

**FOCUS ON YOU**

Today, the Metro section focuses on Carrollton.



**Making a difference:** Diana Franzetti has been the executive director of the non-profit agency Bea's Kids since September 2006. **3B**

More focus communities and the days they're highlighted:

- Northeast Tarrant**  
Thursday
- Irving**  
Friday
- Lewisville/  
Flower Mound**  
Sunday

**Have an idea** for a story about people or events in any of these areas? Send an e-mail to [vwigglesworth@dallasnews.com](mailto:vwigglesworth@dallasnews.com).

**INSIDE**

**Keller ISD head has more allies on board**

Last month's election resolved a political division on the Keller school board, seating a board majority that is supportive of Superintendent James Veitenheimer, who was recently given an extension on his contract and a raise. **7B**

**Girl, 14, fatally shot at teen party**

A late-night teen party with alcohol combined with at least one teen's handling of a gun led to the death of a 14-year-old Arlington girl, police said. **2B**

**Polling places**

Runoff elections are taking place across North Texas today. For a list of polling places, see Page **14B**.

**Mercedes Olivera**

Restaurant mogul Michael "Mico" Rodriguez is new to philanthropy, but as co-chairman of this year's scholarship fundraising campaign for the Greater Dallas Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, he's set a fundraising record that won't easily be matched. **12B**

**Gymnast's concert will help charity**

Olympic gymnast, gold medalist and newly minted singer Carly Patterson will perform her first concert this month to raise money for free dental services for children. **17B**

**What's happening to family values?**

On the eve of Father's Day, readers sound off on what makes a healthy family. **Community Opinions, 11B**

**RELIGION**



**Ark almighty**

The biblical story of a large boat and its animal rescue continues to resonate in popular culture. **18B**

## A neighborhood's dreams are scorched by fires, foreclosures

**But Lake Ridge officials say there's hope yet for upscale development**

By **KATHY A. GOOLSBY**  
 Staff Writer  
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Audrey and Stephen Riser thought they had found the perfect spot for their dream home back in 1994, when they bought a lot in Lake Ridge, an upscale community in far southwest Dallas County

spanning Cedar Hill and Grand Prairie.

But burned-out homes and a number of foreclosures along Rolling Oaks Ridge, where they built their 3,940-square-foot home in 1998, have soured the couple on their neighborhood.

"Lake Ridge has just ruined my dream," said Ms. Riser, who lives across the street from a home at 2519 Rolling Oaks Ridge that burned in January. Another home around the corner on Golden Pond also sustained fire damage several

months ago, and both houses are exposed to the weather.

The Rolling Oaks fire is still under investigation, but officials said the Golden Pond home was most likely a victim of arson.

"It's an eyesore, and I can't stand to look at it," Ms. Riser said. "Then we've got all these foreclosures. I know we've got at least four of those on this street, and who's going to buy a house with burned houses on the street?"

See **LAKE** Page 13B



JIM MAHONEY/Staff Photographer

**Audrey Riser lives across the street from one of a few burned homes in Lake Ridge in Cedar Hill. She says problems are rising, with empty and ruined homes discouraging buyers.**

"Being in the ICU or having some heart transplant operation over the lifetime costs less than this enzyme treatment."

Dr. Lewis Waber, the geneticist who diagnosed Ryan's disorder



Photos by JIM MAHONEY/Staff Photographer

**Ryan Dant coached campers at Hebron High School's summer baseball camp earlier this month. During his tenure as student manager of Hebron's baseball and football teams, he rarely missed a practice or game.**

## Teen who beat odds faces new dilemma

High cost of treatments could keep him out of workforce

By **JAY PARSONS**  
 Staff Writer  
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CARROLLTON — When Ryan Dant was 3½ years old, doctors told him and his parents that Ryan had a rare, incurable disorder that would likely kill him by his mid-teens, if not earlier.

His parents cried, and cried some more on the way home. Ryan took a nap.

In the years that followed, Ryan was told he wouldn't get a driver's license (he did), he wouldn't finish high school (he did), and even if by some miracle he did those things, he'd be in a wheelchair — maybe with a breathing tube attached. A ravaged body certainly wouldn't let him play varsity baseball. (He did.)



**Ryan Dant dreams of working for the Texas Rangers.**

**DigitalEXTRA**

Video: Ryan and Mark Dant talk about Ryan's life. [dallasnews.com/extra](http://dallasnews.com/extra)

Ryan graduated from Hebron High School last month, almost 16 years after doctors at Children's Medical Center Dallas gave the diagnosis of mucopolysaccharidosis — or MPS 1, an enzyme deficiency disorder that often leads to a painful death.

Soon, Ryan will face another goal he isn't supposed to reach — the work world.

He's physically able to work, but probably faces an insurance dilemma: work and go without the medicine he likely needs to survive, or not work and get Medicaid to cover \$450,000 in annual treatment costs.

"Ryan says he's going to get a job with

See **LIFESAVING** Page 8B

## Fired nurses fire back

**Mesquite: Hospital defends action as ICU patient ratio debated**

By **KIM BREEN**  
 Staff Writer  
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Three nurses who say they were fired from a Mesquite hospital after refusing what they believed was an unsafe patient load are trying to bring attention to what they consider dangerous understaffing.

Nurses Diana Sepeda, Nancy Friesen and Sandra Taylor said they were fired this month from Dallas Regional Medical Center — formerly the Medical Center of Mesquite. During a night shift in the hospital's ICU in May, each nurse refused to take on three patients because they did not think they could provide adequate care.

"I've never been fired before in 27 years," Ms. Taylor said. "But there comes a time when you've got to stand up for what's right."

"These hospitals are making profits on the backs of these patients."

Paula Reisdorfer, a spokes-

See **HOSPITAL** Page 15B

## Static for church, college

**Dallas: First Baptist says Criswell can't sell KCBI without approval**

By **SAM HODGES**  
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Leaders of First Baptist Church of Dallas have sent a hot letter to the president and trustees of Criswell College, protesting plans to sell Christian radio station KCBI-FM (90.9) without the church's approval.

Tuesday's letter, a copy of which was obtained by *The Dallas Morning News*, says "an attempt to circumvent, evade or avoid the voice of the [church] membership to speak on this significant issue is wrong, both morally and legally," and warns the matter could end up in court.

The college's trustees met Friday.

"The board took no action on a sale, but the matter is under study, review and prayer," Criswell College President Jerry Johnson said.

First Baptist Dallas founded Criswell College in 1970, naming

See **CRISWELL** Page 17B

## How about some enthusiasm for election day!



**JAMES RAGLAND**  
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When you wake up Sunday morning, and likely long before you go to bed tonight, Big D will have a reigning new city father.

Either Tom Leppert or Ed Oakley will become the 53rd mayor Dallas has had (elected or appointed) since the city was granted a town charter in 1856.

For what it's worth, that regal

roster now includes 48 men and four women — from the late Dr. Samuel Pryor, who first held the city's reins, to Mayor Laura Miller, who has 10 days left in the saddle.

The history is intriguing. But so, too, is the present. And by present I mean right now — election day! An exclamation mark may be a stretch because recent history strongly suggests that

Dallas voters aren't terribly excited about abandoning their flat-screen TVs and leather sofas to go cast a local ballot.

They'd rather have their hands around a frozen margarita, a golf club or the remote control.

But I was given fresh hope this week when early voting ended

See **MOST** Page 2B

# Lifesaving treatments carry a high price tag

Continued from Page 1B

the Texas Rangers, and I believe he will because everything else he said he would do, he's done," said his father, Mark Dant. "But we need to find a compassionate senator or congressman who will finish out the gift of dreams."

On April 13, 1988, Ryan was born weighing 8 pounds and healthy — or apparently healthy. It wouldn't be until September 1991 that doctors noticed Ryan's liver and spleen were enlarged, the joints in his fingers stiffened and his face coarsened.

A geneticist told Mark and Jeanne Dant that their son had Hurler-Scheie syndrome, a form of MPS 1. Only 40 infants in the U.S. are born with the disease annually.

Ryan's body doesn't produce an enzyme that breaks down certain sugar molecules in cells. Without the enzyme, the molecules build up, damaging joints and vital organs.

There was no cure and no good treatment. Ryan would probably endure excruciating pain until his body couldn't function anymore, killing him by his early teens.

"I remember walking down the hallway and Jeanne asking, 'What are we going to do?'" said Mark Dant, a lieutenant in the Carrollton Police Department. "We were crying. It was the end. We spent about a year crying."

After a year went by, the Dants had a bake sale to raise money for MPS research. They raised \$342. The Dants' Ryan Foundation for MPS Children has raised \$3 million since then, mostly through sports tournament fundraisers and auctions.

As Ryan approached age 10, his headaches became so severe that he'd vomit and pass out. He began to limp, and his joints were so stiff he couldn't throw a baseball.

"He knew what was in his future, but he didn't complain — ever," Lt. Dant said.

With funding from the Ryan Foundation, a California doctor started a trial enzyme replacement treatment in 1997. It wasn't a cure, but weekly intravenous treatments would prevent further damage.

On Feb. 13, 1998, Ryan — with a baseball tucked in his arm — got the first trial infusion. Ryan's headaches went away and his body began growing again.

"He could throw a baseball again, and that was his big dream," Lt. Dant said.

The treatments didn't reverse 10 years of damage to Ryan's body.

His hands are short with stubby, curved fingers. He's grown to 5 feet, 5 inches.

His body wasn't strong enough for him to play baseball regularly, so he became the student manager for Hebron High's football and baseball teams. He rarely missed a practice or game.

Hebron baseball coach Steve Stone said: "He definitely showed us what tough means, and he's one of the toughest kids I've ever known."

"Sometimes we feel sorry for ourselves — 'Oh, it's a tough day and it's hot out,'" Mr. Stone said. "And he's the first one out there, saying, 'What do you need to me to do, Coach? Want me to get the bases out? Want me to rake the mound?'"

But football coach Brian Brazil said Ryan wasn't a token inspirational story — he was "one of the guys." Ryan wasn't untouchable or immune to teasing — and that was a good thing, Mr. Brazil said.

"They didn't treat me any different, and that's what I wanted," Ryan said.

Ryan got in for one play last year in football and batted twice for the baseball team. During a baseball game in Houston his junior year, with his team down 14 runs, Ryan fouled off six pitches before hitting a fly ball into the outfield to score a run.

"The team met me on the plate and it seemed like we won the World Series," said Ryan, who finished his baseball career with a single and a sacrifice fly.

Ryan plans to attend Brookhaven College for two years and transfer to the University of Louisville, his favorite school. Ryan then hopes to land a job with the Texas Rangers and work his way up to clubhouse manager.

"What better job than working with the players and coaches in the locker room before and after games?" Ryan said.

For most kids, getting hired by the Rangers would be hard enough. But Ryan has a bigger problem. Under most insurance plans, Ryan would either quickly max out his lifetime coverage or face unaffordable premiums.

Ryan's treatments require four-hour IV infusions every week. The enzyme medication costs almost \$450,000 a year — "every year, forever," Lt. Dant said.

"This IV enzyme treatment for these groups of disorders is the highest-cost treatment of anything," said Dr. Lewis Waber, the geneticist who diagnosed Ryan's disorder. "Being in the ICU or having some heart transplant opera-

tion over the lifetime costs less than this enzyme treatment."

Lt. Dant said he doesn't blame the pharmaceutical companies. The medicine is so expensive because so few people need it.

Ryan's coverage under his parents' plan is set to expire next year when he reaches his lifetime cap. At that point, federal Medicaid could pay the bills — but only if Ryan's annual income is at the fed-

eral poverty level, \$10,210.

Ted Hughes, a spokesman for the Texas Health and Human Services Commission, said alternative programs are geared toward people with disabilities that prevent them from working.

"If a person is able-bodied and ready to make \$30,000 a year, they're probably not going to be able to qualify for most of these programs," Mr. Hughes said.

Lt. Dant wants state and federal governments to waive the maximum income requirement for people like Ryan who have rare diseases.

"It costs so much to keep these kids alive, but it's worth it," Lt. Dant said. "They can contribute to society, but not if the government won't let them. We need a congressman to take up the battle."

As his dad pleads for help, Ryan

shows no hint of the worry audible in his father's voice. He looks more like the 3-year-old who fell asleep as his parents cried over his diagnosis that day in September 1991.

"I still have goals for the future, but I don't look toward the problem," Ryan said. "I live by a code. Live life to the fullest. Who knows if I'll be here until tomorrow or the next day, so I'll live life to the fullest today."

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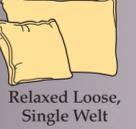

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