

The Allegheny Drifters



always bluegrass ... just around the bend!

In 2002, veteran western Pennsylvania bluegrass mandolinist **Bob Artis** was invited to put together a one-show-only bluegrass band to perform with the Pittsburgh Mandolin Orchestra at their debut concert to be held in April 2003. Bob's wife **Karen Artis** was the obvious choice to play bass, and friend and former bandmate **Bernie Cunningham** was called in to sing and play guitar. With the addition of Alabama transplant **Jake Abrams** on banjo, the **Allegheny Drifters** were born and were an instant hit.

At the time, Jake and his wife Lisa were busy with their own band, but Jake continued to help out on banjo when he could. In 2005, **Keith Beaver**, banjo picker from Ohio joined the band, and remained a popular member until his departure at the end of 2013. Young banjoists **Gregg Welty** and **Jim Scott** occupied the banjo spot until 2017, when the Drifters added well-traveled banjoist **Radford Vance** and 5-state fiddle champion **Michele Birkby-Vance**, bringing a powerful new dimension to the band's sound.

Hallmarks of the Allegheny Drifters are their stunning vocal harmony and their total commitment to professionalism. They've learned what audiences enjoy, and work hard to please and entertain. They are a traditional bluegrass band without being overly bound to convention or restrained by the past. All are talented songwriters, adding fresh original material to the band's catalog. They continue to seek new ways of reaching out to audiences with their message of authentic bluegrass.

The Allegheny Drifters released their first CD, ***Out of the Woods***, in the spring of 2006 and the project received great reviews.

County Sales said "good songs, good singing, excellent listening" while *Bluegrass Unlimited* described it as "refined and well produced... traditional in the best possible way".

In 2008, the band released ***Can't Wait***, featuring the outstanding fiddling of internationally acclaimed **Michael Cleveland**. WYEP's Bruce Mountjoy referred to the material as "great original additions

to the bluegrass songbook...tasteful arrangements that make each song come alive". With a nod to Bob's catchy title tune, *Bluegrass Music Profiles* enthusiastically declared, "Can't Wait? Don't wait! Get it!" This project was followed by an all gospel recording, ***Climb Heaven's Ladder***, released in 2014. The title track was penned by Karen, and once again guest Michael Cleveland provided his blazing fiddle.



In celebration of the band's 15th Anniversary in April 2018, they released ***Rolling On***, recorded by the talented Grammy-nominated engineer, **David Mayfield**. All of their projects have been well-received by national and international audiences worldwide via broadcast and streaming audio.

Over the past 15 years, the Allegheny Drifters have earned a solid reputation as one of their region's most popular and hard-working bluegrass bands, performing at festivals, county fairs, corporate events, community day celebrations, universities, weddings, arts and crafts fairs, churches, rural grange halls and urban summer concerts.

Exciting to hear...fun to watch...the **Allegheny Drifters** enjoy what they do, and that joy is shared by their audiences and ever-growing number of followers and fans.

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