

Keiser University Teams Take on Fitness Challenge

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Earl "Will" Doyle, a student at Keiser University's Lakeland campus, trains to compete in the Tough Mudder competition Nov. 3 to benefit the Wounded Warrior Project. Doyle is an Army National Guard veteran who served in Iraq.

LAKELAND | A group of students at Keiser University's Lakeland campus has been revving up on fitness workouts in anticipation of an upcoming athletic event they will participate in to help raise funds for veterans.

Julie Snyder, department chair for Keiser's sports medicine and fitness technology program, is heading a statewide event project at nine of the private, not-for-profit campus sites. She said having students participate in the event has many pluses, including teamwork-building among staff and students.

There will be three teams participating from the Lakeland campus, for a total of 36 students. They intend to get down and muddy Nov. 3 for the annual Tough Mudder Competition.

Keiser has 1,250 students at the Lakeland campus. This particular competition, which benefits the Wounded Warrior Project, is near to the hearts of many Keiser students, faculty and staff, said spokeswoman Kimberly Dale. Nearly 2,500 of the school's 20,000 students are active-duty service members, veterans or military family members.

Student Earl "Will" Doyle, 30, of Lakeland, is stoked about the Tough Mudder event (www.ToughMudder.com), which considers itself "Probably the Toughest Event on the Planet." Each of the endurance challenges tests for toughness, fitness, strength, stamina, mental grit and teamwork.

Doyle, a veteran of the Army National Guard who served in Iraq, said he's ready for it. He would not have been ready, however, when he was in Iraq gaining weight from the good food, he said. While there, he put on 25 pounds. "Over there, we worked 12- to 14-hour shifts," he said. "When I got off, I just wanted to eat and go to sleep."

But he's since dedicated himself to fitness and is getting a personal trainer certificate. He has also opted to complete his associate's degree and go on to get a four-year degree in fitness.

As the date of the event draws closer, students will be helping motivate each other and get ready. Doyle said while he's not certified yet, he can certainly help a friend train. "There are two people on our team who have done it previously and have experience," he said. "Two or three of them are veterans, too."

"We really just want to finish together," he said. "There are a few people who are not in the best physical shape. But we want to work together, and not leave any man — or woman — behind. The main thing is just completing it, no matter how long it takes."

To keep things competitive yet friendly, Keiser tossed in a motivation factor: The Keiser team that finishes first gets some new gym equipment for their campus.

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