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State briefs: July 25

July 25, 2004

Judge awards family \$75,000 in damages CHATTANOOGA - A judge has awarded the family of a man who died while at Moccasin Bend Mental Health Institute \$75,000, saying the hospital ignored regulations in their treatment of the patient.

The lawsuit filed against the state of Tennessee by Donald Azbill's family argued that his treatment at the state-run hospital from April 19, 1996, until his March 20, 1999, death was not appropriate.

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In his ruling, Hamilton County Circuit Judge Neil Thomas noted that Azbill did not improve during his stay and that he was damaged by being placed in restraints an "excessive" number of times.

Knoxville woman dies in Sevier wreck A Knoxville woman was killed Saturday morning in a two-car accident in Sevier County, authorities said.

The accident occurred at about 10:30 a.m. when Nancy Weaver pulled her 1991 Sentra onto the northbound lane U.S. Highway 441, according to the Tennessee Highway Patrol.

Weaver, 63, drove into the path of a southbound 1995 Pontiac driven by Donald Bonser, the highway patrol said.

Bonser, 63, and his passenger, Judith Bonser, 67, were both uninjured. The accident occurred near the intersection of McMahan Road.

No charges are pending in connection with the accident.

Mothers file \$18M lawsuits against special ed teacher JACKSON, Tenn. - Two mothers have filed lawsuits totaling \$18 million against a former Henderson County special education teacher, alleging misconduct and abuse of their children.

Diana Ray Moore filed a \$9 million lawsuit July 12 against Susan Wallace, a former special education teacher at Beaver Elementary School, on behalf of her 6-year-old son, who has Rubinstein-Taybi Syndrome, a condition associated with mental retardation.

Three days later, Lisa Mooney filed essentially the same suit on behalf of her 4-year-old son, who has a speech impediment that severely limits his ability to communicate.

The Henderson County Board of Education is named in both filings.

E. coli diagnosed again, but two cases ruled unrelated JOHNSON CITY, Tenn. - Officials here have confirmed a second case of the same strain of E. coli bacteria responsible for the death of a 6-year-old boy last month.

A 63-year-old Johnson City woman was admitted to Johnson City Medical Center on

July 1 and diagnosed with Escherichia coli 0157:H7, a potent strain of E. coli that can prove lethal in sensitive populations, according to David Kirschke, medical epidemiologist with the Northeast Tennessee Regional Health Department.

Six-year-old Jacob Luis Francisco died in June at Johnson City Medical Center as a result of hemolytic uremic syndrome, a complication of 0157:H7.

But Kirschke said the two cases aren't related.

Georgia looking at interstate to Tennessee ATLANTA - Lawmakers from Georgia want the U.S. Department of Transportation to look into building two new interstate highways that would cross the state, one from Savannah to Knoxville and another from Augusta through Macon and Columbus. Six members of the House delegation from Georgia introduced legislation authored by Rep. Max Burns, while companion legislation was introduced by Sens. Zell Miller and Saxby Chambliss.

The proposed Interstate 3 along the Savannah River could follow the largely completed Savannah River Parkway, while the proposed I-14 likely would follow the Fall Line Freeway.

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