



NEWS RELEASE

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## **Wheelchair racing kicks off the 2014 Army Warrior Trials training week at West Point**

**WEST POINT, NY** – Retired Army Staff Sgt. Chanda Gaeth is one of the more seasoned wheelchair racers at today's training with three years of competition under her belt. "There is so much prep time involved in racing," she explained as she dabbed her racing gloves with klister, a special kind of tacky to provide friction on the wheels. Gaeth first began wheelchair racing when she was training for her first Warrior Games in 2012 and needed to add a sport to her roster. She now participates in wheelchair racing, cycling, swimming, shot put and discus and has won gold medals at all three of the Warrior Games she attended.

The wheelchair has been a part of Gaeth's life since 2003, when she sustained spinal cord injuries serving overseas. At Warrior Transition Battalion (WTB) Fort Sam Houston, Texas, Gaeth's adaptive reconditioning began with water therapy. She was on bed rest at the time her mentor, Master Sgt. Rhoden Galloway, convinced her to learn how to swim. Master Sgt. Galloway's wife set up a training event for Fort Sam Houston Soldiers in Austin, Texas in 2012 where the Soldiers were able to learn swimming tips from Olympic swimmers. Gaeth is proud to say that she went from not being able to swim to learning the backstroke.

Sgt. Galloway is not the only adaptive sports mentor in Gaeth's life. Her coach, Saul Mendoza, is an Olympic and Paralympic medalist and once held the world record for the 800m in wheelchair racing. "Her improvement is amazing," Mendoza said of Gaeth. "She loves it, she's a machine. Other athletes stop to talk on the track but not her; she keeps pushing and pushing around." Mendoza spent the morning with four athletes helping them train for the competition next week. The wheelchair races include 100m, 200m, 400m, 800m, 1500m and tentatively relay.

Along with her three-wheeled racing chair, Gaeth also brought Vicky Torres with her to the 2014 Army Warrior Trials as her non-medical assistant. Torres has been assisting Gaeth over the past year, following in her brother's footsteps. Torres explained that her family really got her involved in helping with adaptive sports. "My father just retired from the Army this past year," she said. "Chandra got him into shooting and archery for the first time. It really helps him to stay active." Although she has seen Gaeth participate in her sports, Torres is particularly excited to be at the trials so that she can see other adaptive sports, such as wheelchair basketball.

Back in Texas, Gaeth competes in local competitions, such as triathlons and the Alamo Marathon. In addition to looking forward to the Warrior Games in Colorado Springs in the fall, Gaeth hopes to be a member of the American team in the 2016 Paralympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

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Cutline: Retired Army Staff Sgt. Chanda Gaeth trains to compete in the wheelchair racing event at the 2014 Army Warrior Trials in West Point, NY.

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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