

# Productive Nightmare

SOLUTION FOR DRINK SPIKING WAS LITERALLY THE PRODUCT OF A FLORIDA GIRL'S DREAMS **BY EDITH G. TOLCHIN**

**O**NE DAY IN 2019, a 16-year-old girl had a nightmare.

The dream was not unfounded; it came after she heard her college friends were victims of drink spiking. That was enough to scare the daylight out of Shirah Benarde of West Palm Beach, Florida, who is well aware of this trend.

A recent study by the American Addiction Centers involving 969 participants showed 56 percent of female respondents said they unknowingly consumed spiked food and drinks.

Shirah had a brainstorm after her nightmare. Here's the story of the NightCap.

**Edith G. Tolchin (EGT): How did the NightCap come about?**

**Shirah Benarde (SB):** I wanted to come up with a solution to drink spiking to protect my friends and me when we went off to college.

A few weeks later, I went to sleep and thought of NightCap in a dream. I say that I "slept on it!" The product and its functionality simply formed in my dream, and I took a mental note to circle back in the morning.

When I woke up, I told my dad. I tried explaining the product and drawing it, but I knew I had to just show him. That's when I created the first prototype out of my mom's pantyhose and a scrunchie from my room.

**EGT: Exactly how does it work? Is it one size fits all (drinking glasses)?**

**SB:** The NightCap is a scrunchie that can be worn on your wrist or in your hair. When feeling uncomfortable at the bar, club, or a party, pull the cover out from the scrunchie pocket

and use it to cover your drink. Place your straw in the straw hole to drink with peace of mind.

When you're done using it, you can tuck the cover back into the pocket of the scrunchie. NightCap fits best over Solo cups or similar-size/shaped cups.

**EGT: How did you create the prototypes after the first one?**

**SB:** To make the next four prototypes, my dad and I found a local seamstress. She made all the prototypes out of old gymnastics leotards, socks, and pantyhose type of material. She would come to the house and show my dad, my brother and me.

After making it to the final prototype, my brother started working with a manufacturer to get the first round produced in Dallas, Texas. The product is currently made from nylon and spandex.

**EGT: Have you invented anything before?**

**SB:** I have never invented anything before, but I always had an entrepreneurial spirit. Before NightCap, I would create and sell shirts and sweatpants to my friends who were going to college.

I called it "Quarantees," since it was during quarantine, and I was selling T-shirts. I would tie-dye the shirts and create custom logos for the university they were attending to print onto the clothing.

**EGT: Where are you manufacturing? Have there been any supply or logistics issues due to the pandemic?**

**SB:** We manufacture our product overseas. Since the NightCaps are so light, we can airship our products to our warehouse, leading to a smoother logistical process.



The NightCap is a scrunchie that can be worn on your wrist or in your hair. When feeling uncomfortable at the bar, club, or a party, pull the cover out from the scrunchie pocket to cover your drink, and place the straw in the straw hole.

**EGT: Where are you selling now?**

**SB:** All NightCap products are available at Nightcapit.com and Amazon Prime. Additionally, we've expanded on the Amazon platform to Canada, the United Kingdom, and the rest of Europe.

A significant amount of our business is doing discounted bulk orders with organizations. We've worked with over 75 universities in the U.S., Europe and Canada to provide NightCaps so they can be handed out to students at no cost. Our products are sold in 40 different countries.

**EGT: How many different types are you selling?**

**SB:** Our flagship product, the NightCap scrunchie, is available in four colors. Additionally, we launched the NightCap keychain last December, which is a unisex version of the product. And even more recently we became the exclusive U.S. distributor of StopTopps, which is a disposable version invented in the U.K. that we are selling to bars, clubs and venues.

**EGT: I saw on your website that you received a patent. How long did that take, and was it difficult?**

**SB:** Filing for a patent was one of the first things I did after coming up with the idea. The original provisional patent application was filed in February 2019, and the official patent was granted in December 2021. It wasn't too difficult; it was just a long process that takes a lot of patience.

**"Today, you can turn every hobby and passion into a business. With a great story and product, anything is possible."** —SHIRAH BENARDE

**EGT: Have you had any difficulties with product development?**

**SB:** In the beginning, figuring out the original design was a lengthy process that took a lot of trial and error. Initially, we thought the drink cover should go inside of the scrunchie and have a zipper or Velcro opening. However, through the design process, we determined it should be on a pocket on the outside.

**EGT: I heard you were on "Shark Tank." How did it go?**

**SB:** We got a \$60,000 deal for a 25-percent stake in the company with Lori Greiner. The experience was surreal and at the same time one of the scariest things I've ever done.



After going into the “Tank,” I feel like I can take on any task given to me.

I used to watch “Shark Tank” as a kid with my brother. If you told me someday we would pitch to the Sharks together and get a deal, I wouldn’t have believed you.

**EGT: Has your age been a benefit or a deterrent in managing a business?**

**SB:** My age played a huge role in the beginning of NightCap. I wasn’t as confident at 16 due to my lack of education with business. I had no idea what I was doing, I didn’t know where to begin.

However, growing up and going through the motions of running a company taught me so much. I learn the most from my business partners, who I surround myself with, by and trial and error. I am learning more every day and after running my business for almost four years, my confidence has grown tremendously—which has a large impact in decision making when running a company.

If you’re a young entrepreneur, go for what you’re passionate about. You want to spend your days doing what you love. Today, you can turn every hobby and passion into a business. With a great story and product, anything is possible.

I never imagined I could be where I am today at 19. Stay dedicated and never give up. The best part about being an entrepreneur is the journey to your destination.

**EGT: Do you have new products forthcoming?**

**SB:** We have a few products in development that we can’t announce just yet. Follow us on our Instagram @nightcapit and subscribe to our email list for updates. 📧

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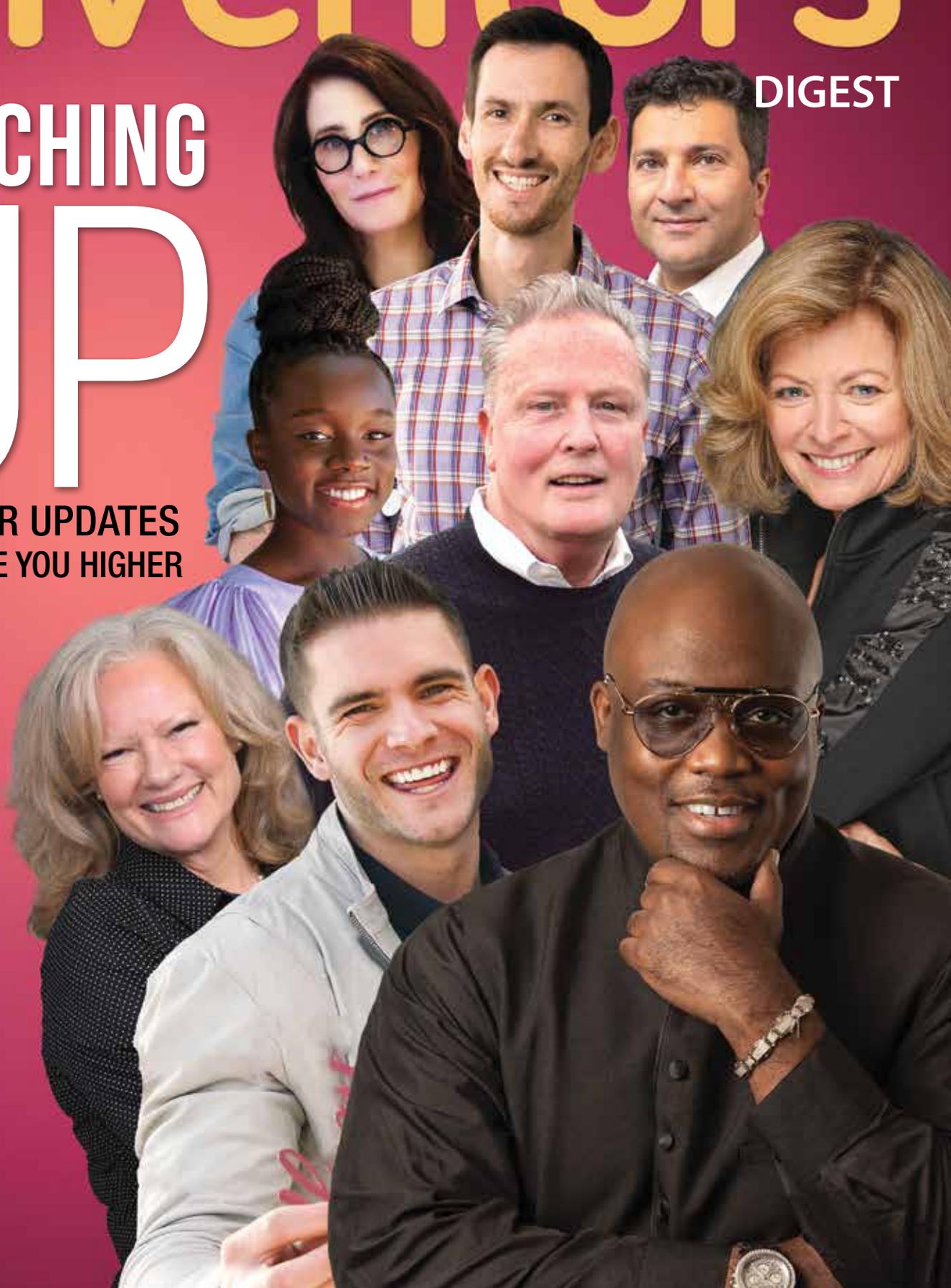
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