Local boy, 14, killed by cousin in gun accident

CORTEZ JOURNAL ONLINE

Navigate Site

July 3, 2001

By Jim Mimiaga
Journal Staff Writer

A 14-year-old Cortez boy died Friday evening after being accidentally shot by his 18-year-old cousin, according to police.

Kenneth Loren Gapp was killed around 6:30 p.m. by a single gunshot wound to the chest from a 9 mm handgun wielded by his cousin, Justin Dean Gapp, according to Cortez Police Chief Roy Lane.

The victim was pronounced dead upon arrival to Southwest Memorial Hospital a short time later.

The two cousins were playing with the loaded gun in the front yard of their residence on South Beech Street in Cortez when it discharged. The gun is registered to Justin Gapp, who reportedly purchased it from a private individual, Lane said.

"They were out in the front yard screwing around with it," Lane said. "We do not know if it was pointed or what, but it was a very stupid thing to do."

The case is being investigated and will be turned over to the district attorney's office, which will determine whether charges should be filed, Lane said.

Lane said that alcohol was not a factor in the shooting. The death was not intentional, he added.

District Attorney Joe Olt said Monday that criminal charges are a strong possibility, but he is awaiting the results of the investigation before deciding.

"It depends on the details of the investigation, but we're almost positive there will be charges," Olt said.

Gapp could be charged with reckless manslaughter or criminally negligent homicide, Olt said.

Justin Gapp's parents were inside the house, along with another teenage boy, when the incident occurred, police said. Kenneth Gapp was living at his cousin's home.

"It is very emotional, especially when such a young person is involved," Lane said of the 911 call and police follow-up.