

THE POINT

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THE QUARTER

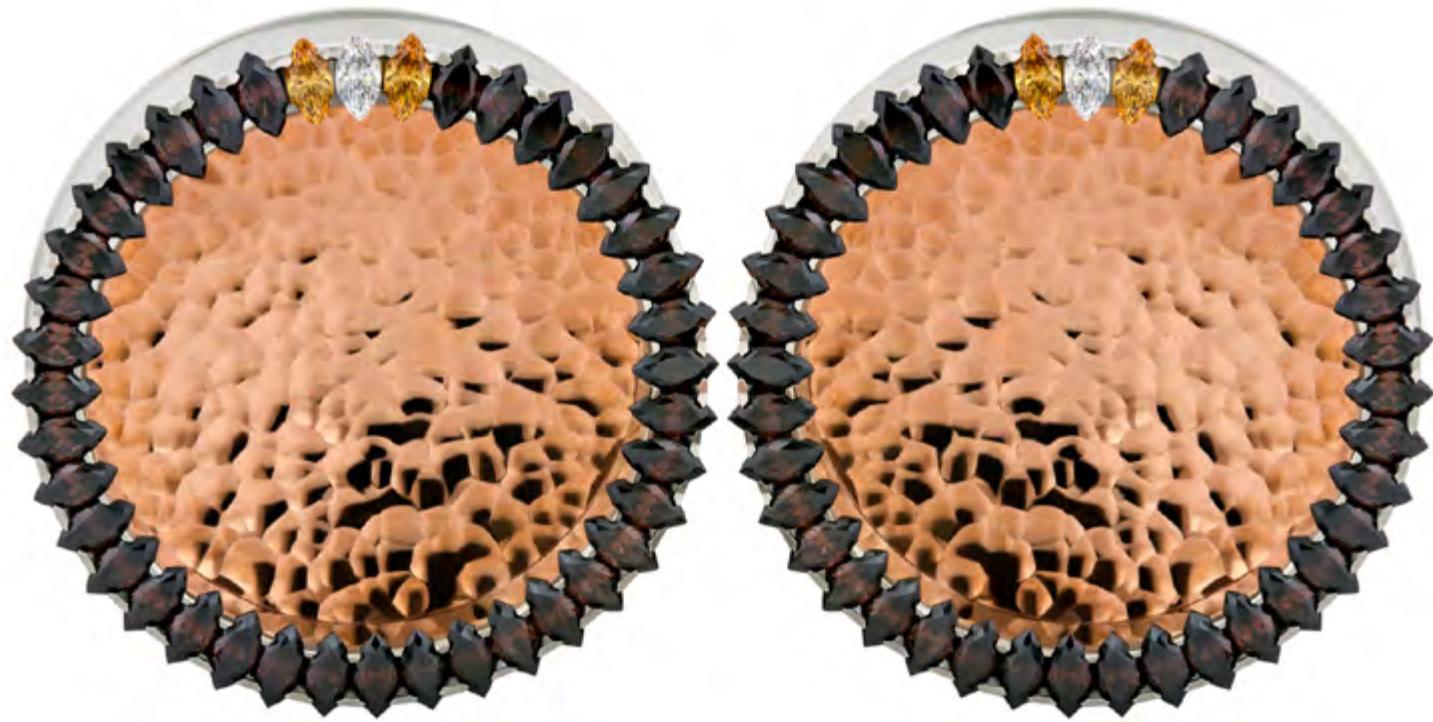
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• The Post-Conference Issue

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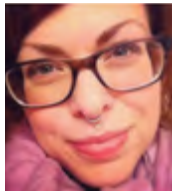
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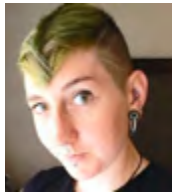
BECKY DILL



FROM THE EDITORS

**KENDRA JANE B
MARINA PECORINO**

The Point Editors



• Kendra Jane B

With a blink of an eye it is over; another Conference has come and gone. The 21st annual Association of Professional Piercers Conference was my sixth, and these six years have been quite the journey. I have gone from apprentice and Al D. Scholar to Board Member. This year's Conference had me wearing more hats and running more steps than ever, but it also came with the chance for me to share what I do with my two daughters (and show them off a bit). Being able to share the one week of the year that makes me feel the most alive and like myself with the two people that I love more than words; I have to say it was the most rewarding experience. It was an honor to introduce them to a wonderful group of people, my community, my family, the most beautiful people I know. After all they say it takes a village to raise a child, and I belong to a great village.

I consider myself very fortunate to have grown up in a household with a mother that is not only educated, but owned her own business, travelled the world, and can change a tire or build a deck. She set me up for success without even realizing it. She allowed me to learn from my own mistakes while still showing me compassion. She may not have agreed with all of my life choices, but she always supported me. As a female leader in our community, I feel that I have a responsibility to be supportive, compassionate, and to encourage the growth of those around me.

I am so fortunate to be one of just a handful of women to have served the APP as a member of the Board of Directors. My way has been paved by powerhouses like Bethrah Szumski, Alicia Cardenas, Elayne Angel, and Ash Misako. This gives me some very big shoes to fill. These amazing ladies have shown that intelligence, hard work, determination,

and perseverance will succeed. So I want to take this opportunity to say how fortunate I feel to have had the support of these fierce ladies in my career. It is no secret that our industry has been a male dominated industry since its inception (as with the majority of industries). Now that I have the opportunity to set an example for generations of young ladies, it is difficult to find words to express my appreciation. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to be my best, both personally and professionally.

• Marina Pecorino

"Good morning. Today is going to be epic!" A note with these words is how my conference experience started, and they couldn't have been more true. This conference experience for me was epic. As my third APP Conference, this one takes the cake, but I'm sure future Conferences will be even sweeter.

I started the rough draft for this editorial after attending the week's opening festivities at the pool party. As early morning light started peeking through my hotel window, I had an almost giddy appreciation of the events of the previous evening. For the first time at an opening party, I felt like I finally broke out of my shell. I willingly and enthusiastically floated between groups, sharing conversations about professional and personal topics; social media marketing techniques, obstacles faced by international piercers, organizing state-wide groups for piercers. I credit the awesome APP unisex underpants largely for my brazen approach.

Truthfully though, the credit should go to the incredible people in our industry, this community, and my tribe. Conference is a week of hardcore learning and aisles of unbelievably gorgeous merchandise, but it's also a week for connecting with a much larger family. We welcome new people from around the world with an open attitude and without judgement.

My first class of Conference this year was a round table about disorders in the industry, and I heard many attendees mention social anxiety. This is certainly something I face especially in such a large crowd in such an overwhelming city. But the support is strong

with this group, and I feel that is a vital component for many of us. This support and lack of judgement allows Conference to serve as a safe space where ideas can flow.

Every year, I'm continually impressed by our international attendees traveling so far to share in the event. For some, the experience was only possible because of generous donations from others in our community. As an industry, the self improvement of one piercer benefits us all. The give and take of knowledge is a communal effort. Sitting around the "Splash Bar", there are never ending opportunities to learn from exposure to new perspective through a casual conversation.

On Thursday night at the annual Banquet dinner, everyone was sporting their most futuristic attire. Quite a few folks won life-changing prizes. The schol-

ars and volunteers cheered each other on for a week of hard work. The Board of Directors had another changing of the guard, allowing some great leaders to move on to new projects and others to take on new responsibilities. We said hello, goodbye, and thank you to members of our industry family.

And then, before we knew it, the week was over. The vibe died down and the piercing tribe dispersed. We all trickled back home and started counting the days until our next chance to gather. For many, this countdown will be short, thanks to opportunities like guest spots, Camp APP, and Conferences like UKAPP (congrats on the second annual!) and BMXnet. Personally, I can't wait to see you all in Vegas for the 22nd annual APP Conference; mark your calendars now for June 11-16, 2017.

THANK YOU, ASH MISAKO



I am fortunate to work in an industry that surrounds me with beautiful things, special occasions, and brilliantly talented people. One such person I feel lucky to not only call a colleague but a friend is Ash Misako, the wandering piercer. Ash has a no nonsense attitude and will always tell you where you stand, but at the same time she wants you to stand as tall as you can and be the best you can. I am absolutely honoured to be able to say thank you to Ash, from the bottom of my heart. I am so

proud that I have the opportunity to join the Board of Directors as you step down, and it would not have been possible without your support.

As a fellow piercer I admire her commitment to the highest standards, the fact that she never settles, she strives to stay at the forefront of education and knowledge, and willingly helps many new piercers better themselves. As a client I admire these exact same attributes, but I also know that I am in safe hands, and that she would never compromise my health or the experience that I was looking for by rushing the process or just to make the sale. Ash is a special combination of everything a piercer should be.

A perfect testament to Ash's commitment to our industry can be seen in the beautiful gold end from Anatometal named after her, the "Kira Kira". However, the respect that accompanies something such as this was not earned overnight. Before owning her own shop, Kira Kira, Ash spent many years honing her piercing skills at Hearts of Fire. In fact

she has been piercing since 2001 and an APP Member since 2008. Since she joined the APP, her invaluable commitment to helping and bettering our industry has become even more evident; piercing is not just a career for Ashley, but truly a passion. She has volunteered countless hours for this passion, all to ensure young piercers are steered in the right direction. She helps those piercers wanting to become Members alongside her, providing answers to their questions as they move through the steps to membership.

She has spearheaded the mentor program at Conference for the past 3 years and has set it up for success. Now, she steps down from the Board and away from these responsibilities to focus on other areas of piercing for awhile.

I hope she knows what an invaluable mentor and role model she has been to, not only myself and fellow Members, but to piercers worldwide. Ash Misako, thank you for all you've done. XO

—Kendra Jane B

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THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

THANK YOU, BRIAN SKELLIE

JEF SAUNDERS

APP President

The first time I ever heard Brian Skellie's name was in a discussion about "how crazy people can get about cleanliness."

This was in 2001 or 2002 and I kind of just assumed Brian was some nut who wanted to turn body piercing into surgery. Little did I know I'd become an enormous fan of Brian's, a proponent of much of his philosophy, a fellow Board Member and a friend.

Brian's tenure as President was really a joy to behold. For those not in the know, Brian is a spectacular navigator of choppy waters. To him, no problem seems insurmountable; every issue fraught with emotion has a rational conclusion. Brian is the rare worker-bee that is also an expert boss.

During Brian's tenure, the APP had it's largest conferences to date. He helped process the application and renewals of literally hundreds of Members and applicants. He acted as a resource to the Legislation Committee. He served as International Liaison, supporting piercers all over the globe with their questions about piercing and the Association of Professional Piercers. He also filled in as Medical Liaison by committee. He spoke at industry related conferences all over the world. During

all of this, he also ran businesses on two continents. Did I mention he did all of this from France, while raising two young children?

It really is difficult to imagine body piercing being quite what it is without Brian's influence. Whether the discussion centers around health and safety, freehand technique, material standards, anodization, StatIM autoclaves or disposable studios, Brian's name will come up. He's a master of all things piercing related.

If Brian's tenure as President marked his departure from APP work, I'd write about how much we'd miss him. Of course, that's not Brian's style at all (and we are very thankful for this.) He will continue to assist the Board in all things technical and web related. He is now deeply entrenched in the work of updating the data processing of our ever-expanding membership. Thus giving the organization, and all APP Members, a modern and streamlined method of maintaining membership standards.

Brian hasn't done this alone. I know this from my own personal experience. Without a dedicated partner, the kind of volunteer hours someone like Brian puts in are simply not possible. His wonderful wife Sandrine is as much a part of this work as Brian is. Thank you Sandrine!

Brian has taught me a lot about piercing, but he's also taught me a lot about being a dad. One of my favorite experiences with Brian was talking about fatherhood in Mexico late one night while we attended the LBP Conference. It was one of those conversations you think back to and say, "I really needed that at that point in my life." He may not have thought much about it, but I did... and still do.

So thank you, Brian. You've been an exceptional Board Member and President of the Association of Professional Piercers. Thank you for your ongoing support of not only the APP, but the entire piercing community.



Jef honors Brian at the 2016 APP Conference.



REGISTRATION



Although the lines may have looked long, our registration staff worked harder than ever to make them move as fast and efficiently as possible.



Our volunteers hard at work to ensure their ducks are all in a row

CLASSES



—photo by Julie Taylor

CONFERENCE REFLECTIONS

2016

Unless otherwise credited, all photos are by Autumn Swisher

IT'S NOT JUST COUNTER GIRL

STEPHANIE HILL

Alicia Cardenas led a well-attended round table at this year's APP Conference titled, "Women in Piercing." The group in attendance explored the past, current, and future experiences of those identifying as women in the piercing industry. As we went around the room hearing from people describing their situations or that of others in their shops, we learned that as an industry we still have opportunities to improve, especially in the following areas:

- Harassment, discrimination, and abuse
- Objectification
- Language norms
- Active presence of female role models
- Leadership positions

Coming from a corporate background, I was surprised to hear how prevalent harassment, discrimination, and abuse based on gender still are within the body modification industry. I have always had to go through mandatory training and regular reminders of what is (not) acceptable and what is (not) legal. Yet, many of the stories I was hearing sounded accepted with no one taking action whether or not the person being victimized spoke up about the treatment. Experiences by managers, coworkers, and clients (male and female) included verbal degradation, persistent sexual advances, and physically inappropriate acts that in many cases traumatized the female piercer victims. We all have a legal right to not experience that from any individual that interacts with the business (staff, vendor, or client).

If your business does not have a sexual harassment policy, please adopt one and ensure that your staff has been properly trained. If you (or your manager) is not sure where to start or what your rights are, there are many companies that can provide this expertise and training. First and foremost, everyone in your studio must feel safe at all times. Several people in the round table suggested ways to express this violation of safety. Saying to a client, "you are making me uncomfortable, so I need you to change how you are speaking to me in order for us to continue," is a great way to set and follow-through on ground rules. If they continue, all personnel must feel that it is appropriate for them to refuse service to that client at any point in the in-



Illustration by Fish from *Responsible Body Piercing* by Michaela Grey & Jim Ward. Used with permission.

teraction. No client or sale is worth sacrificing anyone's emotional or physical safety. Finally, know that you have legal rights. If you experience abuse, contact your police department. If you have questions about harassment or discrimination, investigate government agencies that provide support or speak with a lawyer. I have always been taught to write allegations down as you experience them. Sometimes, the pattern of behavior is more telling than an individual incident, so having a log of what you have experienced, along with dates, can provide the evidence needed to tell your story.

Objectification often seems subtler than other mistreatment based upon gender, but it quickly damages a person's potential in their career. While many people assume this word means to treat a woman like an object, like a piece of meat, it goes beyond this. "Object" contrasts the word "subject," like in a story: the reader only has interest in the subject of a story. The objects of a story merely exist to add background and interest to the subject. The object alone does not play a role of interest to the reader. Anything we learn about those

people are merely to embellish what we know about the subject.

As women, we play this role more often than we notice, but we deserve the spotlight, too. If we bring that into daily experiences in the piercing world, whenever a female is discredited in a shop, often by a client, that female loses the opportunity to play a star role. A client may ask a male piercer the exact question he just asked the female, even if she is the owner, because the client may assume the male has more authority or knowledge. The group in the round table suggested to the men in the group that if a client asks a woman a question and then turns to them or another male asking them the same question, to avoid the tendency to give them the answer. Instead, say something like, "she just answered that question for you." That type of response empowers the female, and she jumps into being the subject, not the object.

Now, let's talk about the term "counter girl." When do we hear the term "boy" used for males over 18 years old? Historically in the U.S., "boy" has been a derogatory term to imply a subservient position or to sexualize a male. We have heard the term "boy"

used during slave times or in other racially degrading manners, and we hear "pool boy" when middle-aged women plan to have an illicit affair with a young man. Other than sexualizing or demeaning a male, I do not hear the term, "boy" used to refer to a man. So, unless we intend to sexualize or demean our vital studio role, why does any shop continue to use the term, "counter girl?" If you still do this, please stop immediately. Change your job description. Change your postings for counter positions. Change your policy and/or procedure manual, and communicate this change to staff and clients, if necessary. There are no girls who work in your shop. People work in your shop. If you are a woman who is referred to as a "counter girl," inform your manager that you would like a new title and why. Show that person this article if you need more of an explanation... or have them give me a call.

While I did hear some discouraging stories in the round table, I found it refreshing that many of the males in attendance encouraged and supported female piercers. We heard of several males who act as role models for women, but often that relationship has a damsel-in-distress/knight-in-shining-armor feel to it, whether that was the intent by either party or not. Two things that can remedy this are: 1) If men

stop solving women's problems for them and, instead, set the expectation for women to think critically and answer questions/solve problems through their own knowledge and research, they decrease the reliance on a male to hold control over that mentor-mentee relationship. 2) Provide a network of female role models who should do the suggestion from #1, but also demonstrate first-hand how critical thinking and self-reliance leads to increased respect, expertise, and leadership in the industry. We love having the male support, but we absolutely need to see and engage with the female leaders in the industry to help shape future female leaders.

Speaking of female leaders, we could all rapidly identify amazing current and past women in the industry who could be wonderful resources for providing guidance for other women. We also shared several experiences in which female leaders had taken on tra-

ditionally male qualities to "fit in" and establish the respect prior male leaders already had. Unfortunately, these more aggressive qualities often backfired by treating females in those workplaces more harshly than others. Some female leaders in the group ex-

pressed past feelings of losing themselves and their femininity as they attempted to gain acceptance and respect from their male community. They helped us learn that a significant number of female leaders perpetuate the disrespect and verbal/emotional abuse of women who enter this industry desperate for a strong, positive female role model to help her navigate the rough roads she will inevitably encounter. We need female (and male) allies. We need to maintain and celebrate our femininity in a way that centers on ourselves and not men.

The group left Alicia's round table empowered, connected, and prepared to take action. One action we committed to was to change our language and expectations to match the level of respect and appreciation we deserve. Since Conference, we have supported one another through several positive changes. Many attendees shared their experiences, both positive and negative. A few others have shared tips and resources for developing ourselves as business women and leaders. I am excited by the future of this group and other females in the industry who may be joining us. And thank you to the men who have encouraged and supported us as we have paved our way in this industry.

If your business does not have a sexual harassment policy, please adopt one and ensure that your staff has been properly trained.

TalkAPP

WILL SPENCER

—photo by Matte Erickson



Jaymes Lombardi making a point during his TalkAPP presentation on Client Connections

It's Las Vegas... everyone always wants more: more classes, more options, and of course more free time too. All at once. So how do we get more classes squished into

a day without taking up more time and without a magic wand? Make them shorter.

Not all of them of course—not the technical classes, not the hands on classes. What about the others? The inspirational classes. The stuff that makes you think. The people who open your eyes and stretch your perceptions. Talking about new concepts or angles of approach to subjects you might never have thought about. These are the kind of classes that don't need hours and hours. In fact all that extra time would bog them down and the core idea would get lost in a miasma of unnecessary flotsam.

This was the idea behind Talk APP. Inspired by the success of the

ever popular TED Talks we crafted a new format just for the APP that gives us the ability to put all these great class ideas into a smaller, faster, more exciting format. With only twenty minutes for each presenter, we are able to take great ideas and boil them down to the roots. Our aim is to give you a class with punch that you'll actually remember. This year we had two talks with standing ovations.

We hope you checked out our new format and if you haven't already and please give us your feedback. We are always striving to integrate new ideas and make this better. We look forward to hearing from you! We can't wait to see what next year's topics will bring.

VOLUNTEERS



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Seven Wolfe

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Andre Berg
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THE POOL PARTY

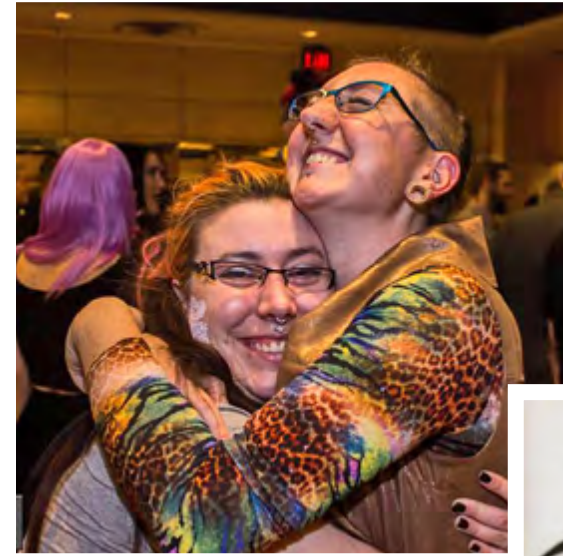


—photo by Matte Erickson



Did someone say pizza party?





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EXPO



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TETHER JEWELRY

Creative Innovator's Award & Best Single Booth Award



Q: Tether Jewelry had a very strong first show at this year's expo. Tell us how it came to be and what the line is all about?

A: Tether is about creating a jewelry brand that is not only innovative and beautiful, but can reach a wide audience. Riding that line between where designs can be enjoyed and embraced by all people. No matter gender/scene/age, jewelry for all. With each piece of jewelry we hope to take you on a journey; our story is just beginning. That is why this season is called Genesis.

Spending 15 years at a very jewelry-centric studio was where I truly fell in love with body jewelry and all it's diversity. I started asking "why isn't anyone making this/doing this better?"

It was at that time I was blessed with the job of designing a line for the shop, I got my first taste as a jewelry designer, and began to bring answers to that question. During that time it really inspired me to explore my designing capability further.

It was 3 years ago, at the 2013 Conference that I decided I wanted to finally pull the trigger on starting my very own jewelry line. The next year following was tough; I kept running into obstacles and other frustrations. All while continuing to pierce. I finally decided to take a huge leap of faith and step away from piercing last year to give Tether all my energy. Fast forward to now, after an amazing response at the expo. It feels so good to have

overcome those roadblocks and have re-assurance that the leap of faith I took was worth it. The future looks very bright and I'm excited to continue in this industry I love so very much as a jewelry designer and manufacturer.

Q: How did you come up with the name of your company?

A: Naming things/projects is the hardest thing for me. My brain can't seem to commit to one idea. But there was something very natural and easy when "Tether" popped into my head. The name comes from a place of feeling anchored and connected to things. Being a social shapeshifter myself, I like to be fluid and sit in between two social scenes or two places, taking inspiration from different places and surrounding myself with many peer groups. Tether comes from that place too. There is something uniting and comfortable about that flexibility.

Q: This year Tether took home not only the Innovator's Creative Award but also the best Single Booth Award, what was the inspiration behind the design of your booth?

A: I wanted to bring the feeling and identity of Tether out and present all my products in a striking yet minimal environment. We wanted to create a visual experience that was uniquely Tether. We arranged our jewelry display in a way that made you feel like you were looking at an alien language, and as our guest, to feel like you're a space explorer that just stepped into another world.

Q: The design of your booth was unique, but everything about your

presentation is very well thought out, right down to your packaging. Tell us more about this.

A: It took over 2 years to come up with a more complete system for the line. Tether isn't just about the jewelry. It's a true exploration of those great feelings you get from adornment and fashion. When you open a box and it contains something that when you put into your hands, or put on, it gives you joy. You get a smile, smirk, or goosebumps. I know we all have felt it. This is my compass in my journey as a designer.

Everything has been designed together and iterated many times. Every color we use is deliberate: our displays, the font, our images on social media, all of it.

There is a quote that has always rang true for me from Doug Tompkins who founded a successful outdoor line: "There is no such thing as small details."

I also say "we" because all of this wouldn't have happened without the team of artists/designers and dreamers that are part of Tether. And, of course, to our wearers. Tether is about building something bigger than myself and trusting collaborations and making long term, deeper connections to bring forward something truly special. I hope people can feel that.

Q: Each one of your pieces has a name and a story, please tell us what some of them are?

A: The 2017 Collection was named Genesis as it marks the beginning of our journey. Our first experiment to glimpse into a future unknown. It's inspired by water and crafts of travel; both space and sea. Also comes from a passion for machines, science fiction and architecture. Some of the designs were brilliant accidents.

• **Navigator—**

The very first locket ear weight. The name came from the movie *Flight of the Navigator*. I adored that movie as a kid. The shape of this design was inspired by the spaceship in the movie and a traditional gold ear weight from the Tamil Nadu region of India. This is my ode to alien spacecrafts that can travel our deep blue seas as well as the vast expanse of space.

• **Melange—**

Inspired by the distinctive work of H.R. Giger, I wanted to create a piece to have depth, and texture, but from more angles. It's my own take on gold granulation, stacking together long tubular ellipsoids to create patterns.

• **Drake Series—**

The Genesis collection is inspired by ocean and water. One of the most well known civilizations that had their own innovations on the sea were the Vikings. The longships were way ahead of their time. And so this design is an ode to one of their ships. The Drake name comes from the word Draken which means dragon. The vikings sometimes had a dragon-shaped prow on their long ships as a sym-

bol for protection. Out of that design, using the curving lines of a Viking longship keel, manifested the Drake cuff. The Drake hoop was an accident from an early iteration of the cuff that was too large, I immediately thought how a larger clicker weight would be great in earlobes.

Q: What are your plans for the next year?

A: You can expect more designs next year. I am committed to ensure we are delivering the best product to the end customer. Our primary goal for next year is how to be a better wholesale-only design house. All the while enjoying ourselves and trying to create a memorable and lasting experience.

Q: Do you have any advice to those small companies that are thinking about making their first appearance on the expo floor at Conference?

A: This took a huge leap of faith for me. Plan for the long game, there are no shortcuts. This industry is growing fast and there is a little piece for all of us. Don't be afraid to partner with someone. We can't do everything ourselves, especially when doing it well.





TAWAPA Best Multiple Booth Award Winner

At this year's Exposition, Tawapa won the multiple booth award with their dark unicorn themed display. I had the opportunity to interview Phoebe, owner and designer for Tawapa, about how their processes and ideas have evolved during 20 years of producing jewelry for the industry. Manufacturing and distribution to over 200 countries is a huge job, and it sounds like Tawapa is constantly fine-tuning their processes to meet demand and introduce new designs.

Marina: *Tawapa has been producing jewelry for our industry for 20 years. How have the manufacturing and order processes changed in that time?*

Tawapa: 20 years is a long time. Everything has changed, and then changed back, and then changed again. The manufacturing process used to be much much simpler. In the beginning we only produced carved jewelry. Ideas were communicated to the carvers via my drawings. I started Tawapa in 1996 working with the carver who was making buttons for my clothing line at the time. I loved him, but the industry grew quickly in the beginning; he began taking on a lot of clients and our quality and security were compromised. So I started the Tawapa carving workshop in about '98 or '99. Building our own workshop made it possi-

ble to hire a team focused only on Tawapa. This meant, better quality, consistency and prices. It also gave steady jobs to a small team who really got to know our product and our vision. These are the guys who still carve all of Tawapa's organic jewelry. Our relationship has been long and prosperous. It's been great growing up together.

We are now, clearly, more focused on metals which is a huge shift in manufacturing (and designing). I started the Tawapa metal workshop about 7-8 years ago. This was the next major milestone in our production capabilities. I learned so much in this process and was once again able to provide solid jobs to

a strong team who could grow with us. Here we have our master wax carver who works beside me on new designs. She is, incidentally one of the only female wax carvers in Bali. She is highly skilled and can work sometimes up to one month on extremely complicated designs. Her finished waxes go to casting and then come back to the workshop for finishing. Besides our wax carver we have 2 amazing sample makers. These guys make hand made samples that don't need cast pieces for the design. They are also the ones who finish our "masters" for casting and who consistently help me problem solve; they are our engineers. Their skill surpasses most silversmiths I have met, so their time is

precious. Next we have our production team. These people are piecing every item of jewelry together with their hands, their bench, a torch and some solder. Our team is stellar and coincidentally predominantly female, which is very uncommon in the jewelry business. They come to us with different degrees of skills. It's been amazing to watch these women excel, deepening their skills while sharing, teaching, and learning from each other. The intent is that everyone who works for us learns greater skills for the future while they become experts working piece by piece on Tawapa jewelry.

Using metal is infinitely inspiring to me. Every day and every year I learn more about the process,

while creating new processes and transforming old ones.

Regarding the ordering process, we have gone from producing stock and selling what we have, to primarily taking orders and filling them, to finding a happy medium. Producing quantity and quality to fill orders in a timely fashion is an inherent challenge in this business where everything is handmade in small facilities. Through the combination of in-house stock and taking orders, we are able to hone in on this great conundrum and continue to fill orders better and faster.

Marina: *Tawapa is woman-owned and operated. Has Tawapa chosen to always employ only women and why?*



Tawapa: This has been a natural evolution of the company. We do not exclude men. We love men :) I think energetically, the environment Jenella and I have created over time is more feminine, and therefore we attract females. I know that in our production studio, since we have balanced the gender scheme, it is a much gentler environment for everyone to work in. Incidentally, this choice was not at my request, it just happened naturally.

Marina: *Tawapa offers a huge selection of designs and materials, which must require a lot of space and a wide variety of skills. How is quality control handled within the manufacturing process.*

Tawapa: As I mentioned earlier, we have a carving workshop and a metals workshop. We also have started sampling ourselves here in Los Angeles, which helps speed the whole process along.

We have at least 3 stages of QC. The carving workshop quality controls everything they produce, then they deliver to the metal workshop. Here, we have full time QC people dedicated to checking the quality while also checking and testing and double testing everything that is produced in the metal workshop. Next, all of that jewelry lands in our studio in Los Angeles, where we have 1-3 people checking every single piece of jewelry that comes through here.... again. It's a very important process that takes a lot of time and employs several people.

Marina: *Where do you guys find inspiration for new designs and jewelry lines?*

Tawapa: I am inspired by everything all the time! It's limitless. But I like to focus on a few important topics every year or every season.

We did a large collection of geometric inspired jewelry a couple years ago. This year I was inspired by gothic and deco stained glass. I mean, it is infinite, and this inspiration is what drives me.

Marina: *Tawapa has released all sorts of new designs within the last year. Which new designs are the Tawapa pirates most excited about this season?*

Tawapa: Oh wow... so much! To begin with, we are excited about horn again for the first time in awhile. The simple sophisticated geometric shapes that are a long way from previous "tribal jewelry" are really changing our current outlook on carved jewelry. I wear horn again! Besides that, the bondage eyelets are super innovative and new. (We love all the new eyelets.)

We are thrilled about all of the septum jewelry and push pins. The black nano coating has added a refreshing new look to everything. A few favorite designs would be the Minona, Valkyrie Shield, the Owl, Origami Weights, Unicorn Weights, and Notre Dame (inspired from the window of Notre Dame). We are also excited about the inclusion of stone in so many of our new designs.

Marina: *Where does Tawapa find inspiration for the Conference booth displays?*

Tawapa: We LOVE creating displays! We spend way too much time, effort and money on it, because we enjoy it so much. This year that unicorn (previously a horse) came to us magically, and we sort of built the display around her, deciding that matte black was this year's color choice. I've also been really inspired by street art lately. I've been learning screen printing, so some of that carried over to the overall look of the campaign. Every

year is different depending on current inspirations. #currentmood Going all white a couple years ago was a bold move for a dark industry that I think everyone found surprisingly refreshing.

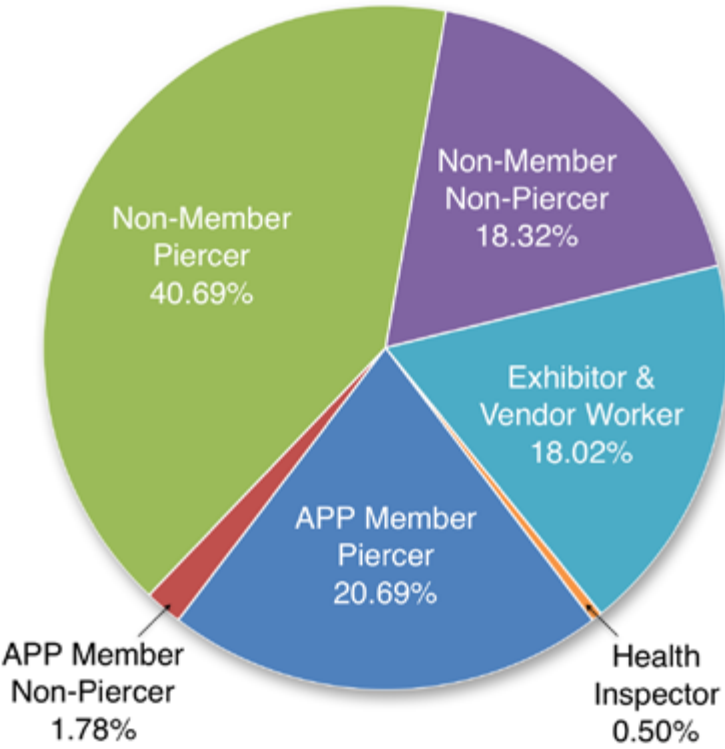
Marina: *Does Tawapa have any suggestions about how to handle and display your jewelry in the shop?*

Tawapa: Be innovative with your materials. Think outside of traditional "displays" and use unusual items and materials for your displays. Creating multiple levels is really important to us. The key is to create a visually stimulating display that maintains an essence of simplicity so that it does not overwhelm the viewer. It's a thin line. You need to wow your customers with an amazing display that doesn't take focus away from the jewelry, but rather, draws them in and makes it easy for them to digest, and want to buy.

Marina: *Is there anything else you'd like to share with The Point readership?*

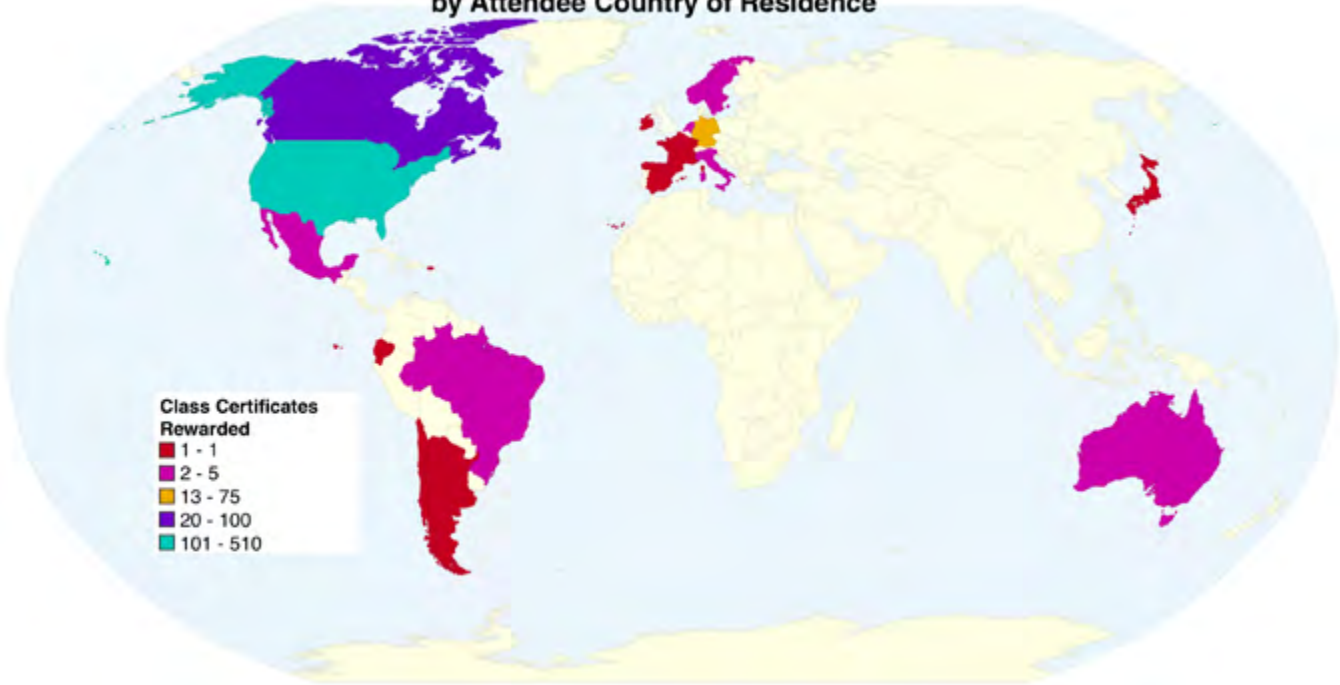
Tawapa: We are just really humbled that we are still here after 20 years! It has been an exciting ride. It is awesome to be 20 years in and feeling more inspired than ever. We are so grateful to all of our shops, piercers, friends, and community who have stood by us all of these years. I think that in this industry more than most, there is a very symbiotic relationship between all of us. All of us at Tawapa love and respect the relationship we have within this greater community that goes beyond manufacturing jewelry. It is a relationship that has withstood the test of time... and it feels great! So, thanks, you guys! We love you!

2016 APP Conference & Exposition
Attendees by Registration Type



CONFERENCE STATISTICS & DEMOGRAPHICS

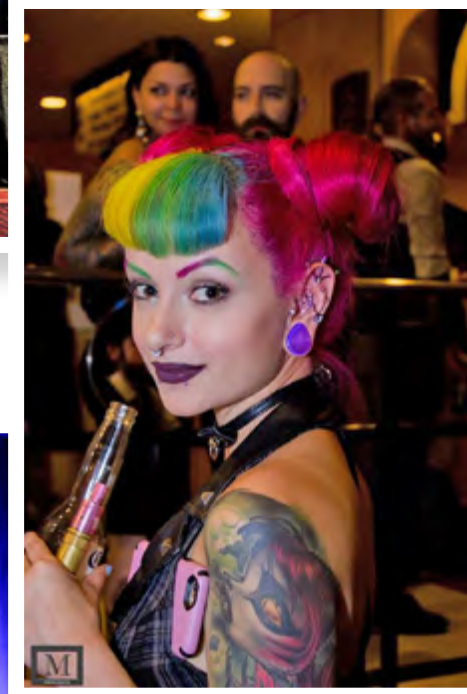
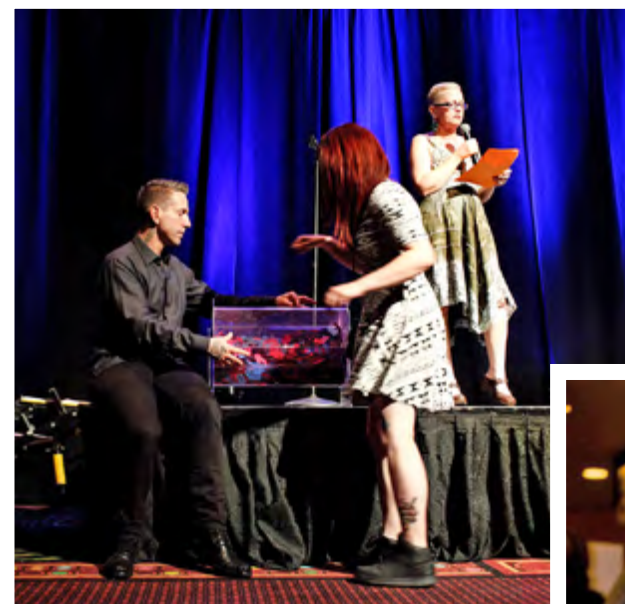
2016 Conference Class Certificates
by Attendee Country of Residence



This globe map highlights the country of residence of international attendees who were awarded certificates for attending classes at the 2016 APP Conference & Exposition. If you are interested in the exact number of certificates per country, an interactive version of this map is available [here](#).



BANQUET

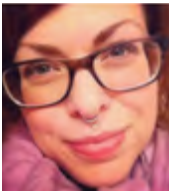


—photo by Matte Erickson





BANQUET PORTRAITS



THE 2016 BANQUET DINNER

KENDRA JANE B

The banquet dinner is a highlight of the week in Vegas for many people. In fact, it has sold out the last few years in a row. Every year we get to see our colleagues dress up in their fanciest duds, from stunning gowns to costumes that fit the theme for the year. This year we saw some of our favorite science fiction characters, including Barf and Leeloo. As we enjoyed a great dinner we were entertained by the familiarity of a sideshow. From there we moved on to the evening's formalities: speeches, awards, and the much anticipated grand prize raffle draws.

The evening's formalities got started when Cody Vaughn and I had the opportunity to say thank you and welcome to our new Members for the year. "This century has seen the advent of technologies and procedures those before us never thought possible, not to mention an exponential growth in the numbers of body modification enthusiasts, and in turn the number of piercers looking to be their best. Every year we gain new Members and grow as an organization but this last year saw us gain an amazing 86 new Members. Congratulations to all our new Members."

- New Members:**
- Andie Saunders
 - Ashley Reeves
 - William Barron
 - Matt Bressmer
 - Kyla Scrivener
 - Olivia Theriault
 - Kara Dee
 - Lara "Barkley" Barkley
 - Laura Davis
 - Michael Bernhardt
 - Megan Feeley
 - Robert Wilson
 - Kelli Zeien
 - Edward (Richie) Bibee
 - Hannah Phykitt
 - Mona Lisa A. Escalante
 - Whitney Chase
 - Joshua W. Spriggs
 - Chris "Plaid" Weyer
 - Emily Woods
 - Jarred Mantia
 - Lani Soleil Gillespie
 - Ricky Andrew Minor
 - Anthony Merritt
 - Joey Hayden
 - Nick Lanehardt
 - Rivka McCormack
 - Courtney-Logan Rose Cangelosi

- Sebastian Wolfe Pickersgill
- Ana Paula Escalante
- Lola Slider
- Jay Zogg
- Tim Gerdes
- Janessa McKissack
- Leo Ziebol
- Melinda Hupy
- Dominick Arduino
- Giselle Rose Arduino
- Inaveronica Ausland Pedersen
- Amy Willmore
- Jacob Spjut
- Matthew Buonantuono
- Kevin Allison
- Crystal Vozzella
- Ryan Terrillion
- Doug Poisson
- John Robberson
- Rosemary Willicome
- Justin Ellis
- Hali Stimis
- Amanda Thompson
- Chris A Taylor
- John Osborne
- Hall Boyer
- Paul Rainer
- Jason "Jay" Zukas
- Dustin Schoelier

- Phoebe Dowling
- Ryan Tantay
- Britt Riggs
- Samantha Minh (Robles)
- Brittney Lola Lebbano
- Thomas Gottschalk
- Scott Self
- Derek Ian
- Robert Chambers
- Kolby Cain
- Kaylyn Suellentrop
- John Alonzo
- Dustin Jackson
- Michael Kabbeko-Johnson
- Chelsie Ross
- Bernard P. Ellis II
- Eric Schuh
- Michael Kaspa
- Amy McNichol
- Dorian McCarron
- Nicolas Fox
- Thomas Mocek
- Westin M. Fryar
- Rich Hartwick
- Maddie Akers
- Matt Ronin
- Charles Charlie Wheeler
- Deidra Saville Evans
- Bilal "Cozmo" Whitest

Miro Hernandez then had the distinguished pleasure of announcing this year's birth announcements:

- Shortly after conference last year, Brian and Sandrine Skellie's daughter Serena was brought into this world.
- Ahri Elise Wilson was born on April 11th to Robert and Carissa Wilson
- Hazel Grey Hemmingsen was born on May 6h to Tyler and Laura Hemmingsen
- Patience J. Hope McInnes was born on July 9th to Mike and Michelle McInnes
- Tamarah and Wednesday Henryson brought a female "puppy" into this world on September 24th. When Tamarah was pregnant, the baby's gender couldn't be identified, so after people kept asking and asking, they finally just said, "a puppy" and that has stuck since.
- Julie Green of Westcoast Piercing and Ink first grandchild, Daya, was born on June 21
- Simon Patrick Saunders was born on September 8, 2015 to 2 of our APP members, Jef Saunders and Laura Leonard
- Troubador Rocco Grosvenor was born on September 29, 2015 to Nathan and Chelsea Grosvenor
- Mark and Nikole Montgomery are now grandparents with the birth of their beautiful grandson Lachlan (Lock Ian)
- Lyric Mason Dinsmore was born on November 22, 2015 to Desiree Dinsmore and Dustin Merryman

This past year was also filled with loss and sorrow and we mourn the passing of several members of our community:

- Hugh Mattay from Australia passed on Jan 28 at the age of 37.
- Leah Lovell from New York passed at the age of 28
- Peter Pina, 33, of Electric Chair Tattoo and Body Piercing in Houston.
- Jerome "JJ" Moiso passed away on February 26th after a long battle with cancer. He was one of Al D's last apprentices and had worked for a handful of Seattle studios as well as owning his own studio for a couple years. He was also involved with the original body art regulations in Washington State.
- Charles Gatewood and his iconic photography that brought the weird and macabre to pop culture and his larger than life personality.
- In 2014, Mark Siekierski joked about having this quote read as a memorial if he should ever pass, and sadly this year that wish will be made a reality.



"Look again at that dot. That's here. That's home. That's us. On it everyone you love, everyone you know, everyone you ever heard of, every human being who ever was, lived out their lives. The aggregate of our joy and suffering, thousands of confident religions, ideologies, and economic doctrines, every hunter and forager, every hero and coward, every creator and destroyer of civilization, every king and peasant, every young couple in love, every mother and father, hopeful child, inventor and explorer, every teacher of morals, every corrupt politician, every "superstar," every "supreme leader," every saint and sinner in the history of our species lived there on a mote of dust suspended in a sunbeam."

With the completion of that paragraph there was not a dry eye in the place and we all knew that we had honoured a great man and all those that we had lost last year.

Last year's banquet gave me the opportunity to thank someone very special to me, Caitlin McDiar-mid. This year the tables were turned and she awarded me the Josh Prentice Volunteer award. This definitely brought me to tears. I was stunned and left speechless to say the least. I am so honoured to have been recognized for something that brings me joy and fills my bucket until it runs over.

Brian Skellie also had the privilege of presenting this year's President's award to Ana Paula. This woman is a powerhouse in our industry and has brought safe piercing education to Latin America. When she

is not teaching worldwide or starving to build LBP and the education seminars available to Latin American piercers, she creates stunning jewelry. A mother, wife, educator, and creator she is the most deserved recipient of this award.

From there the evening progressed to the presentation of the Expo awards. This year, there was a tie for the Creative Innovator's Award, being presented to both Tether and Onetribes. We also saw Tether win the Single Booth Award. It is so wonderful to see a first time exhibitor and new company hit the ground running. At the other end of the spectrum, two long standing pillars of the industry took home the evening's other awards. Tawapa won the Multiple Booth Award and Diablo Organic won the Technical Innovator's Award.

Now that the formalities had been taken care of it was time to get onto the top raffle prize drawings (we all know this is what everyone was really waiting for).

As the evening drew to a close, lives had been changed forever, and we knew the week was drawing to a close. This is always a bittersweet moment for many of us. So until next year I leave you with this. . .

Alvin Toffler said, "The illiterate 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write. But those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn." It is in this vein that we gather in the desert; to learn with the best; to unlearn some of our preconceived notions; and relearn things we thought we already knew. From our classrooms and workshops to our exposition floor it has been evident that the APP, our Members, Sponsors, and conference Attendees ensure that they take every opportunity to learn and grow both personally and professionally. We are so very excited to see what the future holds, when we boldly go where no piercer has gone before.



Onetribes presented their new design called "Ghost in the Shell," which tied for this year's [Creative Innovator's Award](#).



Jane Absinth (left)
& Angie van Dijken (right)



SCHOLAR REFLECTIONS

ANGIE VAN DIJKEN—AL D. SCHOLAR

"I'm too inexperienced, too small, too far away. Let's attend in the future, when I'm more experienced. Why should I attend now?" Thoughts that have frequently gone through my head. I was second guessing myself all the time; doubt all over. It wasn't until after a conversation with Shorty; he convinced me to go, with just one single question: "Do you want to improve?" Of course I do! "Then sign up," he said and so I did. Two days before the deadline with the thought, "at least I tried." I'm happy I did, because I got through!

I drove to the airport, slightly fearful, of going on a trip this far alone and not knowing what to expect, but there was no need to be worried. I arrived safe and sound at Bally's Hotel and it felt like home right from the start. It's just so great to see people from all over the world, with the same passion for piercing and the same purpose to attend—to teach and learn.

Everyone was super friendly and showed true interest in one another, all open for a chat or a hug. It is the place to network, make friends, have fun, and have a drink or two. Just by having conversations with others, you will learn new things, get new ideas, or get the advice you were looking for. In one week you will increase your knowledge and expand your view on things.

The classes were great and interesting. Being a volunteer, I also had the chance to see what goes on backstage, how truly amazing it is to see so many people working together to make this Conference happen. Without them, this wouldn't be possible!

I'm so glad I applied for the Al D. Scholarship. I've grown in so many aspects, professionally and personally. Not only did I learn a lot, but I also made new friends. I have a new family now. I can proudly say, I've been there and hell yes, I'll be back again as a volunteer!

So, if you are like me—second guessing if you should go, because you feel like you don't have the experience or own a small studio—just ask yourself one thing. Do you want to improve?

HANNAH BOUGH—AL D. SCHOLAR

I initially found out about Conference four years ago. However, up until last year, attending it was something that seemed unachievable for me, until I found out about the Al. D Scholarship. I found applying for the scholarship to be an extremely nerve wracking experience. I just hoped that throughout the application process my hard work, dedication, and passion for the industry would show. I don't think I'll ever forget the moment I got the call from Kendra

to say I made it. Achieving a place as a Scholar was definitely a career defining moment for me.

In the weeks leading up to Conference, I became extremely excited to meet all of the faces I had seen from the other side of a computer screen. I watched all of the training videos, attended meetings, and prepared myself for the tasks that were to be set for me as a Scholar. However, nothing could prepare me for what I was about to undertake.

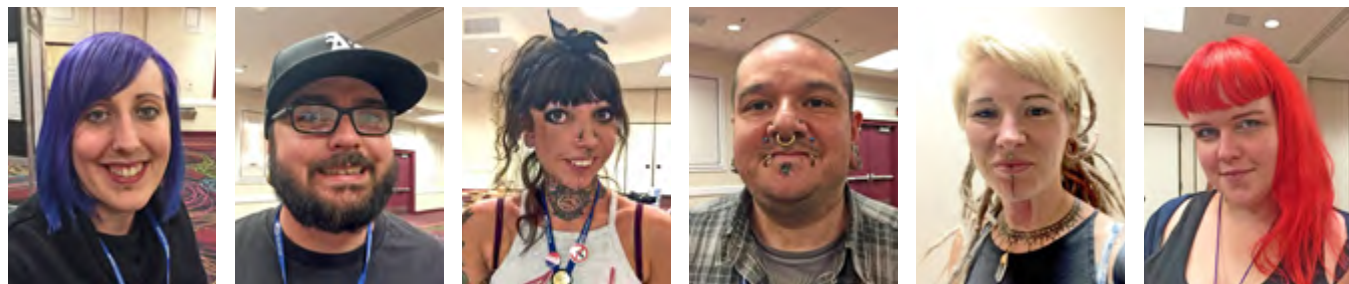
Being a volunteer means you get to be part of this awesome group of people who accept you as if you have been part of Conference since day one. They accept you as one of their own and take care of you when you need it (and even if you don't). I have never met a group of people so willing to help others at the drop of a hat. The selflessness of the volunteers is astounding and I am already counting down the days until I get to see them again.

There are numerous things that happened during my time at Conference that I won't forget: the myriad of information during classes, meeting some of the piercers whose work I admire, volunteer dinner, and the extremely loud singing on the way (I'm sure the other passengers on the bus were delighted by our dulcet tones)! Yet, one of the most overwhelming and emotional moments for me was having my name called out at Banquet. It made me feel privileged to stand up in front of my peers, knowing that we are all striving to make our industry a better place and that all of the hard work during the application process had been worth it.

I am really happy that I pushed myself out of my comfort zone and applied for the scholarship. It was definitely worth all of the stress I put myself under. If asked if I would do it again I would, without a second thought. Since coming back from Conference I have faced my work with a renewed energy and I am counting down the days until next year. Thank you to everyone I met during my week for making my experience great, but especially Caitlin, Kendra, and Ryan for allowing me to be part of it.

JAMIE BIGGERS—AL D. SCHOLAR

This year has been a completely life changing experience because of the Al D. Scholarship. Where I come from, there is no sense of community within the industry. Now that I've attended Conference, I feel like I have a home and a family. Previously, I was so stagnant in my career it wasn't even funny. Now, because of the amazing opportunity I was given to attend this year's Conference, not only have I pushed myself harder to learn, but I've pushed myself in my



business as well. Solely based on Conference, I now have an achievable goal of opening the only APP shop in my county by next Conference.

The sense of community and love I now feel from the industry is amazing. These newly discovered feelings are all because of the people who thought I was deserving enough to be a part of the volunteer group. For whatever reason, they saw something in me that they felt was worthy enough of this life changing experience. Conference changed my outlook on—not just piercing—but my life as well.

I just want to say thank you to Caitlin for putting up with my BS and every single volunteer. Also, I want to thank Krista Crespo, Becky Dill, the Bay Area Piercing Group, and most of all the crew at Electric Monk Tattoo for pushing me and helping me get this scholarship. It has been an amazing experience. Thank you.

MAREE FOWLER—AL D. SCHOLAR

You'll make life long friends, they said.

Be prepared for tears, they said.

It will change your life and you will want to volunteer every year, they said.

They were right.

Receiving the call saying I was successful in gaining an Al D. Scholarship was emotional. They, the volunteers, are one big family and every year open their arms and welcome a group of strangers as one of their own. It truly is heartwarming that no matter how many miles from home any given volunteer was, no one was ever alone. With endless hugs, laughter, and self care reminders, I always felt safe and relaxed.

For many, in our youth we were the outcast, quiet, nerdy, alternative kids. To be in a place and be surrounded with what feels like 'your own kind' is a beautiful experience. For me personally, I was incredibly nervous, shy, and found it hard to start conversations. Mostly I was anxious for my first volunteer shift working the classroom door. It's an intimidating feeling having up to 300 beautiful and skilled piercers standing in front of you, many of whom I admire. There

were many I did not know, but wanted to get to know.

However, I surprised myself and found I loved scanning their passes and welcoming them to the class. The quick hellos and welcomes, exchanging a few friendly words; this gave me the confidence I needed to enjoy and gain the most from Conference.

There are so many highlights, memories, and experiences to list. If asked what I took away from Conference, I would have to say, passion for this industry. I gained more than I even had before, self confidence to trust in myself both professionally and personally. Should I ever need to reach out, I have the support of my new duckling family and fellow attendees from Conference. Las Vegas and the APP Conference & Expo has been a humbling and unforgettable experience.

This wee lassy has come back to Scotland with newfound friends, new goals I will strive to achieve, and a lasting desire to be the best piercer I can be.

From the bottom of my heart, thank you. I will make it my mission to be there again next year. All my love.

NICOLE HOLMES—AL D. SCHOLAR

When I look back at the big fuzzy ball of excitement and emotion that has become my fused memory of this year's APP Conference, I can't help but inhale a contemplative breath of satisfaction and wonder. This year was my first and I was fortunate to be awarded the Al D. Scholarship; it gave me a view beyond simply attending.

The event and location were not at all what I had expected. As it turns out I thoroughly enjoy Vegas, which came as quite a surprise being a tree-dwelling hippy! Before the Conference began, I took the time to look around; wandering the streets it was easy to spot other piercers doing the same. We definitely took over Vegas!

Cherry picking my highlights I would have to say the first few volunteer meetings were an unforgettable experience. Such an amazing collection of wacky and wonderful people gathered for a collective cause. I felt instantly at home and quickly part of the

volunteer family. Helping with attendee reception during Registration was particularly electric. All the attendees lining up down the hall with anticipation. An incredible hubbub.

Another favorite moment was the privilege of covering the Expo door just as the Members-only hour started. It was so fun to be part of that hour long piercer Christmas!

I had a particular fondness for 45 piercings in 45 minutes. This was a fast paced video reel of quick edit videos showing the few seconds before, during, and after the execution of a piercing from a head cam worn by the piercer.

Also, I never realized how many Members-only sessions there would be. While there were so many classes available to every piercing attendee, the Members-only sections were quite different. Delving deeper and longer into the discussion material.

But fun and memorable aside, I wasn't just attending as Nici the piercer and volunteer. I was also there as Nici the first president of the UKAPP and for that, I had many many educational and eye opening moments. Seeing the well-oiled machine that is Caitlin and Conference - together still learning and growing, becoming ever more tight knit - showed me that the UKAPP holds the potential for something great. It has the potential to become a thing that really can benefit both individuals and the industry mutually.

For example, the doubling up of speakers in each class was possibly accidental genius. Having multiple opinions on each topic, varied experiences, and often even moments of yin and yang techniques was eye opening and definitely something I appreciated and will take home.

In short, I learned a lot, made dozens of new and future friends. I had some fantastic new experiences. I pushed my personal limits and boundaries. I met some of my heroes and bought some amazing jewelry. I will definitely make it my goal to return each and every year possible.

I'd like to take this opportunity to urge you to get to next year's conference and if you're struggling, please apply for the scholarship. Also to say a huge thank you to everyone that helped me get there this year. You were right, I needed to go and it did change my life.

FABRICIO CORDOSAO—AL D. SCHOLAR

Original:

A minha participação como um atendente bolsista Al D. foi extraordinária toda a trajetória, textos, vídeos, visto, conversas para no fim fazer tarefas modestas, acompanhando toda a responsabilidade

de lidar bem com o público, de não interromper o ritmo de trabalho, uma preocupação minha. Foi com certeza um presente, um grande prêmio da minha vida, pela qual sou muito grato. Que ajudou nos custos de uma viagem internacional. É uma felicidade muito grande ter ajudado a cuidar da casa. O contato com pessoas boas, profissionais, evento organizado. Curti todas as classes, eventos, socialização, cada momento inédito.

O reconhecimento do esforço aqui veio rápido e responsabilidades também. Percebi como estamos perto do ideal é como o bom acabamento faz toda diferença. Emocionante ver a indústria do piercing americana de perto, sua história. E é sentir seu maior bem que são as pessoas que integram a APP, gostei imensamente do povo muito educado, hospitaleiro e carinhoso.

**—Muito obrigado por tudo
Fabrício Cardoso Bambino**

Interpretation by Pablo Nicolas Perelmuter:

My involvement as an Al D. Scholar was extraordinary. I had a few concerns before attending; the whole process of the event, the instructions and videos regarding modest volunteer tasks, following all responsibilities when dealing with attendees, and not interrupting the pace of work.

It was definitely a gift, a great prize of my life, for which I am very grateful. This gift helped cover the costs of my international travel. In return, I was more than happy to help take care of the Conference while connecting with good people & professionals in a well organized event.

I enjoyed all classes, events, socializing, and each unique moment. The recognition of the effort here came fast and responsibilities too. I realized how close we are to the ideal and how the detail is what makes all the difference. It was exciting to see the American





piercing industry closely, and witness its history. It feels like your greatest asset are the people that are part of the APP.

I enjoyed myself immensely. The people were very polite, hospitable, and kind.

Thank you very much for everything.

Editor's Note: Please note this serves as an interpretation rather than a translation; a direct translation from Portuguese to English is not possible.

ILKA HONOUR—NO EXCUSES SCHOLAR

What an amazing convention that was! I had never been to Vegas, let alone a convention of body piercers, so I had a fantastic time. I am sure that my life will never be the same. Now that I have been home for a couple of weeks and readjusted to home life, I have had some time to think of three key subjects that I really brought away from the Conference.

I was stunned and intrigued by the beauty of the modified and bejeweled bodies of the attendees. This was a walking tribute to the cutting edge of self expression and individuality. The mods. The piercings. The jewelry. The dress. It was a majestic spectacle of human style. I decided to step up my game and join in this circus show of design. I am inspired. I will keep you all posted as I morph.

The professional training I received in marketing and online sales will be the key component to my future business plans. I am currently refurbishing the most adorable trailer into a fully functioning tiny studio. I will be relying on an online presence to book my clients and sell my jewelry. The tips and tricks that I learned in class will save me a ton of research time as well as money.

It was also great to meet my colleagues face to face before befriending them on social media. I feel that after a personal meeting I would be more comfortable trying to glean a little more information from them

than I would after just a cold online meeting. I feel like a professional with distinguished colleagues. Sounds adult doesn't it?

The mystical and mysterious healing powers of the shamanic practices had a place there. I enjoyed the classes that referred to those ancient ways and our modern application. I treat my clients with reverence and great love when they are needing a healing. I would like to further develop my skills in this area, and I look forward to sharing my experiences with those of similar mind at Conference next year.

It is with profound appreciation that I extend my heartfelt thanks to you all for selecting me. It is a progressive idea funding scholarships. I hope to pay forward the opportunity you shared with me to another aspiring attendee soon.

JASMINE ELLIS—NO EXCUSES SCHOLAR

It's taken a full week to find words to explain everything I have experienced at Conference. Now, as I sit here trying to put those words to paper, I still cannot fathom how wonderful this opportunity has been for myself and the other scholars. The generosity of everyone who donated to the scholarships amazes me and I cannot thank them enough or tell them how much I appreciate the chance I was given.

The pull of modifying my appearance began as a young child—being just another face in the crowd made me feel as if I was invisible, easily passed over and forgotten; but now, being a part of this industry, I'm starting to feel more comfortable in my own flesh and I have no one singularly to thank for that feeling except for the community as a whole. Becoming a piercer has shown me that it is possible for me to help someone else struggling to be themselves and I am humbled by that prospect.

While at Conference I met some of the most exquisite human beings I have ever encountered. Being able to "nerd out" with them and spend hours talking about piercing particulars in detail has left a feeling a comradery that won't ever fade, so I thank them for being willing to open themselves up to forming new friendships and becoming industry affiliates. Especially to the group of scholars that I had the chance to make lasting personal friendships with, I adore each and every one of them immensely for who they are and the fact that they are also trying to improve themselves and the shops they work at.

When I first signed up for a full week of classes I was intimidated by the workload I had ahead of me. Once I got there, however, I realized it wasn't as bad as I was imagining it to be. A few others had mentioned

that it was probably one of the smoothest conferences to date, both for attendees and all volunteers; for that I am eternally grateful. Of all the classes I took, a few stood out more than the others: Safe Practices in the Sterilization (and Piercing) Rooms, Septum's: Where Skill Meets Luck, Needle Theory, and Studio Documentation. After taking those classes I realized how lackluster my apprenticeship really has been and how much I absolutely do not know in regards to piercing safely and knowledgeably. It put a fire under my tail and made me desire to better my studio as a whole and myself for the sake of my clients. There is a lot that I don't know, and I will be forever learning in this industry to help provide the safest, cleanest, most professional piercing that I am physically capable of performing.

In this world there are many different ways of learning and teaching to get the lesson across to a wide variety of individuals. Personally, I find the most success in learning new material via hands on experience. To quote Benjamin Franklin, "Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn."

Going to Conference, I was able to be part of a large community of people who all travel hundreds of miles yearly to learn more about their chosen career path so that they also can provide the safest procedures for their clients. This has helped me become a better person in and outside of the studio. To everyone who works endless hours and without sleep every single year to make the APP Conference run as smoothly as it does, to every single last volunteer who helped with registration, class credits, and any questions anyone may have had while in Vegas, and to every single attendee who works tirelessly every year to afford going to APP – keep doing what you're doing. You are changing lives and not just your own. Thank you for this beautiful and unparalleled opportunity we are all given each year to better ourselves and our studios for the safety of our clients.

LOREIA BËRGEN—NO EXCUSES SCHOLAR

This year's Conference was really intense for me. But in a more efficient way – as a professional and as a person. Unfortunately not everything worked out as originally planned, but in the end everything worked out well. As I said, it was still very intense.

As some of you may know, I had a very rough year and one of my main focuses was self care. This worked out pretty well – I hydrated, gave myself enough sleep, and tried to eat as healthy as you can in Vegas. This idea of self care could also be seen with other people this year. I worked as an underground volunteer; I

made a point to bring coffee for fellow volunteers and forced people to eat fruits. :D

I took really awesome classes this year, from the "safety" classes (procedures in the sterilization room, and piercing room, and the statim class) to the marking class. I took the anatomy class again this year and I really loved it; when you know how you should work, it is important to repeat the basics again and again and again. This gives me a real good feeling.

I learned a great deal and will (again) make some changes in my studio: I will rebuild my sterilization room in the next months and I am super proud that I will be able to do a second showcase with high quality jewelry! I also brought some gold home with me and I am super stoked about this! I travelled to the Conference with the last of my savings and spent it all at the Expo, but I have faith that this is the right way to act (my faith comes from receiving the scholarship). Thanks to everybody who made this possible for me. I can't express what this means to me. I tried to find as many piercers as possible to say thank you for the scholarship, but I know there are more of you. So I just want to let you know, I am full of love and full of gratitude for you!

TREVOR JACKSON—NO EXCUSES SCHOLAR

Las Vegas, Sin City: the place you go for a weekend you'll never remember. This is what most people think of when they think of the strip. For me, there is a drastic difference. Vegas is a place of knowledge for those who have no outlet of their own, a place for community with a family you never knew you had and above all else a place to continue to move a growing industry



out of the dark and into the light.

I can't even begin to describe the impact the 2016 APP Conference had on me and my career, so I'll start back one year prior, back to 2015 when I had exhausted my resources at a previous studio I had been working at.

Having always heard from my peers how amazing Conference was and how much they learned and bonded with others in the industry, my mind was blown that something like this actually existed. A place that we could all be one big family and help each other move forward in our own personal journeys. I had to be a part of this, take the next step in my career, and get over this rut I had been stuck in for so long. Unfortunately, finances are always a deciding factor and things at the shop weren't too busy, so I turned to scholarship opportunities.

I applied to the Al D. Scholarship and No-Excuse Scholarship in hopes that 2015 would be the year I took that next big leap in my journey. Once it was all said and done I didn't end up receiving one and it left me really bummed for months to follow. I felt as if I had missed out on knowledge and opportunities to move forward, and I didn't know what to do with myself. It was then I decided to do whatever I needed in order to make it to Conference the following year, no matter how difficult it seemed.

This year my dreams came true. As soon as scholarship applications were up I jumped on them to make sure I got the best use of my time and the opportunities set out in front of me. Not only did I apply to the Al D. and No-Excuse, but I had also put in for Club Tattoo's scholarship; I wasn't going to let any of these pass me by. After months of waiting and anticipating the outcome I received a phone call from the ever so amazing Christina Shull saying that I would be receiving the No-Excuse Scholarship and that I would be going to Conference! It felt so surreal, like I was dreaming. It was finally happening and I couldn't believe it.

From start to finish Conference was nothing like I had expected. Everything from the cross country road trip to get there to waiting in lines for check in and getting my badge, it was a dream come true. Upon arrival, I had no clue what to expect. My main goal was to not die in the desert heat and definitely to not make a fool of myself in my first year; this was all made way easier by the awesome folks involved in the mentor program. Even though I didn't ask a whole lot of questions to my

mentor, Tyler McClure, he was still there to help me with anything I needed and for that I will always be grateful. Everyone was so welcoming and happy to be there it was for sure an amazing start to the week.

I had a full schedule of classes throughout the week from various lectures and slideshow presentations to hands on workshops which really helped to visualize each piercers' unique approach and concepts. Out of all of the classes I took I would have to say that the most beneficial to me were the Strategic Marking workshop, Male Genital Piercing, and APP Talk: Personal Journeys.

Having four instructors for the Strategic Marking workshop was extremely beneficial. It put into perspective how different an approach can be from piercer to piercer to achieve the same end goal. Rob Hill really helped with his explanation of placements and execution order for not only traditional industrials but

also for multi-point industrials. I also found Courtney Maxwell's approach helpful when marking paired nostrils on less than ideal anatomy. If marking is one of your weak points, I would highly recommend checking out this class in future years; you won't be disappointed.

The Male Genital class not only put me in a good position to understand ideal placements on areas that have drastic changes in shape and size, but also helped me to understand what is ideal to pierce and how to allow for a nice smooth process. Male genital work isn't something I had ever offered due to lack of knowledge and training, but I do look forward to being able to add some to my portfolio.

To round out the end of my week I finished with stories of personal journeys within the piercing industry and how some got their start. Everyone has their own journey and have had to deal with various obstacles along the way, but with enough passion, dedication, and hard work they were able to overcome those milestones in their careers to get them to where they are now. One important lesson I took from this class was that sometimes you'll be put in less than ideal situations, whether it be with a client, co-worker or employer, or even a peer in the industry. With the right attitude and knowledge you can overcome it and move on towards the next challenge that needs to be tackled.

We all know that knowledge is valuable and will help us all move forward, but I would have to say the best part of this experience - what I'll carry with me

for the rest of my journey - is the sense of community and family that was present from the moment we got to the Bally's. I can't remember the last time I had this great of an experience. After meeting peers that I have followed on social media for years, I realized they are regular people just like me! Everyone was down to Earth and extremely helpful even if they didn't know who you were.

Not only was I able to interact and bond with fellow piercers from my home state of Michigan, I was also able to spend a lot of time with a couple piercers from Alaska, Indiana, California and even several from out of the country. This was a valuable tool that I have never had access to in the past; Conference was there to help bridge that gap.

All in all I couldn't be more grateful for the opportunity I was given and will always remember my first year at Conference. I highly encourage anyone looking to continue moving forward to attend Conference. If money is the deciding factor, there are plenty of scholarship opportunities to apply for and being a scholar makes bridging those awkward "meeting new people" moments much more bearable. I can't wait to go back and see our community continue to grow into a bright and happy future.

Thank you APP for making this Conference possible. Thank you to all the piercers who put forth money out of their own pockets to make this opportunity available for us scholars; you are the real heroes here.

JOSHUA MELNICK—NO EXCUSES SCHOLAR

It's been difficult enough organizing my thoughts post-Conference, so the concept of structuring an essay has been daunting to say the least. It's been six days since Conference, and I still feel like I'm floating. Full of gratitude for those who have given to me. Full of ideas for new approaches to things. I already know who I am in this world and am comfortable in my vessel. But I walked away from this experience feeling more confident in my decisions, sourcing inspiration from the successes and joys of others in my chosen community.

I made a post on my personal social media attempting to express my thanks for all those involved with Conference, and my ability to attend it, but re-reading it later I feel like it falls short. I feel like it always will. There are simply too many people involved. I suppose that's what pictures are for; the shortcomings of words. The picture I attached to this post perhaps better encapsulated the pure joy I was blessed with experiencing. There, between the smiling faces of Paul King, Pat Pierce, and a lovely cut-out of Sailor Sid, you can see my most genuine smile of



gratitude: gratitude to the universe for spinning me to that place, at that moment.

The classes I was able to experience were exceptional, and better yet the discussions afterward about the content. Being able to bounce around ideas with more than just one other piercer at a time was a first for me, and something I truly enjoyed. Seeing so many different, yet viable approaches to the same problems are very exciting, and I greatly value the connections I've made. These connections will allow me to reach out and further pick the brains of the individuals explaining such approaches. It's certainly safe to say the conference experience has also taken down the veil of importance I've put up around certain individuals. We're all human, we're all geeks to one degree or another, and piercing is the language we share. I shouldn't be afraid to speak it.

I feel blessed, truly. But I also feel proud. I acknowledge that I did not get there on my own, but I did get there of my own volition and determination. No one wrote my submissions for me, and it still required hands and thoughts. The last meal I had in Las Vegas was some Chinese food, and eating alone while reflecting on my time at Conference, I mechanically and unthinkingly reached my meals conclusion and cracked open my fortune cookie. My fortune that day - now pinned on my corkboard at home - reads "of all our human resources, the most precious is the desire to improve." That to me is the spirit of the APP, the mission statement of piercers, and something that was so serendipitous, I can't help but feel that I'm on the right path for myself in life.

ELECTION TIME IS UPON US!



I'm sure many of you are burned-out on election talk given how divisive and controversial the recent U.S. Presidential election was. I'm optimistic we can get through the upcoming APP election with much less friction and vitriol; not to mention far fewer TV ads and automated phone calls.

As a 20+ year member of the APP, I was around before there were elections for Board positions. I've participated in all of the elections (I'm pretty sure) and I've seen that process change, for the better, over the years. I believe the current

system is the best we have ever had.

It is a little ironic that being an outstanding piercer has almost nothing to do with how qualified or effective someone will be to serve on the Board of the Association of Professional Piercers, but it's the truth.

Being able to execute flawless septum piercings all day long doesn't mean someone is good at time-management. Being the head piercer at a well-known studio doesn't mean someone is good at working with others to solve problems. Just because someone seems

to be nice when you talk to them on Facebook, it doesn't mean their personal life is in-order and they will be able to dedicate the time and energy necessary to complete their duties as a Board member. Enjoying hanging out with someone for a couple of hours at Conference doesn't mean they handle conflict well and are open to compromise. Just because you like the idea of a candidate who wants to "shake things up", it doesn't mean they have any idea about the legal structure and requirements of running a non-profit organization.

Having 1,000,000 Followers on Instagram doesn't mean someone has an understanding of the APP's mission statement of education.

It can be difficult to know what skills and experience a candidate has that will be applicable to serving the APP. For the last few years, I have started doing three things to help me make a more-informed decision about my colleagues who are trying to get elected:

I look for a history of successful service to the APP. Members who have worked on subcommittees, volunteered at Conference and/or offered up their time and services to the organization in other ways, consistently prove to be Board members that finish their terms and are effective at helping the APP move forward.

I really read the bios the candidates present during the process. I want to know how they have helped the APP and what skills and experiences they have that will be directly applicable to being an effective Board member.

I reach out to candidates and ask them questions about their experience and their ideas. I try to find out in what ways they think they can be effective and what ideas they have about the current state of the APP as well as the future of the organization.

It is my hope that for the upcoming election, and all future elections, the membership will put thought and time into why we are casting the votes we are. Instead of just voting for names you recognize, or people you like, dig a little deeper. Demand a little more of the people who want to represent our industry and our profession to the rest of the world.

Thank you and happy voting!
—Derek Lowe

2016 MEMBER UPDATE

AARON POLLACK



Elections

2016 Elections are in full swing at the APP office. We currently have four Board of Directors positions that will end their terms at Conference 2017. Check your email inbox for your ballot. Remember that to participate in voting or running for a position on the Board of Directors the nominee must have completed a membership renewal if necessary, and have all necessary membership documentation including BBP and First Aid/CPR on file with the front office.

Conference Certificates and Photos

Certificates and photos from Conference 2016 are being processed and will be released soon. Keep an eye out for both!

The photos will be posted to an official tumblr page for easy access, and will be promoted through email and conference social media pages.

Certificates will be mailed upon completion.

Conference 2016 Recap

Conference 2016 was a resounding success. We had a week jam packed with classes, expo, and our biggest raffle ever!

By the end of the week we had 986 attendees and gave away over \$165,000 worth of generously donated prizes.

Thank you to every person who attended, all of our volunteers, our corporate sponsors, vendors, and those who donated.



**Conference 2017 will be held
June 11–June 16, 2017
at Bally's Hotel and Casino, Las Vegas**

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“Essential reading...” RUNNING THE GAUNTLET

An Intimate History of the Modern Body Piercing Movement by Jim Ward

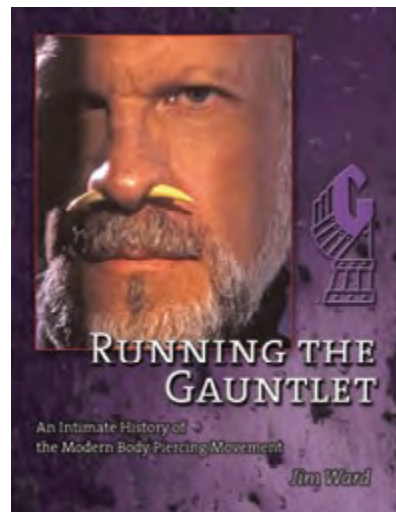
In this revealing autobiography, Jim Ward, considered by many to be the father of the modern piercing industry, tells the engaging and candid story of discovering his own fascination with body piercing, his founding of Gauntlet, the world's first body piercing studio, and how he transformed a personal fetish and backroom, amateur pursuit into a respected profession and spearheaded a world-wide social phenomenon.

Essential reading for everyone with an interest in body piercing; you, your shop staff, and your customers will treasure this book.

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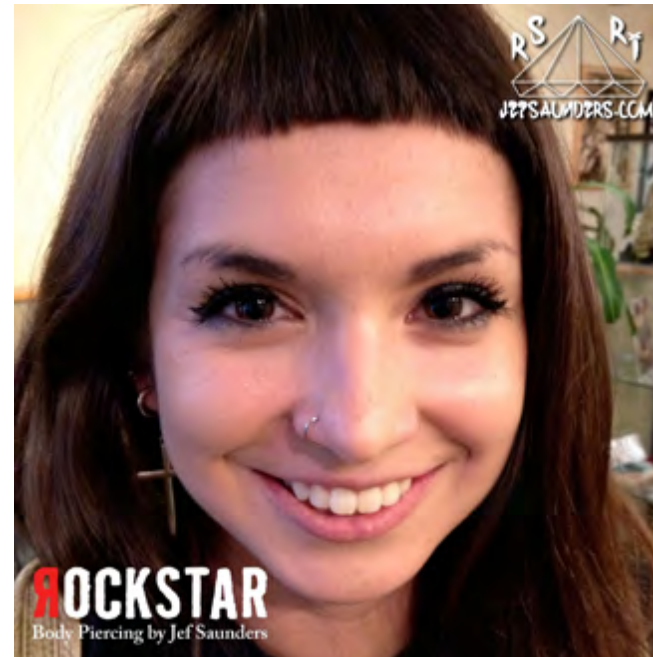


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“Essential reading for anyone who wants to understand how modern body piercing arrived at the place it currently occupies.”
JAMES WEBER, Former President
Association of Professional Piercers

NOSTRIL PIERCING: JEWELRY CONSIDERATIONS —RINGS & CIRCULAR JEWELRY

JEFF SAUNDERS

Thursday, December 19, 2013

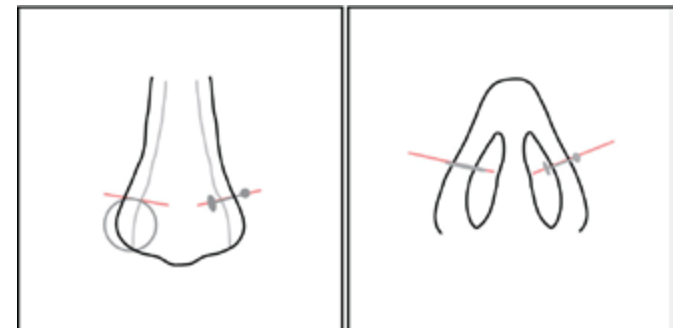


“How do you get snug fitting captive bead rings for nostrils”? I was astonished to hear my experienced colleagues respond “Have a lot of different sizes of captive bead rings”. Sure, an appropriate selection of jewelry is critical, but they completely neglected that nostrils pierced with a ring have to be angled appropriately for that style of jewelry.

Nostril piercings with rings are different than nostril piercings with studs.

I'll say that another way: on a few clients, the angles for snug hoop piercings and appropriately placed stud piercings is the exact same, perpendicular angle. On the vast majority of clients, the angles for hoops and studs should be different.

Let's look at a client with a very narrow nose.



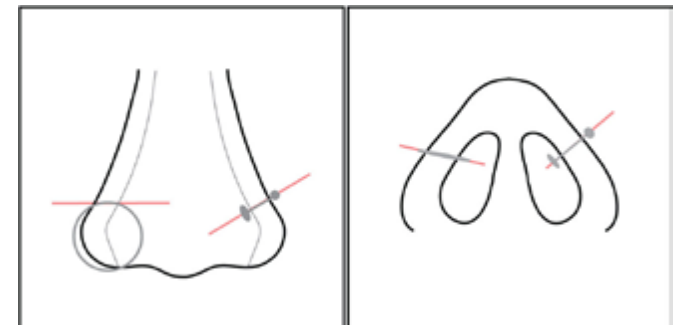
I began piercing in the 1990's. Piercing with a ring was the rule, not the exception, and we put them everywhere. Why? First, many of us used aftercare that involved rotating harsh chemicals into the wound. Of course, it turns out that was a bad idea. Secondly, rings looked really cool... to the customers of the 1990's captive bead rings and circular barbells were what body jewelry was. Times have certainly changed.

We discovered that our aftercare needed improvement and leaving the jewelry alone was actually a much better plan than constantly rotating jewelry through the piercing channel. We also discovered that many piercings healed better with straight jewelry. Straight jewelry didn't add the stress of curved jewelry through a straight piercing channel. Eventually, over the course of the past 15 years, starting a piercing with a ring became “wrong” amongst a large majority of piercers. While I would agree that the switch away from rings has sped up healing in some cases, using straight jewelry exclusively has not been all good. A great many piercers have lost the ability to pierce appropriately for ring-style jewelry, and this is unfortunate because a nostril piercing with a ring is both safe and aesthetically pleasing.

One of the reasons this series of blog entries began was an exchange I witnessed between a few piercers. A newer piercer asked his more experienced colleagues,

You will notice that a “ring” piercing and a “stud” piercing are at virtually the same angle, both are about perpendicular to the tissue, and both result in aesthetically pleasing piercings. For this type of nostril, ring and stud placement is virtually interchangeable. This person gets their cake and gets to eat it too.

But that isn't true for all clients. Let's look at a nose that is broader, with a more pronounced flare to the nostril.



Lo and behold, this type of nostril is pierced significantly different for a hoop and a stud. Having different sized rings won't help the client at all. Why? If you start their nostril perpendicular (and appropriate) for a stud, look at how the smallest ring possible looks:



In this figure, you can see how the appropriate sized ring is huge and doesn't look correct at all (in grey). See what happens when an inappropriately small ring (in red) is put in? It cuts into the nose, but it also bows out... you can't make a piercing snug by putting a smaller ring in it anymore than you can make baggy jeans into skinny jeans by getting a smaller waist size. The issue in the jeans is the tailoring, and the issue with a nostril with a hoop is the piercing angle, plain and simple.

At this point, you may be saying "I read your blog about [perpendicular piercing](#) Jef, and piercing with a hoop breaks those rules.". Yes. Yes indeed it does. When we elect to pierce for a ring we need to acknowledge that the piercing will be more prone to irritation because we are not piercing perpendicular. That doesn't mean we need to completely avoid it.

Starting a nostril piercing with a ring can be done safely, with a consultation beforehand. The client should be informed that ring and

stud piercings are performed at different angles, and that they may not be able to change from one to the other and have both look nice. The client should be informed that the curvature of the ring through the straight channel that the piercing needle makes can cause irritation. The client should expect a slightly longer healing process.

I know some of my colleagues will disagree, saying that starting with hoops is an unnecessary burden on our client. I suggest that we look at a nostril piercing with a hoop the same way we look at orbital piercings. Sure you could try starting the piercing with straight jewelry, hope the piercing heals at the correct angle, and then force the piercing to re-heal with the correct jewelry later on... but why? The piercer needs to understand that a pre-piercing consultation about the relatively small risk presented by starting with a ring is enough. Piercers do these consultations all the time: we caution our clients about the potential issues tongue piercings can have on their teeth and gums. We caution them about the temporary nature of surface anchor piercings. We explain scarring is possible on each and every piercing. Following our explanation, we let our clients make the informed decision to get pierced or not. Getting a nostril pierced with a hoop style piece of jewelry is no different.

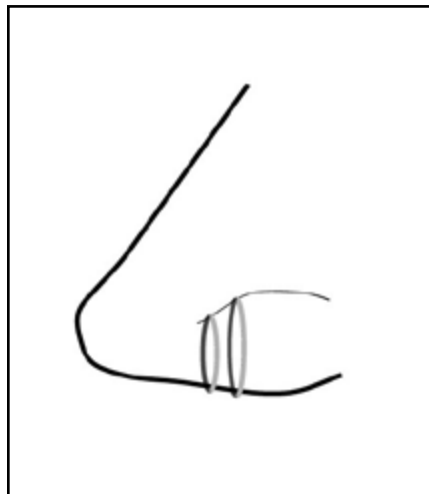
Now that we've established that ring piercings are both safe and different from stud piercings, what are some of the things a piercer will want to consider? Smaller rings are usually more aesthetically pleasing, but how do we make that happen? How do we decide what size is safe and appropriate?

My first suggestion is the use of a piercing tool called a size place-

ment ring, or SPR for short. I was introduced to this tool by the [Fakir Intensives](#). SPRs are just niobium captive bead rings with no captive balls in a variety of sizes. The Fakir school anodizes theirs blue to keep them separate from regular captive bead rings, and to distinguish them from jewelry for piercings. When Billy Wood worked for me, he came up with the idea of further distinguishing the SPRs from previously anodized jewelry by anodizing them two different colors. Rockstar has used these ever since:

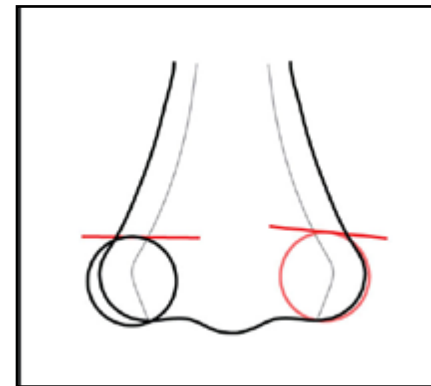


When piercing with a ring, I will make a dot on the cleaned nostril with a disposable gentian violet marker, and then place an SPR on the mark. In some cases, I will need to open the SPR larger than the size of the bead. Taking this into account, you may need to go larger with the jewelry selection. This helps me find the appropriate size but also helps my client visualize the size and angle of the piercing beforehand.

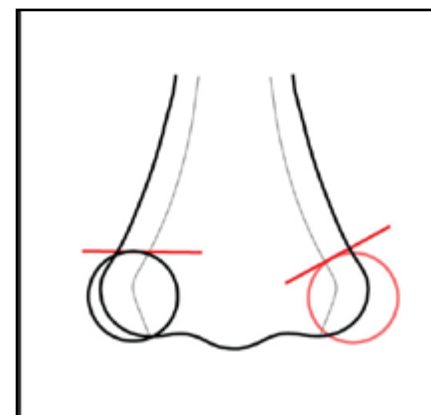


Typically, marking toward the front of the ridge gives me the smallest ring possible. Sometimes the ridge of the nostril can accommodate several rings the same diameter, but in most cases as you place the ring further back the diameter grows.

I find that when working with clients, many want something impossibly tight. The angle of the piercing for the average nostril tends to be almost parallel with the floor, or very slightly downward tilted. Still, for the piercing to heal we need to accommodate for some swelling and allow a small amount of space so the ring doesn't rub on the skin of the nostril.



Above: the nose ring on our left is appropriately angled, the one on the right is angled too hard. Angling the piercing too hard gives the client a piercing that is exceptionally tight, but exceptionally challenging to heal. I have found that the piercing on the right is prone to irritation bumps, while the one on the left is far easier to heal.



Above: the same nostril on our left is looking good, but now the piercer has gone too angled down on the right. This isn't aesthetically pleasing.

Jewelry Options:

- **Captive bead rings:** "CBR's" are the old standby and I still like them for nostrils with hoops. I strongly suggest having several "half" sizes (9/32, 11/32) handy. I prefer 18 gauge for nostrils with rings, as the curvature of the ring through the fistula tends to be even more irritating at 20 gauge. For some, as thick as 16 gauge will look appropriate, though most clients prefer thinner. Most of my clients prefer to wear the bead on the inside of their nostril, so it isn't visible.



- **Fixed Bead rings:** One advantage fixed bead rings have over captive bead rings is the ball tends to be smaller. Either way, the client can wear the ball on the inside of the nostril as to hide it from view. Again, I like 18 gauge for initial piercing.

- **Seam rings:** I suggest against starting a piercing with a seam ring, the small seam in them can be irritating and is a great place for bacteria to gather. I know of some colleagues who will start with a seam ring with a sterilized small o-ring over the seam. This seems like an elegant solution to the problem, although an o-ring seems as obvi-

ous (if not moreso) than a captive or fixed bead on a ring.

- **Nostril nails:** A nostril nail is a sort of hybrid nostril screw / fixed bead ring. It can look quite nice and can also be modified without the use of tools to be slightly snugger than traditional rings. Nostril nails are a favorite of clients who like to change jewelry regularly.



Above: Laura Jane has pierced her client using these techniques. She has opted to give a small amount of room for swelling on this fresh piercing, but the jewelry still looks appropriate. This piercing will look great while healing and can be even tighter when healed.

With that, I have completed the jewelry considerations I wanted to discuss. It is possible that I will want to revisit jewelry considerations, but the time has come for techniques. My next few blog entries will feature a variety of nostril piercing techniques.

I am also excited to announce that many of these principles and discussions will be turned into a 2 hour techniques class at the 2014 [Association Of Professional Piercers](#) Conference in Las Vegas, Nevada. My co-instructor is the brilliant [Alicia Cardenas of Sol Tribe in Denver Colorado](#).

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Clockwise from the right, David Vidra, Stephannie Hutter Thomas, Judas Zukas, and John Osborne

AN INTERVIEW WITH DAVID VIDRA —by Matte Erickson



In a continuing effort to bring a little insight to some of the interesting people within our history, we bring you our next casual interview with, David “Mama” Vidra. The contributions that David has been responsible for are too numerous to list. A piercer, registered nurse and educator, David has been an integral figure in pushing the piercing industry towards legitimacy in the eyes of Federal and medical agencies. Not only was he an early Board Member, instructor and liaison between the APP and OSHA, he also created Health Educators (www.hlthe-du.com/), one of the only industry training programs in the world.

Matte Erickson: How did you get the nickname “Mama”?

David Vidra: Mama came from Kevin Tarbell at Splash of Color in East Lansing, Michigan. It also came from all the years I worked with the handicapped. That started when I was 13. I started High Hopes for the handicapped and in the early ‘80s started an organization that cared for AIDS patients until death. North Coast AIDS Home Care, an agency taking care of the patients, closed in early 1990. I also did theater with the deaf/blind and assisted with a deaf choir.

ME: How long have you been around piercing? What is your history?

DV: Since I was 21. I got my first piercing at Body Language in Cleveland, Ohio by Linus Herell. So, 38 years total I have been around piercing and involved. As far as my history, I apprenticed and did piercing all while focusing on other parts of my life. I directed outdoor education program for a CYO Camp in Ohio, worked with mentally and physically challenged people for care as well as directing theater with the deaf/blind and what we call normal people, but the whole time I was piercing, getting pierced and doing all the above.

ME: Who most influenced you in your early body piercing career?

DV: Influences outside of local people, which was Linus and John Brittan, came mainly from the Gauntlet’s PFIQ. Fakir’s *Body Play* magazine also was a great influence in regards to the spiritual aspect of piercing, which was also very important to me.

ME: Who have been your role models during your involvement in the piercing industry?

DV: Michaela Grey, Jim Ward, the Gauntlet classes (basic and advanced). During my classes there I met both Al D. and Eric Dakota. These were the first people that really affected me personally and professionally. Also, I got the opportunity to speak with Elayne Angel

(this was before her involvement with APP) at a FDA conference in New Orleans, which had both been invited to speak at. I always had great respect for her and was fortunate to have gotten to watch her pierce at her studio. All of these people helped shape my career and so many more I haven’t mentioned as well. Shops like Infinite Piercing, Blake’s shop, Note Nomad, but they were the more extreme of our time and would share information freely.

ME: What are a few of your favorite Conference memories?

DV: Favorite memories, there are so many this is very hard to keep short. When conferences began, if there were 200 people there, OMG that was huge! We would debate different things from aftercare, things such as preps; betadine is what almost everyone used at the time, and BZK wipes to remove it (ETOH (alcohol) would deactivate it), salt solutions etc. Memories of good debates and agreeing afterward what directions we wanted to see the industry head.

Being around people who love everything you do, sharing information with each other about why we would do what we do. There were schools of thought, Jim Ward’s, Fakir’s, other owners and those who had minimal to no medical education and could not get

it. Being a new nurse at the time, about 6 years or so, I took what we did in medical, but not to the extent we did in hospital. This included documentation, adapting tools (no locking forceps etc.). It was an exciting time!

Doing the opening session with Derek and Shawn on the classes, who the Board was, was such fun. Teaching with Dr. Jack on anatomy and working with him on legislative issues in early '90s. Attending the first APHA convention. Michaela getting us that membership expense both to be there, and to get our membership paid for, not from dues, but from our own incomes. Such a success! Talking to all these people who did not really receive us too well at first, but that was the minority.

My fondest memory was teaching blood borne and studio documentation. Teaching wound care with Dr. Betsy and teaching anatomy with her and Dr. Jack. Discussions at the splash bar with those people who would say can I talk with you, and spending hours answering questions and trying to help every person no matter how long it took.

There are goofy things, but my fondest of all, was teaching and giving everyone the information they needed (no trade secrets), being accepted by others at times (though some never did). When Bruno (Pat Tidwell) gave me a towel with my initials on it, I had made it into the towel club. It felt great and came with respect from some more extreme people which, God, I wanted to be, but could not. So I could live through them keeping their asses safe, and we could come up with new ways to do what they needed to.

Research, God, back when I was on the Board for five years and a

consultant (until three years ago). Research costs money. Not just going on the web. Back then, you paid for medical and nursing journals, and for opinions from government and other big agencies. All that money was raised, or paid for, by my shop so we could prove points from minimum standard to higher standards, where appropriate. Sterilization, oh my God, what we did then to now, but no one bitched about money they spent because it was for the greater good of the community.

One last one is the first legislation in Washington; helping to write it get the proof of what we were asking for and it being passed with a ban on ear piercing guns what a rush.

ME: What keeps you busy now that you no longer pierce?

DV: All the work I have done for education, from research to getting different certificates within nursing; such as wound care certificates and certified instructor and facilitator, which both added to what I could give, and getting things certified for health inspectors for their continuing education. Setting the base courses, anything with health and safety. Teaching anatomy and wound care with Dr. Jack and the latest with Dr. Betsy and the organizations. Early on we were members of APHA, and some I just do not remember. Working on the NEHA manual (the first one) and I am glad to hear it will be updated finally. Working with OSHA, CDC, and NIOSH with different projects, all of which really brought me much joy with the illness affecting me the way it does at times, it makes it a bit hard to continue it all so I limit what I can do.

ME: If you could pass on one piece of advice, what would it be?

DV: One piece of advice: keep your relationships strong and make time for them over anything else (work, organizations, etc.) When everyone else is gone, only they will be there. The others will not. Just your closest friends and your partner. The rest move on without you and that has been proven. Most do not know my lover, he never wanted to go there with me, but he was always home when I came home and loved me no matter what. So keep them strong. My only regret is not one at all. I did a lot. I know that I was, and still am, a good piercer and educator and do both when feeling well with pride. No matter what others might say, my name still holds weight.

I miss some of what was, and miss it fondly. Remember, we all get replaced, but no one can be who you were to the clients and students you served.

ME: Puppies or kittens?

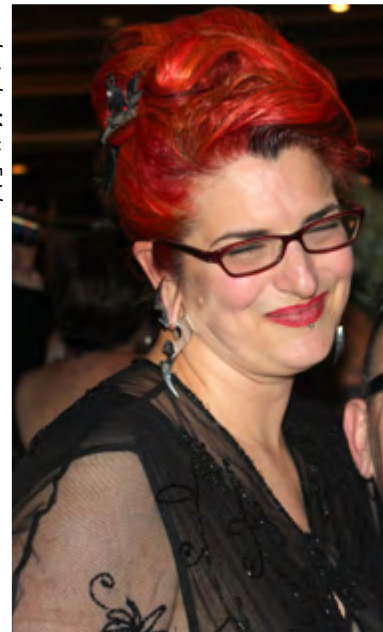
DV: Both right now. We have a boy; his name is Gus. He thinks he is a dog, but he is not. He is the sweetest when he wants to be, and tries to keep my legs calm. He always knows when things are bad and makes it better. I am looking for a small dog to go with Gus and of course, for me.

We hope you enjoyed this little look into the life of David Vidra. To be honest, I am amazed it is as short as it is. David is a great storyteller. If you ever have the chance, please pull him aside and let him tell you some of the stories in a way only he can tell. And, to David, thank you for putting up with all the correspondence in getting this done. You are a gem. If you would like to see anyone in particular interviewed here, feel free to contact us at archive@safepiercing.org.

—photo by Matte Erickson



—photo by Matte Erickson



—photo by Sean Hartgrove



—photo by Barry Blanchard



—photo by Matte Erickson

Clockwise from the top: David and Eduardo Chaverria presenting a class on Bloodborne Pathogens at the APP Conference (2008); with Betsy Reynolds in 2002, the year he won the APP President's Award; "Mama" Vidra making a point; with Rivka Chavi at an APP banquet, 2015; at the 2016 Dallas Suscon right before David received a Lifetime Achievement Award

BECKY DILL

Story: Sean Dowdell

Photography: Becky Dill

Piercer Name: Becky Dill
Studio Name: Cold Steel America
City/State: San Francisco, CA
Number of Years Piercing: 10

"Becky Dill is a professional piercer at Cold Steel America located in the Haight District in San Francisco. She is one of the nicest piercers I have ever met. I personally admire her for her outlook and think that her attitude could be more useful to more piercers in the industry." -Sean Dowdell

SD: When did you know that you wanted to learn how to pierce and what was the moment that inspired you to learn?

BD: A couple weeks after I turned eighteen in 2003, I followed my friend into a local piercing and tattoo shop. While I was there, I spontaneously decided to have 2 helix piercings and a center labret performed. It was like opening up Pandora's box! I had never felt anything like it before; the pain, the excitement, the euphoria. I had a big smile on my face before he even took the forceps off my lip.

At that time in my life, I was faced with some pretty big decisions; I was unsure about college and I was feeling a lot of pressure to take the next step into "responsible adulthood". A week after I had my lip and ear pierced, I heard a rumor that the man who pierced me might be looking for an apprentice. Being curious, I wandered back into the shop and asked him to pierce my nipples. This time, the procedure didn't go as smoothly. Regardless of the mistakes that were made, I smiled with pale lips and asked if he would choose me for his apprenticeship. I remember he smiled back and I'll never forget his words: "hell yeah, you've got the right attitude."

SD: Who taught you to pierce and where?

BD: Although he may argue that we learned to pierce together, Rick Anders was the man who started it all for me. He is one of my best friends and one of the greatest people I know. At the time, he owned a studio called DV8 Tattoos and Piercings in Concord, CA. He is now the sole owner of a studio by the same name in Roseville, CA.

SD: Was your apprenticeship a traditional hard apprenticeship?

BD: My apprenticeship was not traditional by any means. We were unknowingly doing a lot of things wrong at that time. After doing lots of research, Rick and I sought out the facts. In 2006, we attended our first APP conference and our lives were changed forever.

SD: Who do you admire or look up to in the piercing industry and why?

BD: I admire a lot of people in our industry. Growing up as a piercer, I idolized Jim Ward and Fakir Musafar for being the American pioneers of a field I love so much. Elayne Angel has always been an inspiration and will always be my model for success and professionalism. Once I started networking through the APP, I was introduced to Luis Garcia whose no bullshit attitude and high skill level and experience offer me no excuses for imperfection or negligence, Brian Skellie whom I believe is the wealthiest source of factual information for our industry. I hope one day to have a brain as big as his! Steve Joyner, one of the hardest working men in this industry, continues to fight the good fight with legislators across the country while being a teacher, a guide, and someone I can always lean on for help. Eduardo Chavarria, a friend of mine whose honesty and valuable critique has been the catalyst for most of the good things that I've done in my career so far. There are many others I could name but these people have and will continue to shape who I am as a professional piercer, whether they intend to or not.

SD: What do you think is something positive that is coming out of the piercing industry today?

BD: I am really enjoying that for the most part piercers are moving away from experimental placements and jewelry styles, and instead have been focusing on perfecting the seemingly simple and time tested piercings. Social media is creating a higher demand for quality jewelry and piercers are becoming more conscious of the work they do.

SD: What is something negative that you feel is hurting our industry?

BD: I think any industry can have a little bit of an ego problem. I also think that we should be more conservative sometimes with what we allow to get

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posted online. I am also not a fan of posting pictures of bad piercings as a scare tactic. We should all flood the internet with happy and healthy piercings.

SD: When did you become an APP member and what has it done for you as a piercer?

BD: In 2007, I went to work for the beautiful 23rd St Body Piercing in Oklahoma, the owner of the studio, Jason King has been a member of the APP since 1996! I didn't receive membership until I applied in 2009 but working in that immaculate studio changed my whole career. Being a member of the APP has given me credibility and respect. In my opinion, it shows that I not only care about myself and my studio but that I also care about where this industry is going as a whole. This collection of passionate piercers advocates health, safety, and education. The APP is the largest organization of its kind and has committees that work in legislation and public outreach. I will remain a member of this wonderful association for the remainder of my career!

SD: Please describe how you started the Bay Area Piercers group, what it is and why you started it?

BD: I grew up in the Bay Area and being friendly and outgoing, I am happy to have collected many friends, several of which also work as piercing professionals. I was in Oklahoma for two years and while I was there I learned some lessons so hard that I almost gave up on piercing altogether. Instead of giving up, I decided to swallow my pride. I took my lashings and I grew from my mistakes. It was the best and worst thing that ever happened to me as a piercer. When I returned to California, I thought it might be a good idea to gather my piercer friends together for an information exchange. Everyone knew each other and that made the whole experience very comfortable. We laughed and learned and had so much fun that we scheduled another meeting for the following week! As word got around, the number of people in attendance grew and now we have over 150 members. In this group, we share ideas in a casual, constructive, and unbiased environment. Our now

monthly meetings are set in a round table format, with a facilitator directing the conversation. There are many different topics that rotate into discussion. Most meetings focus on an individual piercing or skill, other meetings are about the day to day stresses of the job; allowing you to vent if you need. It has been an amazing experience, and I am happy to report that similar groups have formed across the country including but not limited to: Oregon, New England, Washington and Central Texas.

SD: What is your favorite piercing to perform?

BD: I enjoy working with people! If someone has a great attitude then it doesn't matter if it's an earlobe or a nipple, we're bound to have a great time. I do enjoy performing genital piercings, especially on couples! One couple told me that their decision to get married was based on the intimate relationship they'd developed after receiving a few piercings from me over the span of about a year and a half! Although I'd love to take credit, marriage is rarely a result of body piercing, haha. But seriously, many people are uncomfortable with their bodies and through body piercing I think I've helped some people achieve self love and maybe some peace.

SD: Are there any piercings that you get nervous to perform?

BD: Piercing other piercers still gets me nervous!

SD: Where do you hope to be in 5 years?

BD: Happy and still working at Cold Steel! I want to be producing more artwork, maybe do some teaching through the APP and the BAPG. In a few years I might go for a board position, if they'll have me, of course.

SD: Can you tell us something that most piercers would be surprised to know about you?

BD: I love to paint! My mother is also an artist and since she'd always use acrylics it continues to be my medium of choice. Recently, I've been producing a variety of portraits. I also am a bit of a movie buff; I was raised with hundreds of movies in my household. Anyone who can quote Monty Python

is a friend of mine!

SD: Do you find it hard being a female in the piercing industry for others to give you respect, or does it come fairly easy?

BD: My experience has been mostly positive. I honestly don't think I would get any more or less respect if I were a man. There is a group on Facebook for all women who are working in the piercing and tattoo industries called "Ladies of body modification". This group has been a great place for women to reach out and discuss their frustrations and experiences working in a male dominated industry.

SD: What is the best part about piercing at Cold Steel?

BD: I love the people I work with. Paul King and Mic Rawls are both Gauntlet-trained piercers and it is an absolute honor to work beside them. Paul offers different anthropology lectures every year at the APP conference as well as for the BAPG. I could listen to him talk all day long! When I lived in Oklahoma, I met ex-piercer/tattooist Weston Weller who has since joined me at Cold Steel. Weston has got to be one of the greatest a-holes I know, he's one of my favorite people and keeps me laughing all day long. Even though we're not Cold Steel feels like a family-owned business. It is an absolute delight going to work everyday.

SD: Where do you see the piercing industry going in the next 10 years?

BD: The last ten years has been a roller coaster, I can only imagine what will happen next. New laws will continue being created across the country of course. I think we'll see a decrease in the use of piercing guns. I think we'll continue to see an evolution of piercing needle and jewelry design.

SD: What are your thoughts on the heavier modifications such as scarification and et cetera?

BD: I enjoy body modification of all types! I would be interested in having some scarification performed in the future, but I've never had any interest in adding these skills to my resume. People don't understand how much train-

ing is involved, and how dangerous it can be. Let me just remind everyone that safety comes first, then teamwork.

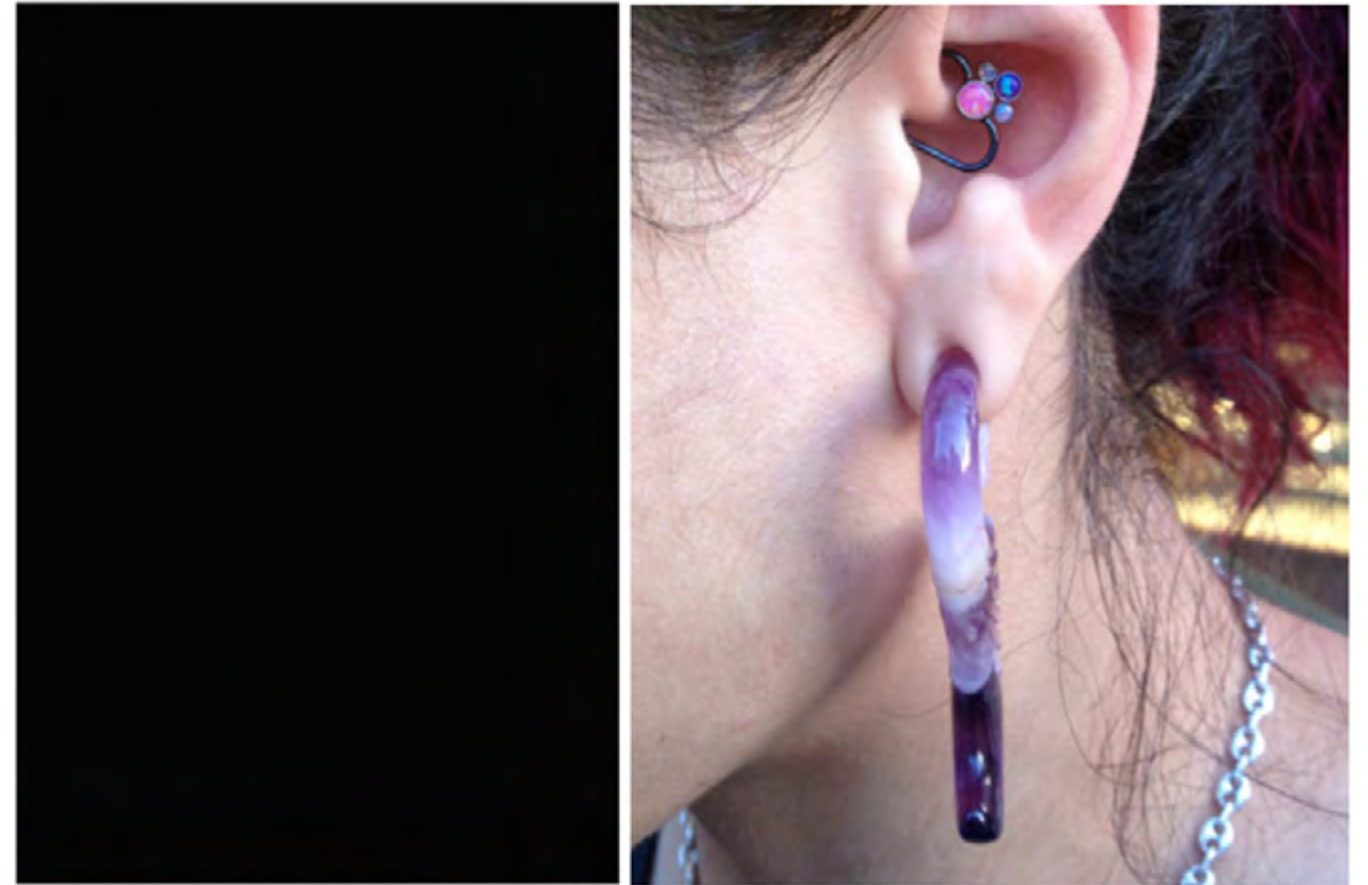
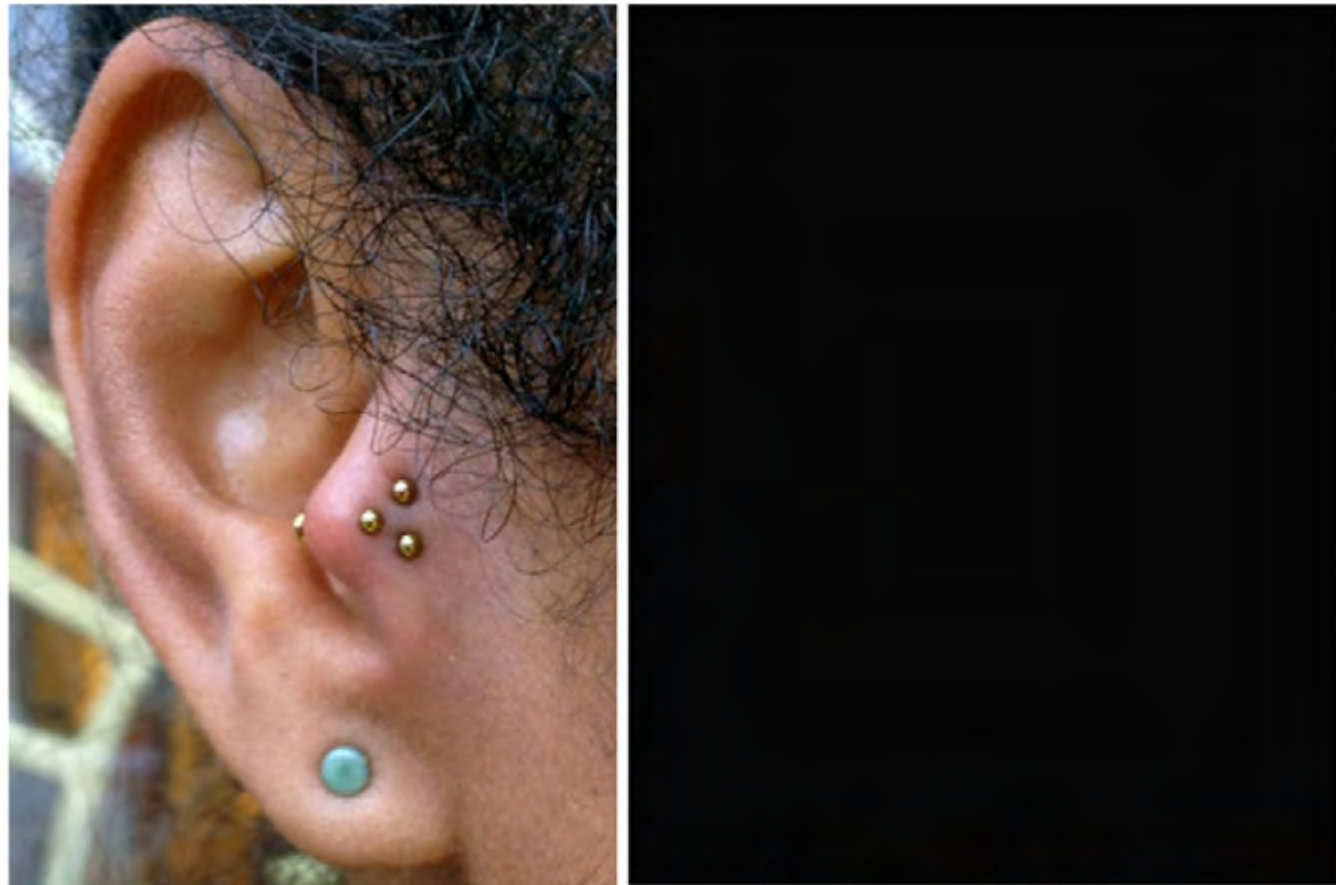
SD: I know you have an interesting outlook on negativity and the way that you deal with it. What advice would you give to other piercers that have to deal with other piercers that put them down, or talk down about them or to them?

BD: I do have the strong opinion that speaking negatively about any peer is incredibly unprofessional. Finger pointing is not an efficient way of creating a positive change. Saying negative things about somebody is not going to earn you respect or help you gain clientele. Every single one of us makes a mistake from time to time and unfortunately some lessons are hard learned. When clients come in with problems and "they got pierced by so-and-so down the street" don't berate them or make them even more uncomfortable by pointing out every negative. Instead, take that opportunity to talk about how fantastic you are. Take a moment to introduce yourself and offer suggestions of how to improve their situation. Try not to say things like "So-and-so uses the worst jewelry in town" instead say something like "I feel like a better quality of jewelry could be beneficial for these reasons". Do your best, practice common sense, never stop learning, be humble, be able to take criticism and don't be afraid to ask for it either. Creating your own local piercers group could be an excellent tool for maintaining a good relationship and positive communication with your peers. If you're consistently receiving complaints about anything, it may be wise to do some research but don't let the elitist a-hole down the street ruin your day.

SD: Have you always been so damn nice, or do you ever get angry at anything?

BD: Haha...well, I'm not a morning person; unless you have a coffee in your hand, don't bother talking to me until after ten.







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Calling All Manufacturers, Collectors And Enthusiasts

The Body Piercing Archive, in conjunction with the Association of Professional Piercers, will be hosting a historical body jewelry exhibit on the Expo floor in 2017.

We are looking for jewelry, catalogs, jewelry packaging cards, business cards and any other stand out items from 2007 and earlier. We would like to focus on defunct companies however, all steel, titanium, niobium, glass, and gold companies are encouraged to participate (alternative materials will, hopefully, be another exhibit in the future).

Please note, we do not want your items. We just want to share and display them for our community. All items will have clear attributions and descriptions from the information you will have provided. This exhibition will also appear in the Point Magazine. For more detailed information, please contact Matte Erickson at archive@safepiercing.org

Thank you,
The Body Piercing Archive
archive@safepiercing.org

