined, sitting competition.

Army Veteran Andy Soule of San Antonio, Texas, competed and placed fourth in the 15-kilometers and 7.5-kilometers biathlon competitions. He also placed fifth in the 12.5-kilometers biathlon, one-kilometer cross-country sprint, sitting, and 15-kilometers cross-country, sitting events. He earned ninth place in the 10-kilometers cross-country, sitting competition.



Team USA Paralympian Army Veteran Bryan Price of Belton, Mo., earned ninth place in the 4x2.5-kilometers open relay and 19th in the men's 15-kilometers cross-country, sitting competition.

Army Veteran Jeremy Wagner of Nanakuli, Hawaii, earned 16th and 22nd place in the men's 12.5-kilometers and 10-kilometers cross-country, sitting events respectively. He also competed and earned 18th place in the men's 15-kilometers and 7.5-kilometers, cross-country, sitting competitions.

For more information about the Army athletes or the Paralympics visit the Team USA Paralympics section at <http://www.teamusa.org/US-Paralympics>, and to learn more Warrior Transition Units or the Army Wounded Warrior Program, visit <http://www.WTC.army.mil>.

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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, follow on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/armyWTC> or join Facebook at <http://facebook.com/armyWTC>.

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