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Miramar looking ahead with facility

Events already planned at city's cultural center

BY CHRIS GUANCHE
STAFF WRITER

Although its official opening is still a few months off, the Miramar Cultural Center is already organizing a diverse selection of events.

The cultural center is part of Miramar Town Center, which

also features a new city hall, a library with mini college campuses, as well as retail and residential space. When completed, the arts center will include a banquet hall, as well as two galleries.

The 46,000-square-foot center will kick off its offerings

with the two-day CaribeFest, set for Nov. 15-16. Traditionally staged Labor Day weekend at Lakeshore Park, the Caribbean festival is temporarily moving this year to the cultural center and doubling up from a single-day event. The festival's move is part of an effort to highlight

what the cultural center has to offer, said Alexandra Davis, vice president of CaribeFest.

"It shows that our event is a success," Davis said of the move. "It helps to show that we're not just a festival that's outdoors."

For CaribeFest's new second day, the schedule will include a Caribbean jazz concert. The center's galleries also will fea-

ture musicians and work from local artists.

In January, the center will host the Gold Coast Opera, featuring productions of *Aida* and *La Boheme*. The center also will feature events from the Florida Sunshine Pops Orchestra, including a show with Rodgers and Hammerstein music, and another show that will be a tribute to the late tenor singer

Luciano Pavarotti.

Creating a diverse selection of events is important, said Mitch Morales, the center's general manager.

"You need to do your homework and you have to get a general sense of what's important to the community, and find the type of programming that's go-

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ing to be of interest to them," he said.

As the city has no prior experience in running a cultural center, it struck up a partnership with the Broward Center for the Performing Arts, said Vernon Hargray, assistant city manager for operational services. Hargray said partnering with the Broward Center early on has been important in developing the cultural center.

"By us having that partnership, we're like that guy with the Verizon phone and the entire staff behind him," he said.

As part of the town center, Morales said another factor

will work in favor of the cultural center: gas prices. With prices so high, Morales said residents are re-evaluating where they spend their time and will seek destinations closer to home.

On a broader scale, the town center is a way to revitalize the city and meet the needs of residents, said Phil Rosenberg, director of human resources.

"A city is way more than a street or sewage system," Rosenberg said. "It's a place ... where people want to live. The cement that pulls that together is a sense of culture and a future."

For more information, go to www.miramarculturalcenter.org.