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Hundreds turn out for Central Green's B-Day party

By Karen Zurawski **Updated 4:12 pm CDT, Saturday, July 27, 2019**

IMAGE 1 OF 4

Central Green Park celebrated its seventh birthday with a British Invasion, including a performance by the Beatles tribute band, The Fab 5.

While visiting her sister and brother-in-law in the Katy area, Magda Calix took in the birthday celebration of Central Green Park at LaCenterra at Cinco Ranch.

She was among a crowd of 1,800 people who danced and sang along with the Fab 5, the Beatles tribute band. The evening to mark the park's seventh birthday also include stilt characters, face painting, British dancers, door prizes from local businesses and Bruce Manners, comedian and juggler.

“I'm so happy," said Calix of Honduras. Happy, too, was Yvonne Arceneaux, park manager, of Central Green, who has been activities director nearly as long as the park has been open. The Willow Fork Drainage District issued $5.98 million in bonds in 2012 to fund the first phase of its park plan, which included $1.85 million for construction of Central Green Park at 23501 Cinco Ranch Blvd. In addition to financing and building drainage facilities, the district also has financed and constructed recreational facilities that include three parks and trails.

“I conceive, plan and execute 200 events per year at Central Green," said Arceneaux, who is the district's only full-time employee. Booking six to 12 months in advance, she said she looks for diversity and things that interest the community — what's hot nationwide and cultural enhancements.

“I celebrate five different countries a year," explained Arceneaux, whose background includes 13 years in broadcasting. That means audiences have enjoyed Korean and Bollywood performances as Arceneaux brings the world to Cinco Ranch. Working for radio stations she planned promotions before moving to the nonprofit arena where she planned events such as galas, celebrity meet-and-greets and charitable functions.

“For me, it's like breathing," she said in talking about her job. “I've been doing events since 1992."

Since the drainage district is a subdivision of the Texas State government, Arceneaux works with contracts and insurance for events. Weather has led to rescheduling of groups, but the park with a capacity for 1,000 — not counting the restaurants that rim the half-acre park — rarely is without an event, she said. All events are free thanks to the Willow Fork Drainage District and Cinco Municipal Utility District No. 12, she said.

Her favorite event of recent years is an Indonesian Festival. She explained it was a touring company that was traveling the world to celebrate Indonesia. The troupe brought its counterpart to America's Beyonce. “She was so warm, talented and welcoming," said Arceneaux, who noted that while Indonesian performances start on the stage they end in the crowd.

“It's such a beautiful culture to witness and experience and how they involved the Katy community from the activity booth to the entertainment. They reached out to people visiting the Green and made them a part of it. It was fun and colorful. Everything was five-star."

A recent trend based on requests from millennials is for comedians, she continued. When she first started, she said she brought in comedians but they didn't work well. “This year I brought comedians

back and they really captured the crowd and have been very successful." Comedians include Curt Miller and Bruce Manners.

One of the things that makes Central Green very unique is programmed educational classes, according to Arceneaux. These include Conversational Spanish, storytime and homeschool art.

“What I love most about Central Green," said Arceneaux, “you see and hear on the news about people who don't like this organization or these people. You hear so much negativity. You come out to Central Green and we have people of every demographic, every religion and everybody celebrates together. We come together as one and everyone has a wonderful time."

Another plus cited by Arceneaux is the economic impact that audiences bring to the Cinco Ranch area when they come for lodging, eating and shopping. “We're putting dollars back in the community," she added.

karen.zurawski@chron.com

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