

jewelry to clothing to food to art from countries such as Japan, Thailand and India. **Story, Page 11B.**



performance at this year's San Antonio Stock Show & Rodeo.

A lifetime rodeo-goer, Kavy preferred the down-home food and the neighborly confines of the Freeman Coliseum to the upscale fare and glitzy environs at the AT&T Center.

"It was more of a community, family thing then," Kavy said. "I don't seem to know anyone walking around here. It's a big production, that's all."

The San Antonio rodeo, like the rodeo industry generally, has embraced the idea that bigger is better as it battles for the sporting public's attention. Rides and events get added, marketing money goes up, entertainment

to appeal to the broadest group we can."

That has meant the San Antonio rodeo now has a multimillion-dollar entertainment budget able to draw acts including Alan Jackson and the Beach Boys; a slick, new advertising campaign that could cost \$1 million; and a six-figure salary for its executive director, R. Keith Martin.

Martin received \$286,000 in salary and benefits in 2005, the latest data show.

Tom Frost, longtime San Antonio banker and a member of the rodeo's executive committee, said the changes have been beneficial

See **RODEO/9B**

made \$120,000, according to its latest tax report. That includes \$6,000 in retirement benefits for Martin and \$6,720 for Schronk, who also is one of three assistant executive directors.

A spokeswoman for the exposition said the organization does not comment on compensation.

WR. Watt Jr., president and general manager of the nonprofit Southwestern Exposition and Livestock Show in Fort Worth, earned \$2.2 million in 2005, including \$1.78 million from a deferred compensation plan that was terminated during the year. He said his salary for this year is \$190,000.

"Due to some changes in the tax law, I had to get that money out," Watt said.

It's a one-time payout that covers the last 15 years of his retirement, he said.

Watt, 72, has run the Southwestern Exposi-

See **PAY/10B**

Predator attacks on livestock and game are rising

Hill Country drought and less management by ranchers are cited.

By **ZEKE MACCORMACK**
EXPRESS-NEWS STAFF WRITER

MEDINA — Poisons, bounties and sharpshooters in helicopters haven't been able to stop an increase of animal attacks on smaller livestock and game as drought forces the predators to travel farther to find food.

Hunters and ranchers say

more coyotes, hogs, bobcats and foxes are preying on livestock, game and even pets across the Hill Country. The area's available water, thick brush and remote canyons provide ideal hiding and resting spots for predators that search by night for lambs, goats or other meals.

"The problem is not new, but it's a little worse this year," Bander County Commissioner Richard Keese said. "We've got a severe drought, so lots of coyotes from South Texas have moved north."

The drought, which means less food and cover, is also a fac-

tor behind reduced stocks of deer and exotic game. And then there's the hit-or-miss predator management approach in a region that's seen rapid residential growth and a rise in absentee land ownership.

"We have less ranchers actively trying to control predators," County Judge Richard Evans said. "If you work at the problem on your ranch and your neighbor doesn't, they (the animals) just move over there."

"It's a multicounty, multifaceted issue," he said.

Bob Sims, supervisor for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's

Wildlife Services in its Hill Country district, said organized predator control there dates to 1934. The use of lethal toxicants helped steadily beat back coyotes and other predators until 1972, when the deadly baits and lures were banned, he said.

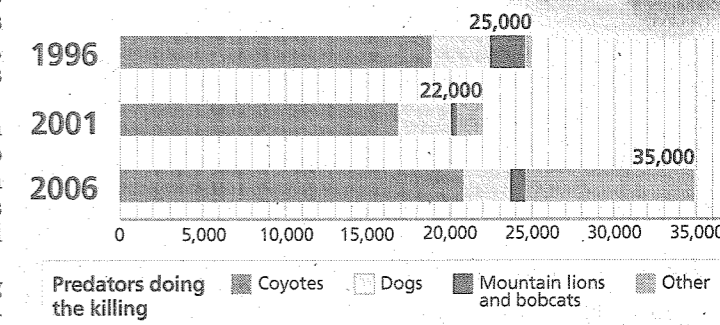
The predators rebounded in subsequent years, which also saw a decline in once-common sheep and goat operations — as well as fewer deer, turkeys and other game.

"When a rancher is protecting sheep and goats, he's also pro-

See **ATTACKS/11B**

Predator watch

The number of calves killed statewide by wild predators has jumped about 60 percent in five years.



Source: Texas Wildlife Services

EXPRESS-NEWS GRAPHIC

A smoke alarm can save your life — and you can get one for free



KEN RODRIGUEZ

A house fire on North Hackberry Street recently claimed the life of 47-year-old Martha Fragoso Campos.

When firefighters arrived at her home before dawn Feb. 4, they found a disarmed smoke detector, its lid hanging open.

The fire broke out in the kitchen. Campos was found away from the kitchen.

An arson lieutenant at the scene told the Express-News a working smoke detector would have saved Campos.

The lieutenant's assessment echoes a disturbing refrain.

Four fire deaths have been reported this year. In each case, detectors were either absent or not working. At this rate, San Antonio will

surpass last year's grim total of 17 fire deaths.

In all the fatal incidents dating to the start of 2006, firefighters have found only one working detector.

There is a flip side to this tragic trend. But it is not often told.

On Dec. 9, a smoke alarm in a North Side apartment awoke two young brothers, one 8 years old, the other 6. The boys roused their parents and siblings around 5:30 a.m.

It took four trucks and 32 firefighters to extinguish the blaze. All seven family members escaped unharmed.

That happy ending didn't make headlines. But it underscored a truth: Detectors save lives.

See **RODRIGUEZ/3B**

City Council votes to toss \$25,000 at 'nonpolitical' Esperanza Center



RODDY STINSON

How deep is the pile of cash that City Hallers roll around in every day?

This deep:

"An Ordinance authorizing the re-allocation of \$25,000 to be paid from District 5 one-time project funds to the Esperanza Center to assist with the purchase of Rueben's Ice House, at 820 S. Colorado, to be used as a gathering place for the community in exchange for the provision of public programs at the location."

— Agenda Item #14, approved unanimously by the City Council last Thursday

You read it here first.

So common is such financial foolishness at City Hall that \$25,000 tossed at the militant (and curiously

named) "Esperanza Peace and Justice Center" sailed through council chambers without a hitch, a twitch, a word of protest, a media report or a public or private question about council priorities.

Making the silence particularly bewildering was information attached to the agenda item that detailed the sources of the \$25,000:

"Reduce funds set aside for the Good Samaritan Center by \$2,000.95"

"Reduce funds for West End Park Senior Center by \$1,350"

"Reduce District 5 high school graffiti (project) by \$2,500"

"Reduce Inman Christian Center Corridor Revitalization by \$14,219.39"

See **STINSON/3B**

Little is lost by ending E-N involvement in Top 25 sports polls



BOB RICHTER
PUBLIC EDITOR

Tim Griffin has a job that sounds easy: He goes to a sporting event, takes a seat like one typically occupied by a millionaire, scribbles notes, gathers statistics, interviews coaches and players and then writes about what he's compiled.

The Express-News sportswriter became so adroit at covering college sports that a few years back the Associated Press asked Griffin to join the panel that weekly chooses the AP's college football and basketball polls, the so-called Top 25.

Last week, however, that ended. Effective at the conclusion of the NCAA basketball season, the Express-News no longer will participate in the polling process for football or basketball. Here's why, said Steve Quintana, assistant managing editor/sports:

"We began reassessing our involvement in the AP poll more than 18 months ago when the issue of including the poll in the BCS (the NCAA's Bowl Championship

Series) process came to a head. That presented some ethical issues, not only for us, but for many other newspapers.

"There were other issues," he said, "including the treatment of a New Orleans reporter who made an honest mistake voting on deadline last football season. That reporter was publicly humiliated by the AP, and we won't subject our own reporters to that kind of treatment.

"The bottom line, though, is the poll evolved into something it was never meant to be. So we won't be a part of it anymore."

Griffin is unperturbed. Sports isn't just an occupation for him; it's an avocation. And, as he knows, it isn't easy work. "It's time for somebody else to have a vote," he said Friday.

In 2004, Griffin and four other Texas AP voters came under scrutiny when University of Texas football coach Mack Brown lobbied panelists to change their votes and

vault No. 5 Texas over No. 4 California, which would send UT to an elite BCS bowl.

UT faithful mimicked Brown, inundating Griffin with more than 1,000 e-mails and telephone calls. He stayed with Cal, but three Texas voters switched, and Brown got what he wanted: a trip to the Rose Bowl.

That turned off fans, journalists and athletes who don't wear burnt orange and persuaded AP to exit the BCS selection process after the 2004 season.

"The NCAA should decide who plays for the national championship," Quintana says. "They shouldn't put the burden on a bunch of sportswriters."

Stewart Mandel, a sports columnist for SI.com, recently completed work on a book slated for release at the start of the 2007 college football season. "Bowls, Polls and Tattered Souls," he says, is about "the chaos and controversy" in college football, including a chapter on

polling.

Mandel acknowledges there's an inherent "conflict of interest" when reporters vote on teams they cover, but said he was surprised at the Express-News' timing.

"A lot of the concerns newspapers had should have been alleviated when AP dropped out of the BCS process."

The reality is the AP football and basketball polls have no role in determining national champions. They are irrelevant except to launch debate. The Express-News will continue to publish the polls, but it loses little by not participating.

Meanwhile, not having to file a football Top 25 vote by Sunday morning or a basketball Top 25 vote by Sunday night, and not having to school himself on national contenders, will free up scores of hours for Griffin to spend with his family.

For the past decade or so, he covered a football game each weekend

and, in order to make an educated vote, found himself watching, listening to and keeping notes on 15 to 20 other college games each week as well as monitoring sports programs, such as ESPN's "Game Day."

Basketball season demanded even more diligence because games are played every day.

I asked Quintana if pulling out of the AP poll lessens the newspaper's prestige.

"I don't care about prestige," he responded. "The only people I need to impress are the people who read the Sports section every day. Those people want a section that's thorough, useful and entertaining, and we can give them that without voting in someone else's poll."

Bob Richter is the Express-News public editor. His opinions are his own. Contact him at (210) 250-3264 or brichter@express-news.net. Visit his blog at MySA.com, keyword: public editor.

Rodriguez: No excuse for no smoke alarm

CONTINUED FROM 1B

There's no excuse for not having one. If you can't afford a detector — and some cost as little as \$5 — the fire department will deliver one and install it at no charge.

The fire department has installed almost 4,000 free detectors since Jan. 1.

District Fire Chief Randy Jenkins credits the surge in requests to a media campaign and the late November death of state Sen. Frank Madla.

"When he died we had 400 calls in four hours," Jenkins says.

In January, one South Side woman wanting a smoke detector didn't call the fire department. She called me. I put Jenkins in touch with

the woman, Mary Morales, who is scheduled to receive an alarm shortly.

"When Madla died, my hair stood on end," says Morales, 74. "I thought, 'That could be me.' I got scared."

Morales did not act on her fear until more tragedy hit. She saw the charred remains of three homes on the South Side.

That was it. Morales needed a smoke alarm for her 42-year-old home. Then she heard about an elderly couple, Guadalupe and Carlota Garcia, who perished in a West Side blaze. "That really hurt," Morales says.

Morales pays closer attention to fire fatalities than most. The stories have become so frequent, the detail of an absent or nonworking

detector so familiar, they prompt few to act. And if the victim is not famous, a lesson is missed.

"When regular people die," Jenkins says, "no one gets the message."

To help spread the message, a local law firm has donated 26,000 smoke detectors. Jenkins says the fire department has roughly 22,000 left.

Consider the difference they can make:

On Jan. 19, a fire left a two-family home uninhabitable in Passaic, N.J. According to news reports, smoke filled a second floor bedroom just before 1 a.m.

Detectors sounded. Flames ripped through the top floor. Two dozen people escaped without injury.

Days earlier, a two-alarm

fire ignited in a Berkeley, Calif. apartment complex. A smoke alarm awoke a sleeping woman around 3 a.m. A fire official said the detector saved her life.

The next time a fire death is reported, you can almost be certain responders will find no working alarm.

The difference between life and death can be a \$5 purchase. Or one call for a free detector.

To get a free smoke alarm, call 211 Monday through Friday between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. If you already have one, check the batteries to make sure they are working.

Call Ken Rodriguez at (210) 250-3369 or e-mail krodri- guez@express-news.net.

Reputed brothel leader facing 30 years after plea

ASSOCIATED PRESS

AUSTIN — A man accused of managing brothels in Texas and Oklahoma as part of a nationwide ring that forced immigrant women into prostitution has pleaded guilty to federal charges.

Juan Balderas-Orosco, 34, faces up to 30 years in prison for transportation for prostitution, importation of undocumented immigrants, and conspiracy to smuggle, transport and harbor undocumented immigrants. He pleaded guilty Friday.

Authorities say the Austin area and Oklahoma City operations Balderas ran were part of a larger ring that included brothels in 13 cities, including ones across Texas and in Las Vegas, New York City and Atlanta.

The ringleaders sneaked

hundreds of women, mostly from Latin America, into the country and forced them to have sex with as many as 40 men a day, many of them also undocumented immigrants, according to court documents. They moved the women from brothel to brothel and kept their earnings, the documents show.

"The prostitutes reported they were not free to leave the brothels on their own, and the brothel operators were usually armed with firearms," according to a court document.

In 2002, immigration agents and Austin police raided a house they later said was a brothel run by Balderas.

Balderas was captured last year.

He is the lead defendant in an indictment that charges 12 people with smuggling and prostitution crimes.

Stinson: 'Nonpolitical' center gets funds

CONTINUED FROM 1B

and adults on San Antonio's near West Side.

Esperanza turns them into slide shows and then litical" group continues to promote its services.

DO YOU HAVE DIABETES?