

YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

MIRAMAR

Holiday party blends past, present

■ **Holiday cheer in Miramar brings residents and neighbors together for reminiscences, celebrations and entertainment.**

BY EILEEN SOLER
Special to The Miami Herald

Miramar blended old with new for an annual hometown holiday extravaganza that forged new memories for the future while evoking its past.

"You can't celebrate moving forward unless you remember where you've been," Mayor Lori Moseley said.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new Miramar Cultural Center/Arts Park was celebrated before the traditional Holiday Illuminations show, which has taken place since 2004 at Town Center.

Red and gold bows, a green ribbon and bright twinkling lights wrapped the Cultural Center's entrance like a festive gift.

The city's 20-foot Christmas tree, a menorah, and other winter holiday symbols filled the courtyard where Santa Claus later would appear.

An outdoor stage was decorated with colored bulbs, garlands, toy soldiers and a winter scene backdrop. Inside the center's 800-seat theater, operated in partnership with the Broward Center for the Performing Arts, the latest technology provided perfect sound and a dramatic light show, including a starry night.

"The city should be proud," optometrist David Popper said.

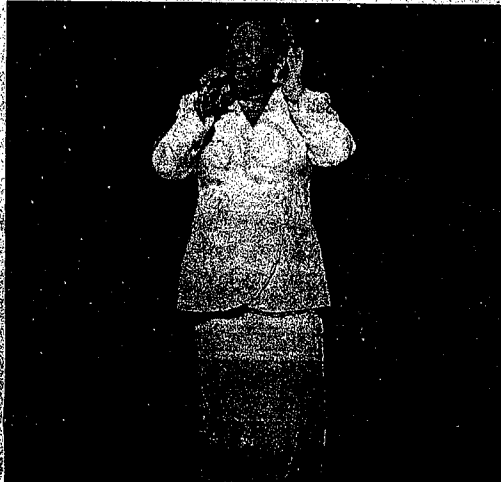
And through the five-hour festival, homegrown talent offered joyful music that led up to and followed the lighting of the holiday tree.

Inside, a spiritual show featured acts such as the Miramar Holiday Band, the Miramar...



PHOTOS BY EILEEN SOLER/FOR THE MIAMI HERALD

GRAND OPENING: Miramar dignitaries gather for the opening of the city's Cultural Center/Arts Park at Town Center during the traditional Holiday Illuminations show last weekend.



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WHAT'S UP

• PEMBROKE PINES ORNAMENT SALE ON

Always invited to the

amar Holiday Band, the Miramar Holiday Choir and gospel singer Jackie Allen.

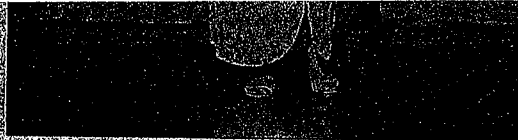
Outside, former Miramar Police Capt. Jim Lind and Betty Hartung of Miramar, the city's Early Childhood Chorus and city employee Franky Mae Daley joined a cast of more than 100 who performed traditional hometown sounds.

For decades, the show was staged at Shirley Branca Park on the city's east side. The city tree was erected at the base of the park's amphitheater; city employees, residents, schools and churches performed, and Santa arrived down a chimney.

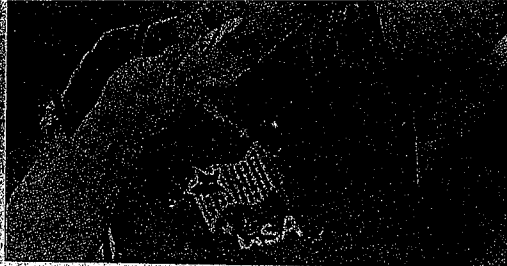
In 2004, after Hurricane Wilma took out trees and electrical power at the park and Miramar's new City Hall opened, the event was moved to Town Center. The first events were stiff, with hired entertainment and a fake tree.

Moseley said much of this year's cast was plucked from talent auditions earlier this year.

"It's appropriate that we have an 800-seat theater so everyone can come see what we have in Miramar and in all



SHOWTIME Jackie Allen, above, sings a Christmas song at Holiday Illuminations. At right, Melanie Menroig, 3, of Pembroke Pines snacks on a candy cane. Below, barbershop quartet The Good Blend performs the national anthem inside the city's 800-seat theater.



of Broward County," said Moseley, who used the word "phenomenal" five times before the show even began.

Other local acts included Carlos Bowers, Alyssa Rivera, Lu White, Nick Merico and Melody Haughn.

Participating schools were Glades Middle, Sea Castle Elementary and Silver Shores Elementary.

Opening the night's celebration were talent contestants The Good Blend barbershop quartet and vocalists Kevin Yungman and Jessica Ward.

Still, four east-side resident groups pooled resources and got the city to chip in a bit during recent Saturdays to decorate Shirley Branca Park and palm trees that line Miramar Parkway in the 53-



year-old city's historic section.

Last weekend, they put up a Christmas tree and at 5 p.m.

today, they will host a public tree-lighting ceremony.

"We hadn't had decorations on this side of town for

so long that we felt left out. Now we're thrilled," said 30-

year resident Nancy Wright, who helped.

ORNAMENT SALE ON

All are invited to the Southern Beach Point Senior Center, 301 NW 107th Ave., Pembroke Pines, to see and buy one of Miramar Holiday ornaments at the second annual holiday ornament sale in the center's lobby.

The stone-ware ornaments are handcrafted at the center's pottery studio and can be yours for a \$5 donation per ornament. All proceeds benefit the senior center.

Best of all, the purchases directly benefit the senior center. If you missed out on last year's ornament—a 2007 holiday bell—a limited number are still available, Helen Daniels said.

For information or to preorder, call Daniels at 954-450-6888.

• GORAL SPRINGS WINTER ART CAMP

With winter break just around the corner, the Goral Springs Museum of Art is offering Winter Camp Art classes for kids ages 6 to 12. The camps run for three days each week from 9:30 a.m. to