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Net 'fame' may have led to bomb death

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For less than \$50, four teens assembled a pipe bomb – the makings of a momentary thrill and a dramatic explosion that might have brought fleeting fame if posted on an Internet video site.

But plans went awry. Daniel Ferraro, 19, was killed instantly Wednesday while filming the blast in his backyard. His three companions avoided injury but face long-term consequences: fel-

ony-level criminal charges plus the loss of a friend.

The incident was the fourth example in five months of young people in Greater Cincinnati getting into legal trouble for their video and Internet antics.

■ In September, the video from a locker room fight between two Norwood teen girls landed on YouTube, and led to a disorderly conduct conviction for one teen.

■ In October, three men in their 20s were arrested for dropping water balloons from an eight-

story building in downtown Cincinnati. They had a video camera rolling as they targeted passers-by who stopped to pick up a dollar bill that was glued to the sidewalk, police say.

■ In November, controversy erupted over the e-mailed topless photo of a 15-year-old Clermont County cheerleader and her female cheerleading coach, which ended up posted on numerous Internet sites.

See **FERRARO**, Page A11



Miami University Web site

Daniel Ferraro with Jessica Bleasdale at an NROTC event in July. Ferraro was killed while filming a pipe bomb explosion.

Why do teens take risks?

Dr. Kirk Little, of Little Psychological Services in Florence, says some teen brains aren't wired yet to heed warnings that may seem like common sense to others.

Such people often are described as "thrill-seekers" or "adrenaline junkies." The psychological term for such people is "sensation seekers," Little said.

About one in 20 boys fits that definition, he said. Girls with such traits are far less common.

"They thrive on adrenaline rush, thrills, adventure. ... When they get that thrill, they feel more normal. When they're just sitting there, they feel restless and unsettled," Little said.

Parts of the brain that control impulsive behavior might not be activated until early 20s or later.

"That's one theory. Another theory is that some kids' brains are just different," he said. "They don't have the kind of brain that is able to say: 'If I carry this out, it could be bad or painful.' So they also tend not to learn as well from their mistakes."

Such teens can be attracted to the Internet, where easy access to video stunts fuels a kind of one-upmanship situation, where one teen seeks to do something even more outrageous than his peers. And many others enjoy sitting back and watching.

"It's the same exact phenomenon that makes us stare when we go by an accident. ... We have this almost morbid fascination with looking," Little said.

So who's responsible when stunts go bad? The young people involved? Their parents? The media and the Web? All of the above? Little says there are no easy answers. But part of the solution is for parents, schools and officials to provide more structure and control over impulsive teens.

"We say when you're 18 you're on your own and you're free to do whatever you like," he said. "It's like you give them too much rope and then they hurt themselves. They can't control themselves and we take away constraints and parental guidance."

Little

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