

*When Prevention Gets Attention:  
News Analysis and Communications Training for  
The Minnesota Statewide Health Improvement Program*

Active Living Research Conference  
San Diego, California  
March 10, 2013

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berkeley **media** studies group

# Berkeley Media Studies Group

- Research on news coverage of public health issues
- Media advocacy training and strategic consultation for community groups and public health advocates
- Professional education for journalists

# About SHIP



Photos courtesy of the SHIP Progress Brief – Year 2.

Focus on nutrition, physical activity, tobacco control

Local leaders work with schools (pre-K through college), workplaces, towns and cities.



# Funding for SHIP



FYs 2010-2012: \$47 million over two years, statewide

FY 2012-2013: \$15 million (↓70%), efforts included only about half the state

FYs 2013-2015: \$35 million, available statewide

Source:

<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/oshii/ship/docs/SHIP3report.pdf>

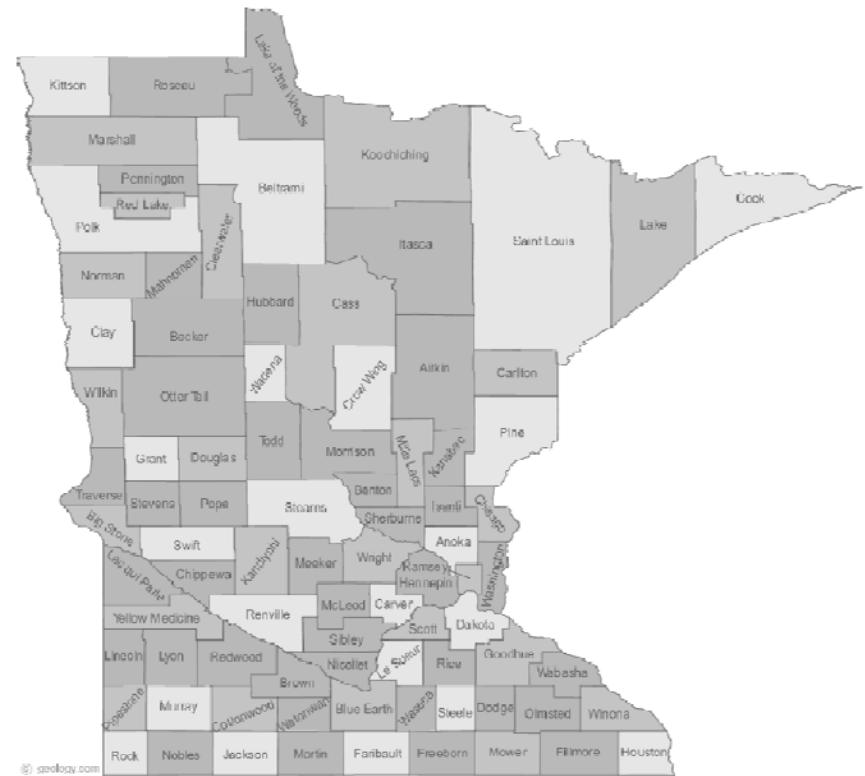
# Our Work with SHIP in MN

## Media content analysis

### 4 regional trainings

- Bemidji
- New Ulm/St. Cloud
- Eagan
- Minneapolis

Training for state DPH  
communications staff



# SHIP Content Analysis

Examined news from Jan 2007 - July 2012

- *Bemidji Pioneer*
- *Duluth News Tribune*
- *Eagan Sun This Week*
- *KSTP, WCCO, KARE, KMSP*
- *Mankato Free Press*
- *Minneapolis Star Tribune*
- *Minnesota Public Radio*
- *New Ulm Journal*
- *Rochester Post-Bulletin*
- *St. Cloud Times*
- *St. Paul Pioneer Press*

**StarTribune**

The Free Press

*Know It All.*

**Duluth News Tribune**

# Findings & Recommendations

Of 155 stories, most (84%) were local news stories about one of 51 city/county/tribal grantees

Main themes (n = 997 individual messages):

- Future benefits of SHIP (42%)
- Need for SHIP (26%)
- Evidence of SHIP benefits (25%)
- Responsibility for health (5%)
- Criticisms of SHIP (2%)

# SHIP Content Analysis Findings

Most stories focused on creating policy or community change than as a means to prevent illness

Best to use plain language, not jargon, avoid “choice”

*“In one generation we cut smoking in our state in half. What we’ve learned is that, to advance prevention, we need norms that support healthy behaviors, not discouragement.”*

*-Larry Cohen, Prevention Institute, Star Tribune, March 14, 2012*



# Findings & Recommendations

Strong coverage of local issues but few local spokespeople

*“Backyard gardens provide a cheap, organic source of nutrition-building, fat-busting vegetables. But what if you don't have a back yard-or the money to rent space? Dakota County has come up with a solution...It is providing grants to groups with excess land to start or expand community gardens.”*

*-Jessica Fleming, Reporter, Pioneer Press, April 7, 2010*

Authentic voices could contribute more opinion pieces to make the case for SHIP

# Findings & Recommendations

Stories described what SHIP was *doing* or *would* do, not on what SHIP had done

Would have more impact to emphasize what SHIP has *accomplished*, even if just in recounting setting up the program

*The CEO of Brooklyn Park's Diversified Plastics, for example, said the "payback was astonishing" from using Hennepin County SHIP for his firm's wellness program, saving his company approximately \$100,000.*

*-Star Tribune, July 7, 2013*

# Thank You!

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