

U.S. Space & Rocket Center[®] is Alabama's Top Tourist Attraction

HUNTSVILLE, AL -- The Alabama Tourism Department has once again identified the U.S. Space & Rocket Center as Alabama's number one tourist attraction among those who charge an admission. Also making the state's Top Ten list were two other Huntsville attractions, including the Huntsville Botanical Gardens, coming in at sixth place, and the Early Works Museum Complex at ninth.

The Space & Rocket Center reported 470,000 visitors last year, topping the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail, the Birmingham Zoo, the McWane Science Center, also in Birmingham, and the USS Alabama Battleship Park in Mobile.

"This speaks directly to the perseverance and dedication of our employees," said Larry Capps, the Space & Rocket Center's CEO. "Our people strive to make certain everyone who comes here has a positive experience whether they're museum guests, in one of our camp programs or a part of one of the many night functions we do, and that makes people want to come back," he added.

Capps said he expects attendance numbers for 2010 to be even higher as the Center is working to bring in a series of traveling exhibits normally seen only in much larger cities. The first, *Star Wars: Where Science Meets Imagination*, opens to the general public on June 24th. He says they also expect renewed interest in their SPACE CAMP[®] programs as a result of NASA Astronaut Dottie Metcalf-Lindenburger's shuttle mission next month. She will become Space Camp's first graduate to fly in space. Two other grads have been selected for the astronaut corps but have not been scheduled yet to fly.

In other categories, the beaches of the Alabama Gulf Coast were the number one natural destination in the state attracting 4.5 million visitors last year. The Birmingham Botanical Gardens attracted 350,000 visitors to make it the most attended free attraction. More than 800,000 people attended Mobile's Mardi Gras making it the most attended event. Jordan-Hare Stadium was the number one sports destination with 676,912 fans attending Auburn University home football games. The number one seasonal attraction was Decatur's Point Mallard Park with 138,562 visitors.

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(NOTE: The contact for this release is Al Whitaker, Media Relations Manager, U.S. Space & Rocket Center, Huntsville, AL. 256-721-7160. Email: media@spacecamp.com)

