

Best spin for this story is the truth

The last thing that anybody needs right now out of Ozaukee County government is spin and behind-covering. But don't count it out just yet.

The Ozaukee County Board's Administrative Committee would never admit to hiring a spin doctor when it decided Friday to spend up to \$12,000 for a public relations firm to help deal with the public and media spotlight of an E. coli outbreak.

By Friday, health officials had confirmed 11 cases of the disease and had interviewed 141 other people with symptoms of the illness — all among visitors to the Ozaukee County Fair early this month. Two children are said to be suffering from kidney failure.

Dozens and dozens of parents are worried sick. Nobody needs to be made dizzy from spin.

As one parent told the Journal Sentinel after his child became sick with E. coli at Bethesda School in Waukesha County last fall, lack of information and a lack of contact with other affected families whose identities were kept secret only made his feeling of helplessness worse.

At the Ozaukee County Administrative Committee on Friday, Board Chairman John Kuba

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Cause of fatal encephalitis unknown

By **KAWANZA GRIFFIN, VIKKI ORTIZ and BETH KORMANIK** of the Journal Sentinel staff.

Preliminary tests indicated Friday that the 17-year-old Fox Point girl who died of encephalitis this week may not have gotten the disease from a mosquito, however health officials cautioned that it's too soon to be certain.

"There is no evidence at this time that this case is mosquito related," said Gina Egan, director of Vilas County Health Department, which oversees the area where Brittney Gigl attended a camp shortly before her death Wednesday.

But epidemiologist Jeffrey Da-

Teen may not have died from mosquito, tests show

vis, the state's chief medical officer, said the results are still inconclusive.

"In no way does it rule out anything," said Davis, of the Division of Health and Family Services. "You really need the full spectrum of tests before making any decisions."

A final report on the cause of Gigl's death will not be available for at least a week, leaving friends and family — many of whom attended the girl's funeral Friday — grieving without answers.

"It's so rare an occurrence that

who knows what caused it? It could be a mosquito bite, it could be that we'll never know," said Jay Roth, executive director of the Jewish Community Center, which runs Camp Interlaken near Eagle River, the camp Gigl attended.

Encephalitis, or inflammation of the brain, is a rare viral infection that affects about 1,500 people each year in the United States, according to the National Institutes of Health.

People contract encephalitis from mosquito-borne viruses about 40% of the time, said Linda

Glaser, a veterinarian at the state Division of Public Health. The rest of the cases usually develop after a variety of illnesses, including chickenpox, measles and rabies.

Other types of encephalitis can be spread by human-to-human contact, such as through the herpes virus or contact with contaminated fecal material.

While officials still don't know if mosquitoes played a role in Gigl's encephalitis, the insect may be responsible for the deaths of horses in northern Wisconsin. On Friday, the state's Di-

vision of Animal Health reported 10 more horses have died from suspected Eastern equine encephalitis, making a total of 28 horses likely killed by the mosquito-borne virus this year.

All 31 cases have been found in a triangle that falls in Rusk, Barron and Chippewa counties.

The state usually sees a couple of cases every few years, according to Donna Gilson, spokeswoman for the division.

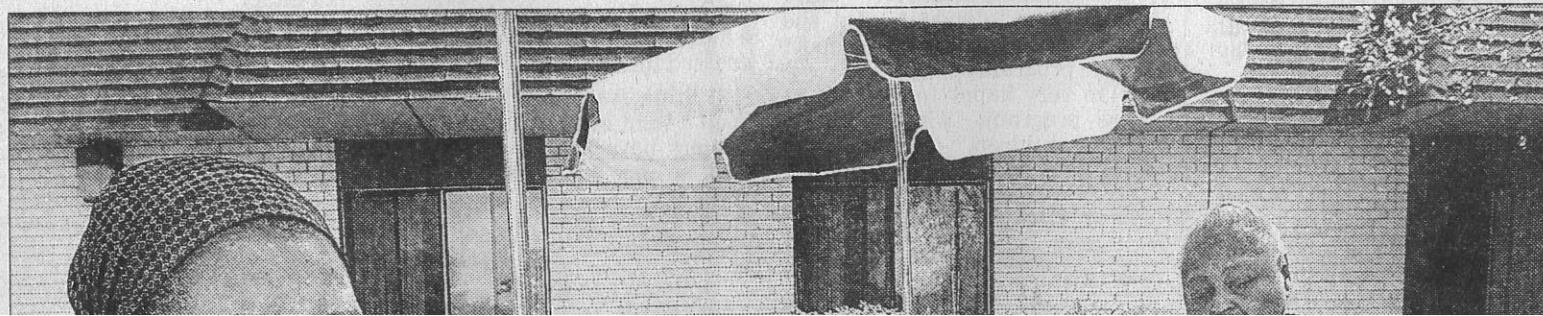
Still, Glaser said the odds of the two encephalitis scenarios being related are small.

"At this time, there is no reason to believe that," she said.

Please see **ENCEPHALITIS, 4B**

"I don't know if I can handle it, but I'm ready to leave."

Mary Collins, a longtime Plymouth Manor resident



Mequon prevails in lane battle

