

THE SKYLINE



Volume 63, Number 3

Wings Over Meridian Air Show: March 28-29, 2026!!

February 6, 2025

On Base

Cupid 5K

Feb. 15 at 8 a.m.

Sonny Montgomery
Fitness Center

Axe Throwing Competition

March 22 at 11 a.m.

Register:

Feb. 17 -Mar. 20

Community Rec. Pavilion

Cosmic Bowling

Every Saturday
at 1800
McCain Rec Center

Staff Nights

Every Wednesday Night
Rudders • 1600-2100

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SCAN for the Captain's Virtual
Suggestion Box



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3rd Annual State of the Base Breakfast



Photos by MC2 Molly Tice

Left: CAPT Luke H. Davis, commanding officer of NAS Meridian, greets guests during NAS Meridian's 3rd annual State of the Base Breakfast at the Naval Reserve Center onboard the installation, Feb. 3. Right: Nearly 100 guests attended the annual event intended to keep our area stakeholders and partners informed of the progress on the installation, and what we are looking forward to in the future year. Those honored for the contributions to the success of NAS Meridian of the last 64 years included: Tom Williams with the Meridian Airport Authority, Randy Carroll with the East Mississippi Electric Power Association, Odie Barrett with Lauderdale Emergency Management Agency, Lee Thaggard with Barry and Thaggard, LLP and Roger Burke with WALT 102.1 and the "Underway with NAS" radio show.

VT-9 Hosts Change of Command

From Staff Reports

Training Squadron 9 (VT-9) onboard Naval Air Station Meridian held a change of command ceremony on Friday, Jan. 31, in the hangar.

Commander Justin Estrada served as the commanding officer of VT-9 from November 2023 to January 2025. He transferred to the USS Carl S. Vinson.

Commander Estrada's leadership was complemented by his own dedication to flying.

He personally flew over 200 hours during his command tour at NAS Meridian. Knowing

the squadron had a critical need for Basic Fighter Maneuvering (BFM) Instructor Pilots, he completed over 70 BFM and 50 Fighter Intercept (FTX) sorties, often the last necessary training stages for student aviators before their syllabus completion. As a result of his determined leadership, VT-9 winged 70 Navy, Marine Corps, and International Military Officers, flying 11,741 Multi-Service Pilot Training System syllabus events totaling 13,026 Class "A" and "B" mishap-free flight hours.

Estrada was relieved by Commander Evan Scott who has served

as the executive officer of the squadron for the last 15 months.

A native of Grosse Pointe, Michigan, Commander Scott graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 2007. He also earned a Master of Science in Engineering in Systems Engineering from Johns Hopkins University in 2016. After selection for the E-2 training pipeline, he earned his Wings of Gold in January 2010. His initial sea duty assignment was with Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron 123 (VAW-123), flying E-2C Hawkeyes.

•VT-9, page 3



Photo by MC2 Molly Tice

CAPT Juston Kuch welcomes CDR Evan Scott as he assumes command as Commanding Officer of Training Squadron Nine during a change of command ceremony in hangar onboard NAS Meridian, Jan. 31. Scott reported to the Tigers of VT-9 as Executive Officer in November 2023.

186th CES Breaks Ground at NAS Meridian!



The 186th Air Refueling Wing Civil Engineering Squadron (ARW/CES), of the Mississippi National Guard based at Key Field, conducted their first training operation on board NAS Meridian, Jan. 30-Feb. 2. The 186th ARW/CES personnel were able to fulfill training requirements involving electrical, heating, ventilation, air conditioning, pipe fitting, plumbing, and carpentry disciplines alongside station Public Works Department personnel. The 186th swarmed the installation with 48 motivated airmen, accomplishing several priority projects to include the removal of trees and building material damaged by the December storm, replacement of 100' of gas line, replacement of several airfield lights, and an engineering survey of 10 acres around Lake Martha. Collectively, the 186th performed 817 hours of skilled labor, rapidly expediting several projects and saving the installation over \$75,000 in equivalent costs for contracted performance. This operation was made possible through a Memorandum of Understanding signed by CAPT Luke Davis and Col Cindy Smith on Dec. 13, 2024.

Photo by Evelyn Adams

Aviators Earn 'Wings of Gold' in January Winging Ceremony

From Staff Reports

There was a naval aviator designation ceremony January 31 on board Naval Air Station Meridian.

Thirteen aviators received their "Wings of Gold" during the ceremony. The naval aviator designation ceremony is not prescribed specifically by U.S. Navy regulations, but has emerged as an honored product of the rich heritage of naval tradition. It marks the culmination of nearly two years of specialized training, which has prepared these officers for the rigorous demands of aerial combat and carrier operations -- earning each the title of "Naval Aviator" and the right to wear the coveted "Wings of Gold."

1stLt. Lucas Urban Dishart, USMC, He is a 2021 graduate of the United States Naval Academy, where he received a Bachelor of Science degree in Quantitative Economics. During Primary Flight Training, 1stLt. Dishart was named to the Commodore's List. While in Advanced Jet Flight Training, he earned one Navy "E" for bombing accuracy. 1stLt. Dishart completed Advanced Jet Flight Training with Training Squadron Seven.

1stLt Lotanna Michael Ezenwa, USMC, is a 2017 graduate of Dartmouth College, where he received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Mathematics and a Bachelor of Engineering in Systems Engineering. In 2023, 1stLt Ezenwa graduated from the Naval Postgraduate School, where he received a graduate certificate in Systems Analysis. 1stLt. Ezenwa completed Advanced Jet Flight Training with Training Squadron Seven.

1stLt Audrey Grace Hollis, USMC, is a 2021 graduate of the United States Naval Academy, where she received a Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Science. 1stLt Hollis completed Advanced Jet Flight Training with Training Squadron Seven.

LTJG Zachary Thomas Mutty, USN, is a 2021 graduate of Auburn University, where he received a Bachelor of Engineering Degree in Civil Engineering. LTJG Mutty completed Advanced Jet Flight Training with Training Squadron Seven.

Capt. Tucker Alexander



1stLt Lucas Dishart



1stLt Lotanna Ezenwa



1stLt Audrey Hollis



ENS Thomas Lacaille



LTJG Zachary Mutty



Capt Tucker Nixon



LT Kieran Player



LTJG John Post



1stLt Grant Steiner



1stLt Tara Storch

Nixon, USMC, is a 2020 graduate of the United States Naval Academy, where he received a Bachelor of Science degree in Quantitative Economics. During Primary Flight Training, Captain Nixon was named to the Commodore's List. While in Advanced Jet Flight Training, he earned one Navy "E" for bombing accuracy. Capt. Nixon completed Advanced Jet Flight Training with Training Squadron Nine.

LT Kieran Edwin Player, Royal Navy, commissioned from the Britannia Royal Naval College in 2017. In 2019, LT Player completed Elementary Flying Training on the Grob 120TP at RAF Barkston Heath, Lincolnshire where he was selected for Fast Jet. In June 2022, he completed Basic Flying Training with the T-6C at RAF Valley, Anglesey and was awarded his Royal Navy Wings. During Advanced Jet Flight Training, he earned four Navy "E's" for bombing accuracy. LT Player completed Advanced Jet Flight Training with Training Squadron Nine.

LTJG John Paul Joseph Post, USN, is a 2021 graduate of the United States Naval Academy, where he received a Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Science. LTJG Post completed Advanced Jet Flight Training with Training Squadron Seven.

1stLt Grant Nolan Steiner, USMC, is a 2021 graduate of the United States Naval Academy, where he received a Bachelor of Science degree in Quantitative Economics. During Primary Flight Training, 1stLt Steiner was named to the Commodore's List. 1stLt. Steiner completed Advanced Jet Flight Training with Training Squadron Seven.

1stLt Tara Anne Storch, USMC, is a 2021 graduate of the United States Naval Academy, where she received a Bachelor of Science degree in Operations Research. During Advanced Jet Flight Training, she earned four Navy "E's" for bombing accuracy. 1stLt Storch completed Advanced Jet Flight Training with Training Squadron Nine.

Capt Taylor Katherine Todd, USMC, is a 2020 graduate of Jacksonville University, where she received a Bachelor of Science degree in Mathematics. While in Advanced Jet Flight Training she earned five Navy "E's" for bombing accuracy. Captain Todd completed Advanced Jet Flight Training with Training Squadron Nine.

LT Eric David Wickum, USN, He is a 2017 graduate of Auburn University, where he received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Public Administration. Durning



Capt Taylor Todd



LT Eric Wickum



LT Alastair Wilkins

Primary Flight Training, LT Wickum was named to the Commodore's List. LT Wickum completed Advanced Jet Flight Training with Training Squadron Seven.

LT Alastair Philip Wilkins, Royal Navy, is a 2016 graduate of the University of Salford, where he received a Bachelor of Science degree (Hons) in Aviation Technology. In 2017, LT Wilkins commissioned from the Britannia Royal Naval College. In 2019, he completed Elementary Flying Training at RAF Barkston Heath where he selected for Fast Jet. In November 2021, LT Wilkins completed Basic Flying Training at RAF Valley and was awarded his Royal Navy Wings. During Advanced Jet Flight Training, he earned two Navy "E's" for bombing accuracy. LT Wilkins completed Advanced Jet Flight Training with Training Squadron Nine.

Golden Stick Award



Photo by Evelyn Adams

Mississippi Council of the Navy League Representative Laura Carmichael has the honor of presenting the Golden Stick award to LT Eric Wickum during a winging ceremony in the chapel onboard NAS Meridian, Jan. 31. The Golden Stick is awarded to the student with the highest composite score during training and sponsored by the Mississippi Council of the Navy League.

The Skyline ~ Naval Air Station Meridian, Miss.

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SARC: 601-481-4274
SAFE Helpline: 877-995-5247
Suicide Hotline: 800-273-8255
Military OneSource: 800-342-9647
CEAP (DoN Civilian): 844-366-2327
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LOCAL HAPPENINGS

FEBRUARY:

8: Meridian Railroad Museum Chili Cookoff, 12 - 9 p.m. - The deal: Come hungry, stake your claim and ride it out. Winners will be announced and coveted trophies awarded, right on the spot. More information soon. Call 601-710-0843 or 601-479-2483 for all of the details. **Located at the Meridian Railroad Museum in Meridian, MS. [Click here for tickets, entries, & info.](#)**

20-23: Dracula: A Comedy of Terrors - Ever wondered what would happen if you took Bram Stoker's legendary vampire tale and put it into a blender with Mel Brooks, Monty Python, and The 39 Steps? That's just what happens in this lightning-fast, laugh-out-loud, 90-minute vampy, campy romp. **Located at the Meridian Little Theater in Meridian, MS. [Click here for tickets, entries, & info.](#)**

21: Orkidstra! 6 p.m. - FREE Music for Families! Experience an unforgettable evening of music and storytelling with our special concert featuring the iconic tales of "Peter and the Wolf" and "Goldilocks," infused with the unique talents of Huntsville MET who offer a unique approach to storytelling through music and movement. **Located at the Evangel Temple in Meridian, MS. [Click here for tickets, entries, & info.](#)**

22: Meridian Mardi Gras, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. - Mitchell Distributing and the ACES are proud to announce the 2025 Meridian Mardi Gras celebration, a downtown event featuring parades, delicious food vendors, amazing bands, and MORE! **Located in Downtown Meridian, MS. [Click here for tickets, entries, & info.](#)**

AREA HAPPENINGS

FEBRUARY:

15: Mary J. Blige Concert, 7 p.m. - Featuring performances from Ne-Yo and Mario. **Located in Birmingham, AL. [Click here for tickets, entries, & info.](#)**

19: Jim Gaffigan: Everything is Wonderful! - Jim Gaffigan is a stand-up comedian, actor, and bestselling author known for his observational humor and self-deprecating style. His comedy often touches on everyday topics like food, family life, and the challenges of parenting, all delivered with his signature deadpan delivery. **Located in Birmingham, AL. [Click here for tickets, entries, & info.](#)**

19: Alton Brown Live! - Alton Brown has embarked on live culinary tours, sharing his passion for food with audiences across the country. **Located in Birmingham, AL. [Click here for tickets, entries, & info.](#)**

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Kirsti Dearing
Coordinator of Advisement and Transfer Partnerships

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LEARN MORE



• VT-9, page 3

He deployed aboard the USS Enterprise (CVN-65) for its final deployment in 2012, supporting Operation Enduring Freedom.

His subsequent shore tour was with Air Test and Evaluation Squadron One (VX-1) as an E-2D Operational Test (OT) pilot at NAS Patuxent River, MD. He served as Personnel Officer, Aviation Safety Officer, and Fixed Wing Quality Assurance Officer, overseeing safety and maintenance of various manned and unmanned fixed wing and rotary platforms. He also served as the lead OT representative

for the E-2D Aerial Refueling Modification program. During this tour, he was selected for transition to the Navy Reserve Training and Administration of the Reserves (TAR) community.

He then transferred to Training Squadron Nine at NAS Meridian. During his tour with the "Tigers", he served as Operations Officer, Administrative Officer, and T-45C instructor pilot.

Following his department head tour, he served on the staff of the Chief of Naval Operations, under OPNAV N98, Air Warfare Directorate.

He was responsible for the Flying Hour Program funding and allocation for the U.S. Navy over multiple budget cycles. During this tour, he was selected for command and reported to VT-9 as the Executive Officer.

CDR Scott has accumulated over 3,000 flight hours and 128 arrested landings in a variety of naval aircraft. His military awards include the Meritorious Service Medal, Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal (two awards), the Navy Achievement Medal, and various service awards and ribbons.

Sale... Or

HOMES/APARTMENTS

For Sale: 2BD/1 BA home located in Poplar Springs. 1154 square footage heated and cooled with additional 800 sq ft of basement. Screened in porch, new dishwasher, and new flooring in the kitchen. Looking to get 90k and for someone to take over our VA loan (2.5% interest rate). Please contact Riley Pfeiffer at (919) 909-6651

For Rent: 1BD/1 BA furnished apartment. Has day room, kitchenette, washer and dryer, smart tv's, central heat and air conditioning. Very clean and private, good location. \$1200/month includes utilities and wifi. No Pets. Text or call 601-527-4098.

For Sale: 3 BD/2 BA home. 1,496 square foot heated and cooled. 200 square foot utility room/pantry. Poplar Springs Elementary school district. Huge fenced back yard and storage building. New roof Dec 2012. New AC April 2017 and remains under warranty until 2027. Around the corner from Northcrest

church (North Hills). Asking \$150,000 but there are a few little cosmetic things that could be done so will take \$125,000 as is. Contact Jared or Felicia Monsour at (601) 938-4810 or (601) 934-0931

For Sale: 3 BD/4 BA home with 2965 sq ft of lake view home in beautiful, gated Lake Eddins in Pachuta. Entertainer's kitchen with huge eat at bar. Brick floors in main living areas, all new floor covering in remaining areas, total remodel. Gorgeous brick w/natural cypress home, 2 car garage w/bonus room. Asking \$299,900. Will include additional lot on water for fishing/boat storage w/asking price. Call 601-720-1420.

For Rent: 3BD/ 2BA house offers beautiful lake views, perfect for fishing and relaxing by the water. This house has recently been remodeled. Monthly Rent: \$1,500. Deposit: \$1,000. Additional Fees: Dalewood Rent-er Privileges Fees. Please contact Carlos at 601-604-9986.

For Rent: 1 BD/1 BA. Entire House in North Hills District. Listed on AIRBNB or can book direct. Daily or Weekly rates plus cleaning fees. Contact: 601-504-5415

For Rent: 3 BD/2 BA, only 5 mins from main gate of NAS Meridian. Nice size private yard / garbage and water provided. Pets permitted with deposit. \$1,150 a month. Contact 601-480-1324.

For Rent: 3 BD/1.5 BA home 15 minutes from NAS at 4814 36th

MISCELLANEOUS

Ave. New refrigerator and 2-year old AC & furnace. Call Terrance at 469-318-9769.

Nanny or caregiver services. Call Alice at 601-934-1866 or 601-679-8112. Has installation access; can take children to school and pick up and available days, nights and weekends.

Event Space for Rent: Deer Creek Banquet Hall. 6000 sq. ft. indoor with 1600 sq. ft. outdoor spaces for rent for gatherings and events. Call Reginald at 251-455-1559.

Listings in the "Sale...Or" column are free!
Submission deadline is the Wednesday prior to production.
Email information to nasmeridianpao@gmail.com

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NAS Meridian Host 6th Annual Disabled Veterans Hunt



The sixth annual Disabled Veterans' Hunt was held at Naval Air Station (NAS) Meridian, Mississippi, on Jan. 18-19. Hunters drawn for the hunt came from Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, and Florida. Participants in the weekend hunt harvested five deer. The Disabled Veterans' Hunt provided a time for comradery and was a significant morale booster for the disabled veteran hunters, as well as the active and retired military personnel who volunteered their time to assist with serving as guides, transporting deer, and cleaning and processing harvested deer. Contributions to feed participants during the event were provided by the NAS Meridian First Class Petty Officer Association, NAS Meridian Chief Petty Officers Association, NAS Meridian Commissary, Subway on the installation, Punishers LEMC Mississippi Freedom Chapter, NAS Meridian Ward Room, Stella Hurtt Law Firm, and VFW Post 3036 in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. The Fallen Outdoors Mississippi Team provided funds for lodging the participants. Blue Dog Tracking supplied blinds for the hunt and tracking services.

Courtesy Photo

Chaplain Donn Turner Demonstrates It's Never Too Late To Serve

By Petty Officer 2nd Class Gabriela Isaza
Navy Reserve - Navy Public Affairs Support
Element West

With a dream of serving in the military since the age of five, Oklahoma City native Donn Turner is beginning a new chapter in his life as a military chaplain. What makes his story so unique is that he was commissioned into the Navy Reserve in his early fifties.

Like many others, Turner dreamed of becoming a naval aviator after watching the film *Top Gun* as a young man in the 1980s. He joined America's Sea Cadets, a U.S. Navy youth development program, as a young student with the intent of eventually joining the Navy. However, when it was time to attend college, the Air Force had more opportunities for pilots, so Turner enrolled in the Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps program at the University of Oklahoma. He completed boot camp at Lackland Air Force Base, but unfortunately, Turner was medically discharged from the service.

"I was heartbroken but soon found fulfillment by serving in the United Methodist church," said Turner who has served as a bi-vocational pastor in his civilian job. "I never imagined that I was being prepared for a different mission."



Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Gabriela Isaza
Lt. j.g. Donn Turner, a chaplain assigned to the Oklahoma City Navy Reserve Center, poses for a photo. The Oklahoma City Navy Reserve Center's mission is that of the entire Navy Reserve, which is to enable Sailors to serve and mobilize when needed.

Twenty-four years later, at the age of 48, Turner came across a Navy chaplaincy advertisement. Despite being past the maximum age for direct commissioning, something compelled him to click the link.

"I was stunned to read that I could still serve," Turner said. "I was even more surprised when I discovered that my ministry experience over the last 24 years was exactly what I needed to meet all of the professional requirements."

Determined to pursue this new chapter, Turner enrolled in the Master of Divinity program through Liberty University, adding Christian Counseling to his degree. He also realized that in order to meet the Navy's physical requirements, he'd have to lose more than 100 pounds to be qualified to serve. Over the course of 18 months, he adopted a healthy diet and lost 110 pounds to align with Navy fitness standards.

"Chaplain Turner, despite now being in his early fifties, demonstrated remarkable determination, a lifetime of leadership, and a deep understanding of pluralistic ministry, making him a strong candidate," said Lt. David Lockwood, the Chaplain Program Officer of Navy Recruiting Command. After a rigorous officer package submission process, Turner was accepted and took on the new title of chaplain.

"I called everyone I knew to share the great news of my appointment as a Navy chaplain," Turner said. "When that turned out to not be enough, I even shared my excitement with strangers in grocery stores and gas stations. I do not believe my feet touched the

ground for the first few months."

LT j.g. Turner currently serves at the Oklahoma City Navy Reserve Center (NRC) as a Navy reserve chaplain. He will soon join the fleet and transition to active duty through the reserve component to active component (RC to AC) program. Outside of his reserve duties, Turner works as a learning and development professional, creating and managing corporate training programs, while also serving as a bi-vocational minister at a United Methodist Church. These experiences have equipped Turner with the skills and insight to excel as a chaplain.

"Some people serve because they need an extra paycheck. Some serve because it's what the contract requires," said Cmdr. Andy Valerius, former commanding officer of the Oklahoma City NRC. "The fact that he changed his diet and lifestyle later in life to lose weight just goes to prove that he wants to be here serving our nation and its Sailors."

Determination and passion are evident core values ingrained in Chaplain Turner's persona. Once he joins the fleet, he will share his experiences and wisdom with everyone he encounters.

"As a chaplain, I get to be someone's spiritual advisor, teacher, mentor, or coach," Turner said. "More than anything, I get to be their champion."

NAS Meridian Security Prepares for Citadel Shield Exercise

From Staff Reports

Naval Air Station Meridian conducted a large-scale exercise on Thursday, Feb. 6 onboard the installation as part of the Navy-wide Citadel Shield-Solid Curtain (CS-SC25) Exercises.

Nearly 30 military and civilian personnel were involved in the exercise to include the following departments: Naval Security Forces, Fire and Emergency Services, Emergency Operations Center, Public Affairs and the Safety Department. Air care Helicopter also participated in the exercise.

Citadel Shield is the first week of a two-week exercise that oc-



Courtesy Photos


MA2 Bret Kobes, right, and MA3 Brandon Merced participate in the Counter Small Unmanned Aircraft System Exercise onboard NAS Meridian, Feb. 5.

curred between Feb. 3-14 on all Navy installations in the continental United States. The Solid Curtain Exercise occurs the second week. The exercises are conducted by Commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command

(USFFC) and Commander, Navy Installations Command (CNIC). CS-SC24 is a regularly scheduled exercise and is not being held in response to any specific threat.




Exercise events during both weeks simulate realistic threat scenarios such as active shooters, unauthorized base access and improvised explosive devices. This two-part approach is designed to enhance the readiness of U.S. Navy security forces and ensure seamless interoperability among the commands, other services and agency partners in order to protect life, equipment and facilities.

campaign to prevent stalking



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If you or someone you know is a victim of stalking and you are unsure of where to seek help, call the National Center Helpline at 1-800-FYI-CALL or e-mail gethelp@ncvc.org.

This poster was produced by Nevada Hispanic Services in conjunction with the National Crime Prevention Council and the National Center for Victims of Crime and made possible by funding from the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.

N9 Nook

Check here to see the latest news with
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NAS Meridian Tenant Commands Take Stalking Awareness Pledge



Courtesy Photos

Marine Aviation Training Support Squadron One, Naval Technical Training Center, and Training Wing One take Fleet and Family's Stalking Awareness Pledge onboard NAS Meridian, Jan. 28. The NAS Meridian Fleet and Family team provided resources to our Navy personnel during the month of January for National Stalking Awareness Month!

FFSC SCHEDULE

WOMEN'S SELF DEFENSE CLASS **FEB 1&8**
 Feb 1st - Ages 12-16. Feb 8th - Ages 16 and up. Anyone under 18 years of age, must be accompanied by an adult. Classes start at 9:15am until 10:45am at the gym.

TAP CLASS **FEB 3-7**
 CAPSTONE to follow on Feb 20TH
 Located at The Fleet and Family Support Center, BLDG 405

COMMAND FINANCIAL SPECIALIST TRAINING **MAR 10-14**
 Located at The Fleet and Family Support Center, BLDG 405

↘

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SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 8TH - AGES 16 AND UP
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 AT THE GYM

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