

Homeless girl recovers from deadly E. Coli infection

SEATTLE (AP) — Brandi Lopez's battle against a serious E. coli infection left the homeless, six-year-old girl in the hospital. Ironically, her recovery might put her and her family back on the street.

When Lopez fully recovers from kidney failure and heart problems related to the infection, she'll have to leave Children's Hospital and Medical Center. It also will mean an end to temporary shelter for her father and brother, who have been staying at Kid's House, which provides housing for families of sick children.

"I don't know where we're going to go," said her father Adam Lopez, a former boxer and truck driver. "It's just me and my babies."

Brandi was stricken with E. coli infection while the single-parent family was staying at the Lighthouse Mission in Bellingham, where the family went for refuge after moving to Washington from Texas.

Health officials don't know where she contracted the bacteria, which is found in cattle feces and intestines and can infect humans through tainted, undercooked meat.

Brandi and her five-year-old brother, Teddy, are among five children stricken by E. coli bacteria in Whatcom County last month. The cases appear to be unrelated, said Paul Chudek, a county Health Department supervisor.

Three of the children were hospitalized. Teddy was released after a few days of treatment and a six-year-old Lynden girl remains at Children's Hospital in satisfactory condition.

Brandi was treated for a time at Children's Hospital in Seattle and then transferred Wednesday to St. Joseph's Hospital in Bellingham for monitoring until she is ready for discharge, Children's Hospital spokesman Dean Forbes said Friday.

It is not clear when she will be released, said nursing supervisor Sylvia Smith in Bellingham.

And it is unclear where she will go when she is ready for discharge.

"My little girl can't go back on the streets," Lopez said. "She won't be able to handle it."

Social workers at the hospital were trying to find housing for the family, and Forbes said Al Archer, director of Lighthouse Mission Industries, "has kind of taken it upon himself to find them housing."

"Anytime we have a man and children we have a crisis," said Archer said earlier this week.

Lighthouse Mission normally doesn't accept children, but took the family in because they had nowhere else to go, Archer said.

"It's devastating that this happened," Archer said of Brandi's illness.

Lopez says this is the first time the family has been homeless — in the past, they made ends meet living on welfare.

They traveled to Bellingham by bus and at first stayed in motels while Lopez sought help.

But he found he and his kids were at the end of long lists at some agencies, while others had no services for families with children — especially those headed by a male single parent.

Lopez said he believes contaminated food or unsanitary bathrooms at the mission caused the infection.

Three children died during an E. coli outbreak in January that sickened about 500 state residents. Those cases were traced to the Jack in the Box fast-food chain, which recently set up a trust fund for many of the victims.

Small town copes with youths' deaths

TONASKET, Wash. (AP) — Chad Jackson and Amanda "Mandy" Brown were typical kids, but when they killed themselves in separate shootings within a week, this tiny community turned to uncharacteristic efforts to save the survivors.

Their suicides were the first in memory by anyone so young in this Okanogan Highlands fruit orchards and ranch town of 1,100 in north central Washington.

"It's a delicate thing in a small community," said the Rev. Randy Middleton, pastor of the Tonasket Community Church who officiated at Miss Brown's funeral.

Jackson, 20, was found clutching a photograph of Brown after he shot himself in the head and died atop her freshly dug grave at the town's cemetery overlooking the placid Okanogan River.

Among his personal effects, police found love letters from Brown, 15, and an alarm clock, found with Jackson, that was set for the exact time of her death. She died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head at her home Nov. 15.

Jackson shot himself Nov. 21 with a .357 magnum handgun his worried father had locked in a shed after Miss Brown's death, Okanogan County Sheriff Jim Weed said.

His funeral was Saturday in the Tonasket Cemetery, about 100 feet from where Miss Brown was buried.

Described by her family as being quick-witted and outgoing, Brown left a note apologizing to her parents and proclaiming her love for Jackson, but gave no specific reason for taking her own life.

"They had talked about breaking up," Weed said. "That apparently precipitated the Brown death. The Jackson boy, we don't know for sure, but it would follow he was feeling some vicarious responsibility for her death."

Jackson had landed a job at a WalMart store that recently opened at Okanogan, about 25 miles south of here. He graduated from Tonasket High in 1991, and had begun to expand his circle of friends after going to work at the discount store.

Miss Brown, a freshman, was active in sports and liked to draw and read, relatives said.

While relatives and friends of the two youths struggled to cope with their deaths, teams of mental health workers, clergymen and school counselors began round-the-clock efforts to make sure the town would lose no more of its youth prematurely.

Groups of mental health workers from the coun-

ty's mental health agencies joined the high school's counselors to answer questions and talk to friends of Brown and Jackson who were hit hard by the deaths.

Letters with information on recognizing suicide warning signals were sent to parents of junior high and high school students.

Tonasket High School Principal Gary Jorgenson called in substitute teachers on the Monday after Jackson's death so that students could have additional adults to talk to.

Senior high students formed peer groups, under the guidance of counselors, to talk to students who felt uncomfortable sharing their feelings with adults.

"People are blaming themselves. That puts people at risk and that's one of our tasks now, helping people understand that no one's to blame," said Ron Wise of Okanogan County Counseling Services, a community mental health agency in Okanogan.

"It's very unfortunate, very tragic," said Mike Mahlman, another mental health counselor. "The whole community is hurting right now. What we're focusing on is not having any more of it."

"Our hope and prayers are that this is going to stop," Mahlman told a group of about four dozen parents who met at the high school Tuesday night. "We had two young kids in a love relationship that went sour. ... The last thing we want to do is place blame. We had two young people who made an unfortunate choice."

School district officials drew up lists of students considered to be potential suicide risks, who they will be watched closely in the coming weeks and months.

"It appears things are slowly getting back to normal," Jorgenson said before students left for Thanksgiving break. "That's what we want to do, to get things back to normal again as soon as possible."

Jorgenson said he feared news stories about the deaths might cause some students to think about suicide as a way of getting attention.

"The less we romanticize and sensationalize it, the better off we are," Mahlman said.

"The bad part about living in a small town is that everybody knows what everybody else is doing," Mahlman said. "But that's also the precious part about being a small community; there's a lot of caring."

Do your part
to make the world
a better place.



Help save an
endangered species.

The Party Animal

Guido's

Doing our part to help better the
world for everybody.

• Monday Country • Tuesday Mania
• Wednesday Disco • Thursday Mug Night

journalism
writing
drama
science
math
gift books
scholarship
study guide
textbooks
reference
business
computers
business

CASH FOR BOOKS

monday-friday 9:00-5:00 saturday 9:00-2:00
two locations

QUALITY USED TEXTBOOKS

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON
LANE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
LINFIELD COLLEGE

LAYAWAY NEXT TERM'S BOOKS

no money down
bring your author, title, and edition
find your books - pay by January 8, 1994

Smith Family Bookstore

textbook and general bookstore
(across from Sacred Heart Hospital - near the U of O campus)
768 East 13th Avenue 345-1651

general books
(across from the post office near the Hilton/Hult Center)
525 Willamette Street 343-4717

textbooks may be sold at either store
monday-friday 9:00-5:00 saturday 9:00-2:00