

"Dart Wars" go too far?

When do "dart wars "and other teen pranks cross the line from "fun" to risky behavior to criminal?

Public comments as of October 27, 2011, 1:59 AM

All Participants



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Introduction

Recent news stories have highlighted communities dealing with local teens engaging in pranks that resulted in criminal charges. With the end of each school year, local law enforcement is faced with managing the angst of teens looking forward to summer and celebrating the end of school.

In addition, teens frequently engage in activities that they view as entertainment, while others in the community see the "fun" ranging from an annoyance to a threat to the safety of the community.

So, when do these pranks go too far?

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As of October 27, 2011, 1:59 AM, this forum had:

Attendees:	122
Participants:	11
Minutes of Public Comment:	33

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Lynne Streeter in Montgomery

July 14, 2010, 9:08 PM

As parents of a somewhat "open" home, I have been slightly amazed that Montgomery permits Dart Wars; however, I also know that the young people who participate in it look forward to it very much. My concern is not that young people charge and creep through our yard, it's the driving and playing that feels overly dangerous.

Every summer we vacation in New Hampshire. On the property of the lodge where we stay there is a skateboard park where the young people (mostly male) board from 7 am to 11 pm. They are "forbidden" to shout and, almost exclusively adhere to this rule, speaking to one another in low tones. We must acclimate ourselves to the repetitive sounds of hours of boarding every day; however, where would these young people be and what would they be doing otherwise? Some are very skilled. I think what I'm trying to say is while boarding is dangerous, the resort has provided specific space with strict rules within it in efforts to minimize their and the young peoples' risks.

Dart Wars, I feel, is similar. It's organized play which allows young people to burn off spring-time steam. I think they should be allowed to play (with, perhaps, more community awareness on the parts of both players and community--for example, that the community knows that this is not a school-endorsed competition) and some rules should be established about driving while playing (if not already). I think the question would be, what will happen to the activity when something "bad" happens--physical harm, really inappropriate behavior (we are aware of the underwear rule), property damage? After all, in most communities, it is the actions of very few individuals making really harmful choices who wreck whatever the place/activity is for other participants who mostly play safely and fairly.

We're aware that to permit activities like Dart Wars is an extremely difficult decision to make. Lynne (and Bill) Streeter

steve heidel in Montgomery

July 2, 2010, 7:02 PM

Dart Wars is harmless. I agree with some of the statements that point out that stupid kids do stupid things. There is nothing about dart wars that either should forgive or encourages that. We are blessed with some of the best behaved kids in the country so everyone should back off and let them have some fun. If anything the example given concerning the incident with the police is an example of the kind of over reaction that happens all too often these days and in the end calmer heads obviously prevailed.

Doug Hughes in Montgomery

June 30, 2010, 2:21 PM

Actually, I've never heard of "dart wars"; apparently the Sycamore Hi "wars" have not (yet) invaded my community. However, to answer the question, I would suggest; "pranks" that involve/inconvenience persons that do not want to be involved (either during the execution or the correction) - become risky. "Pranks" that require correction/reconstruction become criminal.

Name not shown in Cincinnati

June 30, 2010, 12:46 PM

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I haven't experienced or heard of any unforeseen or negative consequences of "dart wars." Even big kids need to play.

Dave Dannenberg in Cincinnati

June 28, 2010, 3:02 PM

To remain a vibrant community with storied traditions, it is important to keep intact these traditions. Sure, some young people may be irresponsible, but a little culture is worth the risk. High schoolers are exceeding the speed limit due to Dart Wars? Well, they (and you!) are exceeding the speed limit routinely without any stake in Dart Wars, so let's keep things in perspective. Dart Wars doesn't make kids do stupid things. Stupid kids will always do stupid things, and they should take responsibility for their actions, be held accountable, and learn from their mistakes. I think that the most salient issue here regards police involvement in Dart Wars. I doubt any teenager intends to scare residents with their dart guns or disobey the speed limit, and the fact that a portion of the money raised for the Dart Wars prize goes to charity is further evidence of the good nature of the Sycamore High School students involved. The police should only be involved when a malicious crime is committed, and I see no malice in a few teenagers running around with dart guns.

Gary Gross in Montgomery

June 28, 2010, 2:28 PM

The game is an attempt at some fun, as some call it a rite of passage which marks the end of another school year. The problem comes when one individual or a group of individuals creates a safety issue for themselves or others.

The uses of rubber dart guns are not dangerous with proper usage. The safety comes when they expand their games to include our town and the surrounding areas. They introduce rushed driving of their cars on our streets when they move from one location to another location, they are trespassing on private property when they are running between the houses, and they are producing larger than normal groups of people gathering around our community. Their activities often draw in non-participants to their games.

I kicked a group of warriors out of my back yard after I noticed they had left a gate open, which created a safety issues for my dogs. I have seen them racing down our streets exceeding the speed limits. I have seen groups of kids standing in the street blocking traffic.

It is all fun and games until there is a serious accident and then the damage becomes someone's liabilities. I suggest the schools or organizers look for an alternate location that allows their games to continue without impacting the rest of the community.

Name not shown in Cincinnati

June 28, 2010, 12:39 PM

Please explain what "dart wars" is. Do I need to take any precautions? I have never heard of it. How did I miss this since I have children who attended Sycamore High, with the youngest graduating just last year.

Name not shown in Cincinnati

June 28, 2010, 12:13 PM

Our children are not in Sycamore schools, so we were initially unaware of this rite of passage. One of us was "ambushed" at our back door when taking the dog out - the dog went beserk and could have retaliated protectively had he not been leashed. The boys ran off very quickly once the dog started barking. Not knowing of the ritual, we called the police thinking these were prowlers, but were

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informed it was just a prank. Moral of the story, we need to publicize this event so all residents are aware.

Name not shown in Montgomery

June 28, 2010, 12:06 PM

An interesting backgrounder on Dart Wars on Wikibin, at <http://wikibin.org/articles/dart-wars.html> that even highlights Blue Ash and Sycamore HS, though somewhat dated:

"Police in Blue Ash, Ohio, near one of the largest organized games of Dart Wars at Sycamore High School have taken one of the most extreme no tolerance policies against Dart Wars. In 2004, Blue Ash police officers pulled guns on several Dart Wars players and also attempted to pin criminal charges on five teens; Laura Belles, Chelsea Nixon, Andrew Shaver, Cory Mangus, and Jeff Ellingham. (charges later dropped)"

Therein lies one of the many problems, adult sized individuals lurking around a neighborhood, pre-dawn, seeming with guns.

Current Sycamore HS Dartwars Info is at <http://www.dartwars.moonfruit.com/#> and <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=313319190304>.

My opinion, it is risky!

Gerald (Gerry) Houchell in Cincinnati

June 28, 2010, 9:25 AM

On the assumption that darts are "pointy objects" that might take out an eye, their use in games suggests Darwin's Law at work. Sports such as swimming, baseball, softball, soccer, flag football and full contact football with proper training and equipment, offer an outlet for pint up energy that we all experienced in our youth.

Like the mountains and woods? Try spending a day in Montgomery's parks, or plan a weeklong backpacking trek (proper training and equipment are required). Kentucky's Red River Gorge, and Ohio's eastern Appalachia each have an abundance of camping and backing packing trails.

Has the city of Montgomery considered working with sports and camping equipment outlets and companies to train and equip our youngsters to become physically fit and confident, assets that they will carry throughout their lives? I suspect there is a good business opportunity here. Gerry Houchell

Mike Miles in Montgomery

June 27, 2010, 12:47 PM

as long as laws are not broken and property (public and private) destroyed then let them have their fun. Maybe I don't have enough of the back story, but dart wars seems pretty harmless.
