

Wounded Warriors Introduced to Adaptive Athletics During Training Camp

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More than 40 seriously wounded, ill and injured Sailors and Coast Guardsmen - including 20 first timers - traveled to Naval Base Ventura County (NBVC), California, Jan. 16 to participate in the first Navy Wounded Warrior - Safe Harbor (NWW) adaptive sports camp of the year.

The five-day camp introduced athletes to swimming, seated volleyball, wheelchair basketball, archery, shooting, and track and field.

"The NWW adaptive sports team is very excited to kick off the 2016 season," said Navy Wounded Warrior - Safe Harbor Adaptive Sports and Recreation Lead Megan Haydel. "The camp athletes hope from here to go on to try out for our 2016 Warrior Games Navy team at our trials in Hawaii, Feb. 21-26.

"However, this event is about more than just sports," continued Haydel. "These camps offer our recovering wounded, ill, and injured service members an opportunity to connect with their fellow injured Sailors and Coast Guardsmen. Many of them haven't felt like they've been part of team since they were injured or became ill. Our adaptive sports program gives them a place to feel at home. Whether they are elite athletes in their sport or novices trying out for the first time, every one of them will be welcomed to the group and will be part of the NWW program for life."

NWW coordinates the non-medical care of seriously wounded, ill and injured Sailors and Coast Guardsmen, and provides resources and support to their families. NWW offers individually-tailored assistance to ensure enrollees' successful recovery, rehabilitation and reintegration.

Adaptive athletic reconditioning - athletic activities that are modified to meet abilities of injured or ill individuals - are an essential component of their recovery and rehabilitation plans. The proven benefits of adaptive athletics include greater self-esteem, lower stress levels, and fewer secondary medical conditions.

"I have always been an athlete for my entire life, and now since my injury, I can no longer play certain sports," said Operations Specialist 3rd Class Melissa Klotz. "Participation in adaptive athletics is a way for me to have a quality of life and release from the miserable hole I was in. This is only the first day of camp and everyone here is super awesome. The coaches are really knowledgeable and friendly. I am looking forward to the rest of the week."

Klotz suffered hip and traumatic brain (TBI) injuries when she fell during a training exercise on



NAVAL BASE VENTURA COUNTY, Calif. -- Navy Wounded Warriors learn how to cycle safely during their track training session at the adaptive athletics camp on Naval Base Ventura County. (U.S. Navy photo by Shannon Leonard/Released)

deployment. She had a complete hip replacement six months ago and she continues to suffer from nerve and muscle damage. She is a NWW enrollee currently stationed at Naval Station San Diego, and the recent camp was her first experience with adaptive athletics.

Musician 3rd Class Abbie Johnson, who is also attending her first camp, is currently stationed in Hawaii and suffers from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

"Today went really well and I had a great time," said Johnson. "I tried some sports that I was a little rusty on. It was good to do some reconditioning such as working on my sprinting as opposed to long distance running. I met a ton of great people today. Everyone here is so accepting, and it is nice to be in a place where we all understand each other. The coaches were really motivating. I want to make the Navy team for the Warrior Games, and I am going to give it my all! It is great to still feel like I am part of a team, especially since I am in the process of transitioning out of the Navy.

Brittany Jordan retired from the Navy last year. She is visually impaired and suffers from TBI.

"I love the camp, they have different things for everyone," said Jordan. "The instructors here are amazing. They really care and want to help you. I came to camp because I needed to get off the couch and do something. I wanted to meet new people who are in my predicament and just have some fun. Since being here, I have met so many people from different backgrounds, and I am having a blast. During swimming, I was so blown away at how well I did. I am excited to continue participating in adaptive sports. It's just great!"

To learn more about NWW, the DoD Warrior Games, and adaptive sports, visit <http://safeharbor.navalcommander.com>, call 855-NAVY WWP (628-9997), or email navywoundedwarrior@navy.mil.

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