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Evie was a member of the Vermillionaires, a team 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.

Evie and her teammates began preparing for the tough run well in advance.

"We did Saturday training," she said. "Every Saturday, we'd get together for an hour and run through a circuit that was based on a lot of the obstacles we thought we might face."

"We worked on challenging our strength and cardiovascular levels, and we did this for a couple of months prior to the event," Evie said. "We knew that this would require a lot of upper body strength, and a lot of cardiovascular strength, so those were the two areas we really focused on."

In other words, a lot of lifting and pull-ups became part of the team's fitness regimen.

Some aspects of the event were impossible to train for. The plunge into ice water, for example.

"It's something that you just can't adequately prepare yourself for," she said. "In the marathon world, when I would finish my long runs of 18 or 20 miles, I would come home and take an ice bath to relax my muscles. That's nothing compared to having to dive under these obstacles filled with cold water and stay in that for five minutes at a time."

Tough Mudder is much more about running through obstacles and testing one's endurance. It also is a source of assistance to veterans and their families.

"The proceeds of the event go to the Wounded Warrior Project that helps wounded vets," Evie said. "It helps provide therapy for them, and helps their families as the veterans are

struggling and recovering from their injuries sustained in battle. It's really an amazing program to be a part of."

Evie, a U.S. Army veteran, said this cause was particularly "near and dear to my heart. As a veteran, I just felt it was so important. What's often neglected is ... these veterans that are wounded in battle. We hear their stories, and we think it is so wonderful that they sacrificed so much for us, but we never hear about what happens afterward. They have to live the rest of their lives with these injuries, and often times they are debilitating."

"The Army can help a little bit, but they still have to live their lives, and deal with those injuries," she said. "It really is an amazing cause, and it's something that was widely promoted at the event. I think we all felt a little bit of pride that day, collectively, coming together, really challenging ourselves and knowing that the proceeds were going to a really important cause."

The physical challenges of the course, the hard training that is involved, the unique hardships that participants must endure – and all of that mud – have hardly deterred Evie. Not when you finish Tough Mudder brimming with pride and a sense of accomplishment.

"I'm so excited for next year, are you kidding me?" she said. "I have friends, when I tell them about it, who are intimidated about it, but I just feel like it would be such a great accomplishment for them."

"I want to bring a huge team next year," Evie said. "You just feel so good at the end. You all work together, and there are people who you don't even know who are helping you when you can't get over that wall. They're not leaving you; they are helping everybody out, and it's really an amazing thing. To be with thousands of people who are working together is really a spectacular situation."

■ *Story by David Lias*



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