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PROVIDED PHOTOS BY SALLY ASHER

The Confetti Park Players, led by Katy Hobgood Ray, right, perform at Jazz Fest in 2016.

Confetti Park Players offer a colorful take on Louisiana music

BY KIM SINGLETARY
Special to The Advocate

Jazz Fest will see the return of a lively and creative group that celebrates Louisiana music through the voices of its next generation — the Confetti Park Players.

Led by singer/songwriter Katy Hobgood Ray, they'll be performing songs such as "Have You Seen the Okra Man?," "Buttermilk Drop," "Roman Candy Man," "Watch Out for the Pirates" and "Snoball."

Ray and the kids will be onstage from 3 p.m. to 3:45 p.m. May 3.

Born in Bogalusa and raised in Shreveport, Ray has played music her entire life. In addition to knowing her way around a violin, guitar, ukulele and bass, Ray's résumé also includes work as a radio host and content producer for NPR's Red River Radio and launching an online north Louisiana music zine called NeonBridge.

A former Kindermusik teacher, five years ago, Ray found herself frequenting Algiers' Confetti Park with her 2-year-old son Louis. The music soon came flowing out of her, and she was hosting a free music circle



CONFETTI PARK PLAYERS

WHEN: 3 p.m. May 3
WHERE: Jazz Fest Kids Tent

► Jazz Fest Kids Tent schedule, **Page 2G**

in the park.

"It's such a great space," she said. "It's always filled with kids, and everyone seems to know everyone."

Open to any child, the group met up twice a week to sing songs that ranged from traditional Louisiana favorites like "You are My Sunshine" to those crafted by Ray or local musicians she knew.

"We had 2-year-olds up through 8-year-olds, and the kids were loving it," she said.

Then, one day, Ray got an unexpected call. Her friend and artist Charles Gillam

wanted to book the group for the 2014 Algiers Folk Art Fest.

"All of a sudden, we had a gig," Ray said. "So we had to come up with a name and decided on the Confetti Park Players."

Within a year, the group released its whimsical first CD, "We're Going to Confetti Park!," which won a Parent's Choice award.

Tracks include original tunes, and songs ranging from jump rope jingles to blues, featuring well known local musicians such as Tom McDermott, Matthew Perrine, Sarah Quintana and Johnny Vidacovich.

The Confetti Park Players also performed at the 2015 French Quarter Fest.

"At that point, I applied to Jazz Fest, and we got in," Ray said. The group performed there in 2016.

Hrilina Ramrakhiani has been with the Confetti Park Players since its early days, and the young teen says she remembers her first Jazz Fest performance fondly.

"The organization treated us like stars ... we had our own special entrance, we had access to a trailer and water before and after the

► See **CONFETTI**, page 2G



The Confetti Park Players loved their first visit to Jazz Fest, in 2016.

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at Zoo-to

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fest events.

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► See **THROW M**

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► See **AROUN**



It takes 2 to tango





PHOTO BY SALLY ASHER

Katy Hobgood Ray is a singer-songwriter who also hosts The Confetti Park podcast and radio program, featuring music and stories spun in Louisiana. Hear it at 11 a.m. every Saturday on WHIV 102.3 FM.

CONFETTI

Continued from page 1G

show and we were allowed to share our music and captivate the audience, and then enjoy the festival after performing."

In addition to performing, Hrilina said the Confetti Park Players also get to write their own songs and poems.

Ray noted there was definitely a learning curve in going from working with professional musicians to teaching children but said she's loved the journey.

"It's just such a miracle to watch a kid emerge from their shell through music," she said.

"Someone will show up shy and looking at the ground, and then you can watch them become alive."

"These kids have also developed a great community with each other, and that's not surprising really. For me, personally, music has always been a unifier — it's how I met my friends and my husband — and now it's helping these children realize their own potential."

The Confetti Park Players have a lot of playing ahead of them. After Jazz Fest, they're booked for the Beignet Festival in October, and then they'll be performing for their fifth year at the gig that started it all — The Algiers Folk Art Festival.

They're also about to release their first music video, "Let's Go Riding on the Mississippi River," filmed aboard the Creole Queen. The video will be released on the group's website, confettipark.com.

For now, though, the focus is on Jazz Fest, where Hrilina looks forward to performing one of her favorites, the title track from their CD.

"I think my favorite song has to be "We're Going to Confetti Park." It's our staple song, and we have lots of fun with it — we play with shakers and wave colorful scarves. The lyrics are kind of the story of Confetti Park. ... It's a very upbeat, energizing, interactive song."

AROUND

Continued from page 1G

medications, rehabilitation and restorative therapies, medical care, pastoral care, social services, activities and recreation, caregiver support, hospitalization and nursing home care when needed, and other specialty services tailored for individual needs.

The building received a \$1.6 million restoration in 2014 and began operating as an adult day health care program under the direction of PACE Greater New Orleans. The program also operates the PACE Greater New Orleans Shirley Landry Benson Center at St. Cecilia, located at 4201 North Rampart St.

For more information, go to the website www.pacegno.org or call (504) 835-0006.

Nonprofit opens new offices

Families Helping Families of Greater New Orleans recently held an open house to celebrate its new location, 700 Hickory Ave., Harahan.

"The new facility is fully accessible, 2,800 square feet and houses our program and administrative staff," said Mary

Jacob, executive director of Families Helping Families. "It includes a family conference room as well as a larger conference room that can accommodate up to 20 people. We also have a kitchen, two restrooms, plenty of storage, and off-street parking."

"We purchased the building for \$435,000 with a loan from Gulf Coast Bank and Trust. This ownership represents a permanent move to long-term sustainability, which equals improved support and services to families."

Families Helping Families of Greater New Orleans is a nonprofit organization that offers programs for children and adults with disabilities. All services are free. More than 6,000 families request assistance each year.

For more information regarding the open house, call (504) 888-9111.

Rose society to meet

The New Orleans Old Garden Rose Society will meet at 7 p.m. May 1 at John Calvin Presbyterian Church, 4201 Transcontinental Drive, Metairie.

The guest speaker will be Paula Cuccia. Her topic is "Clematis Among Roses."

The group is an organization dedicated to preserving and growing garden roses. Membership is open to anyone interested in old garden roses and is \$25.

For more information, visit the website www.oldroses.com

Parkinson's group

"Life Hacks: C to Work Around Inconvenience" is the subject of the meeting of Big L Lis Parkinson Society from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. in the Esplanade Jefferson General at 4200 Houma Blvd.

The presenter is Sarah Perez and Ph.D.

The meeting is open to Parkinson's patients, family and friends.

For more information, contact Bonnie Huddle at hudd4417@gmail.com or visit the website www.FleurDeLis.org

Eva Jacob Barba is the author of the book "About the People in Jefferson Parish." She can be reached at evajacobbarba@gmail.com

CONTACT US

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Community News Editor:

Karen Taylor Gist
The New Orleans Advocate
840 St. Charles Ave.
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