

Community Action SUCCESS at stopping a new off-licence in South Auckland

Shirl'e Fruean is a hip hop MC, an entrepreneur and a proud Pasifika mum of three children aged 18, 16 and 6. She lives in Māngere East and is active in her community as a mentor and advocate.

In March 2021 she saw on social media that there was going to be a community protest outside a local set of shops. The aim of the protest? To send a strong message to the new off-licence applicant that the community did not want, or need, another bottle shop in their area.

"I felt in my heart I needed to go, to stand with the community. I've had enough of seeing our people protest outside that liquor store demanding the same thing. I'm done. I'm over it. I need to make a stand."

Growing up Shirl'e had first-hand experience of how enticing, yet harmful, the misuse of alcohol can be. Now, as a mum, she is hyper-aware of how accessible alcohol is in her hood. She was angry as just the year before community pressure had successfully stopped the opening of a bottle store in that very same location.

"This is the problem, it's the amount of liquor stores. Many of us are struggling financially, it's exploitation. I'm a product of my community, if you keep putting that in front of my face I'm going to be drinking more and I don't want that."



So, Shirl'e made it a priority to attend the protest at the Vine Street Shops. This was an empowering and educational experience for Shirl'e.

During the protest she had the opportunity to amplify the community's message as she was interviewed by [The Spinoff](#). This led to a flurry of media contacting her and asking her to share her story. Shirl'e instinctively understood that she needed to say yes to these media requests.

"We need to keep pushing. The more we put the pressure on, the more they are able to realise like, hey we're not stupid, this is important to us".

She reached out to her community for support,

"I gave Nana Glenn (Communities Against Alcohol Harm member) a call and we chatted for over an hour

as I was a little hesitant to go on TV but she encouraged me to go and so I did. The second time I took Emily with me as I felt it was better to go in a team."

<https://www.facebook.com/275times/posts/3923746571057811> - Link to Breakfast Interview

“She (Emily) and I connected and I feel that through this whole experience it has brought us together. She’s educated me a lot more about the laws behind all this and about the role of the DLC (District Licencing Committee). That's what enabled me to go on Tagata Pasifika. ‘Each one, teach one’, that’s what I’ve learned from hip hop.”

<https://www.tvnz.co.nz/shows/tagata-pasifika/episodes/s2021-e18> - Link to Tagata Pasifika Interview

This was significant for Emily too. Emily explains,

“Educating Shir’ē about what’s needed to stop the proliferation of off-licences helped me understand the system better and what we need to do. We need grass-roots action, like the protests and we need to keep objecting to these off-licences. We also need to compel the police, health agencies and our representatives in the council and in government to take these issues seriously too. We need positive systematic changes.”

Shir’ē was thrilled when it was announced in May 2021 that the Vine Street off-licence application failed. Now there is one less place for the youth in the neighbourhood to access alcohol. This success has motivated her to get more engaged with the process. When asked if she would object to an off-licence in the future she replies,

“Absolutely! I’m keen to learn more. I want to sit in on the process and see how a DLC hearing works, have a listen. Be prepared.

We need to understand how important it is for us as a community to look after our kids and our community. We need to exercise our brains and our hearts. We can support local groups like Communities Against Alcohol Harm (CAAH). We need to get behind them and get more active.

Go to protests. Get educated. Talk to people.”

[Click here](#) to view the Instagram image of protest.