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Kayaks help vets navigate rough waters



ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH
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March 10, 2009 - Team River Runner instructor Tim Pfeil (right) of Oakville works with former U.S. Marine sniper Nolan Kowalski of O'Fallon, Missouri, on a job during practice at the VA Medical Center Jefferson Barracks Division in south St. Louis County. Kowalski and Pfeil are part of Team River Runner, a club that teaches veterans the basics of kayaking. Currently the team masters their skills at the pool, but will soon move to the outdoor waters. Erik M. Lunsford (P-D)

By Cynthia Billhartz Gregorian
ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH
03/13/2009

Marine veteran Nolan Kowalski schleps his kayak gear toward the pool and strips down to his swim trunks. He's all sinewy muscle and unwavering focus.

A large tattoo between his shoulder blades depicts an M-40 rifle over a circle and crosshairs. The words Scout Sniper are engraved above it, marking the 25-year-old former sergeant of O'Fallon, Mo., as an elite infantryman.

A handful of other veterans are already in the pool inside the Jefferson Barracks