

Seniors celebrate Jimenez's birthday

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CORPUS CHRISTI CALLER-TIMES

Maria Valdez, 73, and Richard Perez, 80, were the first ones to get on the dance floor when Flaco Jimenez's fingers hit the keys on his accordion.

Jimenez and Max Baca started their performance at the Joe Garza Recreation Center with the song "Mi Primer Amor" and Valdez and Perez were not the only ones who got up.

Several other seniors flocked to the dance floor of the recreation center, which had an attendance of more than 200 people.

"I started listening to (Flaco Jimenez) and dancing to his music when I was 16. That's when I got married and would go to the dances," Valdez said. "I always followed him everywhere he played and even in San Antonio. He's the best."

The dance Wednesday was hosted by WellMed Medical Management to celebrate its patients and the seniors in the community as part of the Lonestar Celebration.

The event was also an opportunity to celebrate Flaco Jimenez's 78th birthday coming up Saturday, said Dan Calderon, WellMed Medical Management

director of communications.

"We are having a celebration of Corpus Christi members and it made sense to have a party here for Flaco Jimenez's birthday coming up," Calderon said. "Hopefully they'll have a good time and have some dancing and movement and to get to be healthy which is what WellMed is here for."

Flaco Jimenez performed hits from his solo career and music created with the Texas Tornados and Los Super Seven. Officials said Jimenez is considered one of the most influential Tejano musicians of all time.

He has collaborated with dozens over the decades including Dwight Yoakum and Buck Owens, with whom he scored his crossover hit "Streets of Bakersfield."

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He has five Grammy Awards including a Lifetime Achievement Award, and multiple Tejano Music Awards. Jimenez is a patient in the WellMed Network and a paid spokesman for the growing senior-focused health care company.

Jimenez said he is always happy to perform in Corpus Christi where he can see familiar faces.

"I used to play in Corpus back in the day and the atmosphere of Corpus isn't new for me," Jimenez said. "It's really good for me to see so many people here, people I remember, remembering all of those years from back in day when I'd come play here."

Perez, who's been dancing along with Valdez for about eight years, said he encourages everyone who's 55 and older to get moving to any music.

"We dance to everything," Perez said. "We don't stop. The best is to keep moving. It's the best exercise."





RACHEL DENNY CLOW/CALLER-TIMES

Flaco Jimenez, left, and Max Baca, lead singer and bajo sexto player of Los Texmaniacs, perform at the Joe Garza Recreation Center on Wednesday for Jiménez's 78th birthday party.