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Laredo Morning Times

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2010

50¢

MISS TEXAS USA



Photo courtesy of TexasPageantScene.com

Laredoan Ana Rodriguez is crowned Miss Texas USA on Sunday afternoon in Houston.

Laredoan claims the crown

By CÉSAR G. RODRIGUEZ
LAREDO MORNING TIMES

It took her a few years, but she finally did it.

Laredoan Ana Rodriguez, 24, was crowned Miss Texas USA 2011 Sunday evening at the pageant held in Houston. She moves on to represent Texas in the Miss USA Pageant in Las Vegas in April 2011.

"Laredo has never had a Miss Texas winner at all," said Roel Gonzalez, executive director for Miss Laredo Productions. He referred to this achievement as "history in the making."

For the first time, according to Gonzalez, Laredo now has two winners holding the state crowns: Ana Rodriguez, Miss Texas USA, and Chelsea Nicole Morgensen, Miss Teen Texas USA.

Last year, Rodriguez was first runner-up. But Gonzalez said the preparation, hard work and fitness were keys to the success.

"There are a million of different feelings that are going through my body," Ana Rodriguez said. "I'm excited to represent the whole state of Texas. I

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TODAY'S FORECAST



HIGH 97° | LOW 78°



129th Year, No. 84, 34 pages

PUBLIC EDUCATION

Costly absences

LISD lost nearly \$1M due to students missing school

By NICK GEORGIU
LAREDO MORNING TIMES

A drop in attendance rates at LISD during the 2009-10 school year cost the district hundreds of thousands, if not more than \$1 million, less in state aid.

According to Laredo Inde-

pendent School District data, the attendance rate fell from 96.4 percent to 95.81 percent during the past two school years. Although it's only a 0.59 percentage point difference, it amounted to 186,340 absences. Based on the estimate that LISD gets \$35.47 per student

per day, the absences resulted in \$6-plus million less in state aid.

With the exception of the alternative school, Lara Academy, Martin High posted the lowest 2009-10 attendance rate at 93.1 percent. The highest, at 98.02 percent, was Macdonell

Elementary, which, along with Bruni Elementary, Christen Middle and Lara was only one of four LISD campuses that improved their attendance rates last school year.

This overall decrease is un-

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UNIQUE RIO GRANDE VIEW



Photo by Ulysses S. Romero | Laredo Morning Times

Roberto "Chibbi" Orduña kayaks on Manadas Creek as part of the Big Rivers Outfitters tour along the Rio Grande on Sunday morning.

Kayakers have new way to see the river

By CÉSAR G. RODRIGUEZ
LAREDO MORNING TIMES

At Father McNaboe Park, a path that leads to the Rio Grande is slippery and muddy. It represents quite a challenge for those who want to kayak in the international waters.

But nothing hinders the pas-

sion of adventurers who want to see a different view of the Gateway City.

A group of fellows dared to kayak 6 miles down river early Sunday in the Rio Grande, where strong currents and a few mini-rapids pump the adrenaline of any adventurer.

This is Laredo's newest at-

traction, Big River Outfitters.

Owners Eric Ellman and Steve Kaczor said they are working towards the best interest of uniting the two countries by the one thing that divides them: the river.

"I see the river as something

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CRIME

Some fall victim to trafficking

By DENISE BLAZ
LAREDO MORNING TIMES

Lured by the promise of a better life, thousands of individuals are trafficked into the United States on an annual basis, often becoming victims of commercial sexual exploitation or forced labor.

"It's one of the most compelling crimes," said José Angel Moreno, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Texas during a recent Laredo visit. "It operates in obscurity. The victims are too afraid to come forward to make us aware of this crime. They're not aware of the laws in place to help them."

According to statistics obtained through a 2009 report prepared by Trafficking in Persons, 14,500 to 17,500 individuals are trafficked into the U.S. each year, making it the second-largest criminal industry in the world.

Addressing a crowd filled with employees at the state and federal level, Moreno along with his fellow colleagues spoke at a conference in late August at the Holiday Inn about the full spectrum of the crime that has transcended into modern day slavery.

"Human smuggling is an agreed-upon price, but human trafficking is when they're trying to make money off them," said Edward Gallagher, coordinator of the U.S. Attorney's Office Human Trafficking Rescue Alliance. "Smuggling can cross over to trafficking by extorting them and taking them hostage. They can charge for housing until their debt is paid off, but that's violating their civil rights."

In September 2006, police entered a home in the 2200 block of West Anna Street while seeking information about an assault investigation and discovered three women who claimed they were being held at the home beyond

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