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leading company in the booming obstacle course industry, Tough Mudder has challenged half a million inspiring participants worldwide and raised more than \$3 million dollars for the Wounded Warrior Project.

Tough Mudder bills itself as more than an event, noting that it's also a way of thinking.

"By running a Tough Mudder challenge, you'll unlock a true sense of accomplishment, have a great time, and discover a camaraderie with your fellow participants that's experienced all too rarely these days," states the event's web page.

Evie found that claim to true in every sense.

Evie, 35, married and the mother of three, participated in cross country in high school and more or less decided to hang up her running shoes after that. She dedicated herself to getting back into shape through running after her third child was born four years ago.

She set her sights on participating in Tough Mudder in the last year or so as a way to fulfill a desire to become involved in something more physically demanding than long-distance running.

"It was really incredible," Evie said. "It was, first all, just an enormous event, with thousands of people. They start people in waves, so there is a very large group, with a couple thousand people per wave, that start."

"This particular course was 12 miles, with different obstacles along the way," she said. "Every course is set up a little bit differently because it's set up based on what the terrain is."

Evie noted that Tough Mudder course in New York differs from the one in Colorado, which differs from the Minnesota course, mainly because of the lay of the land.



Evie Clercx participated in Tough Mudder as part of team dubbed "The Vermillionaires," made up of Matt and Carly Heard and Erin and John Vogel, all of Vermillion. John's sister and her boyfriend, who live near the site of this particular Tough Mudder event, also participated with the team. (Photo courtesy of Evie Clercx)

"It was an enormous challenge, but it really was an amazing event," she said. "I come from the marathon world, so I'm a racer. In a marathon, on race day, you're all by yourself. You're trying to better your own time, and it's a very individual thing, and Tough Mudder is very different than that."

All of the participants in Tough Mudder are asked to focus more on simply finishing the course. They are also urged to help each other along the way.

"You aren't competing against time," Evie said. "It's based on completion and working together, so this is an incredible camaraderie- and team- and relationship-building event. It is really, really great to be a part of."

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