

# Social Norms: An Effective Campaign to Reduce Underage Drinking Among High School Students

**Presented by:**

**Jennifer Wood, LMSW, CPP, Coalition Coordinator**

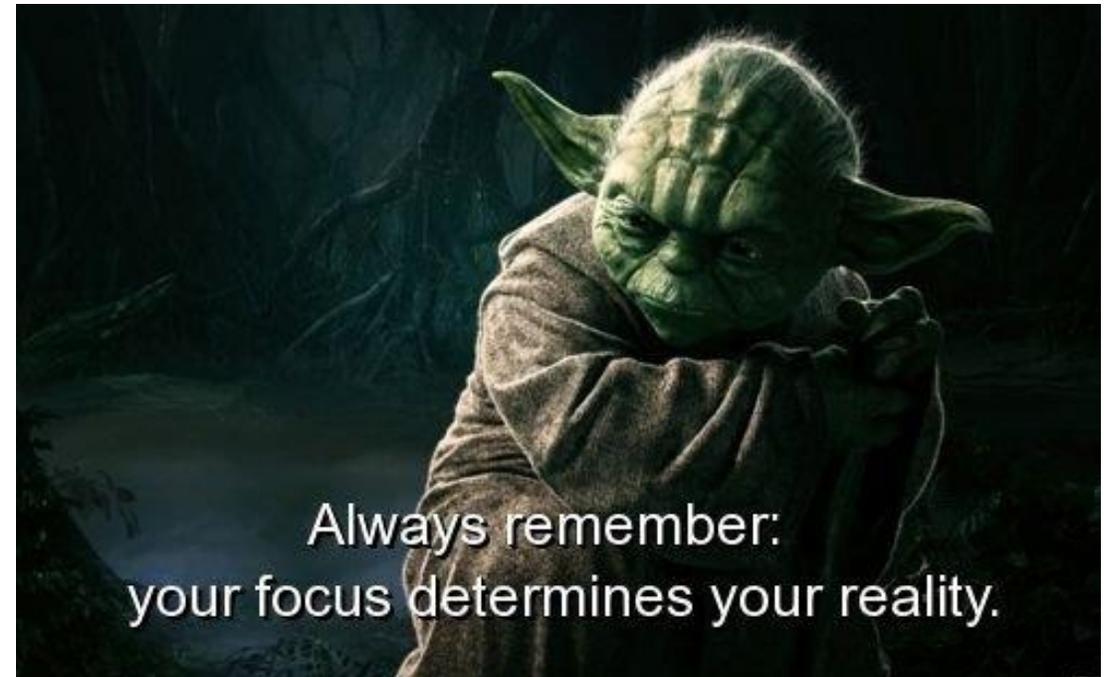
**The Prevention Council**

**Saratoga Springs, NY**

**[www.preventioncouncil.org](http://www.preventioncouncil.org)**

# Outline

- Background
- The Community
- The Challenge
- The Analysis
- The Plan
- The Implementation
- The Outcome
- Lessons Learned



# Background

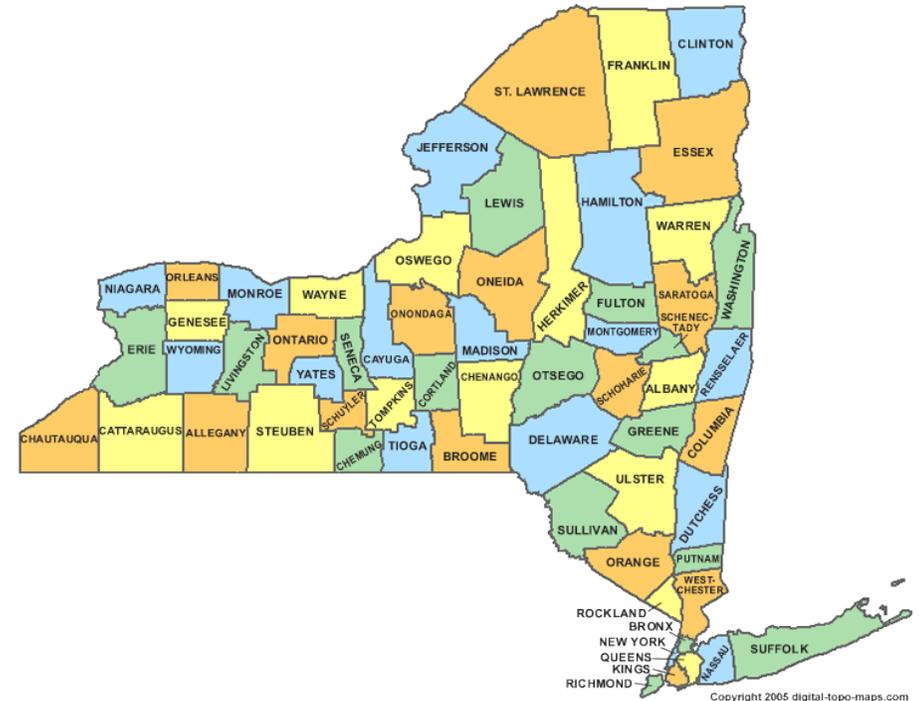
The Prevention Council has worked for more than 30 years to give young people the skills to choose healthy behaviors, provide families with the tools to foster positive child development, help communities build family-friendly environments, and help schools build supportive climates for students.

**We are a nonprofit, community-based organization working to prevent alcohol, drug, and other substance abuse throughout Saratoga County.**

**Prevention Education, Counseling (school-based), Coalition Development, Trainings, Recovery Advocacy**



**The PREVENTION COUNCIL**  
*Helping youth navigate life's challenges*



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# Background



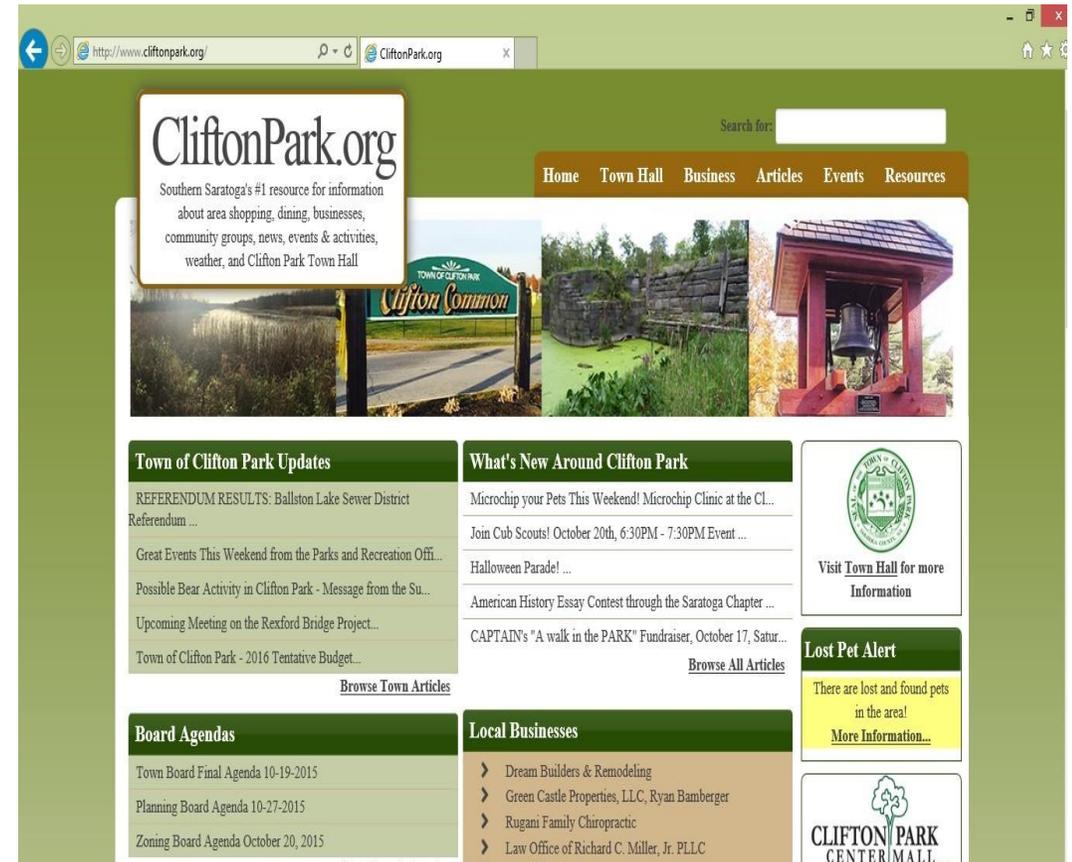
***Mission:*** To reduce and prevent risky behaviors among youth such as substance abuse, violence and problem gambling by developing community partnerships that utilize accurate data and implement proven strategies.

- Formed in 2006
- Received SPF-SIG\* funding to reduce underage drinking among high school students in 2011
- Funding ended in 2014
- Re-branding in 2015 to broaden geographic area and focus topics.

\*Strategic Prevention Framework State Incentive Grant

# Community

- Suburban
- 8 Communities
- Sub-communities: Neighborhoods
- Population: 67,000
- Strong identity with the school district
- Highly educated – 53% with Bachelors Degree, 23% with Post Grad Degrees
- Median household income: \$82,000



# Community

- 10,000 students grades K-12 (3000 in high school)
- Freshmen only building
- Touted for academic and athletic success
- 94% Caucasian
- Pockets of poverty
- Increased diversity due to new industries
- High traffic area
- Active: Retail, Recreation

COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE  
**Shenendehowa**  
Central Schools

OUR SCHOOLS

Shen High School	Arongen Elementary	Orenda Elementary
Acadia Middle School	Chango Elementary	Shatekon Elementary
Gowana Middle School	Karigon Elementary	Skano Elementary
Koda Middle School	Okte Elementary	Tesago Elementary

NOVEMBER 09, 2015  
Superintendent: Dr. L. Oliver Robinson  
5 Chelsea Place, Clifton Park, NY 12065 • 518-881-0600

AttoZ Site Index  
A B C D E F G H I J K L M  
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the great plains

QUICK LINKS

- Commitment to Excellence Profile of Shenendehowa
- Infinite Campus Student/Parent Portal
- EVENTS CALENDAR
- Lunch Menus & Playpams Parent Account Management System
- Fine ARTS
- SHEN SPORTS
- Grab a Grapevine
- MORE QUICK LINKS
- Click here to look up and pay your taxes on line

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- 11/11/15 - Veterans Day, No School
- 11/12/15 - K-5 Parent/Teacher Conference Days, No School K-5
- 11/12/15 - HS Drama "Midsummer Night's Dream" thru 11/14, HS West Auditorium, [www.shendrama.com](http://www.shendrama.com)
- 11/13/15 - K-5 Parent/Teacher Conference Days, No School K-5
- 11/26/15-11/27/15 - Thanksgiving Recess - No School
- 12/24/15-1/1/16 - Winter Recess - No School
- 1/16/16 - Community Conversations, 9:30 am, Gowana

LATEST NEWS

POSTED 11/9/15  
The High School Drama Club is sponsoring a food drive to benefit the Regional Food Bank of Northeastern New York. Food donations will be accepted in the lobby outside the HS West auditorium during performances of A Midsummer Night's Dream on November 12-14.

DISTRICT LINKS

- Academics
- Alumni
- Athletics
- Budget & Finance
- Board of Education
- Code of Conduct
- Community Services & Education
- Counseling Centers K-12

E-MAIL STAFF DIRECTORY

# Challenge

- SPF-SIG process identified alcohol as #1 substance of choice for high school students.
- High overestimation of peer use.
- Supportive norms – peer and adult.
- Easy access to substance
- Difficult to establish trends with 2008 data, need to clarify issue.

# Challenge

- 32% of high school students have consumed alcohol in the past 30 days.
- Ranges from 14% (9<sup>th</sup> grade) – 49% (12<sup>th</sup> grade).
- Largest increase from 9<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> grades (14% - 32%).
- Rates have decreased since 2008 (9% overall).

# Challenge

## Binge drinking rates

- 21% in past two weeks.
- 31% in 12<sup>th</sup> grade, 26% in 11<sup>th</sup> grade.

## Due to alcohol use in the past year:

- 37% of 12<sup>th</sup> grade students were hungover.
- 26% had symptoms of alcohol poisoning.
- 15% were in a regretted sexual situation.

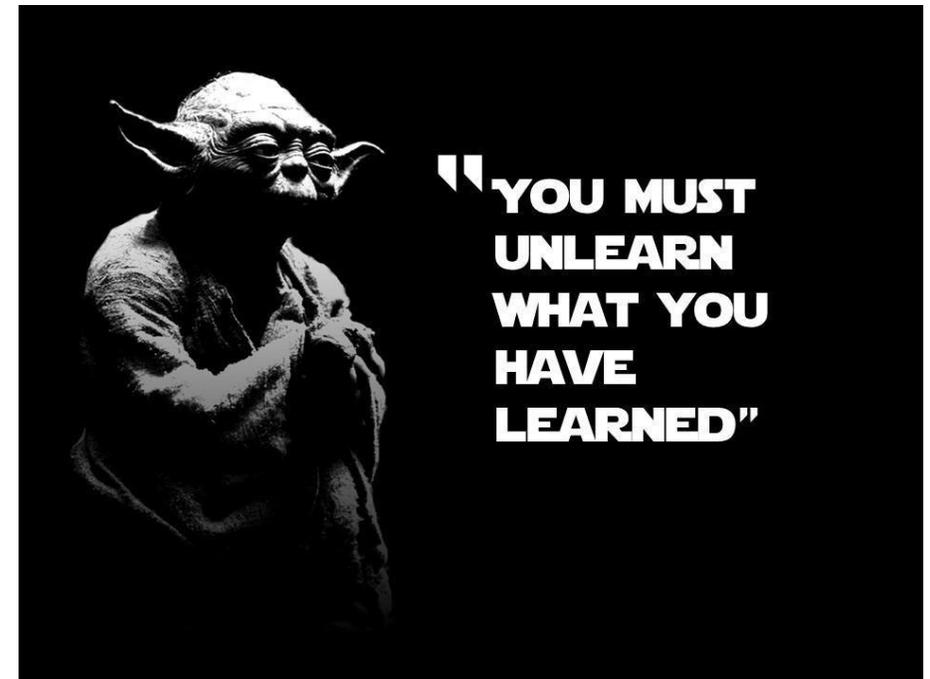
# Challenge

## Why here?

- Three out of four overestimate peer use “Everyone’s doing it”. The reality is, two out of three are not drinking.
- Where do they get it? Parties, Peers, Parents
- Why do they drink? FOMO, Feel confident, Forget stuff, Nothing else to do.

# The Analysis

- Typical approach: Harms, Consequences, Refusal Skill-Building (limited long term effectiveness).
- Funding requires environmental strategies: changing local conditions.
- Enter Dr. Wesley Perkins, Department of Anthropology and Sociology, Hobart and William Smith Colleges.
- Changing the perspective on how we approach prevention programming and messages.
- SOCIAL NORMS



# The Analysis

## Social Norms:

We like to think we're individuals, *but...*

- Peers are one of the strongest influences on behavior.  
*(herd mentality)*
- Look to others for guidance on how to behave. *(Simon Says)*
- We generalize group behavior characteristics on the actions of a few.
- It is easy to create a false perception this way.  
*(All of my friends smoke, therefore EVERYONE smokes)*
- Negative behavior tends to get the most attention.  
*(Ask any middle child)*

# The Analysis

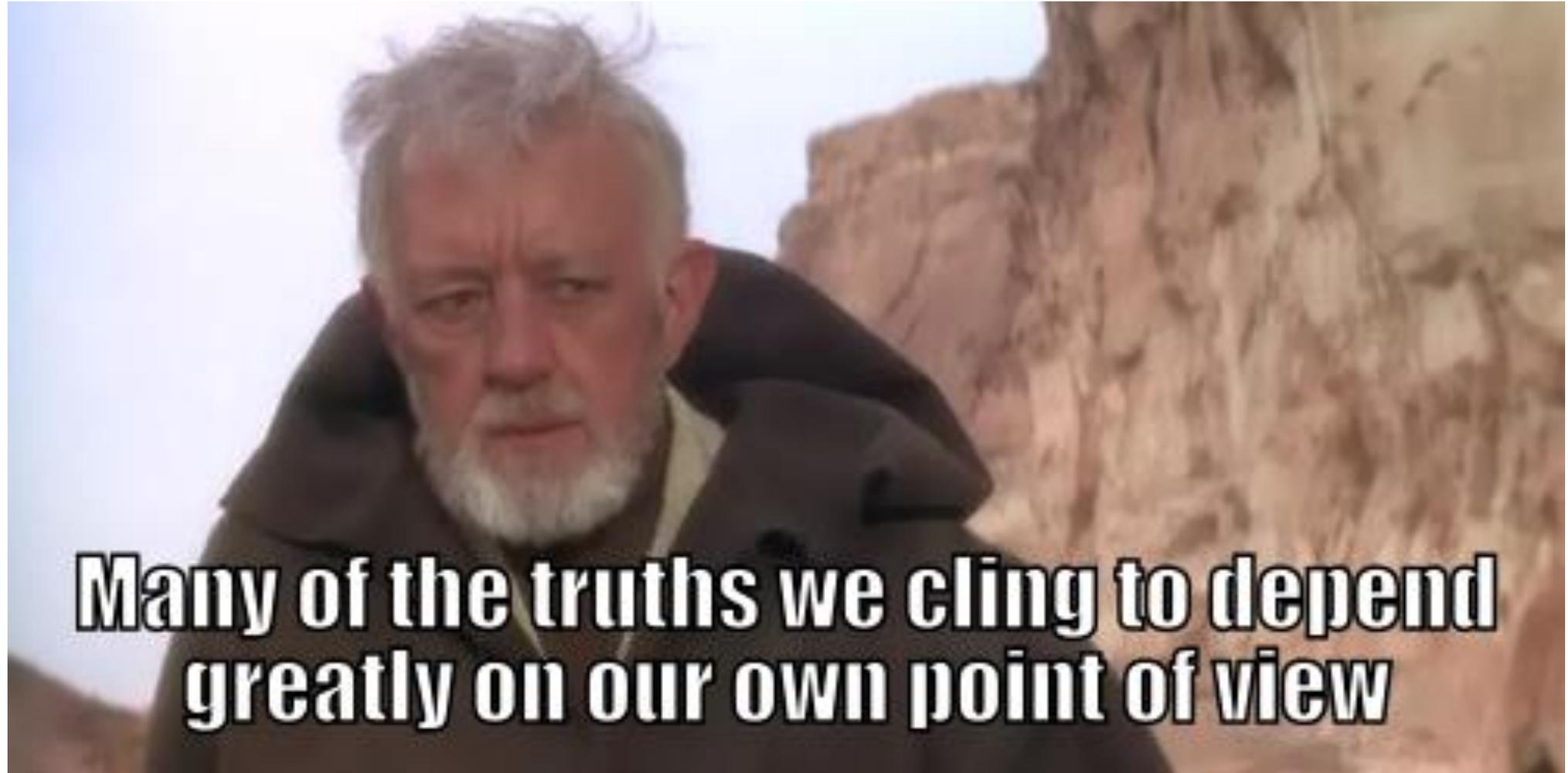
So...

- The behavior we're most exposed to (directly or in conversation) is what we believe to be true in all cases.
- What we think is true, and what is actually true, may be entirely different.
- Distorted sense of what's normal.
- Our own behavior is impacted – more likely to follow along with what we believe the “crowd” is doing (even if they're not really doing it).

# Original Challenge

Why here?

- **Three out of four overestimate peer use “Everyone’s doing it”. The reality is, two out of three are not drinking.**
- Where do they get it? Parties, Peers, Parents
- Why do they drink? FOMO, Feel confident, Forget stuff, Nothing else to do.



**Many of the truths we cling to depend greatly on our own point of view**

# The Plan

- Following data collection, analysis, and a presentation by Dr. Perkins to coalition members, we decided to move forward with a social norms project focused on reducing underage drinking behaviors in high school students.
- Superintendent of Schools was initially skeptical until Dr. Perkins' presentation.
- Implementation would take place in high school buildings to maximize visibility.
- **Now what?**

# The Plan

- Hired a marketing firm (not necessary). A good graphic designer will also work. Or a group of students who know how to use Photoshop.
- Create a branding that students will believe in (necessary).
- Run focus groups to get audience input (very necessary!).
- Faculty/staff were sent a letter of explanation prior to start of campaign (very necessary!).

**PERCEPTION** **REALITY**

Almost everyone here thinks it's cool to drink alcohol

Most of us **don't think it's cool to drink alcohol**

Who Said? You Said!

**PERCEPTION** **REALITY**

Almost everyone at Shen has had at least one alcoholic drink this month

Most of us **have not had an alcoholic drink this month**

Who Said? You Said!

Shen Social Norms Campaign: Phase 2 – Concept B / Board 2  
Posters/ Upper H.S., 8.5 x 11"



We may all be different but most of us never drink alcohol

68% of your classmates choose to never drink alcohol

Avoiding Alcohol is a Good Choice

Shen Social Norms Campaign: Phase 2 – Concept D / Board 1  
Posters/ Upper H.S., 8.5 x 11"



We're all different but most of us think it's not cool to drink alcohol

71% of your classmates think it's not cool to drink alcohol

Avoiding Alcohol is a Good Choice

“Too Wordy”

“Too Young”

# “Just Right”



REVISE 1 – Shen Social Norms Campaign: Phase 3 – Strength Concept / Wave 1 – Options 1-2 Posters / Upper High School, 8.5" x 11"



# READY, SET, GO!



# Implementation



**Do or do not ... There is no try .**

68% of your Shen classmates  
chose not to drink alcohol  
in the past month\*

They've turned up other  
ways to jam together

It's a fact, most of your classmates  
are not drinking alcohol. So stay strong and  
involved in something that inspires you.

\*Source: Shenendehowa Central School District  
Prevention Needs Assessment Survey. Conducted on  
11/16-17/2011 with 1,953 Shen students grades 9-12.  
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68%

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86% of Shen Freshman  
chose not to drink alcohol  
in the past month\*

They're wired into other  
ways to stay connected

It's a fact, most of your classmates  
are not drinking alcohol. So stay strong and  
involved in something that inspires you.

\*Source: Shenendehowa Central School District  
Prevention Needs Assessment Survey. Conducted on  
11/16-17/2011 with 1,953 Shen students grades 9-12.  
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