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DALLAS COUNTY BRIEFS

Mediation services to be brought in-house

Commissioners voted Tuesday to bring a civil court mediation program in-house. The vote creates a county Dispute Resolution Center.

The county has contracted with a nonprofit for about 30 years to provide affordable mediation services to low-income people involved in lawsuits. But county officials said in March that Dispute Mediation Services was failing to get enough case referrals from judges to make the service cost-effective. And an oversight board the commissioners created last year issued a report critical of the organization's practices.

The county has paid the company \$250,000 a year for mediation services, using volunteer mediators. When the current contract with DMS ends in January, cases will be given to the county's new medi-

ation service. County officials estimate the change will save \$141,941 per year.

Kevin Krause

British start filming jail documentary

A British film crew working for the Discovery Channel began shooting footage inside the Dallas County jails Tuesday, sheriff's officials said.

Electric Sky Productions is filming a 3-D documentary called *Outsiders* inside the Lew Sterrett Justice Center. Sheriff's officials say it will document a "day in the life of the jail." Producers expect to need three days inside the jails to film.

The complex houses about 6,300 inmates and is the nation's seventh-largest. After a long spell of failures, the jails now meet state standards and have recently hosted delegations from other U.S. counties who wanted to see the improvements.

Last year, National Geographic filmed inside the jails for a series about female jail officers.

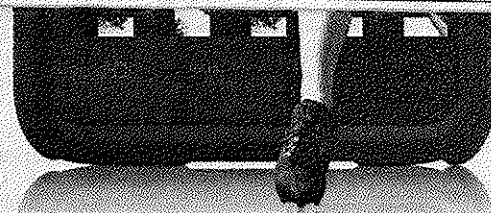
Kevin Krause

Pretrial release options to be studied

Dallas County commissioners on Tuesday approved an agreement with a local college professor to give him data to study the effectiveness of the different ways defendants are released from jail pending trial.

Robert G. Morris, a criminology professor at the University of Texas at Dallas, will spend the next year looking at detailed county data on types of pretrial release such as commercial bail bonds and cash bonds. Morris will use it to determine how each affects court appearance rates, public safety and criminal justice spending. County officials say the findings could result in policy changes.

Kevin Krause



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From The Dallas Morning News

Advocates for the poor complained that the Dallas Farmers Market did not accept the Lone Star food stamp card, and they circulated a petition urging City Council members to change the policy at the city-owned market.

WHAT'S NEW: The market will soon accept the cards. The Rev. Gerald Britt, vice president of public policy at the nonprofit CitySquare, says a new policy will be announced at the kickoff of a Hunger Summit at the market on Wednesday.

GOOD FOR THE POOR: Britt says the new policy will give the poor



Democrat narrow-ed being elected the expansion of rural electric cooperatives and agricultural tax exemptions.

He became a leader of the moderate Democrats in Austin, Mr. Voertman said. Mr. Paul Voertman of Jamison lost his bid to be House speaker to Rep. Byron Tunnell of Tyler.

Friend of 50 years. Jamison was born in