



## Classic country and rock band 309 Express in concert at Springfield Township's Cisco Park

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It all started with a 50th birthday party held at Warrington's Camp America.

"It was a fantasy band my husband wanted to put together for his 50th birthday, that was in 2004," said Mary Duffy, lead singer of the Jenkintown area country/rockabilly band 309 Express.

"It can have good and bad connotations," she said, laughing, about naming something after the well-traveled Pennsylvania Route 309.

In 2008 a reunited version of that "fantasy band" played the Frankford Avenue Outdoor Festival under the name "The Elderly Brothers," a nod to Don and Phil Everly's twangy rock 'n' roll. Out of that original gathering of musician family and friends, bassist Bill Morrison and Duffy's husband, Bill Gioioso, are the only players that stuck with the collective that became 309 Express in 2010. "I wasn't originally supposed to be part of the band. They asked me to sing a song," notes Duffy, adding that her background includes singing Irish folk songs at age 4, singing at church events, as well as professionally as a teenager at weddings and in local bands, such as "Urban Cowboy" era country group Concrete Country.

Comprised of Duffy, Gioioso on guitar, Morrison, lead guitarist John Green (who was in Concrete County with Duffy) and drummer Dennis Jacoby, their repertoire includes songs by Hank Williams, Patsy Cline, Johnny Cash, Emmylou Harris, Buddy Holly, Chuck Berry, Ray Price, Rosanne Cash, Del Shannon, Mary-Chapin Carpenter, Bonnie Raitt, Merle Haggard, Loretta Lynn, Linda Ronstadt and George Jones. The band kicks off the Springfield Township Parks and Recreation free summer concert series 7 to 9 p.m. Thursday June 25 in Cisco Park, 199 Montgomery Ave., Erdenheim. The rain location is the gymnasium at Phil-Mont Christian Academy, 35 Hillcrest Ave.

Having previously performed at Ambler Arts and Music Festival and the Upper Southampton Summer Concert Series, the outdoor concert season is the time the band enjoys best. "The main thing ... is getting that one (song) that'll get people up and dancing," Duffy said.

So far, the band is also scheduled to play West Chester's Brickette Lounge Oct. 10, and then Oct. 17 at the Fox Chase Farm Apple Fest. Duffy said that although most bars look for classic rock cover bands, the Brickette Lounge and the Hollywood Tavern in Abington Township are two venues willing to take a chance on 309 Express' old-school sound.

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