THE SAN ANTONIO Convention & Visitors Bureau has been awarded a 2009 Gold Adrian Award for outstanding feature TV placement in public relations for “Today Show Takes a Vacation.” The SACVB was previously honored with two 2008 Silver Adrian Awards for the brand launch of “San Antonio. Deep. In the Heart.”

The five-nights of music featured the city truly shined.”

Adrian Awards, given to honor creative brilliance and best practices in hospitality, travel and tourism marketing, are presented by the Hospitality Sales & Marketing Association International.

AFTER SIX months of renovations, the Frank W. Mayborn Civic & Convention Center reopened on Jan. 26 to showcase the facility's new look and uses.

“We just love the face-lift that the Mayborn Center has received,” says Pati Oldham of CentroLand Title Company. “The whole facility looks so modern now. We love being able to use the facility for meetings during the week. It is so economical and looks great!”

The lobby has received many upgrades, including a unique art panel system, planter boxes, new lobby furniture, upgrades to the concession stand and beautiful high-end carpeting.

The now Wi-Fi-equipped facility also has a fully renovated kitchen with new appliances.

“The convention center has remained open during the entire renovation project,” says Nancy Glover, Temple Convention & Visitors Bureau. “Our customers have been very pleased with the new look and added versatility. They continue to compliment our efforts and look forward to using the facility in the future.”

Corpus Christi hosts this year’s Texas Travel Counselors Conference, where counselors use firsthand visits to enhance knowledge that is later shared with the traveling public.

The SACVB was previously honored with two 2008 Silver Adrian Awards for the brand launch of “San Antonio. Deep. In the Heart.”

The comprehensive study released by Greyhill Advisors shows that operations contributed $20 million to that total and attendance accounted for $78.8 million. Additionally, Austin gained another $21.4 million in combined media coverage and sponsor advertising.

The five-nights of music featured more than 1,900 artists from 80 stages last year, while 300 films were cast on eight screens. While the music portion has long experienced the highest draw, film events posted significant growth last year and SXSW Interactive attendance jumped 30 percent.

SXSW Executive Planner Mike Shea says pre-registrations and hotel reservations are already ahead of last year’s record pace.

THE ICONIC Texas Stadium — home of the Dallas Cowboys from 1971-2008 — has been abandoned in favor of new digs in Arlington, but it still managed to get naming rights — for its April 11 demolition.

Kraft Macaroni & Cheese is ponying up $75,000 that will go to city-picked charities and another $75,000 worth of products to charities of its choice in order to be the official sponsor of Texas Stadium’s implosion. Additionally, Irving expects to gain about $1 million worth of public exposure through the food
company's national advertising campaign, which includes an essay contest that grants the young winner the opportunity to push the detonation button.

The $5.9 million demolition task was awarded to Dallas-based Weir Brothers, who will bring the stadium down in segments, then level out the site grounds to make it ready for redevelopment—likely a mixed-use development project along the DART line. Ninety-five percent of the stadium's steel and concrete will be recycled. Some of it will be used to renovate surrounding highways and to build the planned DART Orange Line. The Texas Department of Transportation will lease the stadium property for a staging area during reconstruction of the adjacent highways.

"The Stadium literally, in many ways, put Irving on the map in many people's minds. We now have a new opportunity to change what that map looks like, and that starts all over later this spring when we start to really reinvent the face of Irving by reinventing that key intersection," says Irving Convention and Visitors Bureau Executive Director Maura Gast.

To give the stadium an appropriate send-off, events will be scheduled and city officials hope fans and those associated with the team and the stadium will turn out. Also planned are VIP areas for elected officials, city staffers and business leaders.

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"It's such a storied building, people want to be a part of the event and say, 'I was there,'" Gast told The Dallas Morning News.

For information and to watch the progress of the demolition, visit www.cityofirving.org.

SEVERAL tourism organizations have been awarded free exhibit space in the TxDOT Texas Travel Information Centers.

From March through August, these areas will be promoting their attractions with special displays—including colorful photographs and other promotional materials—in the centers' lobbies.

Every six months, use of the display cases rotates to another set of tourism organizations.

Here are the newly selected exhibit space pairings:

- Amarillo: Texas Heritage Trails Program
- Anthony: Central Texas Bluebonnet Travel Council

IN THE RANKS

DESPITE economic challenges in 2009, Texas fairs drew in big attendance numbers with the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo topping the rankings in Carnivalwarehouse.com's Top 50 North American Fairs.

The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo had a record-breaking 1.89 million in attendance in 2009, up 5 percent from 2008. The numbers just edged out the Texas State Fair, in the No. 2 slot, with an estimated attendance of 1.8 million.

The San Antonio Livestock Show and Expo came in sixth place with an estimated 1.3 million in attendance. The Southwest Exposition & Live-
Only one Texas restaurant makes the 5-Diamond restaurant list. That distinction goes to The French Room (in the Adolphus Hotel), which has held that distinction for 21 years.

Many Texas accommodations and restaurants earned 4-Diamond ratings, including Washington’s Inn at Dos Brisas, Austin’s Driskill Hotel and Dallas’ Hotel St. Germain, which each earned 4-Diamond ratings for both dining and accommodations.

According to AAA, the research also found that:

54 percent of active leisure travelers in America consider trusted, independent hotel or resort ratings very important when selecting accommodations.

AAA diamond ratings are the third attribute travelers consider when selecting vacation accommodations, according to a study conducted by InsightExpress. Price was the leading attribute, with 85 percent of travelers citing its importance, followed by the presence of a pool (52 percent) and AAA ratings (49 percent).

According to TIA, a property’s AAA rating is one of the considerations most travelers use when determining where to stay. Location, comfort, lowest room rate, past experience, quality service from staff, availability of room preferences, special discount, reputation, complimentary breakfast, amenities, overall style and AAA ratings are top considerations for members and travelers when selecting hotel accommodations. No other rating entity is among the top considerations.

For the complete listing of 5- and 4-Diamond ratings, visit AAA.com/Diamonds.

TEXAS communities and facilities shine in ConventionSouth magazine’s latest Readers Choice Awards. The awards were given to favorite meeting service providers based on physical attributes, as well as commitment to hospitality and uncompromising service, that meet the demands of professionals.

Winners included the Austin Convention Center, American Airlines Training and Conference Center, and the Beaumont and Dallas convention and visitors bureaus.

Austin Convention Center was noted not only for its vast space offering, but also for being a “leading destination in Green meetings and one of the country’s most technologically advanced facilities” which also happens to be just down the street from the city’s vibrant nightlife.

American Airlines Training and Conference Center received high marks for its spaciousness, state-of-the-art auditorium, aircraft simulators, WiFi, team-building ROPES course and assorted other amenities. Its location to Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport was an added bonus.

DIGGIN’ UP BONES

SIXTY-EIGHT thousand years after a nursery herd of Colombian mammoths meet their fate in the Bosque River Basin, and long after the prehistoric remains were discovered in 1978, the Waco Mammoth Site is now open to the public.

Opened in December, the attraction at 6220 Steinbeck Bend Road, has been well guarded since its discovery, and the pavilion that now stands is reminiscent of the tent that had been in place over the dig all these years. Visitors will find an elevated walkway that allows them to see the dig site, now protected by a glass floor, where the creatures were discovered. The bones are viewable in protective casings. There also is a welcome center, gift shop, restrooms and a trail.

Collections Manager Anitu Benedict says the group consisted of at least 19 female Colombian mammoths and juveniles that had formed a defensive circle when they were overcome by a mudslide — the largest concentration of prehistoric mammoths to die in a single event. Notable is one mammoth that was found with a baby mammoth in its tusks, believed to have been an attempt to lift it to safety.

The attraction is “the nation’s first and only recorded discovery of a nursery herd of Pleistocene mammoths,” according to the National Park Service.

The Waco Mammoth Foundation is hoping that recognized distinction will help the site become Waco Mammoth National Monument. A bill to make it so is traveling through Congress.

The Waco Mammoth Site also represents other creatures that were discovered during the dig and believed to have died at the site at different times, including a bull mammoth, an extinct camel and a saber-toothed tiger.

The Waco Mammoth Site is managed and staffed by the City of Waco, while the Mayborn Museum Complex at Baylor University will protect the collection and continue research and projects.

For more information, call (254) 750-7946 or visit www.wacomammoth.org.

INOSAURS Unearthed is making its Texas debut at San Antonio’s Witte Museum, beginning March 6, boasting the latest technology in animatronics and the latest paleontological discoveries.

The exhibit, which will continue through September, features the world’s largest and most advanced animatronic dinosaurs, full skeletons and fossils. It also is the first exhibit to feature a life-sized model of a recently discovered feather-covered dinosaur.

Visitors can walk among life-sized dinosaurs — tyrannosaurus rex, triceratops and stegosaurus and more — and unearth dinosaur fossils at a paleontological dig set up in the Witte’s Kathleen and Curtis Gunn Gallery. Some of the animatronic dinosaurs (using electronics, instead of hydraulics) can be operated and controlled by the visitor.

For more information, call (210) 357-1900 or visit www.witte museum.org.
TEXAS TRAVELOG

TEXAS TRIVIA

Name some South Texas events that promise a fun cultural fix.

**TEXAS TRAVEL INFORMATION CENTERS**

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*Compared to last year

Dial toll-free (800) 452-9292 for travel assistance from TxDOT's Texas Travel Information Centers
(8 a.m.-6 p.m. daily, Central Time)

www.traveltex.com • www.texashighways.com
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EDITOR: Lois M. Rodriguez DESIGN/LAYOUT: Kirsti Harms

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