

*In Memory of Aaron B. Xue
(1994-2009)*



Support Aaron's Law

**Safe Firearm Storage and
Protection of Vermont Children from
Firearm Mortality**

Citizens for Safer Vermont Children

To educate Vermonters on the necessity of passing Aaron's Law to prevent children from accessing firearms

www.Citizens4SaferVTchildren.org

**Aaron Would Have Been With Us
Today If The Gun Owner Had
Securely Stored The Guns At Home
inaccessible**

♥♥♥

**Aaron's Law Will Save Lives Like
Aaron And Many Other Vermont
Children.**

♥♥♥

**Let Us Take A Stand To Make VT A
Safer Place For Our Children.**

♥♥♥

**Together We Can Make A
Difference!**



HOW CAN YOU HELP?

**Be a Proud Citizen for Safer Vermont
Children**

Sign up to support Aaron's Law at
www.AaronBingXue.org/Citizens4SaferVTchildren

Let Your Voice Be Heard
Urge your district legislators to vote for
Aaron's Law in 2011

**Pass This Brochure To Another
Vermonters**

What Is Aaron's Law?

On February 12th, 2010, the Vermont House introduced a bill H.737: An act relating to negligent storage of a firearm, as a result of the tragic death of Aaron Bing Xue, a vibrant and warm-hearted 15 year old Vermont boy, on April 17, 2009.

This bill (or Aaron's Law, in memory of Aaron) is similar to CAP laws (Child Access Prevention from firearms) that currently exist in 28 states. It requires gun owners to securely store firearms at home when children are around, and proposes to make it a crime for a gun owner to negligently leave a firearm accessible to a child.

Aaron's Law is about safe gun storage, about common sense, about protecting children, and about **public health**. It is **not** in conflict with the Second Amendment. You can read the full text of the bill at:

<http://www.leg.state.vt.us/docs/2010/Bills/Intro/H-737.pdf>.

What Happed To Aaron?

Aaron Xue was a freshman at Essex High School in Vermont. He was an honor-roll student, a cellist in the Vermont Youth Philharmonia, and a champion of many boys's and men's Tennis Tournaments. He was generous, affectionate, loyal, and friendly to everyone he knew.

Among Aaron's friends was a 15-year-old youth, who repeatedly coerced Aaron a few weeks before his death. This youth spread rumors and bad-mouthed Aaron at school, and then pressured Aaron to do things for him, or else, including a gun-related plan for 4/20, the 10th anniversary of

Columbine High School Massacre. On April 17, 2009, three days before 4/20, this youth sneaked two handguns and a package of ammo out of his house, showed them off to others, and left them unsecured in an open area near Aaron's home.

Aaron was deeply distressed and frightened by all of this. He lost sleep and appetite, and became noticeably nervous when around this youth. He wanted to foil the plan, but he was afraid of being resented, retaliated, and further coerced by this youth. He made several attempts in his way: he tried to be extra nice to this youth by buying him dinner, and tried to purposely get caught at a grocery store in an attempt to get the attention of the police and deter this youth. Finally, seeing no signs of backing off from this youth, Aaron went to remove the handguns left in the woods by himself, and at a moment of deep agony and fear, he ended his own life with one.

Aaron's tragic death is the direct result of peer pressure and bullying, and the easy access of lethal firearms by children. Apparently, the handguns and ammo this youth sneaked out of the house belonged to his parent, a former state police officer and firearm instructor, who owned multiple firearms and did not store them securely at home. This youth had easy access to the guns at home and could easily take them out of the house. If these guns were kept secured by the parent, the youth would not have been able to take them out, and Aaron would still be with us today.

You can read more about Aaron's story at www.AaronBingXue.org.

Are There Other Children Like Aaron?

Yes. Aaron is just one of the **many** precious young lives lost in Vermont due to easy access to firearms by children. Firearm related death in children has become a public health problem in the US and in Vermont. Here are some sobering statistics, facts, and reported headlines in Vermont:

Firearm related suicide death:

- Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for Vermont youth ages 15-24. Suicide death in youth is more than the total health related death combined (CDC).
- During a 20-year period (1987-2006), firearms were the main method used for suicide by **66%** youth suicide victims aged 19 and under, **higher** than the national average of only 58%.
- During the same period, Vermont's youth **firearm suicide rate** is the **highest of all states in the Northeast** (including six New England states, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania). During these years there were **69** youth firearm suicides in Vermont.
- A review of 173 youth suicides in Vermont from 1970-1995 found that **69%** of such suicides **occurred at the victim's home**.
- Firearms used in youth suicide usually belong to a **parent**. The risk of suicide increases in homes where guns are kept loaded or unlocked.

Firearm related unintentional death:

- During the last 20-year period (1987-2006), Vermont's **firearm unintentional death rate**, among those aged 19 and under, is the **highest of all states in the Northeast**.

Vermont's rate was over **three times** that of any other New England state and was also above the national average (CDC).

A survey of recent firearm related incidents:

- Feb. 2010, Upper Graniteville, 14-year-old boy accidentally shot his brother.
- Feb. 2010, Georgia, 15-year-old boy fired multiple shots into his neighbor's home, narrowly missed a baby in crib.
- April 2009, Richmond, teen arrested for pointing a handgun at other cars while driving on I-89.
- Feb. 2009, Harwood Union high school student brought a loaded handgun to school. Police confiscated two more handguns during investigation.
- Nov. 2008, Bellows Falls, 16-year-old accidentally shot and killed himself.
- Aug. 2008, Wells, 14-year-old boy shot and killed his mother.
- June 2008, Brattleboro, 17-year-old boy pulled a handgun from his car and threatened to shoot another boy.
- Dec. 2007, Burlington, 16-year-old boy stole his father's handgun and shot his girlfriend in the head.
- May 2007, Chittenden County, 16-year-old boy shot and killed his father.
- Jan. 2007, Sutton, 15-year-old boy shot and killed 24-year-old man.
- Nov. 2006, Highgate, 15-year-old boy accidentally shot and killed his friend.
- April 2004, Brookfield, 14-year-old boy accidentally shot his twin brother.
- July 2003, Dummerson, 14-year-old boy shot by friends playing with pistol.

Why Do We Need Aaron's Law?

Aaron's tragedy is a grievous example of unsecured firearm storage and lack of state law leading to easy, unauthorized child access of firearms and deadly consequences.

Studies show that the presence of unsecured firearms in homes increases the risk of intentional and unintentional gun-related death in children; and that the majority of guns used by children belong to their parents or relatives and are obtained from their own home.

Parents often have misperceptions about children's knowledge of firearms in the home. One study shows that all of the children whose parents owned a gun were aware of that fact, even though 24% of the parents claimed the children didn't know there was a gun in the house. Also, almost 20% of the children with guns in their houses reported that they had played with the guns without their parents' permission or knowledge.

Irresponsible gun storage has deadly and foreseeable consequences for children. We must have a law like Aaron's Law to prevent easy access of firearms by children.

Aaron's Law will be no different from existing laws for alcohol, tobacco, and seat belt use. They are all for protecting children.

Can't We Just Do Education?

No, because education alone is not enough. Studies show that gun owners who have received gun safety training, including training in gun storage practices, are **more likely** (by two fold) to store their guns in the least safe way – loaded and unlocked.

Studies also show that programs aimed at educating children about the dangers of guns are **not effective** by themselves in reducing inappropriate gun use. Children who participate in these programs are no less likely to play with guns than others. Rather than having parents to acknowledge the danger guns in the home pose for children, these programs place the burden of responsibility **on the children themselves**.

Will Aaron's Law Work?

Yes. Reducing access to firearms by children will save young lives.

Studies show that the practices of keeping firearms locked, unloaded, and storing ammunition in a locked location separate from firearms can reduce youth suicide and unintentional injury in homes with children and teenagers.

Currently, twenty-eight states in the country have a law similar to Aaron's Law, and it works. Studies show that in twelve of these states that have such law in effective for at least one year, unintentional firearm deaths fell by 23% among children.

Aaron's Law will make a statement about the importance of, and raise public awareness to gun safety in the home. It will make parents and gun owners take a similar view as other safety measures like seat belts, car seats, bicycle helmets, and locks for medicines and poisons. It will remind gun owners their responsibility of safe gun storage at home to prevent unauthorized child access and firearm mortality.

Aaron's law will save children's lives and is very much needed in Vermont.