

THE POINT

ISSUE 68
FALL 2014

THE QUARTERLY

OF PROFESSIONAL PIERCERS



2014 Conference Issue

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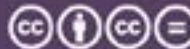
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FROM THE EDITOR



KIMBERLY ZAPATA
The Point Editor

Ah, the after Conference crash—more commonly referred to as post-Vegas depression, or PVD. For me, it set in the second I stepped through the doors at McCarran International Airport. Sure, I was thrilled to go home and see—and hug—my 11 month old daughter (and husband), but there was so much more I wanted to do. So many friends I wanted to see, so many conversations left unheld.

Even so, it was an exciting week. We welcomed new Board members Cody Vaughn, Jef Saunders, Chris Glunt, and Miro Hernandez. We welcomed Brian Skellie to his new position, as President of the APP, and said goodbye to our outgoing Board: John Johnson, Sarvas Berry, and Elayne Angel. At our annual Members meeting we had quorum; something I cannot tell you how many years it has been! (Quorum is the minimum number of members an assembly or society needs be present at any of its meetings to make the proceedings of that meeting valid.) And we educated, re-educated, and revitalized over 1,000 piercers and piercing professionals from across the country, and world.

This year's Conference was a testament to just how far we have come. With over 1,000 attendees (think about that for a moment, 1,000!), next year stands to be even more exciting as we will celebrate our 20th Annual Conference. (The Conference Committee will be meeting in the next couple of months. If you have any class proposals—or other

ideas—for our 2015 event please send them to info@safepiercing.org as soon as possible.)

What better way to highlight our progress then with this full-Conference feature issue. From the opening party to the banquet dinner, and from our volunteers to our Expo and innovations winners, each digital page is covered with the moments and memories, so sit back and enjoy the memories—or check out just a few of the moments you missed out on.

Welcome to issue #68 of *The Point!*

Unless otherwise credited, all Conference photos in this issue are by official photographer Autumn Swisher. ☺

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

PRESIDENT'S CORNER—6

WELCOME FROM NEW BOARD MEMBERS—7

2014 CONFERENCE REVIEW—8

2014 CONFERENCE IN PICTURES—9

SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS—14

2014 BANQUET DINNER—17

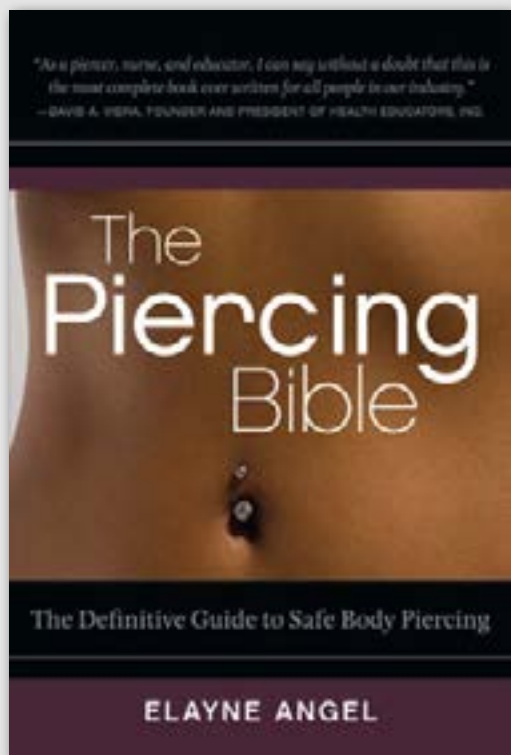
OUTREACH ROUNDTABLE—18

AWARDS—18

RAFFLE & SPONSOR THANK YOU—25

VOLUNTEER THANK YOU—26





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ABOUT THE AUTHOR - ELAYNE ANGEL has been a professional piercer for more than 20 years and has performed over 40,000 piercings. She was awarded the President's Lifetime Achievement Award by the Association of Professional Piercers in 2006 and is a contributing writer for *PAIN* Magazine. She lives in Mérida, Mexico. Visit www.piercingbible.com for more information.

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PAPERBACK

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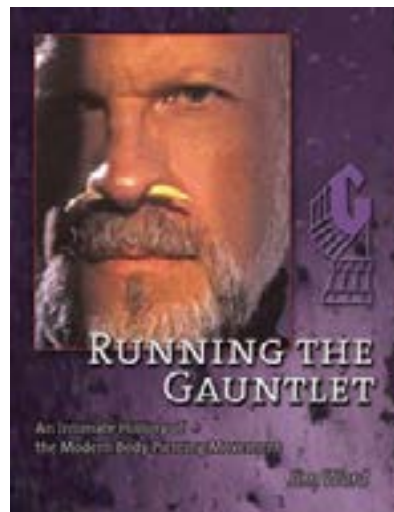
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PRESIDENT'S CORNER



BRIAN SKELLIE
APP President

As we approach our twentieth annual meeting, I reflect on the beginnings of the APP. When I discovered that a group—this group—had formed to take action and establish professional industry standards I was immediately interested and eager to help out in any way I could.

These first actions of the APP, organized by Michaela Grey and a small peer group, were for mutual aid against unfair regulation proposed in California. However, in a short period of time this movement became more, and this group evolved into an incorporated non-profit Association with hundreds of members and thousands of participants. And now, two decades later, I see our trade moving in a great direction—one of growth through participation and collaboration amongst peers.

With the closing of the 19th annual conference, our final board meeting vested five newly elected board members. Steve Joyner officially filled the legislative and regulatory affairs role he had temporarily covered in Mike Martin's absence, and our outreach director Ashley Misako and myself continued our momentum from the previous election.

Our new board has already met since conference and discussed our motivations and ideas for the future. I feel confident we have a very functional working dynamic and trust in our competency to represent the needs of our membership and trade.

This year's Conference saw Committee participation as well as Conference attendance at an all time high, and many local groups have been making significant contributions to the trade in sharing skills and discussing ethics and product quality. I'm very impressed with the ability of our legislative committee and membership to inform and persuade officials to work together to provide standards and prevent unreasonable regulations.

Membership has become more accessible than ever

before, facilitated by an application process that is now online and free (no fees due until acceptance) and an active public forum for prospective member questions moderated by the Membership Committee. I've helped the Committee make it fast and easy for the entire application and video to be submitted and reviewed online, which along with very effective teamwork by the committee has increased both our speed and number of new member approvals.

All of this means that more piercers than ever understand the importance and absolute necessity of quality jewelry. Jewelry makers who are APP Corporate Sponsors and participants are experiencing an affluence of new customers and it is in no small part due to our member efforts to promote and advance the use for quality jewelry, both in their studios and online in our social media that reaches out daily to tens of thousands of potential clients.

Now is the time to move forward with practical projects, such

as having third-party validation for our initial jewelry standards and creating long-term plans for establishing credentials for qualified piercers through hands-on supervised training, skill review and aptitude testing. I am motivated to pursue our plans to provide more experiential workshops and educational services to the membership, more often during the year, and in new locations in addition to our yearly meeting in Las Vegas. I want your certificates for the continuing education we provide to have value beyond paper and peer recognition.

I also want to recognize my fellow members as independent thinkers. I welcome your ideas, and want to make sure that your voices are heard. I will be holding office hours, Tuesday and Thursday of each week from 9 a.m. To 5 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, available online for conversation through Google hangouts as president@safepiercing.org. You will also often find me accessible on Facebook as well, for impromptu interactions. ☺

This year's Conference saw Committee participation as well as Conference attendance at an all time high, and many local groups have been making significant contributions to the trade in sharing skills and discussing ethics and product quality.

WELCOME FROM NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Cody Vaughn—Vice President



I am honored to have been elected by my peers. I joined the Association of Professional Piercers in 2009, and I have served as the Chair for the Membership Committee, and volunteered with the Outreach Committee and the Social Media sub-Committee. I also help to run the APP Tumblr page with Ryan Ouellette, and I have been working as an instructor for the Fakir Intensives in San Francisco since 2010.

My main goals in serving on the Board will be to focus on attracting more piercers to the organization, to work toward more transparent and frequent communication with the membership, and to focus on ways to market the APP to the general public—and not just piercers. I feel that the APP has never been viewed in a more positive light amongst piercers as it is right now, and with the successful push we have all seen on our social media pages—and the unique advantage of membership—we can utilize and unify our combined experiences to seize this opportunity to push the organization further than it has even been.

Jef Saunders—Membership Liaison



Hello *Point* readers!

My name is Jef Saunders, and I am the new Membership Liaison. I am following Sarvas Berry—which means I have some very big, strong, charismatic shoes to fill. Hopefully, I am up up to the task.

It is my goal to do everything possible to expand membership while maintaining the integrity and standards of this organization. I am very much interested in serving the members of the APP to the best of my ability, and I encourage members to communicate with me often about anything membership related. Together we can keep membership in the APP meaningful and worthwhile.

My sincere thanks to the outgoing Board. The tremendous job they have done only makes my job easier and more exciting. Thank you to the members who voted me into this position; I will do my best to fulfill the responsibilities you've entrusted to me. Finally, to the new Board

of Directors: I am humbled to be working by your sides, and am excited by the work we've begun.

Miro Hernandez—Public Relations



I'd like to thank the outgoing Board members, as well as those continuing on in service, for their hard work and dedication. I'd also like to congratulate the incoming Board members on being elected and choosing to embark on this path. A *very big* thank you goes out to the membership who voted and saw something or believed enough in me to allow me the chance to serve as one of your representatives, and your voices.

When I first started piercing, I had little knowledge about the APP. Like many at that time, I was just focusing on getting a piercing straight. I had no interest in joining an organization that I had been told was “nothing but a political group for a bunch of elitist snobs.” But eventually I became determined to become a member, and I did. Years later, and here we are, and I am in a position I thought I would never be in, when I first received my membership certificate.

You are supposed to have a laundry list of goals you'd like to achieve, and something you'd like to see changed when elected. The reality of the situation is as the industry changes, so does my list. As the APP continues to grow by leaps and bounds, the demands of the Board will evolve and grow with our fast-changing industry. I am fully aware that I have big shoes to fill, but I am confident in the memberships decision to have me as a representative for their future.

I'd be lying if I said there wasn't a “what were you thinking and getting yourself into” moment after the first board meeting I attended. I'd also be lying if I said I wasn't excited about what's to come. I am excited to have the opportunity to serve as a Board member at a time when the industry seems to be on an upswing, as evidenced by the amount of customers we are dealing with and the sheer volume of jewelry our vendors are now creating. I am beyond elated to have the opportunity to serve alongside a Board who share a lot of the same ideas and passions for the industry and the future of the organization. I cannot wait to see what comes next. ☺

2014 CONFERENCE REVIEW



KIMBERLY ZAPATA
The Point Editor

On June 7, 2014 I prepared for the 19th Annual Association of Professional Piercers' Conference as I have for every other conference: with frantic, late-night packing (and unpacking) while watching "Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas." I grabbed my laptop, checked in for my flight, and waited with nervous anticipation. (I was thrilled at the prospect of seeing my friends and colleagues but anxious to be leaving my 11-month-old daughter for the very first time.) However, as soon as I walked through the glass doors and into the organized chaos that is the Bally's Hotel and Casino, I felt at home. I saw some faces I knew, and many I didn't, but we were all smiling and greeting each other, and it was exactly what I needed (personally and professionally).

The Facts

The 19th Annual Conference and Exposition was held in the heart of the Las Vegas strip, at Bally's Hotel and Casino, from June 8 through 13, 2014. With 1014 registrants and 282 first timers, the Conference was bigger and better than ever! (Pardon the cliché, but it truly was.) There were:

- 46 instructors
- 68 volunteers
- 52 vendors
- 67 courses offered
- 99.5 instructional hours

The "Fun"

While we all have our own reasons for attending Conference each

year, be it to better (or re-) educate ourselves, shop for the best body jewelry in our industry, or simply connect with piercers and piercees from around the country—and world—the 19th Annual Conference had all that, and more. The opening party, poolside, Monday evening did not disappoint. With perfect "Vegas" weather, a full spread of self-service tacos, and friends—both old and new—the party started at 8:00pm but lasted well into the night, spilling into the lobby bar and hotel rooms throughout the resort. It was the perfect icebreaker for our fairly new crowd—and way cooler than the crap they pull at formal retreats, like trust falls. (Ugh, trust falls.) By time the Expo floor opened the next day, the energy was palpable. (It's not that people were standoffish the first day, it's just that, after the opening party, something was a little different.)

As always, the range of courses, workshops, and roundtables offered was varied, and their curriculums were stellar. Offerings included Gold Jewelry: Sales and Marketing, with Nate Janke and Noah Babcock; Initial Jewelry: The Rules (and When to Break Them), taught by Jef Saunders and Cody Vaughn; and a very open and personal dialogue regarding disorders in our industry, facilitated by Courtney Jane Maxwell and Ashley Misako. Returning favorites were also scattered throughout the schedule, like Working Clean Within Your Studio, Body Anatomy for Safe and Successful Piercings (as well as several other anatomy-based courses), Studio Documentation, and the Af-

tercare "series." The newly formed International Suspension Alliance also held one of their meetings during Conference, which is truly exciting for everyone.

Unfortunately, personal and professional schedules do not always align, and I found myself on a flight out of McCarran a few hours before the banquet dinner. So check out Kendra Jane's [article](#) for full coverage of the banquet dinner.

The Unexpected

One of the undisputed highlights of the week was not a class at all but a roundtable, a Q&A chat with the "father" of modern piercing, Jim Ward. Like everyone, I was beyond excited when I saw "A Fireside Chat with Jim Ward" on the agenda. I work with Jim on *The Point*, and I have read his book *Running the Gauntlet*, but there is still so very much about this man—and his life—I did not know. So I waited anxiously in line alongside hundreds of others who, no doubt, felt the same.

Jim opened his roundtable not with a question but with a harp performance, his first of four pieces to "shake the nerves." The room fell silent. Hundreds of piercers, apprentices, healthcare workers, and other piercing professionals waited in awe as Jim sat down. His performance was beautiful, heartfelt, and personal.

When asked what advice Jim would offer the current generation of piercers (specifically in regards to egos and industry "personalities"), he shared perhaps the most humbling lesson I have ever heard:

“Once a year go to a cemetery and ask yourself one question, how many of the people buried here are still remembered by anyone alive today?” Suddenly everything was put into perspective.

The “class” ended with a final harp performance, and with a standing ovation. Thank you Bethra for convincing Jim to give this amazing performance! And thank you Jim for sharing this with all of us.

For me, this was the first Conference where I truly felt like I’d found my footing. Fears and trepi-

dations were left on the tarmac, and I found confidence I don’t think I have had since fifth grade. I reunited with some amazing colleagues and friends, and made many new ones.

We all leave conference with a laundry list of “changes,” things we hope to do in our studios or with our peers. Some get done, many fall to the wayside—trumped by things like keeping up with your clients, or life. That’s okay. Conference is a great way to reenergize, to remotivate, and to inspire, and—if for no other reason—is the reason it is a must for any

piercer (or industry professional). The event not only puts into perspective the necessity of safety in all aspects of the industry but also reminds us to push our boundaries, personally and professionally, to ask questions, and to try something new—or at least consider that there are alternative approaches and techniques.

Next year we will be moving over to the Flamingo for our big 2-0 celebration. It is sure to be an event to remember, so register early. See you next year! ☺

2014 CONFERENCE IN PICTURES

Socializing



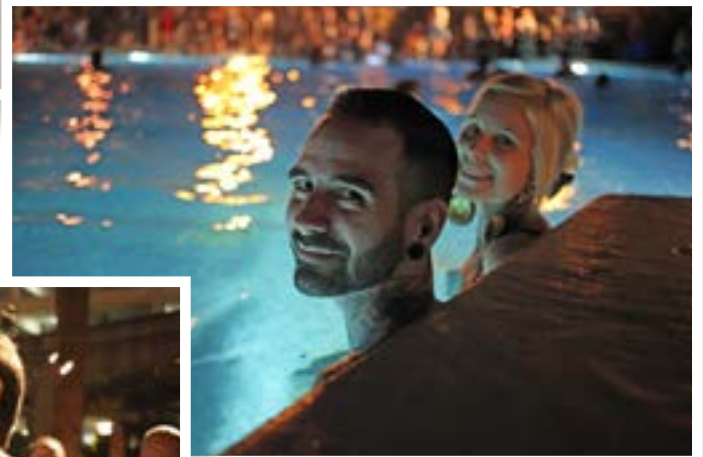
Left, Nate Janke. Bottom, Conference Attendees continue to share long after classes are done. Photos by Kimberly Zapata



2014 CONFERENCE IN PICTURES

The Pool Party

Top to bottom, Super Volunteer, Chadwick Jackson enjoys the free taco bar at the Opening Party; Adam Gregg, Danae Marie, Brianna Sheehan are all smiles at the Pool Party; Efix Roy and Sophie Lacroix relax after the first day of classes; Nate Janke and Super Volunteer Dannielle Greenwood enjoy some well deserved time off.



Classes & Events

Top to bottom, Chris Glunt and Mark Montgomery at the "standing room only" Members Meeting; FaraTa' Wild. The APP had record attendance in their classes this year; Jim Ward's harp performance during his "Fireside Chat"; Jef Saunders, Laura Jane Leonard, and Steve Joyner at the Members Meeting. Photos by Kimberly Zapata.



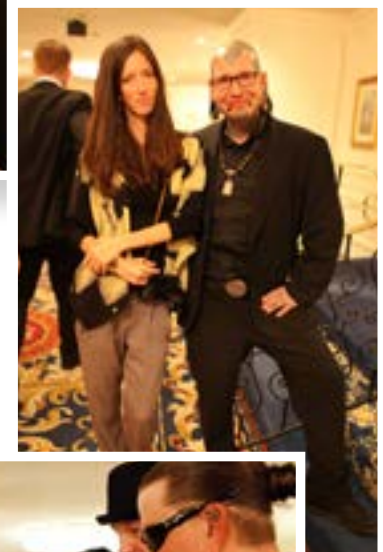
2014 CONFERENCE IN PICTURES

The Expo

Top to bottom, Yorba Linda is ready at the Maya Booth for the Expo to open; With 52 Vendors and almost 200 people working the 86 booths on the Expo Floor, the APP's Expo was an integral part of the Conference experience; Vendors introduce new designs and highlight them with lovely displays (this booth Morton Manley); Jason Pfohl of Gorilla Glass shares a moment with APP Member, Muffe Vulnez.



The Banquet



Clockwise from the top, Conference Attendees packed the Banquet Hall at this sold out event; While the Sideshow theme was in evidence, the next two photos indicate most Attendees preferred to dress in their finest; Super Volunteer Aaron Foster sells last minute raffle tickets to APP Members Mark Montgomery and Rob Hill; Chris Glunt and Paul King share an intimate moment on stage (all as a part of fundraising for the APP).

SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

Al D. Scholar, Zach Fitzgerald



2014 was a rough year. I dealt with a major family loss at the beginning of the year, which required me to use nearly all of the financial reserves that I had planned on using for Conference. I even sold some of my personal belongings in an effort to replenish those reserves, but then automotive issues would take that money as well. I wanted

so badly to not need the Al D.Scholarship. If I could make it on my own, then another piercer could benefit from Conference, and make the world a better place.

The actual process of applying was pretty simple, and I felt like my paper application was strong. However, I had major doubts about my phone interview performance. After the interviews, I started trying to figure out if anything else I owned was worth anything to anyone. Thinking to myself “If I can just pay for the flight and the pass, I’ll figure out somewhere to sleep when I get there.” In my application, I mentioned that I would sleep on a Las Vegas sidewalk. It’s funny, but I wasn’t kidding. Then a miracle happened. I received a call from Tiana letting me know that I had been awarded the scholarship, and was going to Vegas. The clouds opened up and the universe smiled upon me. There aren’t many events in my life that even hold a candle to the amount of joy I felt after that phone call. That same elation continued for quite some time, but then I transitioned into mixed emotions. Sure, I was excited to be one of the chosen few and was thrilled to be going to Vegas, but what if I’m not what they thought I was? Can I handle this monumental task? Anyone that heard I had been awarded the scholarship offered up the same advice “Don’t mess this up.” After hearing this, I started to really worry as to whether or not I deserved what had been given to me. But I was committed. I was going to Vegas.

The days leading up to Conference seemed to drag on and on, and yet when the time was upon me, it felt like I was moving in slow motion with everything around me was flying by. When I arrived, I was a stranger in a strange land. I had no idea where I was or what I was doing. Until I arrived at the hotel. Still afraid and confused, another scholar and a volunteer noticed me and introduced themselves. I was immediately taken to our Mama Duck who gave me a quick tour of the facility. Her

demeanor was that of an exhausted lioness; tired from the weeks/months of intensive labor leading up to Conference, yet ready to adopt another group of newbies and whip them into shape. I immediately felt like there was no way I could let her down, not after everything she had done for us. I was going to be the scholar that I needed to be in order to play my part in making Conference the amazing experience I had always heard it was. I was going to earn my scholarship.

The next morning, I arrived at the volunteer meeting and felt like I was seeing family that I only get to see at Christmas. I tried to introduce myself to everyone right away. (How awesome is it that everybody’s name is on their badges?) Not one sour face, not one gawker, not one rude person in the crowd. We were all pumped to be together. This would be the dynamic for all of Conference. It was my first time being part of such a large group of likeminded individuals. Despite having never met most of the volunteers, I felt like had known them my entire life. Our schedules were packed, and whenever I felt overwhelmed, there was always someone within earshot reminding me to breathe. I love you guys!

If you haven’t been to Conference, I highly suggest making an effort to be there next year. There are so many beautiful people; there is so much knowledge being shared. The classes are very informative and well thought out, and if you disagree, you’ll have your chance to express that. You may have heard a lot of people talk about it being a life changing event, and they are absolutely right. I learned so much at Conference, and I applied that new knowledge immediately. Upon my return, I was busier than I’ve ever been. The positive energy easily recharges your soul and reminds us that what we’re doing is worth it.

Al D. Scholar, Ryan Clark



If you’d told me that I was going to fall in love at Conference, I would have said you were nuts. Yet from the moment I arrived at the hotel, I started falling love—with everything, every person I met, every smiling face I saw. There is an overwhelming feeling of camaraderie when you’re there in the thick of it all, surrounded by hundreds of people with the same goals and passions as

you. It's intense, quite literally. You can't help but bask in the energy; whether it's sitting quietly in a class taught by one of your piercing heroes, lost in a sea of beautiful bodies at the pool party, laughing at the banquet dinner or anything, and everything, in between. You will meet your idols, you will quickly learn that they are regular folks, and you will be able to call them friends when you leave—as long as you put yourself out there. You will be challenged both physically and emotionally, especially when you're sleep deprived and when you're saying goodbyes. I never knew how difficult leaving somewhere could be until I was walking out of the hotel lobby for the last time, but it couldn't have been more worth it.

I have the Al D. Scholarship to thank for the entire experience. The scholarship program is an amazing thing because beyond just helping those with financial difficulties, it puts people together. I ended up working closely with people I'd never met and probably never would have, if not for the program. These people became my family. For example, I am not a morning person, but I was up at seven or eight in the morning every day with bells on. Once I realized how short my time with these people was, I found it difficult to do anything but spend it with them, regardless of how tired or hungry I was. I miss them all terribly, and have since the second we were in different area codes. These are people whose progress I now follow with sincere care. I am legitimately happy for their successes, and sad when they struggle. It was a profoundly intimate experience, much more so than I ever expected, and if you're anything like me you'll be crying your eyes out when it comes time to start saying your goodbyes.

While it was absolutely amazing to learn from so many respected and talented piercers, it was even more incredible to just be able to hang out with them. I can't imagine a better place to network and make friends as a piercer. Any time I found myself near a stranger with piercings, striking up conversation was effortless. (In most any other situation I'd be apprehensive.) I quickly got used to the ol' "what's your name, where do you work" icebreaker. I quickly picked up on the fact that I'd be learning a lot outside the classrooms, and some of the coolest tips and tricks I learned came from chatting with people after classes, or by the bar.

As cliché as it sounds, I think I learned more about myself than I did about piercing. I gained more than just some new information and techniques. I was able to meet piercers local to me who I had been too shy to seek out previously. I was shown how easy it can be to make friends and get along with people, thanks to the volunteer crew and the amazing woman who coordinates

them. I came home with renewed ambition and a whole bunch of new friends from all around the world. I was reminded that there are people that will easily love the heck out of you for exactly who you are. Though leaving was one of the most emotionally trying things I've ever done, for many reasons, being able to go was probably the best thing that's ever happened to me.

Al D. Scholar, Dae Jedic



I've been involved in the industry for about four years, and every year I've watched the application deadline for the Al D. Scholarship come and go. Every time I saw an opportunity to apply, and every time I talked myself out of it. I allowed my doubts and fears to control me in such an intense way, I kept myself from even trying. As human beings, self-doubt

can sometimes be our greatest enemy, and I've battled it throughout my life in many different forms.

As a transgender male-ish person born to Yankees, but residing in the South, *I've allowed myself* to be 'othered' pretty consistently since I first realized my queer-ness. From the little things, like not fitting in in high school and having different musical tastes than my peers, to bigger things, like my sexual preference fueling my running away from home shortly after turning 18 (on Mother's Day no less!), it seemed as though I was destined to be separated from the mainstream because of my differences. As I've gotten older, however, I've made a point to surround myself with people who would love me in spite of (and sometimes even *because of*) parts of me I once thought of as curses. I tend to gravitate towards other 'misfits.' I see now that, for me, being considered 'normal' would be pretty damn boring, and I continue to use my differences as a way to reach out to others who aren't as comfortable with theirs. Simply put, I want to be allowed to truly own my skin, to be the only one completely in charge of MY body.

When I started my piercing career, it was the first job I had where my co-workers saw me and treated me as male, and it was a real game-changer for me. I was accepted as myself, was allowed to have as many piercings and tattoos as I wanted, and it was the catalyst for many very positive life changes. That said, even as I applied for the scholarship and was granted a spot among those precious few, I was filled with that same old, self-doubt. My mind swirled with all of the things that could go wrong,

and all of the ways I could feel cast out from one of the only groups I've ever *really wanted* to fit in with. But this time I didn't let it win. Sure, I barely slept the week before conference, I felt so nauseated at the airport I couldn't eat breakfast, and I was sure I was having a heart attack once in Las Vegas looking for my taxi buddy, but I still went through with it. I realized that I had more control over that feeling than the terrorizing despair it had over me. And you know what? It was the most eye-opening, heart-warming, gut-wrenching, and tear-jerking experience of my life. I met so many people I've looked up to for so long—even though I was still a little too intimidated to meet all of them. I was accepted with open arms (seriously, so many hugs) into a family of people that couldn't be more wonderful. Literally, I can't think of anything about them that made me feel 'othered' or cast-out or like I didn't fit in with them. Even though we are all so different, and many of us from completely different parts of the world, by the end of the week I knew I was at home with them.

So if you are like me, and you've allowed yourself to be put at such unease in regards to attending Conference that it overwhelms you to the point of avoiding it altogether, think of it this way. One of the volunteers (I've searched and searched and can't remember exactly who said it) made a similar point to all of this year's newbies: the dread and fear that you feel is the same that you see your clients dealing with on a daily basis. It is simply the fear of the unknown, and everyone handles it differently. But if you can walk your clients through that feeling and help them to the other side, showing them how relatively painless the piercing process can be, then you can also walk yourself through this process, facing the unknown. And even if you hit some bumps along the way, or you have troubles that you aren't sure how to handle, this is a group of people who wants to assist you. They want to see you happy, helpful, and brave, and they want to teach you how. Let yourself be afraid, and then tell that fear you'll see it in a week, when its blossoms into the best experience of your life. You won't regret it.

No Excuses Scholar, Trist'n Peterson



Before APP, I was an apprentice of 10 months searching for more information on the broad subject of body piercing. I was at the point in my apprenticeship where I needed to collaborate with other piercers and body modification experts about techniques, jewelry selection, and shops. How can I give my cli-

ents the best possible experience to ensure they'll come back to me for future projects? I had a lot of questions and needed answers. At conference I gathered a lot of information and advice from industry professionals on how to do exactly that.

This was my first year attending the Association of Professional Piercers Conference. When I arrived in Las Vegas I was welcomed with unkind stares at the airport and immediately felt out of my element, but this changed upon my arrival at the hotel.

I met a lot of popular body piercers who I looked up to and respected in the industry. I am so thankful that I was picked for the "No Excuses" Scholarship because there is no way I would have socialized as much as I did if I had gone alone. What really blew me away was that every person I talked to was so eager to chat with me, help in anyway they could, and give ideas on how to better myself and my career. I am so thankful; Conference has allowed me to really remove my shell, get to know people, network, and build friendships. (I also roomed with the best people, and although space was limited, we were all equally excited to be there, meet new people, and better our careers.)

I was able to take a full class load and volunteer my extra time to the APP Volunteer crew. My favorite class was Nostril Piercing Advanced Fundamentals because Jef and Alicia made a great team. They each have their own technique, so it was nice to see that no piercer is the same; we all have our own styles. My favorite workshop was Working Clean in Your Studio, all of the instructors made the class interesting and informational. They answered any questions with confidence and in turn taught me a lot of things I was unaware of previously. All the classes I attended were taught by well-educated instructors and I learned so much.

Being a scholarship recipient definitely throws you into the middle of what Conference really is: an intense, beautiful, exciting, epic, inspiring, involving, life-changing, week-long bonanza for the modified! I am looking forward to the 2015 Conference already, and I can't wait to see everyone and meet more people.

APP truly is like family; thank you for the experience! ©



2014 BANQUET DINNER



KENDRA JANE

The buzz around this year's banquet dinner began days before the event, with tickets selling out the night that registration opened! We knew it would be a packed house, everyone dressed in their finest or sideshow attire, but what we didn't know was the extra special entertainment that awaited us from Chris Glunt, your incoming Medical Liaison. From push ups to burpees and even a few lap dances, Chris put his back into it to ensure as many raffle tickets as possible were sold. When enough tickets were on the line he even puckered up for a kiss with the very handsome Paul King. It was a highlight for everyone in attendance in an evening filled with laughter and a heightened sense of community.

From there the entertainment got into the swing of it with a great sideshow act from Swing Shift Entertainment. (They have been long-time attendees of Conference so for many, they were watching not only performers but friends.)

As the entertainment wound down the doors were opened to non-tickets holders, our board members, both old and new, took the stage to either say goodbye or introduce themselves. Announcements were made, and awards were handed out. Joshua Benjamin and Diablo Organics took home the awards for both technical and creative innovations. Best individual booth went to Blessings to You, and best multiple booth went to Tawapa. After a long list of thank yous, which brings tears to her eyes each year, Caitlin McDiarmid had the honor of announcing the 2014 Josh Prentice Volunteer award. This year's recipient has dedicated countless hours to bettering the industry and currently spends many an hour answering Tumblr emails, reblogging piercing after piercing, and giving his time to many of the APP's committees, Ryan Ouellette. Rounding out the awards portion of the evening was Elayne Angel, who presented the President's Award to Brian Skellie, who over the past many years has served to educate piercers around the world and keep knowledge at the forefront of our industry. (Brian is also the APP's incoming President.)

Bethra also had the distinct privilege of presenting Steve Joyner with a Recognition Award from Arkansas body artists to thank him for his support and work on



their state's legislation over the past years.

As always, the evening was brought to a close with the drawing of the final top ten raffle prizes. Some of this year's prizes were:

- \$15,000 worth of Industrial Strength Jewelry
- \$12,000 in credit from Anatometal
- \$5,000 from Body Vision Los Angeles (BVLA)
- H2Ocean prize pack valuing almost \$1500

The grand prize (from Industrial Strength Jewelry) was won by Javier "Fingazz," owner and piercer at Amor Real Tattoo in Santiago, Chile. This prize will be a real game changer for Javier and his studio. There could not have been a better winner, and his excitement was uncontainable, which got the whole room buzzing. No one could have asked for a better end to the evening.

A special thank you to those who sponsored our banquet dinner: Industrial Strength Body Jewelry; Anatometal, Inc.; LeRoi Fine Body Jewelry; The Safe Piercing App; and Kaos Softwear.

Next year the APP Conference will be celebrating our 20th anniversary and we know that the banquet will be one to remember! Ensure you get your banquet tickets when you complete your early registration so you don't miss any of the fun! ☺

OUTREACH ROUNDTABLE—CONFERENCE 2014



JULIE TAYLOR

The outreach roundtable at Conference was very popular again this year, with almost 40 attendees. Participants were full of questions and suggestions for outreach in medical, educational, and other settings, and many piercers said the “You Deserve It” postcards were extremely helpful with outreach as well as for dealing with “price-shoppers.”

Everyone was especially interested in the new Outreach PowerPoint presentation. Geared towards middle-school students, this PowerPoint is designed to help piercers deliver the safe piercing message. And it is now ready for use! Contact outreach@safepiercing.org to receive a copy of this presentation.

Board members and committee chairs stated that the roundtable generated an unprecedented interest in vol-

unteering with the APP. It is clear that outreach is something many Conference attendees feel very passionate about, as well as rewarded by.

A big thank you from the Outreach Committee to everyone who attended the roundtable!

Editor’s Note: Are you interested in volunteering with the APP?

*We have a new survey designed to assess your skills and interests! Email Julie Taylor at volunteer@safepiercing.org to have the survey sent to you. This survey is for those interested in volunteering as a committee member and/or for projects throughout the year and is **not** designed for prospective Conference volunteers. Please email Caitlin at info@safepiercing.org for information about volunteering at Conference. ©*

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AWARDS

Dual Innovator Award-Winner: Jimmy Buddha and Diablo Organics

by Jimmy Buddha

To win both innovator's awards this APP was both a wonderful surprise and an honor. In an industry where so much is changing and evolving, it feels good to know we might be doing something right. I have never really been good at following the rules; pushing limits has always been my natural reaction to the world around me. But if it wasn't for my team at Diablo Organics and my peer group, I would not have the freedom, support, and inspiration to produce award-winning jewelry.

Only a handful of years ago, many of the designs and concepts I utilize today would not have been well received. I have learned the hard way that the key to creating successful designs is not just innovation, but timing and perseverance. It is a testament to our industry and diversified clientele that we are capable of creating new concepts, and utilizing old (and even ancient) ideas to move out of niche markets on the fringe of society, and into the larger fashion industry as a whole. This is helping our businesses to flourish and provide professional services to the general public. So, to those of us "old timers," I hope we can embrace the evolution of our industry, and bring positive influence and wisdom to help guide our paths. To the "fresh blood," I enjoy the new perspectives and energy you bring to the table, challenging us to stay relevant in this ultra-fast-paced world.

We entered and won with the saddle spreader hooks in the *Technical Innovation* category. It's a variation on our original spreader hook. I designed it to accommodate our ever-growing line of "dangles." It is a simple and basic concept all piercers use whether they're conscious of it or not. Spreading pressure over a wider surface area



creates a more comfortable and wearable piece of jewelry. This design allows people of all different sizes to rock progressively heavier "dangles." It also allows me, as a designer, to create pieces that would otherwise be too heavy to wear.

For the *Creative Innovator Award*, I used a design I've had on the books for a few years but have never had the right materials to make happen. Then I came across an amazing section of "grade A" fossilized mammoth tusk allowing us to make these beautiful, three-inch swastikas a reality. The swastika is a hot topic in the Western world, especially in the cyber reality that currently exists, causing much debate. Mention it to people in Asia and they will shrug their shoulders and ask, "What's the big deal?" It's a symbol they see daily. I am aware of the negative connotations this image carries for many, the positive ones for others, the recent historical context, the ancient context, and even all the misinformation out there on the "interwebs," the list goes on and on.

Why does Diablo Organics use it? Why do I use it in my jewelry and even in my logo? For me it is about freedom. It's freedom from dogma, preconceived ideas, rules, opinions, religion, hate or whatever box "they" try to put me in. I'm here to smash the limits and keep kicking ass. That being said: a big THANK YOU to all of you who support us. Through your support we will continue to do what we do and bring you unique, quality jewelry made from extraordinary materials. ©



Best Multiple Booth Display

by Phoebe Minond



I am being given the opportunity to write about my company, Tawapa, for this issue of *The Point*, as we won the award for “Best Multiple Booth Display” at this year’s Conference. I’m honored of course, but given the audience, a promotional article on who we are feels redundant. We’ve been around awhile and, if you have too, you’ve probably already read it somewhere before. This realization allowed me to reflect on all the years we have been in this industry and how it has changed over time. A more appropriate title for this article could be “Growing up as a business in an unstable environment” or, “A condensed history of organic jewelry through the eyes of Tawapa.”

Being in our teens (as a company) feels the same as getting older as a human. We have become wiser and more mature, but we are left wondering how so much time could have passed. As we continue to accumulate years of experience, I realize that the lifespan of this company reflects the ebb and flow of life itself, a road paved with joy and successes, but not

without bumps, potholes, and major road blocks.

I began Tawapa as a renegade wanderer, rejecting the confines of normalcy for a life of adventure, art, and eccentric exchanges with extraordinary people. This put me on a direct trajectory into the piercing world, which embodied and supported all of these ideals. In 1996, I found myself in a small carving village in Indonesia. In those days, the carvers in that village were actually carving sculptures, animals, and art, but as years passed the village has become dominated by piercing jewelry—to the point of oversaturation. When I first arrived there, I was introduced to an exceptional carver who opened the doors of creativity to me. I was so inspired, the possibilities felt limitless. I came back to America with a little suitcase full of treasures I had collected and created. I traveled the country in an old truck with my little case and my carver friend at a time when almost no one had even encountered “organic” jewelry. In fact, that term was only just then being coined. If I am correct, it was Erica

Skadsen who coined it. I met her in Portland that summer. She was hand-carving beautiful wood plugs. She was a pioneer in her field and our meeting felt important and exciting. Besides Erica, Borneo Joe had created and produced incredible jewelry, but his wares were not widely distributed. In Europe, Cold Steel and Wild Cat had begun carrying some carved horn and bone jewelry, but that was it. The tiniest handful of artists, designers, and distributors were the beginning of a new movement of jewelry in the piercing world which, until that time, had been dominated by steel jewelry.

As we all know, the term “organic jewelry” quickly became industry jargon. An influx of carved jewelry, particularly horn and bone, flooded the market. Everyone and their piercer decided to go to Bali, the mecca of the organic movement, to cash in on a budding micro industry that seemed to be growing and growing. Meanwhile, the peaceful village of artisans took down their signs that said “handicrafts” and hung new ones stating “piercing jewelry”. An artist village became a piercing village. The younger locals even began adopting the style, stretching their ears, covering themselves in tattoos, and listening to punk rock heavy metal.



This shift in the industry was both exciting and overwhelming. I loved the hardcore aesthetic some of the Balinese were embodying at the same time that more and more people in America and Europe were stretching their ears and choosing organic jewelry. I did not love the disproportionate amount of jewelry companies that were popping up everyday, and with them, an excessive amount of rip offs and counterfeits. However, now that we are in our ripe old teenage years, I can look back at that time with gratitude and appreciate the fruits that blossomed from that rich yet unstable environment.

Within a couple years, we saw many companies fall as quickly as they had risen. Most of them realized that there was a lot more to running an international business than they had imagined, and the dream was quickly deflated. The ones that did manage to hold on and grow

within the industry did so because they were exceptional. With so much competition, the only way to make it was to be amazing. Today there are only a few really successful companies in the “organic jewelry” industry. The ones who have succeeded are the ones who have forged their own unique aesthetic and style, who make beautiful high-quality jewelry, and who know how to run and manage a business.

I feel honored to have been able to experience so much growth and change and sometimes challenge in this dynamic, insular, tiny beast of a community. I am grateful to the companies who came before me for paving the road. I also appreciate all of those companies who came and went over the years. I see now that they helped shape who we are (and who we are not), and demanded that we up our game. Most of all, as I reflect on the history of Tawapa, I

thank our loyal customers who have supported us all these years and I thank my colleagues, the ones who have carved their own niche in this industry, through beautiful jewelry and a sense of integrity. They have challenged me to continue to excel. Because of them, I have not had the luxury of being lazy. I have learned humility in the most honorable way. I am constantly inspired and motivated to create and to continue to evolve Tawapa on all levels.

This year has brought a lot of change for us as a company, with a move to Los Angeles, a new look, new logo, and more jewelry than ever before. In this industry, as in life, change is the only constant. Embracing change is the gift that comes with age. We, at Tawapa, feel that we are at the dawning of another new era in jewelry, and in life, and we cannot wait to share it with you.



Best Individual Booth Winner: Blessings to You

Interview of Prince Cyrus, conducted by Kimberly Zapata



Q: What is Blessings to You?

A: Blessings to You is the title of my current creative metalsmithing venture which, at the moment, includes designing ear weights and bespoke commissions. The phrase comes directly from my process of creating something for someone as a talisman, an object to carry and direct intention. No dogma subscribed, just well wishes. It took a very long time to think of some clever name or witty phrase but when all was said and done I chose Blessings to You because everything else seemed unable to describe the spirit of my work. On a physical level, BTY is mostly just me at my home studio, hand carving models, and casting them in my garden. But for bigger projects, like creating enough stock for everyone at the APP Exposition, I am very thankful to have support from the fine folks casting at Anatometal in Santa Cruz.

Q: Speaking of Anatometal, how has your collaboration been going with them so far? Are there any big projects in the works you can share with us?

A: Oh my how wonderful it is to be able to visit all the beautiful faces at Anatometal. Their offices and production areas are massive! I always feel like Charlie in the Chocolate Factory. (Cyrus laughs.) Barry and Tod have been so welcoming to me when I come through and I really feel like part of the family there. This being my second year casting I feel like I've hit the ground running with my abilities to create, but there is no replacement for the experience in casting like Tony has. I've been so thankful being able to count on them for my larger production for Vegas everyone was able to take home jewelry they wanted except the bats of course they sold out the first day. As a wizard I always have something up my sleeve...but for now I'll stay tight-lipped.

Q: What was the catalyst that drove you to create Blessings to You?

A: I've dreamt of hand-making metal art for many years. From when I was young being around iron artists, to coming up as a piercer, then assisting design companies; this all

further fueled my thirst for learning. The world of jewelry in our industry is very small, especially compared to other industries. For a while I wanted to step back and find a space for myself that was not 'stepping on anyone's toes' so to speak. I created BTY in response to a yearning to contribute to my DIY community and for stability in the context of hypergentrification in San Francisco.

Q: Many of your pieces seem inspired by nature. Can you tell me a bit about how you decide on your designs, and what the creative process is like?

A: My first collection last year was entitled 'The Floating World,' as an honor to Japanese nature spirits. I chose pieces based on musings about 16th century Japanese poetry and how that poetry described the mysterious connection we have to the icons of nature. For example, the cicada is iconic for its symbolism of rites of passage and its intense summer mating song.

The focus of this year's collection shifted under water, for my 'Modern Atlantis,' bringing awareness about the starfish wasting disease and the



endangered nudibranch sea slugs off the California coasts. It frightens me how mass extinction seems unending in our era, and as an artist I wanted to create bronze body art for archeologists 1000 years from now to dig up and ask ‘Where did this go? Why did they make this?’

Creating these pieces usually starts with hours of research until I envision the right subject of what I am to execute. Sometimes there are days of hand-carving or sometimes hours of rummaging through a forest for the right moment to observe a critter or find the perfect tree pod.

Q: *How does this creative process then inspire your displays, and what you want people to see?*

A: Usually researching a subject really lets me dive deep into the culture of a thing. For example, Atlantis wasn’t just some Greek myth. If you go deeper and deeper you notice many cultures speak of an ancient climate change that devoured coastal cities, cities that we are unearthing off coasts all over the planet. From there I wanted to create a mood for my booth at the expo: hand-painted Neolithic ruins, coral pieces, pyramids, crystal displays, a giant wooden Ziggurat. Selenite crystal slabs were great, a subtle flat white background for displaying bronze and standard versions of designs. “Underwater and ancient” was the set, and my jewelry were the players. I wanted people to see more of a story in my designs, and I tried to use thematic elements in my display to bring that point across.

Q: *What do you feel is the most important factor to consider when displaying jewelry, and how does that differ when you display jewelry online versus in a store (or at an expo)?*

A: I would say that the most important thing to consider when displaying jewelry is being able to let



someone understand everything a piece is about in one glance. Visually you should be able to see the whole silhouette and the physical details. Avoid visual clutter and have a color scheme in mind. Setting the environment around the jewelry should be simple but thematic of the pieces. I try to keep the eye directed through a display to unknowingly move an onlooker along to other pieces. Visuals can entertain while also inform, is there text about the materials and price? I tend to be more contemporary when displaying my jewelry in a studio by keeping flat surfaces and simple accessories in the cases, as opposed to displaying jewelry at an Exposition where a grandiose presentation is better appreciated. In the digital world I love seeing my jewelry next to real life versions of themselves, in pristine natural environments, inside fancy case displays, and—of course—an infamous selfie never hurts. I tend to not have such a strict method to online photos, and on the contrary, I feel the more vari-

ety that is displayed of jewelry online the better—only as long as the jewelry is in focus!

Q: *What can we expect to see from Blessings to You over the coming year?*

A: A glimpse into my bag of tricks? I’m really loving the fact we’ll be at the Flamingo next year for 20th Anniversary Conference, so I’m thinking taking everyone’s ears, necks and arms into the Amazon this year. Think vivid splashes of color, jeweled python in trees, and sloths swimming with piranha through a lush flooded forest. Everyone should start seeing a little bit by little come winter. I’m really in love with found object natural casting, so I intend on releasing more ear jewelry and accessories from the mountains. Theo, from Honeycomb Organics, and I have also been collaborating on a series of plugs. Plus offering bespoke has led me to no shortage of work making folks dream jewelry. If there is one thing I know how to do it’s keeping busy! ☺

2014 President's Award

by Elayne Angel



Brian Skellie receiving the President's Award from Elayne Angel distracted by streakers.

Giving out the President's Award was one of the duties I most looked forward to when I first came into office as President, and it is one of the things I will miss now that my three-year term of service is complete. It is an honor to be able to select worthy individuals from our community and recognize them for their dedication and contributions.

The person receiving this year's award has spent over 20 years in the industry and could definitely be considered a pioneer. They started a piercing business back in 1992 and have been a Business Member of the Association of Professional Piercers since 1996.

This individual has been involved since the first APP Conference and was actually a co-organizer of that original event.

The recipient of the 2014 award has also served on the Board of Directors more than once, and has further distinguished himself doing projects for various committees.

Additionally, he has worked with a number of government agencies including NEHA, the CDC, and NIOSH, to promote safe piercing.

This gentleman is also known as an educator and has taught at APP Conferences and other seminars abroad, including events in Italy, Sweden, and Germany.

He is also a husband and a father.

It is no secret that we have differing approaches to certain things, but there is clearly a mutual professional respect between us, which is something I'm so happy to see throughout the industry in general: the understanding that there is more than one way to achieve desired results.

This man is an *incredibly* hard-working volunteer who has devoted countless hours to numerous projects to further the goals and mission of the organization. He has accomplished a tremendous and impressive amount of work throughout his involvement with the organization and especially during the past three years.

I do have to clarify at this point that a Statim [the type of autoclave he represents and sells] is NOT required for APP membership. The recipient of this year's President's Award is Brian Skellie! *Great* job, Brian; congratulations! ☺

RAFFLE & SPONSOR THANK YOU

Raffle:

Each year at Conference, lives are changed; one of the ways this happens is winning one of the *big* raffle prizes. (Anyone who attended the Banquet, or who viewed the [video](#) of Javier's—and Mauricio's—win, knows this to be true.) By providing these large prizes, sponsors Industrial Strength Body Jewelry and Anatometal, Inc. change our attendees lives and generate funds which help sustain the APP and its programs all year long. But remember it isn't just our big donors, *every* vendor that donates helps the APP, and every attendee that purchases raffle tickets also helps the organization.

The APP would like to offer its thanks to Industrial Strength Body Jewelry and Anatometal, Inc. for their continued support on a grand scale!

- Industrial Strength: \$15,000.00 Grand Prize; \$10,000 in smaller prizes
- Anatometal, Inc.: \$12,000.00

We want to also recognize our other top donors: BVLA; H2Ocean; LeRoi, Inc.; Glasswear Studios; Omerica Organic; NeoMetal, Inc.; and Industrial Strength, LLC (Needles).

Thank you to all of our donating vendors and our attendees who made this a record year for the raffle!

Conference Sponsor:

Every year the APP relies heavily on vendor sponsorships to assist us with the expenses incurred for our special events, services, and for our scholarships. If it wasn't for these companies the APP Conference would be less than what it is every year. Please support those who support the APP!



LEVEL ONE: Banquet Dinner

- Industrial Strength Body Jewelry
- Anatometal, Inc.
- LeRoi, Inc.
- The Safe Piercing App
- Kaos Softwear, LLC

LEVEL TWO: Opening Party

- NeoMetal, Inc.

EXCLUSIVE SPONSORSHIP: The Volunteer Dinner

- Body Vision Los Angeles

LEVEL THREE: Exposition Coffee & Refreshments

- Professional Program Insurance Brokerage
- Omerica Organic
- Oracle Body Jewelry

LEVEL FOUR: Al D. Scholarship

- Buddha Jewelry
- Gorilla Glass
- Quetzalli Jewelry
- Intrinsic Body, Inc.

Industrial Strength Body Jewelry also donated two complete packages for two additional Scholars (in their company's and Shannon Larratt's name).

In 2015 the APP will have new programs, new ideas, and new sponsorship opportunities! Sponsorship isn't just for vendors, and it's a great way to give back to your professional organization. If your studio is interested in sponsorship, please contact the APP office. ©

IN THE OFFICE: VOLUNTEER THANK YOU

by Caitlin McDiarmid

I think if I had to identify my favorite part of my job it would be the work I do with the volunteers at Conference and throughout the year. It wasn't always that way, and I have to credit them for making me grow as a manager, and become a better person over the last ten plus years. I never thought I would be a good mentor, but now I feel like I am one.

In the months leading up to Conference we had a record number of "love" volunteers come forward and, strangely enough, they all wanted a schedule to commit to volunteering. We have always had a good group of helpers, those who volunteer for the sake of volunteering and giving back with nothing in return, but usually it's for limited hours or on a drop-by basis. A lot of times they are unable to commit in advance of Conference, so they are a help in the trenches but I can't schedule them for shifts. This year, it was different.

We also had a rough year, especially our SUPERS. Many of them were not able to make it due to emergencies, family issues, medical concerns, and financial considerations. Our team missed them horribly, and we hope they return. But when all was said and done, we made it—and this year every single volunteer was critical to that success, and everyone performed extremely well.

We had even our "love" volunteers go through online training in advance of Conference, which was new this year. Our SUPERS went through even more extensive training online and, in some cases, one-on-one. We have hit critical mass with the workload, and I am delegating as fast as I can, this means many of the SUPER volunteers took on training responsibilities.



Once on-site, they stepped up even further and honed their management and supervisory skills. I am forever grateful to my ducklings who DID manage to find their way home this year:

Our Booth & Classroom SUPERS:

- Aaron Foster
- Casey Hosch
- Chadwick Jackson
- Dannielle Greenwood
- Jovi Croes
- Ken Seyler
- Kenny Hughes
- Kristin Young
- Marah Kelso
- Mark Montgomery
- Monica Sabin
- Seven Wolfe
- William Spencer

Our Registration SUPERS

- Anna York
- Badur Ramji
- David Kelso
- Jezebel Voule
- Kirsten Eblin

- Kendra Berndt
- Sarah Wooten
- Luna Duran
- Theo Sheffler

Our AV Supers:

- Gus Diamond, Allen Falkner, Brian Moeller, and Shana Gyura

Will Spencer and the amazing Sarah Wooten have to be recognized for their continued dedication to the APP and the Conference. Without these two doing what they do each year, and supporting the other Supers and myself, Conference would not be the success it is today.

Our Al D. Scholars came from far and wide; including four from Norway, Germany, and Mexico:

- Ryan Clark
- Dae Jedic
- Ismael Vargas Guerrero
- Eugenia Vazquez
- Andre Berg
- Zach Fitzgerald
- Kenny Hayden
- John Robberson
- Marita Wikstroem
- Logan Wright

They all performed their work well, but I was even more impressed at how they bonded as a team straight away and integrated into the volunteer group at large.

Once again I want to thank J.D. Lorenz and the crew at Industrial Strength Body Jewelry for donating two complete scholarships, and Buddha Jewelry; Gorilla Glass; Quetzalli Jewelry; and Intrinsic Body, Inc. for contributing to the Scholarship fund.

We had some private scholarships and some piercer-sponsored scholarships. The recipients (Hika Kierke-nupp, Adrian Sanchez, Trist'n Peterson, Molly Bennett, Aaron Pounds, and Heather Weber) worked alongside the rest of our volunteers. And while the "no excuse" scholars weren't required to work many hours, some of them took it upon themselves to work additional ones (don't think I didn't notice).

This year we invited back all of the Al D's from last year, but not everyone could be present.

Shorty Calma, Frankie Pistone, Ryan Feagin, Mike McInnes, and Dianna Brown all returned to show they could work just as hard, even without a full scholarship.

Our LOVE volunteers exploded in numbers and we found new friends and hard workers in this group: Amanda Badger, Arik Johnson, Chance Sledge, Christina Blossy, Corey Hobe, Damian Lynch, Eric Grippe, Solo Paige-Turner, Hugo Hernandez, Jess Ekdahl, Justin Naffziger, Krystal Slager (Klos), KT Wallick, Lani Soleil, Leah-Jean Jett, Megan Naito, Melissa Scogin, Omar Toxqui, Robyn Johnson, Vivi Eye, and Stephanie Segal.

We had non-industry folks, health inspectors, partners, return "love" volunteers, members and non-members.

I'd also like to thank Ash Misako and the Mentor Team. This is a critical program for our event and I think it's implementation in 2009 has set the course for the APP in a great direction.

I struggled this year, both before Conference and during Conference, to complete the tasks that must be done in order for this event to happen. Yet this Conference was another brilliant one and I can tell that all of the growth and expansion has affected me in a very significant way. With that said a couple of people made a significant contribution of time, which went well above expectations: Jezebel Voule, Kristin Young, and Theo Sheffler all traveled to Lawrence, Kansas, stayed for a few days, worked a full day (Conference hours, not this nine-to-five stuff), and got the 786 pre-Con badge packets completed and in the mail along with the equipment. Frankly, they saved my sanity and really made Conference possible this year.

As always, to the men in my life, Thaddeous Love and Paul King; thank you. Thank you for knowing me better than I know myself. For putting up with my bad days

and celebrating my good ones. For being there, always. For loving me, and always knowing I can get it done. I am forever grateful that T has been able to join me these last two years and experience all the joy and love that Conference is—thank you all for welcoming him.

2014 JOSH A. PRENTICE VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION AWARD

by Caitlin McDiarmid

While at Conference this year, Bethra Szumski came and found me. She had spoken with Josh's mom that day. During the course of relaying the story to me, she was overcome with emotion. She told me that Josh's mom is so very grateful that we are keeping Josh's memory alive with this award.



At Conference I asked everyone: those who knew Josh and miss him and those who didn't know Josh, but should have—raise a glass, whether water or wine—and toast Josh, a very fine young man who left this place too early, and leaves us both richer and poorer with his departure.

The recipient of this year's Josh A. Prentice Award is Ryan Ouellette.

Ryan is a good friend of mine. Somewhere in my head I worried about giving him this award. He's more than deserving, but sometimes our community can't see that service—and what it means to volunteer can be extremely diverse.

Ryan isn't a traditional boots-on-the-ground volunteer or an in-the-trenches volunteer.

He has, however, contributed hours and hours of work and some of the major ideas that have shaped our Conference into what it is today.

Back on December 5, 2008 I received an email from Ryan, whom I didn't know well. He wrote that some of our most trusted Board Members had been impressed with his teaching at BMX and that they suggested he reach out and possibly teach at the APP Conference. He wrote, "maybe I sucked, and they just felt bad." He was a bit self-deprecating, and didn't seem to think that we would be interested.

By February of 2009, a mere two months later, he had submitted two fully fleshed-out proposals to the Conference Committee: one was for a workshop-based class that changed up the lecture format (that all classes were being

taught in at that time) and one was for the Mentor Program. In 2009 he wasn't an APP member and therefore wasn't asked to take on the lead role in either of the programs. However, due to certain circumstances, he wound up taking the lead on the Mentor Program that year and playing a key role teaching some of the workshop sessions. By the following year, while he still wasn't a member, he was lead instructor on the workshop session(s) as was Jesse Villemaire. (At that time, the APP allowed non-members to teach only if they were "experts" on a topic *and* they were more qualified to teach the class than an available member.)

Ryan has consistently provided ideas and thoughts on ways to improve Conference since he got involved in 2008. These two programs alone have reshaped our Conference, infused new excitement into classes, and were instrumental, I believe, in changing how our seasoned attendees treat and perceive new attendees.

How else has he volunteered? For the past three years he has participated in processing, interviewing, and choosing the AI D. scholars—which, this year, also included 26 phone interviews.

He has worked countless hours as part of the APP team for Tumblr. (The estimation of hours is seven to ten hours per a week; that's somewhere between 726 hours and 1040 hours over the last two years.) And we know

these social media efforts have been key to the growth that our membership and our Conference has experienced recently.

He is always available for me—offering to help in any way throughout the year—and I hand him small projects where I can.

He is also the first person at Conference who took great pains to arrange for me to leave the hotel a few years back and go out to dinner with him and his friends. While it seems like a simple thing, for me this was a monumental task. By doing this, however, it became clear to me that if I put my trust in my volunteer team that everything would be ok, whether I was there or not.

Instructor, mentor, inspiration, social media mogul, and finally an APP member, Ryan became a member in 2011. I had many conversations with him before he became a member—about the Association and membership. Through his experience and service with the Association, Ryan changed his views of the APP and became one of our staunchest advocates.

Ryan is a special kind of leader. He is special kind of volunteer.

He's provided emotional support and friendship for years, especially during Conference crunch time. I am so glad to have him as my friend, and it was a joy to present this award to him. ☺



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