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New Horizons director Jim Adkins leads the band during a rehearsal. PHOTOS BY JEFF LANGE/AKRON BEACON JOURNAL

Directing New Horizons Band of Summit and Stark Counties has been a labor of love for Jim Adkins for 22 years.

The community band started in 2004 with just three musicians on flute, saxophone and oboe. It now boasts 72 members who play string, wind and percussion instruments.

Over the years, the organization has seen more than 300 musicians, both brand new and those with prior experience, pass through its doors.

Now, as Norton resident Adkins gets set to retire as music director of the band, he'll be going out with a bang with his last concert, "A Tribute to Glenn Miller," at 1 p.m. April 19 at MAPS Air Museum in Green.

The celebratory concert is part of a MAPS fundraiser including a pancake breakfast and opening of a Glenn Miller

exhibit at the museum, 2260 International Parkway in Green. The tribute concert will be narrated by MAPS Museum intern Sarah Christensen, who curated the Miller displays.

Cost is \$15 for adults or \$8 for children, which includes museum admission, breakfast, parking and performances. Proceeds support the museum's history and education initiatives. See mapsairmuseum.org or call [330-896-6332](tel:330-896-6332) for tickets.

Entertainment will include the big band music of Glenn Miller and his era. Miller, known as the grandfather of modern military music, served as an officer in the U.S. Army Air Forces during World War II, when his Major Glenn Miller Army Air Forces Orchestra became the forerunner for many U.S. military big bands.



Jim Adkins works with the saxophone section during a New Horizons rehearsal at MAPS Air Museum in Green. Adkins will conduct his last concert on April 19 after working with the group for 22 years as a teacher and conductor. JEFF LANGE/ AKRON BEACON JOURNAL

“We’re showing how he developed the music to have strings and everything in it and what he was trying to do with American music for the troops in Europe and also the people that were still at home,” said Adkins, 80.

The April 19 concert will include a musical march tribute to each branch of the U.S. Armed Forces as well as tunes including “A String of Pearls,” “Elmer’s Tune,” “Moonlight Cocktail,” “Sweet Georgia Brown,” “Pennsylvania 65000,” “Moonlight Serenade,” “Tuxedo Junction” and more.

New Horizons vocal soloists will be baritone Harry “Canary” Arble of Lakemore and Karen Hazlett of Akron. Arble is now learning to play viola after having played cello earlier with New Horizons. Hazlett is learning the cello.

Both Adkins and New Horizons members believe it's never too late to learn an instrument.

"I started playing the cello when I was 75 in the Akron Pops Orchestra, self-taught," Arble said.

History of local New Horizons

Adkins co-founded the Summit/ Stark County band with founding sponsor Jim Stahl in 2004. The latter was owner of the former Central Instrument Co. in Cuyahoga Falls.

Stahl took on the business end of New Horizons and came on as the teacher and conductor. The organization's mission is to provide life enrichment through embracing music.

"The whole purpose of it was to provide opportunity for adults to learn from the beginning or to have a place to come and play and to learn more," Adkins said.

New Horizons of Summit and Stark Counties is part of an international organization founded in 1991 in Rochester, New York, which was formed to give people past high school band age a chance to play in a musical ensemble. It now has more than 200 chapters throughout the United States and Europe.

In Ohio, the Summit/Stark band is based in Cuyahoga Falls. Others are in Cincinnati and Berea, sponsored by Baldwin Wallace College.



Retired Akron Public Schools music teacher Cathy Fogle will be the new music director of New Horizons of Summit and Stark Counties.

Most members of the local group are middle age or older. New Horizons of Summit and Stark Counties has a concert band, string ensemble and jazz band.

The band plays about seven concerts each year, including locally and in other cities such as Columbus, Cincinnati and Cleveland.

Folks who are brand new to playing an instrument take classes in New Horizons' training program. The band's arrangers write parts for everyone so musicians at beginner levels can play alongside those playing parts at higher levels.

One of those arrangers is Don Turoso, who played in the Glenn Miller Orchestra after Miller passed away. He wrote the arrangement "It's Miller Time" for New Horizons.

Carrie Cunningham of Mogadore, a retired nurse, saw an article about New Horizons in the Beacon Journal 16 years ago, which convinced her to join. She plays clarinet after not having played since high school and has gotten so into it, she and other New Horizons friends have formed an eight-piece combo of their own.

Adkins, a Kent State University graduate who played percussion for the Akron Symphony Orchestra, taught music at KSU, Canton schools, Norton and Plain Local Schools before retiring in 2004.

Cathy Fogle, a retired Akron Public Schools music teacher, will take over as New Horizons music director after Adkins retires. She also teaches strings and woodwinds for New Horizons. Leslie Madden will work with her, teaching brass.

“I’m at a point in my life where there’s a time that I need to sit down,” Adkins, who will play percussion in New Horizons, said of his retirement as music director. “I don’t know what it’s like to relax.”

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