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# Festive opening for Miramar center

By Chris Guanche  
STAFF WRITER

After years of planning and construction, the Miramar Cultural Center and ArtsPark has officially opened its doors.

Although the center featured a preview event in November during Caribefest 2008, its official opening occurred Dec. 6 with a series of events wrapped around it. More than 2,000 residents came to the Town Center for its Holiday Illuminations event. A yearly fixture at the Town Center, the event was a bit different this year since it coincided with the opening of the Cultural Center.

Following the ribbon cutting by the City Commission, about 600 residents entered the Cultural Center for the first of several holiday shows throughout the evening. Locals participated in the holiday-themed show, which included musical performances and a choir.

"It's another venue for showcasing cultural expression and the diversity of the communities across Broward," said City Commissioner Winston F. Barnes.

But the opening of the Cultural Center isn't the end of the line,

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Mitch Morales, general manager of the Miramar Cultural Center and ArtsPark

but rather the beginning, said Mitch Morales, the center's general manager.

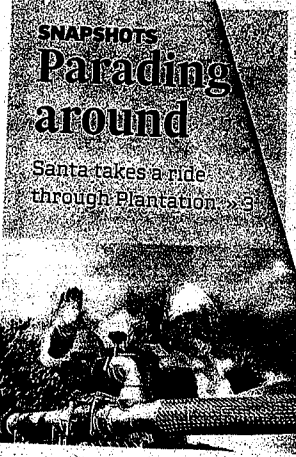
"Now the work really begins," he said. "It's great that we got to this point with the ribbon cutting."

Morales said the center would offer a wide variety of program-

ming during its 2009 season, ranging from family events to opera. The center will also host a summer camp for children and teenagers who want to explore acting as a career.

"Young kids and teens will get

» CENTER PAGE 11

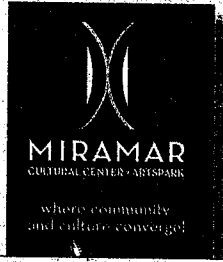


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» CENTER FROM PAGE 1

a hands-on intro to the world of theater and the acting craft," Morales said. Closed off to car traffic, the Town Center was transformed into a Christmas village, complete with a large tree, costumed characters, and a line of carnival concession stands. The courtyard outside the Developmental Services building became a popular spot for children to pose for photos inside Santa's sleigh.

Nearby, the parking ga-

rage was also transformed into a children's playground, complete with a mountain of trucked-in snow and a row of inflatable slides and funhouses.

Those activities attracted Maria and Joe Husoski, who brought along their 2-year-old son, Stevie. They came to last year's event as well, but Joe Husoski said Stevie was too young to enjoy it. But this time, he had his share of laughs at the funhouses.

"We thought Stevie

would like it better," Maria Husoski said. "It's a very nice thing the city has."

Local children also performed outside with several choir shows. For Dwayne and Donna Joseph, the event provided a chance to see their 10-year-old son Aja Glaze sing with other children.

"Anything for the kids, you need to come out for," said Dwayne Joseph. "You also get to see neighbors and friends you haven't seen for a while."

The night was capped off with the tree illumination and a fireworks show.

Overall, the holiday event and the opening of the Cultural Center showed how the city was developing its downtown, said Mayor Lori Moseley.

"There's a collective feeling of pride that's palatable," Moseley said. "It gives you a sense of ownership and belonging."

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