

Big news stories garner Lubbock nationwide attention | Lubbock Online | Lubbock Avalanche-Journal

Buddy Holly, cotton, Mike Leach, wine and the Pac-10 may not seem to have much in common, but for Lubbock, they all mean nationwide publicity.

People nationwide who follow the news — especially recent news about the Lubbock native rock-and-roll legend or Texas Tech athletics and research — likely will have seen multiple references to the Hub City, according to results for Lubbock on news websites such as The Associated Press, Google News and AltaVista.

And that media spotlight, while not necessarily shining a positive light on Lubbock, does keep the mid-size city on the national stage, city promoters and a media expert said.

“It certainly does bring attention to Lubbock or at least let people from around the country learn where Lubbock is,” said Mary Jane Buerkle, a spokeswoman for the Lubbock Chamber of Commerce.

Stories about Lubbock — especially good news such as Texas Tech researchers’ creation of the Fibertect material, which is being billed as an effective tool in the effort to clean up the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico — can provide people across the country with a reminder and new knowledge about the city, she said.

“And hopefully people will continue to learn and do their research and, once they start digging, they’ll see what Lubbock really has to offer,” Buerkle said.

Among recent stories with the potential to catch the nation’s eye was last week’s announcement Lubbock native Buddy Holly will receive a star on the

Hollywood Walk of Fame to celebrate his 75th birthday in September 2011.

National stories about Holly introduce people to or remind people about the late performer, said Brooke Allison, director of the Buddy Holly Center.

“That’s only going to help Lubbock and the center as well because that will draw Buddy back into the national spotlight,” she said. “I think when it gets closer to the event, we’ll get added attention.”

Allison said about 60 percent to 70 percent of the 40,000 people who tour the center annually are visitors from other parts of the state, country and world.

Though most of the center’s visitors already knew about Holly before touring the Holly collection, Brooke said she expects to see an increase in visitors — especially in 2011 — because of coverage of the Walk of Fame.

Among the top results for Lubbock in national media and search engines in recent months are Texas Tech and former head football coach Mike Leach’s ongoing legal battle with the institution.

That’s no surprise to John Osborne, chief executive officer of the Lubbock Economic Development Alliance and Visit Lubbock, the city’s convention and visitors bureau.

“Mike Leach really increased the exposure of our football program — definitely took it to the next level,” he said. “All that additional focus on Tech, I think that’s just added to (Lubbock’s) exposure.”

Osborne, who took the leadership post at LEDA after spending most of last decade in San Antonio, said the university and the Leach-led football program were among the most common topics he’d hear and read about in relation to Lubbock while in the Alamo City.

“And in Lubbock, it’s expected that Texas Tech is going to get the bulk of our publicity nationally,” he said.

Texas Tech’s presence as a Pac-10 and Big 12 candidate in this month’s national coverage of athletic conference expansion, as well as the university’s public interest in becoming a tier one university, kept Lubbock in the national

spotlight, Osborne said.

He said he expects the increased funding, research and population anticipated to coincide with tier one status at the school likely will come with stories.

“Once Tech has achieved that tier one status, it will make a tremendous amount of news nationally,” he said.

Much of Lubbock’s regional and national publicity comes from fields beyond athletics, such as the area’s growing wine and cotton industries, said Randy Reddick, the journalism department chairman at Texas Tech.

Though nearly 25 percent of the nation’s cotton is grown on the South Plains and the Lubbock-area wine industry is among the largest in the state, news coverage of Lubbock area agriculture has only one search result, and the wine industry doesn’t have a presence in the top 50 online search results for the city in recent months.

But Reddick said he expects they still have their place in the minds of news junkies who stumble upon Lubbock in the media.

“The people who are fans of wine and fine dining are almost as rabid as football fans,” he said.

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