

Metro

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DALLAS MORNING NEWS CHARITIES



Photos by David Woo/Staff Photographer

Network of Community Ministries in Richardson has three divisions: Emergency Services, the Adolescent and Children's Clinic and Seniors' Net. Tosan Uwa of Dallas recently received food for her family of five. Seniors' Net, which was begun in 2002, has assisted more than 4,000 elderly residents in the Dallas area over the years.

Star for the silver generation

Seniors' Net is part of Network of Community Ministries Inc.

By HANNAH DECLERK
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for Seniors' Net, part of the Richardson nonprofit Network of Community Ministries Inc.

NEYSY WARREN Since its installment in 2002, Seniors' Net has assisted more than 4,000 elderly people in the Dallas area through its Seniors' Choice Programs so they can live independently in their own

homes, said Network of Community Ministries executive director Alice Mae Britt.

"To me, the elderly are almost invisible. They created the society we live in and enjoy, and as they age, they are put on the back burner," she said.

Network of Community Ministries is one of 23 social service organizations in North Texas that are recipients of donations raised through the Dallas Morning News Charities.

Since 1986, the newspaper has sponsored the Charities, an annual effort to combat homelessness and hunger in the greater Dallas area. *The Dallas Morning News*

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Janice Compos of Garland recently looked for clothes for her family. Network of Community Ministries receives donations raised through the Dallas Morning News Charities.

IRVING

Consultant works after contract ends

Council to vote on \$197,000 bill for work never officially sought

By AVI SELK
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For more than a year, Irving's divided leaders wrestled with a question: Should the city continue a longtime consultant's \$1.1 million contract, trim it down or let it expire in September so competitors could bid for it?

Their decision: yes. Dean International is still working for the city months after its contract ended — an arrangement that has the unofficial blessing of some City Council members, but isn't authorized by any vote or paperwork.

As a result, the city is sitting on a stack of invoices totaling nearly \$200,000 for services it never officially requested. The staff refuses to pay any of it without a council vote, which is set for Thursday.

Meanwhile, a yearlong effort to re-

place Dean International's contract with competitive bids has been jammed up by the politics surrounding company owner David Dean, whose decade-and-a-half relationship with Irving has earned him both loyal fans and fierce critics at City Hall.

This week's council meeting is supposed to clear up Dean's murky employment status and his future with the city — though it's not the first time that's been promised.

The confusion follows months of behind-the-scenes politicking by Dean's allies and opponents on the council over the fate of his contract.

The indecision peaked at 11th-hour meetings held within days of the contract's expiration. Some council members directed staff to unofficially extend the agreement, although there is no indication they had any power to do so.

The result: a contractor working without a contract, unpaid bills sitting in limbo and even more confusion at City Hall.

After council member Rose Cannaday learned last month that city staff was refusing to pay Dean for his post-contract work, she emailed her displeasure to City Manager Tommy Gonzalez.

"This is very distressing to me that we treat people we do business with in this manner," wrote Cannaday, one of Dean's strongest supporters on the council. "I DO NOT DO BUSINESS IN THIS WAY."

But Mayor Beth Van Duyne, perhaps Dean's most powerful critic, doesn't want all inclined to pay the bills.

"What kind of consultant or contractor works past the date of his contract and expects to be paid?" she asked.

Since the '90s, Irving has hired the former Texas secretary of state to lobby legislators and advise city officials about water and transportation projects. Dean International also organized and promoted an annual transportation convention that pours money into Irving's economy.

Dean has amassed powerful and passionate supporters on the council in that time. Dennis Webb has called him a "great tutor" to the city, while Rose Cannaday is the treasurer of a nonprofit Dean set up.

But others, like the mayor, balk at his \$1 million-plus annual contracts, large bonuses and vague performance

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'News 8 Etc.' a tale of success, sadness

Le'ts step into the way-back machine today for the saga of a local TV show that was both a big hit and marked by tragedy.

News 8 Etc., it was called — a fun and freewheeling morning show that debuted in 1970. Two of its three hosts would die tragically. The third just missed a similar fate.

I heard fond, bittersweet memories of the show when I visited recently with some of the old-time TV news anchors now appearing each morning on *The Texas Daily* on KTXD-TV (Channel 8).

Back in the day, NBC's *Today Show* was so dominant in the ratings that ABC didn't even bother to compete with a morning show. So local ABC affiliate WFAA-TV (Channel 8) decided to produce its own.

"Nothing quite like this had ever been done," said John Sparks, a veteran local TV news executive. He began



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as a floor director on the show.

Oh, there had certainly been local interview shows, but they were stiff affairs with very proper hosts like Julie Benell and Bobbie Wygant.

WFAA wanted something to fit the hang-loose vibe of the era. It began by hiring an affable but serious newsmen, Don Harris. A boyish young local reporter, Gene Thomas, was added. And then came the real wild card — a zany, song-and-dance gal named Suzie Humphreys.

She had zero journalism experience. She was a bank

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