

# HILLSDALE DAILY NEWS

## **Festival attendees contract salmonella**

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Hillsdale, Mich.

COLDWATER — “We may never be able to say what caused this food borne-illness,” Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Counties Community Health Agency (CHA) environmental health director Rebecca Burns said after an outbreak of salmonella at the recent Reading Summer Festival Days was confirmed. The festival lasted from July 31 to Aug. 3, but the outbreak came from one event.

“There were eight laboratory-confirmed cases and 33 probable cases” among the more than 250 people who attended an alumni reunion dinner Aug. 2, CHA health officer Steve Todd said. After being notified of the illnesses on Aug. 11 Todd put his department to work to contact attendees. The community invited back all those who had attended Reading schools from across the state and country. Two members of the class of 1942 were present.

About 150 were found and interviewed by phone. “Several of the individuals either had been seen by a doctors or were hospitalized,” Todd said. Many were in their 70s.

Because notification came nine days after the event there was little food to test. “The only samples were frozen (leftovers) and in limited amounts,” Burns explained. The interviews narrowed the potential suspect foods to two, but “we cannot determine the cause outright,” Burns said. Todd also noted no secondary cases were found. Because a person remains infected for a week without treatment, these secondary cases can occur with this type of contagious bacteria.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reports Salmonella is estimated to cause about 1.2 million illnesses each year in the United States, with about 23,000 hospitalizations and 450 deaths.

Most persons infected with salmonella develop diarrhea, fever and abdominal cramps 12 to 72 hours after infection.

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