Accidental shooting of 8-year-old stresses need for safety training

CEDAR FALLS (KWWL) - The Black Hawk County Sheriff is stressing the need for proper firearm training following an accident at a Cedar Falls gun range.

Eight-year-old David Young suffered a gunshot wound to the head Monday while taking part in target practice at the Black Hawk Park gun range. A source close to the investigation says the gun was in the hands of Young's 5-year-old sister.

Young was transferred to the Brain Trauma Center at University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics. According to Black Hawk County Capt. Rick Abben, Young's breathing tube has been removed and the boy is doing better.

Park supervisors re-opened the gun range to the public Tuesday, and several people showed up for target practice. James Heidelman was among them. He shot his first gun when he was nine years old, and passed the tradition on to his children.

"Sure, I’ve had my sons, my grandsons out here shooting clay pigeons, 22’s," said Heidelman.

He says, Black Hawk Park is a great place to train.

"In fact, we're teaching a new person today on how to shoot a nine millimeter," he said.

But, he said, much of that training needs to include firearm respect and safety.

"Teaching our youth safety is number one in hunting. It's number one, two and three," he said.

Black Hawk County Sheriff Tony Thompson believes proper gun handling and safety precautions could prevent another unnecessary injury. He said, Monday's accident drives that point home for many people.

"I'll guarantee you, some of those guys who had to be there beside me last night with that little boy laying on the range, went home with a little different perspective of the importance of guns and gun safety," said Thompson.

Thompson says there were a lot of bad choices made Monday, resulting in Young's injuries. He said this was a situation he'll never be able to forget.

"It's just unfortunate that this has to happen to a young man," said Thompson. "Very few times in law enforcement that you can look back on and say - that's something that's going to stick with you. And this is one of those cases that's going to stick with you for awhile. It's one that makes you appreciate the opportunity to go home at night."

Heidelman echoes the sheriff's sentiment, and sends his thoughts to Young's family.

"Just hope the boy’s doing fine," he said.

The Black Hawk County Attorney says no charges will be filed.