

# He's just 8, but that hasn't kept him from being an inventor

By ALLAN STEIN  
Special to Valley Kids

WESTBOROUGH — Six-year-old Sean Anderson of Westborough was struck by a nifty idea one day as he played electronic tag with his dad using a pair of car door openers.

"Cool! Why don't we combine these two things?" he said.

And TinyLaserTag was born.

"Typically, you go to college, study real hard, get an advanced degree, sit down for 10 years and try to solve a behemoth problem. Sean was, as they say, a lucky inventor," said his father and technical adviser, Mark Anderson.

TinyLaserTag is an electronic game of tag that requires two or more players. Each unit has a firing light that shoots up to 50 feet and a laser sound.

"You point and fire. There is only one button. The first one to hit his or her opponent seven times wins. If you get hit, your unit grunts. If you win your unit says 'winner,' if you lose your unit says 'loser,'" Anderson said.

While coming up with the idea was by accident, he said, getting the technical specifications right for production was another story.

"I had a degree in English and Sean has three degrees in kindergarten," said Anderson, who was unemployed at the time, "so as the co-inventors we needed to hire a builder."

The father-and-son team worked with a student at Worcester Polytechnic Institute for four months with no results. They then hired their neighbor, Matthew Von-Maszewski, an ex-software

director at Akamai Technologies.

"He wrote the software and I worked fixing things around the house. We then found another underemployed mechanical engineer named Gary Kappel. Gary had the software and the skills to get us a prototype - the first of which was done in a toaster oven," Anderson said.

For the first six months they could only get the keychain-sized light toy to fire six feet. Von-Maszewski then recruited his uncle at NASA, who had worked on the rescue of the crippled Apollo 13 spacecraft.

Anderson said he interviewed several companies to produce the game and later got a federal loan to bankroll the project under the family's company name, SeanO Toys.

Although Sean, now 8, does not display any special aptitude for inventions, he is smart "in a scary way," his father said.

"Sean didn't speak until he was three years old. The joke is, now we can't stop him. At six he could multiply any single digit number by any double-digit number in his head. I can recall driving down the road when he was six and a sign that said 'Emus For Sale.'

"I asked Sean to look out the window as we passed. He responded, 'Emus, the second largest flightless bird.' Needless to say I almost drove off the road," Anderson said.

While Sean has no definite career aspirations, he wants to go to Harvard "because he likes attending their football games," Anderson added.

TinyLaserTag is already a hit in Westborough and will be available at Kay Bee Toys, Learning Express, Filenes, and Toys R Us in western Massachusetts by Christmas. For more information on SeanO Toys, go to their website at [www.SeanO.com](http://www.SeanO.com).



SEAN ANDERSON