Beat: Entertainment

Air Show Atlantic Returns To 14 Wing CFB Greenwood, Nova Scotia, in 2024

100th Anniversary of RCAF

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USPA NEWS - There is a lot of excitement in Greenwood, Nova Scotia in the days since Air Show Atlantic announced that it would be returning to 14 Wing CFB Greenwood on August 24th and 25th, 2024. This is the first time since 2019 that the air show will grace the Annapolis Valley community with breathtaking, heart-pounding, and daring air displays along with fascinating static displays. Air Show Atlantic has already announced an impressive list of confirmed performers which include the CF-18 Demonstration Team, the Canadian Forces Snowbirds, and the United States F-16 Viper Demonstration Team.
In 2019, The United States Navy Blue Angels were one of the headlining performers, during which I had the honour of interviewing Lieutenant Commander James Haley, #2 pilot for the Blue Angels. Here are some of the highlights of that interview. Please join me in looking back, and enjoy my next series of articles titled "Air Show Atlantic 2024, Road To Greenwood".

The Blue Angels Squadron arrived at CFB Greenwood, Nova Scotia on the Monday before the Air Show weekend. Early arrival allowed for time to practice and for the team to engage with Media and VIPs.

The Media Day, 2019 interview was both charismatic and inspiring.

I commenced by asking, "What is the mission statement of the Blue Angels Squadron?" Lt. Commander Haley explained, "The mission of the United States Navy Flight Demonstration Squadron is to showcase the pride and professionalism of the United States Navy and Marine Corps by inspiring a culture of excellence and service to country through flight demonstrations and community outreach. In the early days, the mission was directed more towards recruitment into the Navy and Marine Corps, but now it is also to inspire young people across North America to follow their dreams and pursue them with fervor and excellence."

Further along in the interview, I asked, "Could you explain the selection process for becoming a Blue Angels pilot?" He enthusiastically replied, "The Blue Angels Squadron is unique as it is completely voluntary. All other squadrons or units within the Armed Forces are assigned. Every single member of the Blue Angels Squadron has volunteered for the assignment. Most prospective candidates apply numerous times before getting accepted. To qualify for a Blue Angels pilot position, candidates must be an active Navy or Marine Corps tactical pilot with at least 1250 jet hours experience. Applicants will visit scheduled show sites early in the season to observe the Squadron firsthand. Finalists are selected in mid-season and will go to Pensacola, Florida to be interviewed by the current Blue Angels squadron members. The final decisions on the new pilots and support officers require a unanimous decision vote."

My question which would conclude this very upbeat and insightful interview was, "What do you find most rewarding about being a Blue Angels pilot?" With great pride he said, "I realized when I was 6 years old after attending an air show that I wanted to be a pilot, so seeing that dream come true and flying is very rewarding. It goes beyond just the flying. It is having the privilege of traveling throughout North America speaking to students and other community groups telling the story of my childhood dream of becoming a pilot and hopefully inspiring others to pursue their dreams to become who they want to be in life. I find that one of the most rewarding parts of being a Blue Angels pilot."

From interviews that I have done with various Canadian, American, and British Military Demonstration Teams, I have discovered that all have a very similar mandate. Promoting teamwork, the pursuit of excellence and skill, while inspiring audiences. Illustrating that with hard work many goals and aspirations can be realized.
In 2024, as the Royal Canadian Air Force celebrates their 100th Anniversary, heading out to an air show to cheer on our beloved Demonstration Teams would be a terrific way to help honour such a significant milestone.

There are sure to be many more exciting announcements over the coming weeks and months.
For complete and most up-to-date information on Air Show Atlantic 2024, visit www.airshowatlantic.ca

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