

# THE POINT

ISSUE 43  
SPRING 08

The Quarterly Journal of the Association of Professional Piercers



**BMXNET CONFERENCE 2007**

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# FROM THE EDITOR



**James Weber**  
Medical Liaison  
Infinite Body Piercing, Inc.  
Philadelphia, PA

While the APP has established more of a presence in Mexico in the last several years, many still forget we are an *international* organization, and that there are many, *many* other countries that are dealing with similar issues to those in the US. In this issue, we have several stories exploring these.

The first—and most prominent—is our cover story on the BMXnet Conference that recently took place in Germany. All the attending (US) piercers I spoke to were incredibly impressed by this gathering, and this issue includes an in-depth look at the event by Stephan Strestik, the President of BMXnet. Also included is information about the campaign against discrimination against those with body modifications in Mexico and information about new legislation in France. This is not to say that there is nothing going on in the way of legislation domestically—it unfortunately just didn't make it into this issue. Next time around, we hope to include updates on recent developments in Michigan, a draft for legislation Illinois, and the next installment on the new California Lead-in-Jewelry law and how it pertains to jewelry standards in that state—nickel content in particular. Because of print deadlines, these were not able to be included in this issue—but look for them in *The Point #44*.

Just in time for Las Vegas is a rather irreverent look at our annual Conference, with some tips on getting through it—for first time attendees to those of us that should know better. Its timing is perfect, as this issue will be delivered right about the time many of you will be packing for the annual five-day trip, from April 20th to 25th this year.

Also included are introductions to the new members of the APP Board of Directors. Although I am enthusiastic about having been elected to a second term—and am honored to have received a “promotion” of sorts—I must admit I am a little hesitant to step away from my duties as Editor of The Point. Because of this (and many other reasons as well) I am happy Elayne Angel will also be serving on the new Board. For those not familiar with the history of this publication before I took over three years ago: Elayne Angel spent six years building on the work of its previous editors and was the one primarily responsible for bringing The Point to a level of professionalism and punctuality that enabled me do my part in shaping it into what it is today. In our new positions, Elayne and I hope to act as co-editors from the next issue forward, and continue the role of this publication as something truly representative of our industry.

Closing this issue is an Associated Press article that was recently reprinted in many papers across the country. It concerns the unfortunate case of a woman forced to remove her nipple piercings by over-zealous TSA representatives in Lubbock, Texas. While the APP was quickly mobilizing and sending letters to the publications running the story, there was an official TSA statement released, published several days after the original article appeared. It seems diligent letter writing is one thing, but it doesn't hurt to have a high-profile attorney very publicly argue your case either.

I look forward to seeing many of you in Las Vegas, and I welcome you to issue #43 of *The Point: The Journal of the Association of Professional Piercers*. **P**

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

|   |    |
|---|----|
| IN THE OFFICE                             | 2  |
| AN APPROACH TO GENITAL PIERCINGS (PART 4) | 4  |
| CAMPAIGN AGAINST DISCRIMINATION IN MEXICO | 8  |
| THE APP AT APHA                           | 10 |
| NEW BODY ART LAW IN FRANCE                | 12 |
| BMXNET CONFERENCE 2007                    | 14 |
| MEET THE NEW BOARD                        | 22 |
| HOW TO SURVIVE CONFERENCE                 | 26 |
| WOMAN SAYS TSA FORCED PIERCINGS REMOVAL   | 28 |

# THE POINT

The Quarterly Journal of the  
Association of Professional Piercers

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# IN THE OFFICE

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Caitlin McDiarmid  
APP Administrator

As another Conference drew near; I was struggling to remember all the reasons I took this job and wanted to work in this industry. I am not a body piercer. I came to the APP through good fortune at a time when I was horribly unhappy at my job working for a large Catholic non-profit hospital system, doing legal collections work. I was good at my job. I had worked with them for over 10 years. I had established my home office for three years. I made good money. I had wonderful benefits, including a great retirement plan. I was unhappy because the people I worked for and with were not my people. I lacked a community in which I could be myself, where I had some common ground. At the end, for-profit interests bought out the charitable hospital system. This was the final straw and I quit. I quit with no job lined up. I quit knowing that I didn't want to work for corporate interests—I wanted to serve and I wanted to work where I could embrace those varied things which were a part of me and my life. I wanted a place—a career—where I could give back to a group that I was a part of.

And I found it. And it was good. The Board I worked for from 2003 to 2005 was wonderful and embraced me—even though I was not a body piercer and didn't come from the industry. I was amazed by the sacrifice of these individuals: Elayne Angel, Bethra Szumski, Paul King, Megg Mass, Crystal Sims, Jason King and Alicia Cardenas. They did great things. I was so overwhelmed by what they did during their three years that I had a hard time with the adjustment to the new group of Board Members: Phish Goldblatt, Christina Shull, Luis Garcia, James Weber, April Johnson, Schane Gross, and now Eric Anderson and Danny Yerna as replacements for those unable to serve.

Since 2005, things have been rough. Not just for me, but for all of the Board. I recognize that they faced more struggles during their terms and did a great job in the face of adversity (see *Point #41*).

It was why I was so excited by the recent election—to see some of the most sacrificing and hard working members step back up to the plate after all they have already given to the APP. We all welcomed the new nominees who were willing to take on the responsibility of serving the membership; new blood is good. But as we should have learned recently: stability is better, and a mix of experience and new ideas is best. The membership voted, and it was clear by their votes who they wanted in office.

The February board meeting—held at a retreat in the wilds of Kansas—firmly established that the membership spoke well with their votes. The group made up of the current Board and Board-elect was cohesive; it was focused. They took the proper time to learn about the organization's structure and what it means to be on a board of a non-profit. They spent time on what it

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means to serve the membership and the community at large. They looked to their elders on how to best survive and thrive in the experience. They were honest about their strengths and limitations, and they didn't pull any punches with each other. They made hard choices and decisions, keeping the mission of the APP in mind at all times.

Those that served in the past allowed the newest board members to speak up and participate. Those with their feet barely wet in the experience listened to those that have already learned lessons the hard way. Everyone was excited. Everyone felt good about the direction the board elect wants to take with the support of the current board members.

As for me, I have again found the love.

I found it in the sacrifices the board members make. I found it in how much these individuals care about this organization. I found it in their expression of joy about the work before them.

But there are still detractors. It saddens me that the loudest voices are those only with complaints for an organization and a Board that has taken this organization so far and done so much for the industry as a whole. It is hard for the volunteer Board of Directors to remain impassioned and driven to serve the membership and the piercing community—even in the best of times. This is a position which takes away from their personal time, their investment in their own businesses, their income, etc.

My hope is that all of the members can stop struggling long enough to hear me when I say this: In everything said, and all decisions made, the Board of Directors, and the Board Members-elect have always worked for the betterment of this industry, the Association, and its Members. Always.

Find the love. Stop struggling. **P**



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PROUD MEMBERS



# AN APPROACH TO GENITAL PIERCINGS (PART 4)



Elayne Angel  
Yucatan, Mexico

*This is the fourth in a series of articles written by Elayne Angel on the topic of genital piercings. This article—in addition to parts one, two and three previous issues—is taken from her classes taught at the 2007 APP Conference in Las Vegas.*

*This article discusses five of the common piercings for men: frenum, lorum, scrotum, guiche, and pubic. A number of these piercings share various traits; for example, piercings of the shaft and the scrotum are generally tricky to mark because of the stretchy nature of the tissue. Below are some principles and guidelines that are common to these piercings, followed by individual details on each of the placements.*

*This series is only a brief introduction to genital piercings, and clearly does not include everything there is to know about these piercings. It should also be noted that this is one piercers approach to these piercings, and does not necessarily reflect the views of all piercers.*

## Marking

Two important factors for successful healing with all of these placements are that they encompass sufficient tissue, and that you pierce only areas that are reasonably pliable.

When marking piercings that have a central location, observe whether the *scrotal, penile, or perineal raphe* (“midline ridge”) appears actually centered. In spite of its misleading name, it is frequently *not* located at the true midpoint. Piercings are usually most aesthetic when situated at the visual middle of the anatomy, rather than straddling a “midline ridge” that is askew, but if the ridge is extremely pronounced, discuss the matter with your client for his input before finalizing the placement.

All of the male genital piercings covered here are apt to migrate at least slightly from their original spot. The “normal” amount of tissue loss is not necessarily problematic, but you should plan for it during the marking process by starting out wide enough that the final position ends up sturdy and secure.

Be especially mindful of this tendency when marking additional piercings in the same area. Closely inspect the tissue behind existing jewelry for any telltale traces of this relocation, and place the subsequent piercing(s) to account for this. The goal is to make new piercings as wide as the original one was at first, so by the time they have healed (and migrated) they will be properly aligned and encompass equal amounts of tissue. Still, any client may have some piercings drift more than others, therefore uniform ladders can be difficult to achieve.

Equidistant placement of multiple piercings along the shaft or scrotum is easier to accomplish when marking them in a single session, in part because of this propensity towards slight migration. Before marking a ladder, inquire about any overall plan: how many piercings does he ultimately want? If he doesn't

know, a good time to start thinking about this is *before* a second piercing is done. One approach is to space piercings widely apart, and then fill in the gaps with more during future sessions. A safe maximum number per visit depends on your client's health and any healing history, as well as his motivation and dedication to consistent aftercare. I've done a dozen in a session and had them heal successfully, but for others this can be too much for their body to handle.

When marking areas like the scrotum and lorum, check the proposed placement while the piercee is seated *and* standing. The tissue is tricky to work with because it changes substantially with body position, ambient temperature, and state of arousal. This skin rises and descends, so marks that initially appear level can shift dramatically. It also expands and contracts, so make certain the jewelry will not pinch when the tissue spreads out to its widest. You may need to select a larger jewelry diameter or adjust your placement accordingly. To assure optimal positioning, leave

When marking areas like the scrotum and lorum, check the proposed placement while the piercee is seated and standing. The tissue is tricky to work with because it changes substantially with body position, ambient temperature, and state of arousal.

the marks in place for several minutes and then re-check them. If necessary, correct them before piercing.

If the client ordinarily wears a cock ring, this should be taken into consideration during placement, too. He may need to go without it during healing of certain piercings to minimize pulling and trauma.

## Jewelry

My prudent size range consists of a 12 gauge minimum and a 10 gauge maximum for the genital piercings discussed in this article. The balls worn on the ends of bar-style jewelry in these regions must be large enough so that they do not sink into the

piercing channel. However, they must not be so big as to pull the jewelry away from the body, potentially causing migration. I favor 7/32" or 1/4" balls for these reasons. If the smaller 3/16" size is desired, extra length must be left on the post for safety. Balls larger than 1/4" are not well suited for healing in these areas. A strict policy of using one "standard" jewelry size is seldom reasonable for genital piercings. Male anatomy varies widely in configuration and pliability as well as size. Selecting the diameter for each individual piercee is best.

## Piercing

Bright illumination can help you look for vascular elements in the pathway of piercings where the tissue is not excessively thick. If you use forceps, you can often "squeegee" the tissue to force a visible vein out of the way. When the clamp is in place, just *slightly* loosen its grip and use the leading edge to push the vessel from the path of the needle. Alternatively, you can release the area, do tissue manipulation, and check again for a clear pathway. Occasionally a vessel simply cannot be avoided, and a slightly different placement must be selected.

Position your client so you have comfortable access to the area for the procedure. If his penis or scrotum is blocking your view, consider having him don a glove to help keep it out of the way while you work. The anatomy can be lifted but should not be pulled taut, so that the region you are piercing remains pliable. Tissue manipulation can help loosen tighter tissue before frenum, guiche, or pubic piercings.

## Healing

It is not uncommon that the tissue "thickens" or becomes somewhat lumpy around these male genital piercings during healing. This can be a temporary or permanent alteration to the skin. It is not a "complication" per se, but the body's way of dealing with the presence of a foreign object. Individual responses vary, but piercings in these areas may leave lasting tissue changes that do not subside even if the hole is abandoned.

## Frenum Piercing —In the loose tissue along the shaft

The name derives from the word "frenulum" (also called frenum

or fraenum), which is the anatomical term for the region: the fibrous cord of connecting tissue that joins the glans to the foreskin. All piercings of the skin on the shaft are routinely referred to as frenums, though there is a "traditional" placement on the underside towards the head.

In general, traditionally placed frenums are easier to heal than upper frenums and other spots, but some men can heal piercings just about anywhere on the shaft.

### ▼ FRENUM PLACEMENT

Traditional placement is opposite the corona so that a ring worn through the piercing would encircle the head without leaning towards the tip. Many piercers place a frenum too high, and this can leave too little space for a man to get a properly placed Prince Albert later. Many a client has come to my studio for frenum piercing and told me he was "not interested in a PA

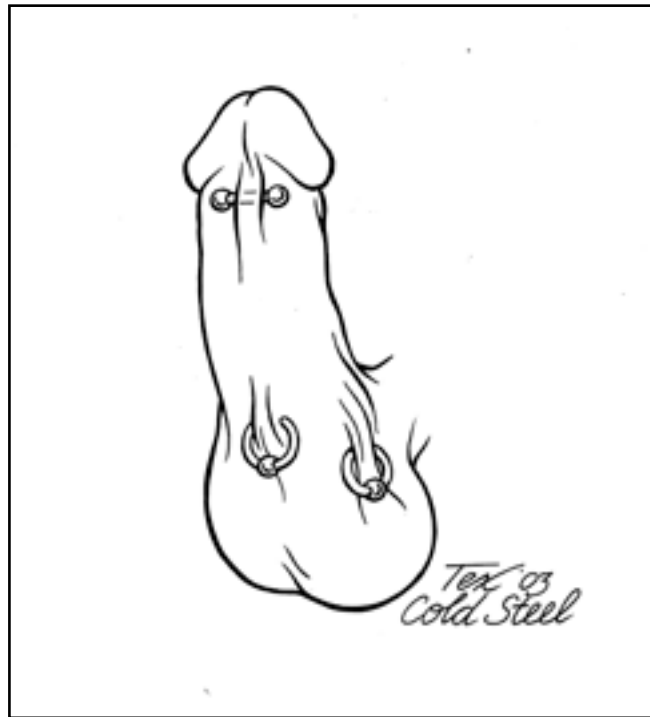
piercing" only to return later to actually get one. These men were pleased I had anticipated their change of mind and left sufficient space.

Major changes can occur to the tissue during erection—and not just in size: on some men that tissue can make a full quarter turn around the shaft! As you pull the skin taut, notice if it stretches out evenly, or tugs in any direction. When your client is a "shifter" and "twister," the piercing will not be centered in both erect and flaccid states, so you should ask the client to decide on his preference before you complete the marking process.

Multiple frenum piercings in rows are common, but to be comfortable, some space in between is needed to prevent pinching. Placing them a minimum distance of 7/16" apart (when the tissue is stretched as it is during an erection) is reasonable. If he plans to stretch to larger gauges, a 1/2" minimum is preferable. Depending on the individual, the jewelry may rest bunched up when the penis is flaccid and gain considerable distance during erection.

### FRENUM JEWELRY

Bar style jewelry is best for initial piercing. The 5/8" is the most common length, but I sometimes place a 9/16" on men with



a small build or well-defined tissue, and a 13/16" for larger anatomy. Occasionally I will put in a 7/8" when it is proportionate.

After healing, a large ring or frenum loop (that attaches to a barbell) can be worn to encircle the head when the piercing placed

after healing. Also after healing, it might be possible to wear a large ring to encircle the base of the penis, much like a frenum loop. A ring may not be comfortable if a wide diameter is needed to accommodate the piercee's erect measurement. Some men prefer to wear the ring hanging down, and only slip it over the penis for sexual activities.



traditionally. These styles are too heavy and cumbersome for initial jewelry. For sturdiness, a ring that is larger than 7/8" in diameter should have a minimum thickness of 10 gauge. For rings over 1 1/4", an 8 gauge is preferred.

#### FRENUM PIERCING

Work with gravity instead of fighting it; rest the penis to one side to stabilize the area when you work on larger or floppier anatomy.

#### Lorum Piercing —The "Low Frenum"

The lorum is well protected because it rests "sandwiched" between the shaft of the penis and the scrotal sack. For this reason it may be easier to heal than a frenum or a less-protected scrotum placement. This is a good option for a man who wants a genital piercing but does not desire one that is involved in penetration, or very obvious visually.

#### LORUM PLACEMENT

This lorum can be placed so that it fits within a condom, and even helps to hold the prophylactic in place. But the addition of a waterproof bandage for sexual activities is advised to assure safety during healing, because the piercing is near the edge of the sheath.

#### LORUM JEWELRY

Ring and bar styles are both suitable for initial jewelry. I use a 5/8" minimum bar diameter or 3/4" minimum ring diameter to encompass enough tissue. Some piercees prefer to downsize to a smaller diameter

#### Guiche Piercing

This horizontal piercing of the male perineum is generally worn for the physical stimulation of the piercee. Contrary to colorful piercing lore, South Pacific Islanders did *not* commonly sport dangling seashells on leather thongs through guiche piercings; in fact, they didn't wear them at all.

#### GUICHE PLACEMENT

Anatomy and pliability vary considerably in this region and some men have a long enough perineum to host a variety of possible locations for a guiche. If there is a longer perineum, you can "test" the area and ask the piercee about his preference. First demonstrate (pinch and gently prod) the traditional spot, and from there expand your palpation up and down as you inquire about the best-feeling location for him. It should go a minimum of 5/8" from the anus; flatter anatomy needs a wider piercing to encompass sufficient tissue than a more "pouchy" convex-shaped form. Make sure to examine the anatomy with his knees close together to verify that there is enough space for the jewelry.

#### GUICHE JEWELRY

Rings or curved bars can be used for starting jewelry, though Tygon or PTFE are also good—especially for tighter tissue. On a "pouchy" perineum, I place a 1/2" of tissue on a 5/8" diameter ring, or on a 9/16" curved bar. If the anatomy is flat, I advise going a little wider, with 9/16"- 5/8" of tissue using the proportionately larger diameter jewelry.

#### GUICHE PIERCING

Placing the piercee on his hands and knees serves the purpose of keeping the scrotum out of your way. Though, many clients appear more comfortable reclining, with their feet up on the table, and knees splayed apart. If the knees are forced as wide as possible, rather than just to accommodate the piercer between them, this can make the tissue tighter than necessary.

#### Scrotum Piercing —called "Hafadas" on the side(s)

Scrotum piercings can be done as a single piercing, a pair, or even multiple rows forming a "chainmail" sack! They can be aesthetically pleasing but seldom have much sexual function. Though, when large or heavy jewelry is worn, it may swing enough during intercourse to be felt by a partner.



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## SCROTUM PLACEMENT

Midline piercings (single or multiple) are common options, as are piercings off to one or both sides. Hafadas and other scrotum piercings work well when positioned within the natural folds or framing the ridges.

## SCROTUM JEWELRY

A 5/8" diameter curved bar or a 3/4" diameter ring are good sizes for a solid piercing that encompasses substantial tissue. When piercing at a more horizontal angle, either rings or bars are fine. But, for a steep diagonal or vertical orientation, bars are superior.

## **Pubic Piercing** —At the juncture of the body and the shaft

This male genital piercing is not placed directly on the penis and it is not inserted during penetration. As such, it is mostly visual in appeal, though it can be functional to stimulate a female partner during intercourse. A true pubic piercing must go *in* the natural fold line where the shaft of the penis connects to the body. If it is placed any higher (where it is often incorrectly located), it becomes a surface piercing and is *much* harder to heal.

## PUBIC PIERCING JEWELRY

I prefer a 10 gauge minimum for this area and use a 7/8" diameter ring encompassing a minimum of 3/4" of tissue. For a curved bar, I use a 3/4" minimum post length. Some piercers have success with surface bars in this area. Bar-style jewelry may be superior to a ring for healing because there will be less stress and friction from clothing. Bars are clearly preferable for active piercees, and may be more comfortable, in general. However, once healing is over, for sexual stimulation of a partner's clitoris, a ring is superior. The three balls of the "captive circular barbell" style have the most "opportunities" for contact with the piercee's partner.

## PUBIC PIERCING PLACEMENT

Make sure the tissue can be pinched up before you agree to pierce it; this has a huge effect on the likelihood of successful healing. Simply raise the penis slightly to locate the natural fold where the piercing should be placed. Marking a visual midline is helpful to center the piercing in this often featureless area.

Healing time for the pubic region can be lengthier than the others discussed in this article, in part because the channel needs to be longer than that of most other body piercings. I have excellent success with this piercing, though it has a reputation for having high rejection rates. I achieve this by accepting only candidates who have pliable tissue, marking at the natural fold, and piercing a wider span of tissue than usual.

Look for the final article on genital piercings in the next issue of *THE POINT*. It covers foreskin, ampallang, apadravya, reverse Prince Albert, and dydoe piercings. **P**

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## CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE DISCRIMINATION OF THE PIERCED AND TATTOOED IN MEXICO

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**Dante Salomo**  
Coyoumary, Mexico  
*(Translated by Ed Chavarria)*

My first encounter with tattoos came at a young age. I can remember my uncle had an enormous dragon tattooed on his chest. My father said that it was bad, but I couldn't understand why; we loved my uncle dearly and could see no bad in him.

Since my adolescence I wanted tattoos. When my brother suffered an accident in which he needed blood donors they were not easily found, and it was said a tattooed person could not donate blood. This was enough to stop me from following through with getting a tattoo.

When I entered the world of body modification I knew there would be a certain stigmas towards pierced and tattooed people. My father was very angry and disappointed when we—my younger brother and I—told him we would be opening a shop dedicated to this. We overlooked his intolerance of the

situation and moved forward.

From the beginning people would come in asking if we did tattoo removal, predominantly because of their jobs. They would ask if we could remove their piercing, because the schools had a problem with it, or because they could not donate blood. I had no idea about the dimensions of this problem. I didn't think that discrimination would be so common.

Then one of my clients, who was also a friend, came to me very desperate, asking me about tattoo removal. His job was threatening to fire him if he did not remove it. I became infuriated. It was then I began searching to see if anything was being done about such discrimination. I discovered no one was. Even worse, no one was speaking out about it happening either. It was then I understood that the only ones that we can

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Then one of my clients, who was also a friend, came to me very desperate, asking me about tattoo removal. His job was threatening to fire him if he did not remove it.

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defend are ourselves.

Then, the idea for the campaign was born. What we had to do was plan on how to initiate it. First was an attempt at collecting signatures. I thought maybe that tattoo and piercing studios would show interest in helping. I was wrong. Only ten studios agreed to the idea. Nevertheless, the process was continued and 2,700 signatures were collected. I took these signatures to the National Council for Discrimination Prevention to see if they would get involved. They didn't.

After a long wait, I knew our efforts were not enough. We organized a public protest and had a great response. Several dozens of modified people gathered and two of my partners did back suspensions in a very public place. (We did not count on support from any authorities.) For the first time we had media presence. This opened the doors for many more others to learn about the problem.

Thanks to the media involvement and press circulation the Senator for Mexico City became interested and agreed to come forward and help. He initiated the passing of a law to include tattooed and pierced peoples in current discrimination laws.

We were then able to take our cause to a national level on March 19, 2007. The results were very interesting: 598 people from 28 states arrived. One of the more revealing things was

90% of the people interviewed—all of whom were modified—had suffered at least one form of discrimination, almost half in reference to work. Twenty-two people had to remove their tattoos via laser, skin removal, and some by burning. Thirty-nine had been assaulted by police, and the authorities had tortured 13.

Presently we're back to collecting signatures on a national level. This time we have more support from the tattoo and piercing studios as well as more states in the nation.

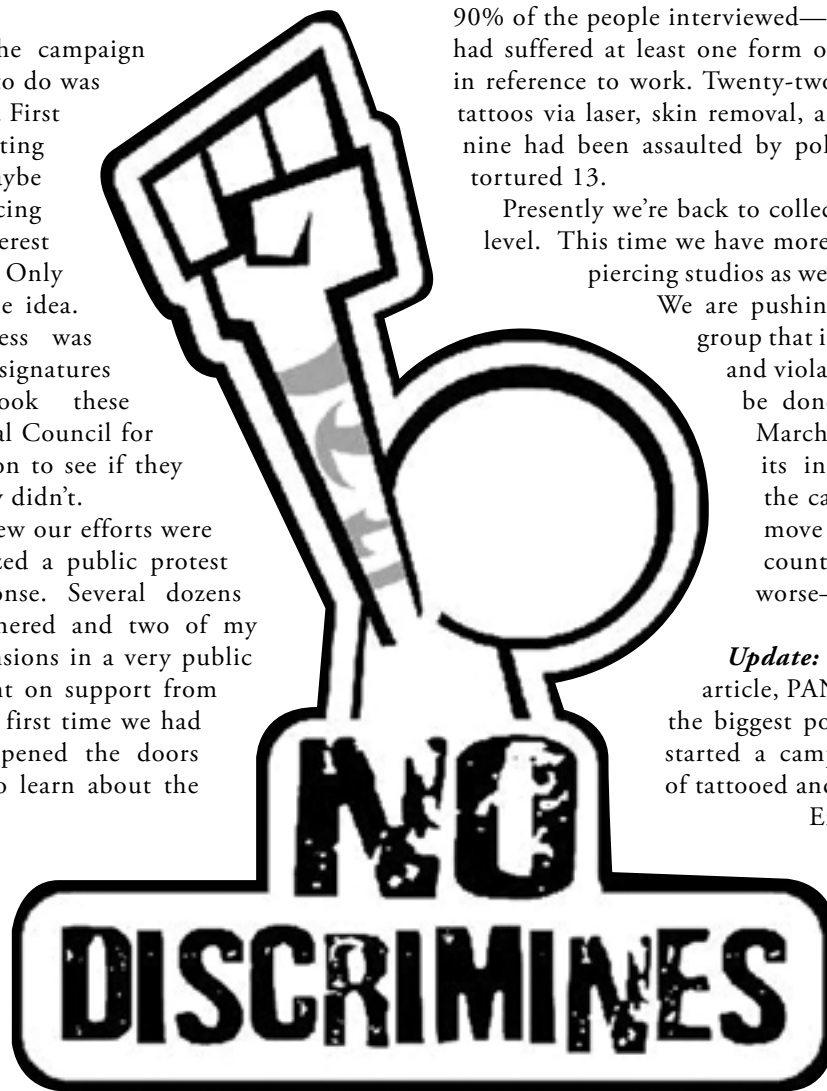
We are pushing to be included as a social group that is vulnerable to discrimination and violation of human rights. We will be done collecting the petition on March 5, which is three months after its initial circulation. We intend the campaign to grow and hope to move on to more Latin American countries with similar—or even worse—situations.

*Update:* Since the writing of this article, PAN (Partido Accion Nacional—the biggest political party at the moment) started a campaign against discrimination of tattooed and pierced individuals. Deputy

Errasti Arango indicates that discrimination is a crime that will be punished with one to three years in prison. Arango comments that this campaign involves the general public, but that they will put a special emphasis on the public and private sector of the

economy, as it is this population that presents the most cases of discrimination against the tattooed and pierced.

The second effort for the national collection of signatures against discrimination ended mid-March. **P**



# THE APP AT APHA



**John Johnson**  
Outer Limits  
Long Beach, CA

In early November of 2007, I flew with Steve Joyner to Washington DC to represent the APP at the annual APHA (American Public Health Association) Conference. Like the APP's yearly Conference, APHA hosts a week of workshops and seminars relevant to public health, with a large expo showcasing over 700 booths offering information, state-of-the-art products and services geared towards public health professionals. The Public Health Expo serves as a gathering point for attendees to meet each other, share information, and learn about public health issues and trends. The APP booth was located directly across from the CDC (Center for Disease Control) booth in the main corridor, and we shared the floor with publishers, computer and pharmaceutical companies, schools of public health, health-related government agencies, and many other public health service and product-related organizations.

From the APHA website:

*"Founded in 1872, the American Public Health Association (APHA) is the oldest, largest, and most diverse organization of public health professionals in the world. The association works to protect all Americans and their communities from preventable, serious health threats. APHA represents a broad array of health officials, educators, environmentalists, policy makers, and health providers at all levels working both within and outside governmental organizations and education institutions."*

The APP has been at this convention for many years and has clearly earned its place as a respected exhibitor. Representatives from the CDC and other health agencies frequently visited with us, and several people knew Steve personally from his past work with piercing legislation around the country. From the amount of people we saw each day, it would seem that our booth was one of the most visited out of all the exhibits. The area between the APP and CDC (across from us) was frequently overcrowded with people trying to listen as we spoke about aftercare and the jewelry we had on display. Health professionals not familiar with the APP before the convention were consistently impressed and eager to have their questions answered and to take our brochures. Based on the purpose, size, and diversity of the APHA conference and how well the APP is received, I believe this is a crucial forum for us to continue being involved with as an organization. Even as we closed down the booth, health professionals continued to approach me with questions. From the hotel lobby to the airport at home, there seemed to be no end to the number of people needing information about body piercing safety. It was incredibly satisfying to be involved in helping The APP to fill that need. **P**



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# NEW BODY ART LAW IN FRANCE



**Sandrine B Skellie**  
SciCan International  
Piercing Experience  
New York/ Atlanta

It has been several years since concerned French piercers formed APERF (Association des Perceurs de France) to represent the profession in discussions regarding the regulation of piercing. In 2001 they published *Le Guide des Bonnes Pratiques (The Guide for Good Practices of Piercing)*, with the aid of medical consultants.

The following year (2002) the results were published of an epidemiological study during which piercing establishments in France were evaluated:

*“Aucun des professionnels rencontrés, que ce soit perceur ou tatoueur, ne possède d'autoclave, seul matériel actuellement validé pour la stérilisation des dispositifs médicaux.”*

“None of the professionals visited, whether piercer or tattooist, possessed an autoclave, the only machine currently valid for sterilization of medical devices.” (Bulletin Epidemiologique Hebdomadaire No. 04/2002)

Not one was found to use appropriate sterilization equipment or practices, and it was noted that they were not wearing sterile gloves for procedures. Although non-sterile exam gloves were worn for procedures and environmental cleaning was observed between clients, samples taken on jewelry, needles, tubes and grips discovered both bacterial and viral contamination. The report gave a positive differentiation between a professional piercer and traditional jewelers who utilize the gun, and the researchers examined the possibility of contamination between clients:

*“L'embase de ce pistolet est souillée a chaque utilisation, elle devient contaminante pour le prochain client en l'absence de stérilisation. Cette pratique doit donc être totalement abandonnée.”*

“The base of the gun is soiled with each use, and become contaminant for the next client in the absence of sterilization. This practice must be totally abandoned” (Bulletin Epidemiologique Hebdomadaire No. 04/2002)

There was a concern adolescents would reuse piercing equipment and jewelry because of costs. The suggestion was made that educational information on the prevention of cross contamination should be distributed.

In December of 2007, a report was published by the French Academy of Medicine (available in both French and English at [www.academie-medecine.fr](http://www.academie-medecine.fr)) that announced they recognize that piercing

is widespread, and complications have been found to be common and sometimes grave. They made recommendations in response to dealing with what they consider the most important problems:

- Information should be given to the public in regards to the risks involved in tattoo and piercing, notably to adolescents and schools.
- Body artists needs to be trained on hygiene and techniques. They prefer a program formed by a cooperative effort between health authorities and body art professionals' associations.
- Written parental consent must be given for body art on minors. They highly recommend against all tattoo and certain piercing procedures for minors under 18 years old (tongue, nipples and genitals) and all piercings for minors under 16 years old with the exception of the earlobes. Specific caution was given for the dangers of genital piercing and in particular for women. Since

they cannot prohibit the voluntary procedure for a consenting adult, they make clear that the practitioner should be prosecuted under the penal code for assault in case of permanent disability or mutilation (art. 222-9 and 229-10).

-They recommend that the distribution of antibiotics, anti-inflammatories or anesthetic products by body artists should be considered illegal practices of medicine.

-Studios (except those who pierce only the lobe of the ear) should be inspected and obtain approval from the health authorities for criteria such as hygienic studio environment, equipment and waste disposal.

-They also suggested an extreme version of informed consent: a required 15-day waiting period. A prospective client would visit for a piercing or tattoo consultation and get a standardized information brochure established by public health authority that details the risks, and give written consent after a 15-day delay for reflection.

-The EU resolution concerned with material to be inserted should be strictly adhered to, notably in regards to Nickel content for jewelry.

-The body artist should be legally responsible for their practice and actions.

-Health authorities should be empowered to sanction studios that do not abide by the legislation, and should make regular inspections.



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-Blood donation should not be allowed for one year after a tattoo or piercing.

(The full penal code can be downloaded at: <http://www.droit.org/jolcopdf/Penal.pdf>)

The February 22nd edition of *Le quotidien de Médecin* (the French daily medical newspaper), reported that two decrees of body art regulations were about to be signed into law from the Ministry of Health:\*

-The first concerns the equipment for tattooing and piercing—such as ink and jewelry—and their manufacture and storage requirements. This should be published by mid-March.

-The second dealt with the risks of tattooing and piercing practices. Registration of professional body artists, written parental consent for minors, and detailed written disclosure of health risks to clients will be required. Training will be mandatory for professionals to conform to the health and safety regulations, and required use of sterile medical disposable products or sterilization after any contact with the skin—even if there is no break in the cutaneous skin surface.

## None of the professionals visited, whether piercer or tattooist, possessed an autoclave...

The decree of February 20th, 2008 stipulates then that the practices of tattoo, permanent makeup and piercing must be declared, and workers must be trained to conform to the hygiene and safety requirements. Each region will have a list of approved training programs and will authorize certain diplomas as equivalent.

It is required to dispose of products that are used in procedures as infectious waste.

The law specifies clearly that jewelry for initial piercings—and for healed ones as well—is free of nickel and must conform to the EU nickel regulations 2004/96/CE to prevent allergic reactions and sensitization, as noted by the Academy of Medicine.

Sadly, the piercing gun is allowed for the ear and nose as long as a sterile, single use element isolates the body part from the part of the gun that is reused.

Piercing for minors is authorized with written parental consent that must be kept on file for at least 3 years.

The client must be informed before the procedure of the risks they may be exposed to and this risk information has to be clearly displayed in the studio. The Ministry of Health will determine the content of this information.

A separate procedure area is required and the Ministry of Health will announce further specifications.

The penalty for people who do not follow those resolutions could be confiscation, fines and imprisonment.

Body artists have been given a bit of time to adjust to the new regulation, but registration is now mandatory with the local administration, and providing information about body art risks to the client has been required from the moment the law was published in the *Journal Officiel* on February 20th.

### Other resources:

[www.journal-officiel.gouv.fr/](http://www.journal-officiel.gouv.fr/)

[www.sante.gouv.fr](http://www.sante.gouv.fr)

\*A decree or a law takes action when published in the *Journal Officiel* unless otherwise specified on the decree itself. The decree concerned with body art was published by the *Ministere de la Jeunesse et des Sports* (in charge of tattoo and piercing regulations) on February 20th, 2008 (JO N# 0043) The decree gave a 6 months to a year time period for studios to adapt. **P**

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Group-Picture, unfortunately most of the Tattooists are missing, they were still in the "Tattoo Machines and their Secrets" class held by the Godoy Brothers.



Pain Solution Show ([www.painsolution.net](http://www.painsolution.net))  
Håvve Fjell loves to play with fire.



Microdermal practice Workshop in Techniques (punch, needle and scalpel), Jewellery (size and designs) and possible variations of placement on the body. Right bottom: Nils (Wildcats Store Serious Piercing Düsseldorf, Germany) teaching.



Luis Garcia teaching Surface Piercing Techniques, on his left side you see the interpreter



# BMXNET CONFERENCE 2007



**Stephan Strestik**  
BMXnet President  
Wildcat Media / Expand Magazine  
Gronau, Germany

This past November, 150 piercers, tattooists, and body modification professionals came together for the first BMXnet Conference. This was a new event best described as a get-together of different body modification disciplines to learn from each other. It is difficult to write about the first BMXnet seminars because they covered so much within the body modification industry.

## What is BMXnet?

BMXnet (Body Modification Exchange Network) began only one year before this first conference, in the form of an “independent piercer meeting” initiated by a couple of friends that work in the industry. We felt the need to sit together and talk, with no company or organization hosting to decide what to talk about and what not. The APP influenced and inspired that meeting a lot— after visiting the APP conference several times everyone on the BMXnet team saw the need to carry on and meet and exchange with others within Germany and Europe. Our first four small meetings (the piercers were from all over Germany but the meetings were in Essen and Berlin) were “piercing-only,” although they had a wide range of topics—such as, “Where is the border between piercing and body modification?”—and also included us working together in each other’s studios.

Another large influence was the 2006 APTPI (Associazione Piercers E Tatuatori Professionisti Italiani) Conference in Italy. That event demonstrated how well piercers and tattooists could get along, despite the history of keeping the two industries separate. It also showed how well you can organize an event like this with a crew of only a few people, and how big the interest and need in Europe is. In the beginning of 2007, word quickly spread about the success of

the conference. Several articles about it (in *The Point* and *EXPAND* magazine) got even more people interested, and when it was confirmed that the APTPI was not doing a conference in 2007, it became a mission to do something in Germany near that date (November).

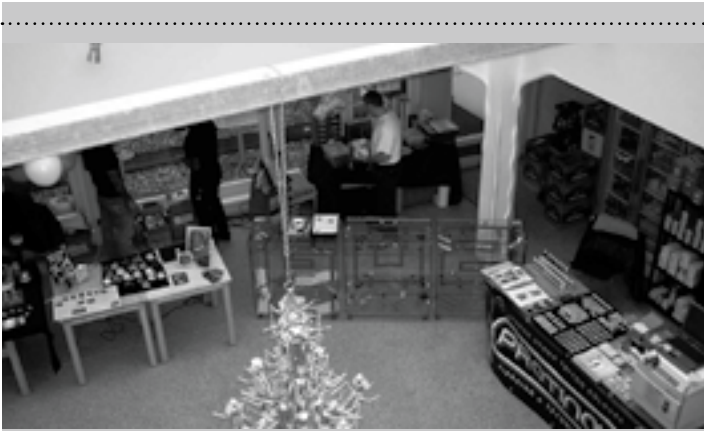
It was also clear that we did not want to exclude any discipline or part of what is common body modification, such as tattooing, piercing, scarification, suspension or any others. One of BMXnet’s main missions is to develop an exchange within and across all disciplines of body modification, with the common denominator being acceptance and tolerance of the work, art and passion of others.

## The Conference

On very short notice (only about three months before the event) everything got started, and our main sponsors—Wildcat Germany and Industrial Strength Europe-Swiss—made the event financially possible. We had amazing support from other organizations—such as the APP, APTPI, OPP (Germany’s Organisation Professioneller Piercer), and the UETA (United European Tattoo Artists)—in the form of contacts, resources and speakers. With their combined help we were able to offer thirty classes for piercers, tattooists and body modification artists. Within a short period of time 100 people had signed up; in the end 150 people attended the conference—which seemed to have been the perfect size to start such a thing.

Initially planned as a two day event, we decided it was a good idea to add another day before the start of the main event to get people together early and offer them somewhere to relax, meet and get together before the two days of listening and learning began. (The schedule was





## The Venue

The location of the first BMXnet Conference was remarkable compared to traditional exhibition halls and seminar rooms. As a formerly convent and current arts space, it offered a special atmosphere that lent further creative and inspirational impulses to the conference.

What follows is an explanation of the idea of the "Unperfect House" from its founder, Reinhard Wiesemann:

*"The more perfect the environment, the more people are damned to do nothing."*

*"In every generation there is a small percentage of people who are on the way to make exactly that which they like to do into a career. The Unperfect house should give those people chances and make them visible to others. In the Unperfect house, anyone can try out a business idea or try to become known as an artist."*

*"In the Unperfect house, anyone is free to test their own way, whoever will, say his view (as I do here), whoever will, in respect to foreign ideas, whoever will not, let it be."*

*"Artistic centers speak to artists, institutes address technicians and tradesmen. The Unperfect house unites creative people from all areas and is not interested in whether someone will earn money or not. Artistic centers seldom offer much publicity, institutes are even quieter. In the Unperfect House, a large portion of the earnings will be appropriated to make the house attractive for guests. In institutions, one must choose to found a firm, to quit their own job, to jump into cold water. In the Unperfect house, on the contrary, one can vocationally, or on the side of school/study, start his dream job. The Unperfect House shall be a springboard for that; to make one's dream into a career or to found a company. But Associations and Hobbyists are also welcome! The diversity of many differing people who are active in the Unperfect house for completely different reasons get one place, whose unbelievable atmosphere leaps over the visitor. And enthusiastic visitors are the other half of the Unperfect house."*

*"For me, altruism and egoism are not opposite. (I translate altruism not as 'disinterestedness,' but as 'being useful to others.')* There are dimensions independent from each other, just as 'height' and 'width.' The often heard charge, 'the action was not altruistic, because a self-interest arose,' is just as illogical as the phrase, 'the cupboard is not high, because it is also wide.' If a person thinks this way, then he decides on a way of life which either only egoistic or only charitable. I don't consider either way desirable."

This should help everyone understand why the "Unperfect House" was chosen for this event: the parallels of their mission and the structure and idea of BMXnet are obvious. Everyone should share and give, and at the same time benefit and profit from the "BodyModification eXchange NETWORK."



Operafication (www.myspace.com/operafication , USA), Zane hanging, Hilary singing.

packed!) That first day of socializing (Friday) was a "suspension day," with Wings Of Desire (Norway) in cooperation with the Superfly Crew (Berlin), Thorsten (iSuspend), Muffe (Copenhagen Body Extremes), Jussi (Circus Mundus Absurdus) and others. That first day was (of course) full of difficulties and a little chaotic, but with so many experienced people around helping and supporting it was the perfect exercise to get everything running a bit more smoothly for the next two packed days. It may sound like a cliché, but that "family vibe" made the event special from day one. Everybody was relaxed and helpful and obviously had the same intention: to make the thing work. That night was the official welcome party, with two great shows by Operafication (professional opera singing coupled with Fakir and a suspension performance) and the second by Psycho Cyborgs. It was a great party, and it was hard to kick everybody out after midnight to go to bed—but Saturday's breakfast and classes started early—at 9 and 10 am.

## The Classes

In the two main rooms (each able to hold 60-80 people each) and the two smaller rooms (holding 20-50 people) up to four classes and round-tables were held at the same time. While the bigger rooms had lectures and speeches the smaller rooms had roundtables and workshops, such as the four-hour *Introduction to Microdermal Techniques*, where a group piercers with microdermal [also called



Hávve and Stephan doing "the press picture".



The audience at the stage.



The EXPO on the top floors winter garden.

One of BMXnet's main missions is to develop an exchange within and across all disciplines of body modification, with the common denominator being acceptance and tolerance of the work, art and passion of others.

surface anchors—ed.] experience demonstrated and assisted advanced piercers with the different placement and procedures of "single point piercings."

There was the class, *Tattoo Machines and their Secrets*, held by the Godoy Brothers—who wrote a book by the same name—about tuning and becoming more familiar with tattoo machines. The second day was even more practical when tattooists brought in their machines for some hands-on practice in recognizing and fixing common misconfigurations.

Steve Haworth's seminars were also very well attended. In detailed theory, attendees were able to learn more about surface-to-surface piercing, genital beading and laser branding. These classes ended up being completely booked, as it was the first time he has taught in Europe. (Steve ended up staying for another week in Europe to work on his H2Ocean-sponsored tour.) The Godoy brothers and Steve Haworth all said they really enjoyed the event, and have already promised to be part of the 2008 conference at the end of July. We hope all the other lecturers will come again, because everyone did an amazing job!



**Luis Garcia**  
APP International Liaison  
No Ka Oi Tattoo and Piercing  
Philadelphia, PA

This past November, I had the opportunity to represent the APP and teach at the first BMXnet.org conference in Essen, Germany. This conference was a three-day, no-holds-barred, body modification education smorgasbord. BMXnet.org is a new project put together by Stephan Strestik, Stefanie Rihm, and Marcus Strohnner, whose purpose is to provide a space for a free and safe body modification information exchange among practitioners and enthusiasts in the German body modification community, and to facilitate interaction without the all too common “my way is the only way” attitude.

The beginning of the conference was a laid back meet-and-greet. Upon arriving, one of the first (and best) things I noticed was the large international attendance. Even though BMXnet is German-based, there were attendees from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, Italy, the UK, Spain, Finland, and even a few from the USA. The first day everyone milled about introducing themselves and enjoying conversation, food, and drinks, and the evening ending with an amazing suspension and performance art show by Hilary and Zane of Operafication (an amazing mix of opera and suspension) and Sampaa Cyborgs.

The second and third day of the conference consisted of seminars and workshops in every realm of body modification imaginable from a multitude of artists such as Paul King, Steve Haworth, Marcus Strohnner, and Thorsten Sekira. Most of the classes were offered in English (due to the heavy international attendance) with the German language classes having translators present. Classes on anthropology, genital beading, surface piercing technique, tattoo machine construction and upkeep, electro-cautery branding and traditional Japanese tattooing were just some of the many interesting seminars available. There were also surface anchoring workshops running all day where artists could watch procedures being performed. There was an international roundtable where board members of the OPP (from Germany), the APTPI (from Italy), and the APP got together to explain the way the organizations work, how to start a comparable organization, and the current state of affairs in the industry in each of our regions. There was also a small exposition running both days with companies such as Wildcat, Industrial Strength, H2Ocean, and Trust, where you could buy anything from plugs to silicone implants and sub-dermal elevators. The conference ended with a hilarious comedic performance by Hawe (of Pain Solution) and a great sixty-person group dinner at the Greek restaurant across the street from the venue.

Overall, the conference was amazing. BMXnet provided the biggest variety of body modification information and seminars I have ever seen. Everyone seemed to enjoy themselves, and the feedback I heard was overwhelmingly positive. Congratulations are due to Stephan and his crew for doing a great job putting together such an influential event.

The two main rooms always had a piercing class and a tattoo class taking place at the same time. They ranged from the necessary evil (but totally fresh to some...) *Validation of Autoclaves, Quality Management of Tools Processing*, and *The Legal Aspect of Tattooing and Body Modification*, to more advanced classes. *Surface Piercing Techniques* was taught by Luis Garcia (from the APP), who also joined an early class where representatives from different body modification organizations had the chance to tell people more about their work and goals. There were two *Aftercare* classes, one for Piercing and one for Tattooing, *Understanding Tattooing Basics* and a class called *Safe Body Suspension Practice* taught by Wings of Desire. To finish everything off there were some great cultural and historical classes: Paul King's *History of Western Body Piercing* and *Sri Lankan Festivals of Suspension*, and Professor Palmisano's *Piercing and Tattoo Anthropology*. (Mr. Palmisano is a Professor of Anthropology from Italy who also spoke at the APTPI Conference in 2006.) Next to classes open to everyone there were also closed roundtables only for advanced body modification artists.

## The Expo

When not taking classes or participating in roundtables, attendees could tour the Exposition. Sponsors such as Wildcat Germany, Industrial Strength Europe, H2Ocean, TRUST, Global Tattoo Supply, medical suppliers and many others showed their products and answered questions. On Sunday, most of the visitors took some time to shop and get the latest information from vendors

## What Else

The location and the mixture of so many international artists—from Italy, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Austria, Poland, England, the USA, and Germany of course—from all disciplines of body modification created a very special and pro-active atmosphere. The discussions were on a very high level, and everyone was interested in the experiences and opinions of their international neighbors. The location helped everyone to connect, as there were sofas, areas with pillows, candles and blankets on the floor, bars and food stations all over the house. You could have a drink or two, clear your thoughts a little bit for the next class, discuss some of the day's seminars, or just relax and talk to some friends (or make new ones).

## The Next Conference

It will be hard to top the level of enthusiasm (and location) for the next conference. With an expected number of visitors anyone from 300 to 500, the “Unperfect House” will be too small. The first priority is to find a place that can be all that the “Unperfect House” was. Since the next Conference is scheduled for this summer (July 25th to 27th), there are still opportunities to find a nice place.

Last year, 60% of the classes were bi-lingual with real time translation (German to English and English to German). This year we aim to have 80% of the classes in both English and German—so it will be even more attractive for international attendees to come. English is spoken at the whole event, so everyone—no matter where they are in the world—should come to the conference and have a



**Paul King**  
 APP Treasurer  
 Cold Steel  
 San Francisco, CA

The European BMXnet conference launched November 2007 in Essen Germany. Luis Garcia, current International Liaison for the APP, and I were invited to teach along with such notables as body modifying pioneer Steve Hayworth. About 150 people attended the first ever three-day event offering about 30 classes in a lovely converted former nunnery!

Inspired by the APP this not-for-profit group decided early on it was within their scope to be all inclusive, as part of their mission, to "develop exchange within and across all disciplines of body modification with the least common denominator of acceptance and tolerance for others work, art and passion".

A highlight for me included the anthropology class taught by Italian Professor Antonio Palmisano of the University of Trieste. It was nice to be able to "sit one out" and listen to someone else for a change. He was both informative and sensitive towards his audience. Any professor quoting the German philosopher Nietzsche's view of physical pain and its crucial relevance to the relationship with our bodies is alright in my book!

After packed days of classes, evenings were livened up with performance art. The performance duo, Operafication, did a beautiful piece featuring a voluptuous opera singer bellowing out an anguished solo, dripping in her own blood, while a dead soldier was suspended from hooks; horizontally face up over the stage. Sammpa Von Cyborg did not disappoint with his famous freak show including drilling a man's face and having fake blood pumped through real stigmata piercings in his cohort's hands. Havve Fjell of the international performance troupe, Pain Solution, in sinister clown face, performed his international sideshow self-mortification antics including bed of nails, sword and fire play. It's a testimony of the talents of all the performers that they kept the attention and adoration of such a body-play jaded crowd.

The classes were well prepared and the conference was considered a success by all the organizers and attendees that I spoke with, so much in fact that BMXnet have scheduled the next conference in Ruhr area of Germany for July 25-27, 2008. I enthusiastically recommend this event! I would encourage you to register as soon as possible since the next event is expected to grow by up to 400%. You can keep posted at [www.bmxnet.org](http://www.bmxnet.org) as well as contact the organizers at [admin@bmxnet.org](mailto:admin@bmxnet.org).

good time. If you need a private place to stay or guest-spot to work the organizers will be happy to connect you with other BMXnet enthusiasts.

I hope the cooperation between different body modification associations and organizations will continue to grow. As a direct result of 2007s BMXnet event, there has been a meeting of all the major German associations at which they agreed to start working together instead of ignoring the fact that they all have common goals. It is time for us all to unite and benefit from collaboration and synergy and help each other, instead of pointing fingers at other's work, procedures, or art.


It is important for me to close this article with a big thanks to all the people in this industry—practitioners and friends—who helped, taught, and supported me when I was new to all this (coming from the comparably boring Internet's New Economy in 2000), especially Thorsten and my boss Martin. As one of BMXnet's founders, I can say that it would not exist like it is without the inspiration of Bruno and Håvve, whose work and attitude have always been an inspiration to me.

[www.bmxnet.org](http://www.bmxnet.org)

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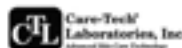
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# MEET THE NEW BOARD



**James Weber**  
Incoming APP President  
Infinite Body Piercing, Inc.  
Philadelphia, PA

It is a great honor to have been elected to serve a second term on the Board of Directors of the Association of Professional Piercers.

Those of you who know me know the last three years—years that I served my first term on the APP Board—has been a time of great transition for me, personally and professionally. It is not without hesitation that I accepted my nomination.

The outgoing Board of Directors—on which I served as Medical Liaison—was plagued by communication problems, personality clashes, and drama. Of the original seven of us elected, at the culmination of our three-year term only four of us remain. Through the unforgiving lens of the Internet, all our difficulties were amplified, our struggles exaggerated, and the three subsequent resignations came to overshadow any of our accomplishments.

This was also a time of professional difficulty. I found myself formally splitting with my long-term partner, which, while a long time in coming has nonetheless been quite difficult. This past September I also had the misfortune to lose three piercers at my shop—the entire piercing staff other than myself. While I felt no ill will towards any single one of them for leaving (they all felt it was time to move on, each choosing a different state, a different path, a different reason for leaving) it obviously left me in quite a bind.

These two things—the loss of my staff and difficulty in splitting assets—led me to a simple solution: The universe was trying to tell me something; it was time to sell my shop and make my graceful exit from the industry which has been my livelihood for the last 15 years. I consulted with appraisers. I consulted lawyers. I spoke to other shop owners who have become my friends through the years. I talked to manufacturers—the

ones who knew just how busy we are and how much jewelry we moved. I spoke to anyone I thought might be in a position to purchase my shop.

But I also had a studio to run—one with more business than could often be handled by three piercers—without anyone but myself to cover piercing shifts. I turned to the same people I have in years past to help with staffing: I called former guest piercers, shop owners, and spoke again to jewelry manufacturers and distributors. I networked on IAM.BME and got the word out: I was looking for guest piercers to man my shop until

I could find permanent staff—piercers that would be agreeable to relocating to a shop that was for sale, not knowing who their boss may ultimately be in the future. I didn't expect it to be easy.

It wasn't. I was hosting two guest piercers at a time, booking flights and flying them in from different parts of the country to have them work anywhere from a week to a month. In addition to getting them acclimated to how things worked at the studio, I was also hosting them as guests in my house. Between myself, my roommates, guest artists and visiting friends I had up to eight people staying with me at any given point. I was “on” all the time, always at work in some way, whether it was

explaining where tools were kept to piercers not used to our shop's layout, to washing sheets and towels at my house with each new houseguest. I was spreading myself quite thin.

But I've also had an amazing procession of piercers in my shop over the past six months. I've hosted piercers and body artists from all over: from the US, as close as rural Pennsylvania to as far as California and Oregon; one from Australia, who I was lucky enough to have stay for several weeks on his tour

...despite all this we share a passion for body piercing, body art, body modification that we care so deeply about because this is our livelihood, our passion, our life.



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through North America; and a Japanese piercer (and friend) who made the trip just to work for several weeks at my shop. (I was relieved to find that—despite a slight language barrier—he adapted quite well.)

In all this turmoil, in this merry-go-round of scheduling, as my partner and I struggled to negotiate a settlement, as I struggled to keep the shop staffed, as I struggled with the comforts of my numerous houseguests something wonderful happened: I reconnected with everything I love about this industry and about the people in it. I realized, even with all the pettiness, the in-fighting, the struggle to get the rest of the world to understand what we do without being critical or dismissive, there is no other place I would have met the people I had staying at my house, the people I have employed at my shop, the people I see every year at Conference, the people that I interact with in my role on the Board of the APP. I came to understand, more than I ever have before, just what this industry means to me and what my place is in it. Maybe the universe was trying to tell me something: to show me where

and with whom I belonged.

My partner and I are coming to the end of our long process of negotiation. A process that, while not giving either of us everything we want, will (hopefully) leave us at least amicable. At its completion, I will become sole owner of my shop. In the past two months I have also been able to find—all at once, it seemed—three new piercers (in addition to hiring back one of the previous ones). I now have a revitalized shop, staff, and attitude. With these, I enter my 16th year in this industry.

This is the attitude, the outlook I hope to bring to the APP in my second term on the Board of Directors. The feeling that, despite all our differences, despite the occasional feuds, squabbles, or arguments, despite our differing opinions about what this industry is, our standards, about how the APP should be run, despite all this we share a passion for body piercing, body art, body modification that we care so deeply about because this is our livelihood, our passion, our life. At the end of the day, we are all working towards the same thing: a place where we all belong.



**Bethra Szumski**  
Incoming APP Secretary  
Virtue and Vice, Inc.  
Atlanta and Athens, GA

I would like to sincerely thank the membership for once again electing me to the board of the APP. I am looking forward to being a part of the further growth, stability and viability of the Association. It is my pledge to you to provide the needed experience and dedication required to fulfill my term and various duties.

It is my goal to help widen the network of participation in the day-to-day activities of the APP, all while keeping strong central leadership. The utilization of committees and work groups will be an excellent opportunity to pull individual members into a more active role, and will also acclimate potential future board members to the duties and stresses they may face if elected. The members of these groups would be both accountable, and recognized, for their commitment, and this will help to maintain a level of productivity that has been difficult to sustain in the past. Committees can also help with future board transitions, allowing mentoring for new board members and creating service

positions for past Board members without the full commitment of another full term.

Since serving my last two terms on the Board (as Secretary from 1999 to 2002, and as President from 2002 to 2005), I have also assumed to position as a distributor for Wildcat USA. While some may see this as a potential concern—a jewelry distributor having a role in shaping APP policy—I am confident that time will show no conflict of interest on my part in this matter. Furthermore, my previous six years on the Board have clearly taught me that the health and welfare of this organization takes precedence to the interests of any single member of the Board of Directors.

Please do not hesitate to contact me directly; I do not bite. I can be reached by phone at either of my shops (in Atlanta at 404-315-6925 or Athens at 706-208-9588), or by emailing [secretary@safepiercing.org](mailto:secretary@safepiercing.org).



**Didier Suarez**  
Incoming APP Vice-President  
Enigma Professional Piercing  
San Diego, CA

I have devoted a large part of my life to the art and trade of body piercing, working as a piercer for fourteen years in the Southern California area. I own and operate two studios—Enigma Professional Piercing—in San Diego, California. Staying in contact with my peers has always been one of my priorities, and I have done this through frequent guest spots, outreach at numerous conventions, and by attending every annual APP Conference that has been held in Las Vegas. This continuing education gives me tools to bring back to my community my clients, and I've been fortunate enough to be able to share what I had been given through networking and teaching. I've provided educational material and instructed for PPIS (Professional Piercing Information Systems) and classes at the annual APP Conference. I've been a guest speaker at San Diego

State University, the University of California at San Diego and numerous San Diego city schools. I took part in forming the board for the CAPSBA (California Association for Safe Body Art) in 2004, and I was appointed outreach coordinator due to my openness and years of work with my community. My actions on behalf of my community have made it a safer place to be pierced, and by the end of my term on the Board I want every APP member to feel they are doing the same. The APP has provided not only me but also our entire industry with basic standards as well as years of priceless education. I would like to thank the membership for voting me onto our Board, and I hope to exceed all your expectations in working to better the association. It is an honor to have the opportunity to serve the membership of the Association of Professional Piercers.



**Elayne Angel**  
Incoming APP Medical Liaison  
Yucatan, Mexico

I feel a little silly using this space to re-introduce myself (after serving two previous three-year terms on the APP Boards of Directors), so I've decided on sharing some other thoughts here instead.

First, a warm thank you to all of the members voted for me. I am very much looking forward to resuming my service to the APP. I feel the Association is an extremely important force in professionalizing and legitimizing our industry, and I am pleased to again play a crucial role in the organization.

When the members of the Board-elect become active in April 2008, it is my intention to again serve as Medical Liaison for the APP. However, this was not my original plan. Originally, I thought it would be best to expand my horizons and seek a different Board position—perhaps Vice President. During our first meeting in February 2008, the group—both current Board and Board-elect—participated in a very revealing exercise in which each of the members openly outlined his or her strengths and weaknesses with the input of all who were present. In the course of this assignment it became clear that, as much as I might desire to try something new, I could best contribute to the organization if I resumed my prior role.

This is one of the benefits of more fully utilizing the by-laws as they apply to the workings of the Board; I might have been elected for a job to which I was not as well suited. I am personally impressed by the way the system is now functioning to optimize the talents and qualifications of its volunteer workforce.

On a related note, one of my weaknesses (as expressed by the other participants in the recent exercise) was that I am “clique-ish.” When this was pointed out, I must admit I was rather stunned; I consider myself to be a very cordial person. It was explained that a clique is “a close group of friends or colleagues having similar interests and goals, and whom outsiders regard as excluding them.” By that definition, I realized it might be true. It turns out that I feel a little shy at events like Conference—No, I'm not joking. I am comfortable there in my role as an educator and public speaker (and look forward to using my skills and experience to teach a class on the topic at Conference 2008), but off the podium, in a crowd, I have a little less self-assurance. As a result of this revelation, I want to explicitly announce to everyone: when you see me at Conference (or elsewhere) know that you have an open invitation to come up and talk to me.



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**Ed Chavarria**  
Incoming APP Membership Liaison  
Koi Piercing Studio  
Salt Lake City, UT

I would like to start off by extending a sincere thank you to all who voted me into a board position. It is because of the trust shown by membership and the positive feed-back from colleagues and friends that I feel confident and strong about working with the Board to help better our community and industry.

My journey as a piercer began in Houston, Texas at Taurian Piercing and Metals, where I underwent a very lengthy and intensive apprenticeship under the tutelage of Steve Joyner and Byriah Dailey. I remained at Taurian for five years, and from there I spread my wings and moved to Oklahoma City to work at Jason King's 23rd St. Body Piercing, staying for a year and a half. I'm currently working in Salt Lake City at Koi Piercing Studio alongside its amazing and supportive staff. Besides the studios that have employed me, I've had the opportunity do guest spots at two other reputable studios: Piercology in Columbus, Ohio and Enigma Professional Piercing in San Diego, California.

In addition to piercing, I hold a deep passion for body ritual and suspension. I have been involved with suspension since 2000 as a piercer/performer in the troupe CoRE (Constructs of Ritual

Evolution). I have worked closely in facilitating suspensions during One Festival: a three day ritual event celebrating the mind, body and soul. I also facilitate private rituals and suspension in smaller more private settings.

My strengths as a leader are as follows: I hold the ability to remain calm and grounded even through the most stressful of times. I am always willing to help out and am of great availability even with a full plate. I can see both sides of an issue and am able to make proper and positive decisions with a clear mind. Most importantly, I have an endless amount of energy to accomplish any and all tasks presented to me.

I'm truly excited to step into the role of Membership Liaison. I look forward to being the representative for the membership on the board, and to being the person with whom the member's share their ideas for positive change. I hope that over the next three years we can all make changes to better our lives, community, and industry. Again, thank you all for believing in me and voting me into the Board. I look forward the changes we will all make. **P**

# HOW TO SURVIVE CONFERENCE



**Stephen DeToma**  
Anomaly Studio  
Pasadena, Ca

The Association of Professional Piercers Conference in Las Vegas, Nevada. You hear stories, you see pictures; you hear about scooter gangs, towels, classes, the Splash Bar, and half of it doesn't make any sense. In 2007, I attended the 12th APP Conference, my first, and it's just as crazy in person as everything you've heard. It's hard to sort through all of it; what you hear from past attendees, what you read online, not to mention all the photos. I've visited Las Vegas several times since moving to Southern California and I'd like to think I can handle myself pretty well, but the first time you set foot into the world of Conference it can be pretty overwhelming. So many questions roll through your head as a first time attendee: Where are these rooms? Where are all the clocks in this town? Eight dollars for a sandwich at Subway? How do these people sleep at night? And that's to say nothing of trying to find someone to talk to at the

I won't tell you that each and every person you meet will turn into your new best friend, but I can tell you that if you don't try you'll never know.

welcoming party, or, God forbid, finding someone to sit with for the banquet dinner. No matter how many times you've been to Vegas in the past, the Conference is an entirely different beast in and of itself.

First time attendees will be overwhelmed with the amount of information and opportunities that are thrown at them. Here, I'll share some of the information that I discovered on my first trip to Conference, as well as some tips that were shared with me from 10 year veterans as well as friends and peers returning for their second, third and fifth years.

Conference is all about budgeting, as much with time as with money. A big challenge for many first time attendee is how to split your time between classes and socializing (and to a greater extent, sleeping). It's a good idea to have a bit of a game plan as to how you plan to spend your time before you arrive in Las Vegas. Obtain a copy of the schedule and plan your classes instead of running from one to another at the last second—and running yourself ragged in the process. Have an idea of how late you can stay up on Tuesday night and still make your Wednesday morning class. After all, if you've come to learn and are unable to

absorb any information, it's a wasted trip. If you have more than one person from your shop making the trip with you, divide the classes amongst yourselves. Bring a notebook or a small tape recorder to take notes; once you get home, everyone can benefit from the information absorbed in all classes.

Chances are good you had to save some money to travel to Las Vegas. You'll need money for a hotel room. You'll need to feed yourself for a week away from home. Maybe you want to buy yourself or your shop some new jewelry on the Expo floor; there's always APP shirts and back issues of "The Point" to pick up as well, right? Las Vegas has that magical ability to slide right up to you, buy you a drink, compliment your outfit, and then make off with half of your vacation money, leaving you cursing yourself for not seeing it coming. As important as it is to know what you plan to spend time doing, know what you plan to

spend your money on. If you have a limited budget for the trip and it's important to spend money on—say, jewelry at the expo—don't bring that money with you when you head out for a night with the boys (or girls). If you didn't come to Las Vegas to gamble: for goodness sake, don't bloody gamble! You'll be amazed at how fast "just five bucks" can become so much more.

One of the things you need to spend that money on (and budget time for) is food. When you get the chance, sit down to a good meal. Things get so busy that meals can be overlooked; just taking a break to sit and eat, as well as decompress a bit, will help you run strong. In the morning it's important to eat something. The days start fast, and if you're unable to get something to eat before you sit down in class you'll be left feeling hungry and tired all day. In that state, how do you expect to take in anything? You're paying good money to learn; plan ahead. When you get to Las Vegas, head out to a grocery store. (They have those there; they're just not on "The Strip.") Get yourself a box of granola bars, some fruit, or anything that's small enough to put into a backpack and munch on when you feel the need.

Las Vegas is a town where nearly everyone gets tipped: Bartenders, cab drivers, bellhops, valet drivers, cabstands, concierges, and especially the maids. After you have your money allotted for food, drink, jewelry and any other extracurricular activities, put together some singles to have in your pocket. Tipping the maids is a good way to keep your room in good shape—and a great way to make sure your car gets pulled out of

All work and no play... Conference 2007. Photo by Barry Blanchard.



the garage quickly. Even a dollar or two is better than nothing.

If you are John Doe who just flew in from Small Town, USA and you walk into the party, it can look like every big name in the world is standing right in front of you. If you were to observe the Splash bar for a 24-hour period, you would see that during the daylight hours there are very few modified people and the average tourists rule the land. We are either attending classes or sleeping off the night before. As the evening draws near, the influx of the modified begins to slowly push the average folks away from the bar to a point where only our “tribe” remains. By midnight, the bar is cordoned off and most people chose to simply walk around it. It can all be a little daunting if the only interaction you’ve had with our community in the past is through the Internet. Look, there’s *that* guy! He’s *always* on BME! Look at *her*; I’ve read about her since I was 16! But who wants to just walk up, stick their hand out and say hello? It’s a nerve-wracking situation if you’re not in your element. The first time I went, the thing I regretted the most when day five rolled around was that I didn’t try and talk to more people. Sure, once the party gets going I’m often “Mr. Personality,” but you drop me in a room full of people I don’t know and say, “Here—go make friends,” and I’m the same scared kid that moved to a new high school when I was fourteen.

Here’s the funny part about that whole situation: There are countless other people right there with you who probably feel the exact same way you do and are too afraid to do anything about it. Those same people (like me) are thinking on the long

drive back to LA, or a longer flight back East they could have been just a little more outgoing. I won’t tell you that each and every person you meet will turn into your new best friend, but I can tell you that if you don’t try you’ll never know.

Even if you are not planning to stay out all night abusing your liver, simply existing in the dry desert climate of Las Vegas for a week is enough to feel like you’ve taken a year off of your life. A huge part of remaining a functioning during Conference is: Drink water. Drink a bottle before you go to bed. Drink a bottle when you wake up in the morning. You’ll be amazed at what a difference it makes. The dry desert air, the recycled ventilation, the climate controlled casinos, the cigarette smoke, and yes, the drinking, will all dehydrate you—either passively or aggressively.

It goes without saying: sleep is important. But when there’s a limousine waiting outside bound for a club, it’s hard to say, “No thanks, I’m off to bed.” I’m not telling you that you shouldn’t get into that limo, but it bears mentioning that if you get into that limo every night, you will certainly be hurting by the end of the week.

In the end, the first trip to Conference is a special one. It will feel overwhelming. It will feel like it will never end; then before you know it, it’s over and you’re wondering where it all went. Soak it all in. Make some friends and have some laughs. Take care of yourself while you’re out in the desert, and if you see me cruising around classes in the morning or socializing at night, don’t be afraid to say, “Hello.” **P**

# WOMAN SAYS TSA FORCED PIERCINGS REMOVAL



Greg Risling  
Associated Press Writer

March 27, 2008

A Texas woman who said she was forced to remove a nipple ring with pliers in order to board an airplane called Thursday for an apology by federal security agents and a civil rights investigation.

"I wouldn't wish this experience upon anyone," Mandi Hamlin said at a news conference. "My experience with TSA was a nightmare I had to endure. No one deserves to be treated this way."

Hamlin, 37, said she was trying to board a flight from Lubbock to Dallas on Feb. 24 when she was scanned by a Transportation Security Administration agent after passing through a larger metal detector without problems.

The female TSA agent used a handheld detector that beeped when it passed in front of Hamlin's chest, the Dallas-area resident said.

Hamlin said she told the woman she was wearing nipple piercings. The women then called over her male colleagues, one of whom said she would have to remove the jewelry, Hamlin said.

Hamlin said she could not remove them and asked whether she could instead display her pierced breasts in private to the female agent. But several other male officers told her she could not board her flight until the jewelry was out, she said.

She was taken behind a curtain and managed to remove one bar-shaped piercing but had trouble with the second, a ring.

"Still crying, she informed the TSA officer that she could not remove it without the help of pliers, and the officer gave a pair to her," said Hamlin's attorney, Gloria Allred, reading from a letter she sent Thursday to the director of the TSA's Office of Civil Rights and Liberties.

Hamlin said she heard male TSA agents snickering as she took out the ring. She was scanned again and was allowed to board even though she still was wearing a belly button ring.

"After nipple rings are inserted, the skin can often heal around the piercing, and the rings can be extremely difficult and painful to remove," Allred said in the letter.

Hamlin filed a complaint, but the TSA's customer service manager at the Lubbock airport concluded the screening was handled properly, Allred said.

Allred said she might consider legal action if the TSA does not apologize.

On its Web site, the TSA warns that passengers "may be additionally screened because of hidden items such as body piercings, which alarmed the metal detector."

"If you are selected for additional screening, you may ask to remove your body piercing in private as an alternative to a pat-down search," the site says.

Hamlin would have accepted a "pat-down" had it been offered, Allred said.

Hamlin was publicly humiliated and has "undergone an enormous amount of physical pain to have the nipple rings reinserted" because

of scar tissue, Allred said.

"The conduct of TSA was cruel and unnecessary," Allred wrote. "The last time that I checked a nipple was not a dangerous weapon."

TSA spokesman Dwayne Baird said he was unaware of the incident. There is no specific TSA policy on dealing with body piercings, he said, "as long as it doesn't sound the alarms."

If an alarm does sound, "until that is resolved, we're not going to let them go through the checkpoint, no matter what they're wearing or where they're wearing it."

People routinely pass through security wearing wedding rings without problems, and it might take a larger bit of metal to trigger an alarm, Baird said.

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## TSA'S STATEMENT ON ALLEGED IMPROPER SCREENING AT LUBBOCK, TEXAS March 28, 2008

TSA has reviewed the circumstances related to the screening of a passenger with body piercings that occurred recently in Lubbock, Texas. It appears that the Transportation Security Officers involved properly followed procedures in that incident. They rightly insisted that the alarm that was raised be resolved. TSA supports the thoroughness of the Officers involved as they were acting to protect the passengers and crews of the flights departing Lubbock that day.

TSA has reviewed the procedures themselves and agrees that they need to be changed. In the future TSA will inform passengers that they have the option to resolve the alarm through a visual inspection of the article in lieu of removing the item in question. TSA acknowledges that our procedures caused difficulty for the passenger involved and regrets the situation in which she found herself. We appreciate her raising awareness on this issue and we are changing the procedures to ensure that this does not happen again.

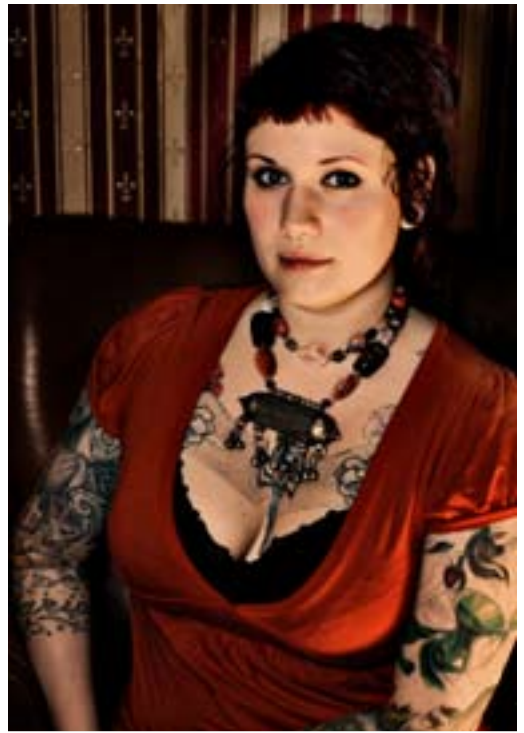
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## UPCOMING APP EVENTS

▶ **ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL PIERCERS ANNUAL CONFERENCE**  
April 20-April 25, 2008  
Riviera Hotel & Casino  
Las Vegas, NV

▶ **ACHA (AMERICAN COLLEGE HEALTH ASSOCIATION) APP INFORMATION BOOTH AT THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE**  
June 4-7, 2008  
Orlando World Center Marriott  
Orlando, FL

▶ **ADHA (AMERICAN DENTAL HYGIENIST'S ASSOCIATION) APP INFORMATION BOOTH AT THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE**  
June 22-25, 2008  
Albuquerque Convention Center  
Albuquerque, NM

▶ **NEHA (NATIONAL ENVIRONMENT HEALTH ASSOCIATION) APP INFORMATION BOOTH AT THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE**  
June 22-25, 2008  
Hilton Tucson El Conquistador  
Tucson, AZ

▶ **APP MEXICO SEMINARS 2008**  
September, 17-20th, 2008  
Plaza Florencia, Zona Rosa  
Mexico City

▶ **APHA (AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION) APP INFORMATION BOOTH AT THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE**  
October 25-29, 2008  
San Diego Convention Center  
San Diego, CA

# THE POINT



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