

Family Founded Fitness: Michelle Midnight & CrossFit 1607

“We met with the owner of Iron-Bound [Gym] and was like, ‘hey, we want to start our own business’...and he was like, ‘well, I hate CrossFit, but I really like you guys,’ so he rented us space within Iron-Bound and that’s how we started.” That’s how Michelle Midnight describes the founding of CrossFit 1607, which she co-owns with her husband, Matt, and Matt’s brother Garrett. The Midnights’ “box” (CrossFit jargon for “gym”) is approaching its eight-year anniversary, and it’s been at its current Casey Boulevard location for about half that time.

It was a natural progression for Matt and Garrett, both Williamsburg natives and earners of exercise and nutrition degrees from Virginia Tech. “Matt from the get-go...knew he always wanted to open his own gym,” says Michelle. He initially tried the physical therapy route, but disliked the medical model: “he wanted to actually work with the person to get them to the level of performance where they wanted, not just what the doctors or health insurance companies deemed as [dischargeable],” says Michelle. She pursued degrees in school psychology at William & Mary and UNC Chapel Hill, and entered that field full-time—but fitness has long been part of her life, too. Michelle taught group fitness part-time for at least ten years before CrossFit 1607’s founding.

So, why CrossFit? “Matt has a lot of injuries that he has to deal with, and running was really bothering him,” says Michelle. “We found CrossFit, and...for him, it was a way that he could work out that didn’t aggravate his injuries, and for me...I saw a lot more effective results doing these workouts than I had doing my group fitness stuff.” CrossFit itself is a methodology of working out that combines weighted movements, gymnastic movements—which are body weight exercises like sit-ups or push-ups—and cardio movements together, to create a highly effective form of exercise. “We are very much family-oriented gym, [and] we believe CrossFit is for everybody,” says Michelle. She’s not exaggerating; their kids’ classes start at preschool, and Matt works on strength and conditioning with middle- and high-school-aged club teams.

In fact, Matt’s work with individual athletes and teams is a part of CrossFit 1607 that Michelle wishes more people knew about. “I don’t think people realize that we also do other services other than CrossFit,” she says. “We do personal training, [and] we do the sports and conditioning side,” along with nutrition coaching and a retail area. They just had a kids’ hockey team in Newport News sign up for conditioning (conducted via Zoom). “We get a lot of our revenue from in-person services that we cannot offer right now,” says Michelle, so any use of the services they can provide online helps them out.

CrossFit 1607 is adapting in many of the ways other gyms are—live Zoom classes, on-demand video—but they are also putting their ideology in practice. This includes online trivia nights and kids’ classes free to the community through Zoom. “I personally each week either call or text every single member to see how they are, to see if they need anything,” says Michelle. “We call it—and it’s so cliché—but we call it our 1607 Family, and it truly is.”

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