

Gun safety with youth

Business



Since the summer, I've been interested in doing a personal project on guns. It's been a childhood obsession that I was very excited to finally fulfill.

However I soon realized after doing my first gun class during the summer, that guns weren't toys like in the movies. Guns are dangerous and a real threat to people. So I decided to explore gun safety for people my age.

Initially, I was shocked by doing some simple research how many people are actually involved in gun related accidents every year. What's even more disturbing is how little it's advertised on TV and on social media.

I see ads all the time against drugs and alcohol but never for gun safety.

There are many Public Service Announcements or PSA's such as the Georgia Meth Projects' ads, which are these short, and graphic mini-ads that are common on TV in Georgia. When I remarked this to my friends, I noticed that the common reaction or response was that gun inflicted injuries are bi-products of things like drugs and alcohol. This makes sense, because you'd think that drugs and alcohol would be the only reason but that simply isn't true. My hometown, Atlanta isn't the most traditional southern city however it's still in the South.

The Southeast of the United States has the most problems with this issue even in cities like Atlanta. Whether it's an urban setting or country setting the risk is always there. To learn more about this I decided to take a gun safety course in order to learn some more information and talk to some people who were heavily involved in Georgia's gun community. I took a class at Wild West Traders Gun Range in Marietta Georgia. Anyone can take the class but if you're under 18 you need to attend with a legal guardian.

If anyone is thinking about getting involved with guns or owning one, a safety class is recommended. I took mine with a man named Gunny Herren, who's in his sixties and has been carrying a gun with him since the age of 18. Gunny told us of his military background as well as how he grew up in a gun-toting family. I had already taken a gun class over the summer to get introduced, but Gunny knew everything about every type of gun and every tidbit there was. During the class, a man behind us asked Gunny about gun safety with young kids.

The man said he had two young nieces who came over to visit every weekend and ran around the house being little menaces and exploring everything. Gunny went on to explain that he had three daughters as well who were now adults but had the same concerns. The man continued his question by saying that he wanted some sort of bed-side box that would be kid-proof but accessible enough to where he could pull it out in a few seconds. I thought this was interesting because I had read several online articles about this. One was from February of last year about a 4-year-old boy from Houston who found his Dad's gun and shot himself in the Stomach, later dying.

Another was a story from October 2013 about a 2 year-old who found her dad's gun under the couch and killed herself. The Dad had thought that she wasn't smart or curious enough to look under there. The common thought with parents, is that if they tell their children especially boys, to not touch their guns that they'll respect the rule and never even consider it. So how does this relate to teenagers? Surely teens aren't as dumb as small children, right? Well, they may be older and more intelligent, but they're also more

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hormonal, they crave independence, and they think they're more mature than they really are. Teenage boys in particular think they can be invisible, I know this because I am one.

There are numerous stories in the news and online about teens showing off their parents guns to their friends, taking it out to the woods to test, or just to fiddle with it. You can't tell a Teenager to not ever touch a gun because a lot of the time they won't listen. If you specifically tell them not to, and they then figure out how to find a gun in the house, it becomes like the forbidden fruit for them and the temptation can easily win. Teens think that they have it under control but like Gunny mentioned during the class and what I noticed when I started holding the guns at the range, is that the moment you grasp a loaded gun, your hands get sweaty, you get nervous, and your mind spins a bit. People slip, accidents happen and Teens are often on the receiving end of that.

I conducted a recent phone interview with a specialist in the medical field who has been very active in opposing the NRA whose name I can't disclose. He answered all my questions in detail. When I asked if there was an age group most affected, he said Teenagers without missing a beat. He then quickly added that Teenage boys were even more at risk because of Testosterone. Testosterone has been the cause for so many teenage boy deaths.

To summarize what the specialist said, Testosterone clouds judgments and spikes heavily when Teens are doing something they shouldn't or doing something in front of their friends or girls. I continued to talk to the specialist

and my initial thoughts were sadly confirmed. He said that the Southeast of the United States was by far the most affected area. The Urban areas such as Atlanta have gang activity and the Country harbors America's conservatives whom carry guns or keep them in their house and use them in their daily life such as hunting. Nevertheless the entire U.

S is under this danger. In 2004, 38% of all households in the United States had guns, meaning that theoretically if a teen a slept over at three of their friends' houses' in a week, at least one would have a gun somewhere in it. This causes considerable consequences: from 1977 to 1983 in California, 88 kids under the age of 14 were killed as a result of unintentional gun deaths caused by themselves or other children. Teens and kids need to know the following: You will most likely be in many houses with a firearm in it and probably have been already have been. Guns aren't these innocent, light toys, they're powerful weapons that have caused uncountable deaths through out mankind.

So be careful, be aware and realize that the threat is bigger than what you think.