



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

June 18, 2014

By Caitlin Morrison, Warrior Transition Command  
and Mike O'Toole, U.S. Army Medical Command

### **Army dominance of Warrior Trials continues at field events**

**West Point, New York** —Army athletes overwhelmed their Air Force and Marine rivals in the field competition at the 2014 Army Warrior Trials, capturing eight of the 12 gold medals awarded in a variety of discus and shot put events. The overall field medal count stands at 21 Army, 13 Air Force and two for the Marines.

More than 100 wounded, ill and injured service members and Veterans from across the United States are at West Point competing in the Army Warrior Trials, June 15-20. 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.

Army Pfc. Kevin Szortyka Jr., Warrior Transition Unit, Fort Stewart, Ga., approached the shot put throw ring for this competition, having only completed a few weeks of practice.

“Shot put is all in the mind. You have to maintain a level of confidence,” he said. “None of these guys know anything you don’t. We are all here for a reason.”

After three rounds, Szortyka placed third in the shot put open category for athletes without permanent medical disabilities.

The athletes took a brief rest before moving to the discus competition. “Shot put is more about power, and discus is more about finesse, which is not my thing,” Szortyka said. “This is the first time I’ve thrown discus...although that isn’t much more than the two times I have practiced shot put.”

Szortyka is based at the Fort Stewart Warrior Transition Unit (WTU) in Georgia, where his job site assignment is with the occupational therapists. “All I do is adaptive sports,” he explained.

Szortyka’s favorite adaptive sport to play is wheelchair basketball. He is transitioning out of the Army in the next month and will be moving back home to Tallahassee, Florida, so he found a wheelchair basketball league nearby to join. “When I get home, it’s a great opportunity to keep playing,” Szortyka said.

As with many of the athletes here, this is Szortyka’s first time competing for a chance to go to the Warrior Games. “The coaches here are great. I had no idea they’d be so knowledgeable and professional,” he said. “They really took the opportunity to make personal relationships with us.”

Many of the field medalists will represent their respective services at the 2014 Warrior Games slated for Sep. 28-Oct. 4, Colorado Springs, Colorado.

#### **Field Event Medal Talley**

Shot Put-Seated, Women: Gold-Sgt. Carlita Maria Harter (Army), Walter Reed WTB, Bethesda, Md.; Silver-1st Lt. Kelly Elmlinger (Army) WTU Fort Sam Houston, Texas; Bronze-Retired Staff Sgt. Chanda Gaeth (Army), La Crosse, Wisconsin

Shot Put-Seated, Men: Gold-Retired Staff Sgt. Isaac Rios (Army), New York, N.Y.; Silver - Sgt. Alex Nguyen (Marines); Bronze - Retired Staff Sgt. Keith Taylor (Air Force).



Discus-Seated, Women: Gold - Sgt. Carlita Maria Harter (Army), Walter Reed WTB, Bethesda, Md.; Silver-Retired Staff Sgt. Chanda Gaeth (Army), La Crosse, Wisconsin; Bronze- Capt. Sarah Evans (Air Force).

Discus-Seated, Men: Gold-Sgt. Alex Nguyen (Marines); Silver-Retired Staff Sgt. Keith Sekora (Air Force); Bronze-Retired Staff Sgt. Jason Ellis (Air Force).

Discus-Open, Women: Gold-Retired Sgt. Monical Southall (Army), Suffolk, Va.; Silver - Retired Master Sgt. Kyle Burnett (Air Force); Bronze - Staff Sgt. Pertrina Williams, WTU Fort Benning, Ga. (Army)

Discus -Other, Women: Gold - Retired Staff Sgt. Tatiana Perkins (Air Force)

Discus -Open, Men: Gold- Retired Sgt. 1st Class Sean Hook (Army), Summerville, S.C.; Silver - Sgt. 1st Class Jermeka Johnson (Army), WTU Fort Benning, Ga.; Bronze - Spc. James Taylor (Army), WTU Fort Sam Houston, Texas

Discus -Other, Men: Gold - Retired Staff Sgt. Michael Kacer (Army), Yonkers, N.Y.; Silver - Senior Airman Gideon Connelly (Air Force); Bronze - Retired Senior Airman Scott Palomino (Air Force)

Shot Put-Open, Women: Gold - Retired Sgt. Monica Southall, Suffolk, Va. (Army); Silver - Retired Senior Airman Jennifer Stone (Air Force); Bronze - Sgt. Kadina Baldwin, Warrior Transition Unit Fort Campbell, Ky. (Army)

Shot Put-Other, Women: Gold - Retired Staff Sgt. Tatiana Perkins (Air Force)

Shot Put-Open, Men: Gold - Retired Sgt. 1st Class Sean Hook (Army), Summerville, S.C.; Silver - Sgt. 1st Class Jermeka Johnson (Army), WTU Fort Benning, Ga.; Bronze - Pfc. Kevin Szortyka (Army), WTU Fort Stewart, Ga.

Shot Put-Other, Men: Gold - Retired Senior Airman Scott Palomino (Air Force); Silver - Master Sgt. Chris Aguilera (Air Force); Bronze - Retired Staff Sgt. Michael Kacer (Army), Yonkers, N.Y.

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**CUTLINE:** Pfc. Kevin Szortyka of Fort Stewart, Ga. throws the bronze medal winning shot at the 2014 U.S. Army Warrior Trials at the U.S. Army Military Academy, West Point, N.Y. The Army Warrior Trials, June 15-19, are hosted by the Warrior Transition Command and highlight more than 100 Army, Marine and Air Force athletes competing in archery, cycling, shooting, sitting volleyball, swimming, track and field, and wheelchair basketball. Participants in the trials include athletes with spinal cord injuries, traumatic brain injuries, visual impairment, serious illnesses and amputations. Army Warrior Trials help determine which Army athletes will compete at the 2014 Warrior Games slated for Sep. 28-Oct. 4, Colorado Springs, Colo. (U.S. Army photo by Eric Lieber)

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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>.

200 Stovall Street - #7S05 - Alexandria, VA 22332