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Hundreds audition for 'Survivor'

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SOUTH BURLINGTON — Bug-eating, cliff-jumping and spearfishing were not among the activities that took place during auditions for the 18th season of the CBS reality show <http://www.cbs.com/primetime/survivor16/> target="_blank">"**Survivor**," Wednesday at University Mall. But one woman did appear to drink her own urine.

Her action captured the spirit of the auditions — that people will do anything to prove that they are the ultimate survivors. Mall spokespeople said the audition drew about 300-400 would-be contestants. (Only about 20 people participate in the final show.)

If any of Wednesday's tryouts succeed, they will take part in a seven-week endurance test and the chance to win \$1 million.

Each person was given two minutes of video time to make a case for joining the next cast.

"The biggest challenge for me if I get on the show will be leaving my family," said Berea Odrey, a 29-year-old Montpelier resident and father of three. Odrey is not exactly a pillar of physical fitness. Standing about 5-feet-11 and approaching 300 pounds, he is not quite like the muscular men from previous episodes. But, he says he has unique characteristics that will pull him through.

"I think I'm a lot like the character Rupert from season seven," Odrey said. "He's a nice guy, but I also have a little Johnny Fairplay in me (also from season seven). Yeah, I'll sell your grandmother if you're not looking."

Odrey said he received 12 e-mails from co-workers urging him to try out for the reality show. Testing his physical strength doesn't scare him one bit.

"I just spent 30 days living with my mother-in-law. If that's not enough to survive me on an island ... I think I've got it covered!"

On the other hand, Erika Nestor, a 42-year-old Burlington resident and mother, appears to have stepped out of the pages of "Shape" magazine. Standing about 5-feet-2, Nestor is bursting with biceps and looks as though she could survive anything.

"I do run a lot, but I think everybody has a shot," Nestor said. "It's more than just physical. It's mental, it's everything."

Nestor said her three children are avid "Survivor" fans and she thought of them and their support while making the decision to audition.

"They ask you why you're the ultimate survivor," Nestor said. "One of my children is handicapped, so I think of my family as a family of ultimate survivors."

<http://www.survivorfever.net/kathy.html>"target="_blank">**Kathy O'Brien**, a 47-year-old Vermonter who competed in the fourth season of the show, was there to share advice.

"You have to be bold, and say anything that's on your mind," O'Brien said. "The producers are tired of hearing, 'I'd be a great survivor because I could eat bugs, or I have muscles.' I got on because I was laughing a lot and I was really sarcastic. I knew nothing about the show."

O'Brien said that reality-show naivete will work in favor of those auditioning because their motives are more pure.

"People have been getting really shallow, only in it for the money," O'Brien said. "I think they're wondering where the really soulful and hard-working people are. And Vermonters, we are hard-working New England people."

O'Brien then took a moment to wave to a friend of hers in line. "I have to watch my friend do her little skit she planned," O'Brien said. "She's drinking a plastic cup of pee — only it's not really pee, it's white apple juice."

Reality indeed.

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