

THE POINT

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SUMMER 10

THE QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF THE ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL PIERCERS



APP CONFERENCE 2010 P.6

PLUS: **WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU RUN OUT OF TECHNI-CARE** P.26

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FROM THE EDITOR



JAMES WEBER

APP President

Infinite Body Piercing, Inc.
Philadelphia, PA

One of the many things I enjoy about writing for *The Point* is that I get to participate in documenting not only the history of the APP but the history of our entire industry. The APP's annual Conference and Exposition is not only an amazing opportunity to see what's new—to see where we're going with new techniques, tools, and jewelry—but it's also a time to explore this history, with lectures and classes by many who have been part of it for decades.

As Board members overseeing Conference, our schedules don't always allow us to attend classes (at least classes we're not teaching), but two lectures I was lucky enough to attend this year were "Beginnings of Contemporary Body Piercing: Fakir's Journey," by Fakir Musafar, and "The Gauntlet: History of an Industry Icon," by Jim Ward with Paul King and Elayne Angel. I don't have enough space here to list all the contributions of Jim Ward and Fakir, and there are few of us not aware of their importance to our industry. Considered by most as the fathers of modern body piercing, these two men came to piercing—and body modification—from different points of view, worked together intensely for many years, and then endured an acrimonious spilt before continuing on separate paths.

During their talks, both spoke of the early years of body piercing in this country: Fakir through his role as the father of the "Modern Primitives" movement, Jim Ward as the founder and owner of The Gauntlet. Both talked about the early years of the APP, and both gave different—and sometimes conflicting—accounts of those years. After hearing them talk, I had the sense their personal falling-out several decades ago still stung a bit—and that this feeling still colored their recollection of the history of that time.

Later that night, after the last night of classes for most of us, I was enjoying a rare moment of calm with Paul and Elayne. As they both spoke at the second of the two lectures, I asked them about the conflicting points of view, and about the holes in the histories given earlier that day. In answer, I was given a third version of sorts: a colorfully uncensored, anecdotal, warts-and-all description of the people and events of the last several decades that make up the accepted history of our industry—and of the APP. This telling promised to be a true one, as much—or even more than—the other two given earlier that day.

History is subjective. It's one thing to know this; it's another to see this in action, to be around long enough to know the difference between what happened, and what people agree upon as having happened. Winston Churchill wrote: "History is written by the victors." History becomes a narrative supporting the enduring point of view. This applies in our industry as much as anywhere else.

And do we, as a community, write our own history? Or do we allow outsiders to continue to document us, to describe who we are and what we will become?

What we choose to define as our history, here and now, is so incredibly important. We must continually look back and decide and define where we've been, to preserve it for the next generation of piercers. According to attendance figures for this year, approximately 40% of the attendees at the 2010 Conference were there for the first time. That's a lot of people who didn't have the luxury of being there the first time around.

So if you missed this year's annual APP conference, you missed history in the making. If you want to be involved, to be part of deciding what really happened, what stories will be told to the next generation of piercers as part of the accepted canon that is our history, make sure you come next year.

In the meantime, catch up on what you missed in the following pages of issue #52 of *The Point: The Journal of the Association of Professional Piercers*.

[You can also see Jim Ward's talk, in its entirety, at tv.bodymod.org. It's episode #58.] P

THE POINT

THE QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF THE ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL PIERCERS

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IN THE OFFICE



CAITLIN McDIARMID
APP Administrator

By all accounts, the 2010 APP Conference exceeded all our expectations – and once again was deemed “the best Conference ever.” (I personally heard it was more organized, ran more smoothly, and had a better community feel than previous Conferences, and, well, Ana Paula was there – so, of course, it was the best one ever.)

For me, it was a Conference of personal challenges and triumphs. I dealt with situations I once would have fled from, and I did it well; I provided emotional support in ways I have previously been both unwilling and unable to do; I became sick with food poisoning, which caused me to rely heavily on the staff and volunteers, and found that the world did not end. In fact, this experience alone enabled me to see the strengths in others that I perhaps would have been blind to.

And then they recognized me; the volunteers and staff stood up and gave me props and presents. This experience truly made the 2010 Conference spectacular for me.

With more feeling and respect than perhaps ever before, I thank the volunteers and staff of the 2010 Conference:

AI D. Scholars:

Neek Boggs
Angi DeLeon
Devery Gerics
Tonya Hansel
Kenny Hughes
Lauren McGeary
Karissa Sanford

Managers/Staff:

Stephanie Jo Collins
Anna York
Tye “Golem”
David Kelso
Samantha Matthews
Jezebel Voule

Board Member

Employees:

Marissa Strebler
Mark Christensen
Damian Valdez
Mandolynne Hopkins
Chandler Bearden

My 8th

AI D. Scholar!
Marah Stein
Justin Fischer
Paul Martinez

Cash & Check:

Tiana McGuire
Paul King

The “Love”

Volunteers:
Darrin Walters
*(Forgotten on stage, but
no less appreciated.)*

Jill Sans
Seven
Zane Nichols
Autumn Spinks
Theo Sheffler
Leah-Jean Carrerou
Casey Kutilek
Jared Silverman
Kristin Young
Jason Murray

AV Team:

Nae Morris
Gus Diamond

The Specials:

Sarah Wooten – *such a
safety net – such a friend*
Will Spencer – *raffle
wrangler*
John Johnson – *your
car paid for your
generosity, so sorry!*
Ed Chavarria – *couldn’t,
wouldn’t,
shouldn’t ever do it
without you!*
Ryan Ouellette –
*mentor program
director*

The Members’ Meeting Helpers:

Darren Walters
Rick Frueh
Mike Martin

And Bethra Szumski, APP Secretary and head of the Conference Committee, for making it all happen.

Lastly, a personal thank you to my love, Thaddeous, for being there every moment before, during, and after the Conference: for keeping me sane, happy, healthy, wealthy in spirit, and a hellalot wise! **P**

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BOARD MEMBER GOODBYES



DANNY YERNA
Outgoing International Outreach Coordinator
Wakantanka
Mexico City, Mexico



ERIC "SQUE3Z" ANDERSON
Outgoing Outreach Coordinator
Pasadena, California

Well, it's hard to believe but my three years as a Board member are over—three years that flew by; three years with a lot of extra work.

Really I don't know where to start this goodbye note, but I'll begin by saying that I really enjoyed these years of work on the Board. I learned a lot and made some amazing new friends. I hope that all members—and non-members—were pleased with the work I did for the organization and the industry.

I would like to say thanks to a lot of people but especially to Cali, because he was the first one who encouraged me to go to these amazing meetings with piercers from all over the states and some from Europe. I finally went for the first time in 2002 at the Tropicana, from that point on, I never missed another one.

The first time I went and took some classes, the second time I took some more, the third time I offered myself as a volunteer, which was a whole other learning experience. In 2005, I became an APP member and started to get more involved, taking as many classes as possible and learning as much as I could. Then, in 2007, I was nominated for a Board position and was elected. So I worked on this Board first with Alicia Cardenas, Luis Garcia, April Johnson, and James Weber. At the next election, James became the President, so I worked with a new Board with Bethra, Eric "Sque3z" Anderson, and Elayne Angel. Due to the new election schedule, toward the end of my term I was also working with Ed Chavarria and Didier Suarez. There were a lot of people, a lot of different experiences, and an amazing time.

During my time on the Board, I translated, in Spanish, all of the APP brochures, the APP Procedure Manual, the Web site, and a lot of handouts for the "Seminarios Educativos, APP en Mexico"—the seminars we have been organizing in Mexico with a lot of success over the last five years.

I can say that it was a pleasure to work with all these people, as well as with Caitlin, who is always around doing an amazing job, Paul King, taking care of numbers and harmony in the group, Karem, who helped me with a lot of writing, Viany, who worked on a lot of translations, Nick Wolak, for all his help and vibes, as well as Ana Paula Escalante. I want to wish good luck to the two new Board members, Brian Skellie and Dana Dinius.

I would also like to say thanks to James Weber, as I was honored with this year's President's Award. It was a total surprise and I don't have words for that! Thank you all so much.

If you are an APP member, get involved: go for a Board position, not for fun or to make extra money or because it sounds cool. Just do it from the heart; a lot of people want and need your help, and if you're not a member yet, you can start by becoming one.

I'm not gone—I'll be around if you need me!

Thanks for everything.

(Remember: The APP Seminars will again be held in Mexico City, October 11-14, 2010.) **P**

Since the end of last year, I have had many life changes. Most of all, I have had a change in occupations. I am currently working for an ambulance company as an EMT and finishing my prerequisites for nursing school. During the final months of my Board position, I was not able to attend the last two meetings due to my school and my work schedule (24-hour shifts every other day, and 48-hour shifts every other weekend).

My more recent activity with the Board has consisted mostly of keeping up with emails and correspondence with the other Board members. I have also been working on a branded APP outreach outline for those who want to provide education in their respective regions.

I have learned
invaluable
lessons that
I would have
never learned
anywhere else.

Because of my rigorous work schedule and a very important court date, I had to forego attending this year's Conference. I am so disappointed that I was unable to make it. Not only was it the first Conference I have missed in 12 consecutive years, but more importantly, my Board position is being taken over by a new member.

I have the utmost confidence that my successor, Dana Dinius, will do a superlative job. I have confidence in both Dana and the other newly elected Board member, Brian Skellie, as they both have the ability to go beyond the call of duty when it comes to any Board position. They are both super swell guys and I wish them the best of luck—working with the present Board will be a reward in itself.

At this time, I would like to thank the membership and the Board for their support, patience, and belief in me to fill the position of Outreach Coordinator the last three years. You have inspired me, picked me up when I have fallen down, and I have been taught so much by all of you! I have learned invaluable lessons that I would have never learned anywhere else. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve with such passionate, well-respected individuals of a community that I have called my family for the past 12 years. Everyone in this industry should be proud of what they do every day. I am eternally grateful for the support my family and I have been given over the years. I hope to remain a part of the piercing industry by keeping my membership in good standing, possibly getting another piercing position soon, supporting the APP, and continuing to promote the good word out there in the medical field.

I will see everyone next year. Most of all, I miss all of you dearly. **P**

PRESIDENT'S CORNER



JAMES WEBER

APP President

Infinite Body Piercing, Inc.
Philadelphia, PA

As this issue of *The Point* goes to print, the APP's voting members will be returning their nomination forms in preparation for the next election—an election to fill one vacant and four soon-to-be-vacant positions on the APP Board of Directors. This is an important election, as it will decide who is filling five out of seven total seats on the APP Board of Directors. Why so many at once? To answer this, let's review how the APP is set up and the way it operates.

(If you are interested in the structure of the coming elections—and a discussion of the APP's bylaws is as exciting for you as it is for me—read on. If not, you may want to skip ahead a few pages, to the coverage of this year's Conference.)

As specified by the APP's bylaws, each Director can hold office for no more than three years in any given position, and can serve no more than two consecutive terms. If a member has filled two different seats in two consecutive elections, that person cannot immediately run again and must be off the Board for at least one election cycle before again being eligible to serve.

In years past, the terms for the entire seven-person Board of Directors were concurrent; everyone was elected at one time, in the same year, and everyone ended their terms at the same time. A benefit to this schedule was the incredible surge of enthusiasm and influx of new personalities that was brought to the organization all at once. But it had a debilitating downside: except for the re-election of any prior Board members, the entire Board was new at the end of each three-year cycle. As it can take some time to “learn the ropes” as a member of the Board, this can make for difficult transitions into unfamiliar roles.

This was the situation when I started my first term in 2005. Of the seven people I was elected to serve with, only Alicia Cardenas, our President, had the experience of serving a previous term. The rest of us became Directors with little training—and no experience—to help us in our new positions. As a result, we had two Board members quit in the first two years, and lost a third before the end of three years. Two of those were also Officers.

Since that time, significant changes have been made to the election process, the structure of the Board, and the role of the Officers. These changes not only make the Board more efficient, but also helped to facilitate a smoother transition from one group to the next. The most important of these is the staggering of elections, allowing for the election of several Directors at a time—and not the entire Board at once. The second was to change how these Board Members are elected—and the titles and duties they assume—to more closely follow the directives of the organization's bylaws.

Prior to the 2007 elections, members ran and were elected to specific positions (e.g., a nominee would run for the Vice-President position, and no other). As a result of this, several positions would be hotly contested (President, for example) while others could have a single nominee on the ballot. Much like one of the shortcomings of the

electoral system for the U.S. President, this meant that the candidates with the most popular support did not always get elected—and it can be argued that this vote was not truly representative of the will of the membership. The current, revised election structure has the nominees who receive the highest number of votes filling the vacant seats, and those elected then assume positions and titles based on their strengths and experiences—as determined by the entire Board of Directors.

The bylaws specifically define only the titles and roles of the Officers; the titles and duties of the other Directors on the Board are decided by the members of that Board. In simple language, the bylaws state that the Secretary keeps the records of the organization, the Treasurer is responsible for overseeing the finances, and the President shall “supervise and control the affairs of the Corporation and the activities of the officers,” in addition to chairing the Board and Member's Meetings. Officers are also permitted to enter into contracts on behalf of the organization. Officers are elected to their positions by the Board of Directors.

By way of example: the APP's current Treasurer, Paul King, was elected to his office by the Board—not the membership—as he is not a duly elected Board Member. He is present at Board meetings, when possible, to present financial reports and offer his opinion, but he has no official voice when votes are taken to determine the course of the organization. This distinction is important to understand the roles of the current Board and Officers as they relate to the election, the new Board members, and the transition of both over the next year.

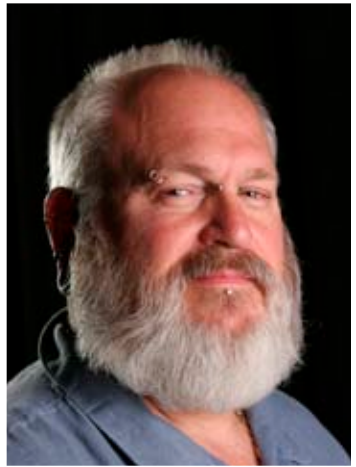
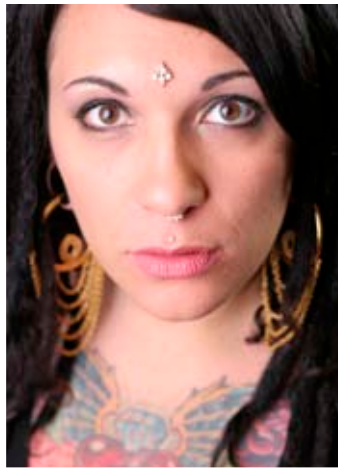
Effective at this year's Members' Meeting, Bethra Szumski's resigned her position on the Board of Directors. At the request of the rest of the Board, she will continue as interim Secretary while we discuss a contract with her, similar to the one now used with our Treasurer.

This new structure will allow Bethra to dedicate herself to the role of Secretary without the added responsibility of a Director's chair. (Or, in her words, it would “maximize the position's long-term impact, while minimizing day-to-day task commitment.”) Secondly—and most importantly—it will allow a new member to assume a seat on the Board prior to next year's Conference, further ensuring a more smooth transition to the next Board of Directors. This means we will have a more efficient staggering of elections. From here forward we will have one election for four seats, and then one the following year, for three.

As for me, I am nearing the end of my second term on the Board of Directors and the end of my three years as President. Next May, at Conference, I will step down and let “new blood” try their hand at overseeing the membership and helping to helm this ship that is the APP. I wish them the best of luck, and the rest of the Directors and Officers will be working over the next year to make this transition a smooth one.

To all members: Make sure you participate in the upcoming election. It's an important one. **P**





LAS VEGAS CONFERENCE 2010

Conference photos by Sean Hartgrove





THE APP CONFERENCE 2010



ERIC GUSTAV "GOOSE" JOHNSON

In The Skin Tattoo & Piercing
Victoria, TX

In the months before the APP Conference, a familiar feeling settles in: claustrophobia. I feel my temper getting short and find myself withdrawing from everyday surroundings as I prepare to make my way to the desert and rub elbows with others of my kind. (Whether or not there is a psychological condition that explains this I can't be sure.)

This year, I was at loggerheads in my piercing career. Some days went smoothly, other nights (actually, most nights) I struggled with the simplest procedures. When I first began in this industry, I was told that around the tenth year you realize you know nothing and must relearn it all. I didn't believe it. Once you know

something, you know it, right? Well here I am, ten years later, finding this advice dead-on. I am grateful I have access to the educational classes that the APP offers. When I have problems with a procedure, I can take a class on it at Conference, start remedially, and build up the knowledge base again.

After attending Conference for several years, I can say that nothing has helped me more, professionally and personally. I tend to be a fairly typical member of the piercing community—an ego-driven, meticulous, workaholic introvert. Each of us has a small circle of people with whom we socialize and communicate but, as a whole, can feel ostracized from mainstream society. True, a lot of



that separation is intentional and self-inflicted, but over time, the divide can wear on anyone's nerves. The fact that this gathering of like minds exists and is accessible to all is a major boon. Every year, I lose myself in the throng of freaks and fetishists. No double-takes as I walk down the hall; no conversations held at arm's length to prevent cultural contamination; no one asking "did that hurt?" I emerge with my batteries recharged, my eyes open, and my psychic armor up and ready to face another year.

Even so, I had some serious reservations about making it to Conference this year. With the effects of the economy trickling down to our industry, now is not the time to spend a week in Las Vegas. My hesitation of going eased when a tattooist from the shop and her husband decided to take a week off and had never seen Vegas. I offered to pay for the room and a couple of classes in exchange for gas out and back. Soon, we all packed into my PT Cruiser, stocked up on as much bottled water as we could, loaded the iPod with Henry Rollins' spoken word albums, and hit the road.

By the time we hit Hunter S. Thompson's "bat country" we were feeling good. The stress and tension of the shop was left behind. As the neon metropolis filled the streets around us, we knew this week would be an adventure—a test of mettle and hydration. Among the masses, we settled in to enjoy a week of true camaraderie.

The workaholic in me jumped at the opportunity to work on my vacation. At the APP Members' Meeting, the call went out for committee members. I volunteered that I took some writing courses in college and before I knew it, I was on the media committee and writing a review of the event. Thus, I present my review of The Association of Professional Piercers Conference 2010.

THE VENUE

The Tropicana Hotel and Casino has a long history with the APP Conference. (I remember the general state of disrepair in years past.) My hopes buoyed when we learned that Tropicana underwent a remodel and that we were the first guests after their May 1 reopening. As we pulled in to the parking lot, we noticed that the construction was not complete, half the pool area was closed, and the rooms (at least in the convention tower) still featured the same shoddy furniture. One disgruntled phone call later and we were reassigned to a room that bore a passing resemblance to the advertised "new and exciting rooms" (the staff also accommodated



INNOVATOR'S AWARD

QUETZALLI JEWELRY

Life, nature, inspiration, alchemy...all words that follow me in my path. But in truth, not my path, but *ours*. Humanity has been known for the desire to portray nature as art—the need for creation and deep symbolism and the need for transforming and sharing.

Guided in this same way is how the elephant ear weights—made of brass and ammonites—came to be. Ammonites are not only a long-lasting love of mine, but beautiful fossilized creatures that lived millions of years ago. They are said to aid in the transformation of stagnant energy and to convert it into its positive counterpart. Ammonites are bringers of prophetic dreams and promoters of deep meditation. Then, we have the elephant—the one that with its size and strength can open all paths and remove obstacles for us so we may move through them. They're known for leading us to a higher wisdom, to inner peace. With its big ears we are reminded to listen well—to truly listen—not from our ego, but from the purest nature of all things.

The elephant ear weights for me are a dream shared, and in return they bring joy to my heart. All this leaves me thinking, "Innovators," what a blessing to have a space for this: "Creative Innovation." Here we can give just a little of ourselves, to share and show, to connect with others, without expectations, needs, or requirements—just creativity and innovation.

But what is to innovate, I wonder, but to do something different from what we always do? In my life, it is cherished like a precious jewel. No doubt I get to be creative with Quetzalli, making jewelry, allowing myself to bring to life pieces that make my heart smile. But we can also be creative in life at every moment, in all of our lives, no matter where we are or what we do. We are a part of nature and life; we are constantly in movement, always changing, from our thoughts to our bones. Each moment is unique, each breath different than the last, and each one of these unique moments gives us the opportunity to be creative. We can be creative in the ways we react, in the choices we make, in the ways we move, in our experience of life. Here we can innovate, here we can all be creative. Even if it is just breathing for one second more instead of reacting by getting upset. We can create by giving ourselves or others a moment of simple caring, or walking a different way home. Everything big or small creates space for the new. Let's make space for this alchemy; let's do something different and allow for positive change to affect us, and all around us.

Our thoughts and actions create, our prayers fly and can change our world and many others.

With love and light . . . always.

—Ana Paula, *Quetzalli Jewelry*, www.quetzallijewelry.com



RAFFLE

The APP would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to all of the generous vendors who donated to this year's raffle. The top donors were Industrial Strength Body Jewelry, Buddha Jewelry Organics, Kaos Softwear, and NeoMetal. We deeply appreciate your support. Simply put, the APP Conference would not be the same without you.

We congratulate all the winners, including Buddha Organic Jewelry—for winning the top raffle prize—and Evolved—for winning the greatest number of prizes.



our inconvenience with free drink vouchers and discounted rates). While the lingering disrepair in some areas was still present, the Tropicana was a congenial host to our gathering, and the staff went out of their way to make the guests happy.

THE CLASSES

Education is the foundation of the APP, and Conference is where we truly see this in action. Even if you're sleep-deprived, dehydrated, and missed half of what was said, you return home with a stack of handouts to review later and a hope of stimulating some of that memory. Unfortunately, scheduling will always haunt us, and many classes are going on at the same time—all of which we want to take.

In addition to basic industry skills, a handful of new courses in specialized fields are offered every year. This year, we saw the addition of classes on suspension rigging, workshops on studio set-up—focusing on aseptic technique—and lectures by two icons of the community, Fakir and Jim Ward.

Suspension has been a tricky subject for the APP, as it is often lumped into the non-piercing body modification category with scarification, branding, and implants. The crossover of interests in piercing and suspension ritual with highly devoted practitioners willing to share their knowledge has gained a toehold in recent years. Tensions remain over including the subject of suspension at Conference, but I applaud the APP for providing a forum for speaking and sharing about it. I enjoyed the class and left with a better understanding of safety precautions that must be followed to avoid a dangerous experience.

ATTENDANCE

This year, 52 instructors/facilitators stepped up and stood before their peers and provided stellar education and leadership – more than a 60 percent increase from 2009.

We also had a 60 percent increase in the number of volunteers, and each dedicated more hours, per volunteer, than in years past – what a great addition to the execution of this Conference.

Attendee numbers were almost exactly the same as in 2009. With the economic woes of this past year worse than most, we were thrilled that our attendees worked hard to make it to Conference in the face of this adversity.

We welcomed 12 health inspectors to the Conference this year – bringing our two industries together in common goals, with education and networking as our foundation. This means real progress for all of us.

Also, this year 40 percent of our attendees were new to Conference! The APP and its efforts continue to reach out to apprentices, new piercers, and experienced piercers who had not yet to had a chance to experience the sharing – the community, the learning, and the joy that is the Conference experience!

The workshops were a brilliant idea. The biggest worry I had before joining the APP was that my aseptic protocol was not up to standard. Handling the equipment under guidance helped me build my confidence and clarify the fact that I was doing it...

PRESIDENT'S AWARD



2010 **Danny Yerna**

As a Belgian living in Mexico, Danny has been the first piercer from outside the U.S. to serve on the APP Board of Directors.

Even before he was elected, Danny was incredibly active with education and outreach in Mexico. He worked with Alicia Cardenas—the past APP President—to establish the APP educational seminars in Mexico City, and since 2006, he has worked tirelessly to take this event from a small group of classes to the form they are today: a mini-Conference providing a week of educational offerings for over 150 piercers every year—piercers who travel from not only throughout Mexico to attend, but Central and South America as well. Having attended each of these events, I can say, without hesitation, that this is the most immediately effective outreach the organization undertakes each year—in addition to being the least costly—and Danny organizes it almost single-handedly.

This alone would be enough of an accomplishment for any one person, but during his term, he has also personally translated—or overseen the translation of—a huge quantity of APP educational materials, including all of our brochures, the entirety of our procedural manual, and a majority of the APP web site. This, of course, is in addition to running his own studio in Mexico City, Wakantanka, which is celebrating its 16th anniversary this year, and editing the monthly magazine TatuArte for more than 8 years and 96 issues with his partner, Karem.

Danny is amazingly connected, incredibly effective, unassuming, well-liked, and respected—and has a work ethic like no one I've ever met. He has been a tireless volunteer as a Board member and as an educator and continues to be a model for the rest of us. For this reason, it is a privilege to recognize Danny Yerna for his service to not only the APP Board but to the entire piercing industry—and to present him with this year's President's Award.

—James Weber, APP President

VOLUNTEER AWARD



2010 **John C. Johnson**

It was my delight to honor John C. Johnson with the Josh A. Prentice Volunteer Award this year. John has continually served our industry and its people. He's mentored newcomers at Conference. He's taught both in the studio and at Conference. He's worked in his community doing outreach about safe piercing. He's sheltered others when they didn't have a place to stay. He's volunteered at every Conference I have been at, and, in fact, he was volunteering at them before I started with the APP – both as a non-member and even more after he became one. (Not to mention that he's aiding in feeding countless vegans at Conference by creating and maintaining a list of vegan/veggie friendly restaurants for all of us to use in Vegas). He has also served, and continues to serve, on committees and volunteers to staff the APP booths at several of the large health conferences we attend. His typical question to me is, "Is there anything I can do for you, anything at all.... No, I mean really, anything?"

I have never heard a bad word about John, and I was pleased to see the whole audience at the banquet dinner stand when I announced he would be receiving this award. He was humble in his acceptance and merely told me afterward that he was now going to have to work even harder to honor this award given in Josh's name.

—Caitlin McDiarmid, APP Administrator



Education is the foundation of the APP, and Conference is where we truly see this in action.

well... mostly the right way. It was great to practice day-to-day disinfection and procedural techniques, something so essential that it needs to be stressed.

Now if any piercers don't know who Fakir or Jim Ward are, they really need to hang up their needles. These two have shaped the piercing community from genesis, continuing throughout their careers. These are our tribe's elders, and it was an honor to hear their stories and to show my respect.

A note on the members-only classes: these make the trip worth it. In a relaxed atmosphere, the accumulated experience of both speaker and audience generates more of a roundtable feel than a class. All non-members: I urge you to join to be able to sit in on these classes. *[Editors note: non-members are invited to attend all of the APP's educational offerings at Conference, with the exception of one or two members-only classes per year, which are limited to APP members in good standing.]*

THE EXPO

The body jewelry expo gets bigger every year. More companies attend, and more free swag is handed out. I enjoy browsing the new designs, and it's refreshing to shake hands with the suppliers that you talk to every week. Of course, finding new suppliers is a high priority as well. It's sort of like dating: an awkward first meeting, a few introductions, and gifts exchanged. The face-to-face interaction on the expo floor is helpful for those who want to shake hands and look someone in the eye before doing business together.

The innovators competition was fierce this year. In the creative

category we saw a set of 38mm amber honeycomb plugs from Glasswear/Ryan Kremp, a few aluminum rigs from Skin Mechanics Steel Works, a set of glass Mayan 7/8-inch flares from Gorilla Glass, a pair of coconut paisley spirals by Coco Loco, some feathered dangle hooks by Diablo Organics, a beautiful set of single-flared interchangeable flower eyelets by Industrial Strength, and a couple of rutilated quartz weights by Reign Custom Design. As for technical innovations, there was a set of glass woven plugs by Gorilla Glass, a pair of borosilicate hoops from Glass Hart Studio, a silver and brass 2-inch Hindu Swastika plug from Diablo Organics, a 12-piece set of glass mini-hoops ranging from 18 to 12 gauge by Glasswear/Ryan Kremp, a collection of needle tools by Togen Inc./Susama Furuyoshi, and a set of Gilson hooks by Skin Mechanics Steel Works. The winners of the Innovator's Award this year were Reign Custom Design/Kevin Mueller for technical with their Sidus eyelets and Quetzalli Jewelry for creative with their Vinayaka hoops. Check out their Web sites for a good look at these exquisite pieces.

The one downside I saw in the expo—and I know I'm not the only one who has noticed—was the inclusion of vendors who did not meet the APP's Minimum Standards for Jewelry for Initial Piercings. It is possible to spot these vendors rather quickly if you do your research. Their presence added some confusion as far as where the line was drawn, but I'm not one to tell people what they should or should not buy.

[Editor's note: It has been the APP strategy that the shoppers will help the vendors understand the quality of the goods they're seeking, and, as a result, raise the overall level. In the interest of educating not only attendees, but vendors as well, the Exposition is open to all companies to vend.]



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THE BANQUET

The banquet was planned poolside, as in years past, but a last-minute change moved it to the Tiffany Theater inside the Tropicana Casino, which proved to be an excellent setting. Dimly-lit and intimate, it made for a nice, conversational atmosphere. The food was so good that it made the barbecue-worshiping Texan in me stop for a moment and think, “Oh my god, I’m enjoying tofu!” The masquerade theme had everyone in their finest, but I found it hard to choose a best-dressed between Paul King’s Latex Cop or Ed Chavarria’s Beaded and Bearded Drag Queen.

El Circo put on an exceptional show. It was a great burlesque performance with a lot of sexy characters and talented performers. A feat requiring less talent (and more bravado) was the dozen or so streakers who graced the party, running through buck naked with peacock feathers lodged in... well, you get the picture.

Next came the speakers and awards. John Johnson and Caitlin McDiarmid, our tireless communication hub, were honored for their help in running the entire show. We heard from James Weber and the rest of our Board of Directors as they welcomed our newest Board members, Dana Dinius and Brian Skellie. This year’s President’s Award winner was our outgoing International Outreach Coordinator, Danny Yerna. His tireless work organizing the APP seminars in Mexico makes him truly worthy of all the praise we can throw his way.

Las Vegas is really just designed for a long weekend. So by the end of a whole week, I loved and hated the city in equal measure and needed to check out with all due haste. We settled our bill, scratched together loose change for gas money, and contemplated whether we could survive on cigarettes and Ramen for the next month. The ride home was a time of introspection—mentally reviewing the half-finished conversations, trying to recollect if we accomplished all we needed to, sorting through the small mountain of business cards, planning the half-dozen improvements to our shop, and the several thousand improvements to our technique.

I offer a piece of advice to all who, like me in my first year, felt that the Conference rolled around me without much impact: volunteer. I accomplished so much this year simply because I knew I needed to write this article. I spoke with my heroes in the industry, weak-kneed and voice cracking, but still interacting because I had a job to do. Volunteering gives you an “in” to meet and socialize with those you may otherwise be intimidated to approach, and you get to meet some of the hardest-working, most-dedicated people in your fellow volunteers. Finally, to all those who spoke with me, thank you for making my first assignment a pleasure; and to those I didn’t get to, I’ll see you next year. **P**

INNOVATOR’S AWARD

REIGN CUSTOM DESIGN

The concept behind Reign Custom Design is simple: a singular mission to bring high quality, innovative, fine jewelry to the body modification community. Reign is the brainchild of Kevin and Tomma Mueller; since its inception, it has sought to uphold the maxim that jewelry should be produced with design and quality as the driving force behind every piece. Within those parameters, Kevin owes his inspiration to the community at large, stating, “It has never been about the money or the recognition. I make creative and beautiful jewelry for creative and beautiful people, plain and simple.” Since 2005, Reign Custom Design has sought to separate itself as an innovator in the body jewelry industry by dedicating their focus to the creation of fine jewelry rather than the manufacturing process alone.

“Kevin is the hardest working man in the industry,” commented Tomma when asked of her husband’s efforts, adding, “and sometimes it is just hard being married to the smartest man in the room.” With a 15-year background in high-temperature casting for the medical and aerospace industries, Kevin sees Reign and the body modification community as an avenue to incorporate expression with innovation. He now stands at the helm of a continually evolving experiment that fuses his technical expertise with art and fashion. Included in his resume is the honor of working with such designers as Harry Winston, Cartier, and Jeff Koonz, as well as co-authorship of an article in the *Santé Fe Symposium Journal on Jewelry Manufacturing* in 2007 entitled, “Effects of Cad/Cam Derived Materials in the Casting of Platinum Alloys.”

In regard to the receipt of the Innovator’s Award for Jewelry Design for the Sidus Eyelets at the 2010 Association of Professional Piercers Annual Conference, Kevin admits, “I don’t exactly know where the idea came from. I just wanted to make something that looked cool...really, really cool! Like many of my ideas, I started out staring at a chunk of metal and the rest is history. We always strive to push the rest of the industry to think outside of the box.”

Included in the mythos of the Sidus Eyelet is a respect for the very force that saves us from the harmful radiation of the sun: the earth’s magnetic field. “I really enjoy the paradox that is created by the levitating disc in the Sidus. It peacefully floats in the middle of the eyelet as a result of the powerful forces that are pulling it in two opposite directions. In addition, the use of the mixed media in copper and brass has always given our jewelry a touch of color and the look of elegance,” adds Kevin.

Reign Custom Design is proud to have made their mark as innovators and honored by the recognition conferred to them by the APP, their patrons, and the friends and family that continue to support them in their quest to push the envelope ever further.

—Reign Custom Design, www.reigncustomdesign.com





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CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS



DANA DINIUS
APP Outreach Coordinator
HTC
Phoenix, AZ

This year, for the first time, the APP Conference curriculum included hands-on workshops. Rudimentary cross-contamination prevention and equipment sterilization protocols should be common knowledge for piercers, though for some Conference attendees, the workshops were an eye-opening experience. I was fortunate to be included as a program facilitator—a fancy way of saying instructor. The workshops were a huge step toward standardized education in our industry.

The general outline for the workshops was as follows:

- Front Counter Setup: Contamination/decontamination protocols and dos and don'ts when dealing with jewelry at the counter
- Piercing Room Setup: Sterilized implement storage, using presterilized jewelry vs. Statim, gloving protocol, proper signage, and general safety
- Sterilization Room Setup: Tool management, step-by-step decontamination processes, proper operation and maintenance of traditional autoclave and Statim

The main topics covered were cross-contamination prevention during piercing room procedures; aseptic technique performed in front of clients rather than describing or using pictures; sterile glove donning protocol (as some states now require); contaminated tool transport in the studio; decontamination of tools, and the various methods of decontamination with equipment and chemical agents; proper sterilization practices, and storage, treatment, and maintenance of equipment. Studio setup according to APP membership guidelines was discussed and checklists for possible studio setups were distributed for take-home reference. Initially, a mock piercing was planned to demonstrate step-by-step cross-contamination prevention, but so many good ideas and questions were flowing, we ended up running out of time.

The workshops were limited to 30 attendees per class, allowing for more hands-on practice and an open communication atmosphere. It was really awesome to see the look on peoples' faces when they found answers, literally, in their hands. Several times I noticed piercers I've seen at Conference for years finally "get it." Some of the most poignant questions I've heard at Conferences were asked anywhere but to the instructor of the class, so I was overjoyed to hear them in the workshops. Not all of us are "people" people; it can be hard to get up in front of a group of piercers you don't know and ask a question that some may

consider trivial. Limiting the group size was the catalyst for comfort for a lot of people to get their questions answered. Each instructor has their own way of doing things, and it made for a variety of interpretations of the same basic points. I certainly absorbed several new techniques, and have put some of them to work since my return home. It seems that each topic could have been at least a two-to-three hour workshop on its own, and hopefully they will be in the future.

Having health inspectors in attendance from several states was phenomenal. Seeing people who work just outside of our craft get involved and show initiative to make piercing cleaner and safer for everyone really gave me hope for the future. I hope these workshops will continue to grow, evolve, and advance as time goes on. I'm very thankful to the group I got to work with – Ryan Oullette, Jesse Villemaire, Crystal Sims, Brian Skellie, and Johnny Velez. And to those who were limited due to other engagements in the week – David Vidra, Steve Joyner, and Noah Babcock – I hope you can be a bigger part of this next year. Big, big thanks to Danny Yerna and Ed Chavarria for presenting the workshops in Spanish as well. **P**

Having health inspectors in attendance from several states was phenomenal.

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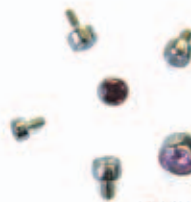
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR - ELAYNE ANGEL has been a professional piercer for more than 20 years and has performed over 40,000 piercings. She was awarded the President's Lifetime Achievement Award by the Association of Professional Piercers in 2006 and is a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

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EL CIRCO SHOW



ELAYNE ANGEL

Medical Liaison

Yucatan, Mexico

The venue for the banquet was a traditional style Las Vegas theater with tiered levels of semi-circular booths surrounding a large proscenium. During the banquet, the stage was graced with a wonderfully entertaining show by El Circo. The performance group, based in Ashland, Oregon, is a delightful amalgamation of traditional circus, drag, Cirque du Soleil, performance art, and body modification. What a perfect fit for the APP Conference!

Opening the show was an unusual yet lovely vocal performance by a costumed woman wrapped in a voluminous cloak, wearing a

tall feathered headdress. Her a cappella chants were at once haunting and beautiful. As she sang and sounded a bell, the mysterious songs imparted a sense of ritual and sacredness. Thus consecrated, the show proceeded with a pair of lithe, corseted clowns—one a neoclassic Pierrot, the other horned with a deer's antlers and adorned with pasties on her nipples. They somehow managed to appear cute as they pierced their own cheeks with long metal skewers capped with a single red rose.

Remaining skewered, they assisted a third performer as s/he

VOLUNTEERING



LAUREN DELAHAYE

Evolved
Columbus, OH

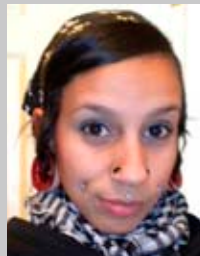
It's been a couple of weeks since my very first APP Conference, and I'm still trying to get a grip on reality. I now understand the meaning of "Post-Vegas Depression." Until I got the Al D. Scholarship, I never thought I would get to experience Conference – other than through stories and pictures from other piercers at my studio. But before I knew it, I was on a plane headed to Las Vegas!

Every day in Vegas was an adventure for me. I was meeting new people, taking awesome classes, soaking in new ideas, and volunteering. There were a few days where I was running on a couple hours of sleep, an apple, and a ton of coffee. (From what I was told, these are some of the perks of being a volunteer.) It was hard work but well worth it, because in the end, it all paid off.

Amid all the chaos, everything went great. Every class I took was extremely informative, and I left with an abundance of new ideas and techniques that I couldn't wait to share with the colleagues in my studio back home. The expo was spectacular; I don't think I've ever seen so much jewelry in one room before.

My initial classroom experience also ended up being my favorite: the conference's first workshop. In the first half of the workshop, I was able to get hands-on with various aspects of piercing setup and cross-contamination prevention. In the second half, I ran through a mock sterilization room where I was able to learn every possible detail I ever wanted to know about a Statim/autoclave. Since there were a handful of instructors, I felt that I received plenty of individual attention, and every question I had was answered. I hope to see more workshops at future conferences.

My first APP Conference had to be the best week of my life. I couldn't have asked for a better experience. I look forward to applying the things I've learned throughout my apprenticeship and my career as a body piercer. Until then, I'm counting down the days until the 16th annual APP Conference.



ANGIE DE LEON

Native Rituals
Oak Forest, IL

I've been trying to figure out how to put this all into words, so here goes nothing: conference was an amazing experience. I don't think that I can pick just one day, or just one person to focus on, so I'll write about the whole week as one collective experience.

Prior to Conference, so many people told me that it would be such a crazy week that I'd probably crack under the pressure. Luckily for me—and for the sake of others—I did not flip my wig. (No, I don't wear one.) In fact, it was probably one of the best times I've had in a very long time. Seeing all of my friends that I haven't seen in years was a major plus. Meeting a whole new group of people was also amazing. Everything ran so smoothly in my eyes—you guys did a great job. Caitlin, I give you props for being strong and being able to do this every year!

The classes were amazing, I just wish that some of them were a tad bit longer. I learned so much from this experience, and I'm using the knowledge back home in my work. I know that Conference was a week long, but I wish it would have lasted even longer. I want more and can't wait for next year.

Everyone was so awesome in every aspect, although I had my issues in my head with some people. Being a part of the scholars/volunteers was amazing—hard work, but amazing. I felt as though I were running around like a chicken with my head cut off, and I would totally do it again. I also recommend this to anyone because you get so much out of it. If anyone wants to be a scholar/volunteer next year, make sure you get quality hot tub time. It does wonders for your aching back, legs, and feet.

And make sure you go to Ronald's—best doughnuts I've ever had. I walked three and a half miles with my great friend Emrys for those things!

Thank you all so much for an amazing time. Everyone did a great job at keeping things running smoothly and keeping each other sane.

tantalized the audience with an artful striptease that ended in a self-administered champagne shower.

Next came a number in which the dancers were costumed with beaded lampshades on their heads. With their controlled, rhythmic body movements, they managed to transform this party faux pas into an art form!

The pièce de résistance was a hula-hoop act that had everyone in the house riveted. A pretty, masked androgynous boy spun hula hoops from virtually every part of his slender body, including the tip of a

single shoulder. Somehow this talented artist managed to perform more and more challenging moves and stunts as the number went on, without ever missing a beat or causing a hoop to wobble or fall. He definitely earned the loud applause—and standing ovation—that followed his performance.

After the show, comments were heard throughout the theater that this was the best entertainment ever to appear at an APP Conference, and the audience was clearly impressed with what they had seen. **P**



IMPLEMENTING CHANGE AFTER CONFERENCE



RYAN OUELLETTE
Precision Body Arts
Nashua, NH

So you're back from Conference. Now what are you going to do with what you learned? I have always found it challenging to take what I've gotten out of Conference and incorporate it into my studio effectively. I've been going to Conference for eight years, and every year I come home with a laundry list of ideas. Honestly though, not many are finished before I lose my motivation. My main problem is that I try to tackle them all right away instead of focusing on one and seeing it through to completion. There is so much information available at Conference that you can easily get overwhelmed. Trying to take all the information from the classes, round tables, and expo and turn it into immediate change in your studio is an easy way to melt your brain, or start a fight with your co-workers. Trust me; I know.

This year, I tried a different approach. I put together my usual list of ideas and changes that I would like to enact, then ranked them by what I thought would be the most beneficial to my studio as a whole. I also tried to get a good idea of how much time, effort, and money it would take to complete each task. It really helps when you can think step-by-step what it would take to improve a certain aspect of your studio or your procedures. You might be surprised that the biggest impact could come from faster, smaller improvements. I tend to over-think things a lot in my studio. Way too many supplies, way too many unnecessary steps. My big focus this year was breaking down why I do what I do, and finding ways to simplify things without degrading performance. Not all of it will work, and not all of it will be permanent, but focusing on improvement is important in an industry that changes so much from year to year.

One of my biggest obstacles is that I'm the only piercer in my shop, but I have three tattoo artists who share my sterilization room and decontamination practices. Coming home with a list of "piercing things" that I would like them to focus on typically means I have my tattoo staff fed up with me rather than changing their practices effectively. It's a good idea to consider what things on your list will be the most helpful to other members of the studio, and even which ones will be the most problematic. I decided to start with my sterilization room because I thought I could improve our decontamination chain while also making things faster and easier for all of the staff;

a win-win for everybody. I never really noticed that I had all these extra glove changes and surface disinfects because I was simply doing things on the wrong counter top or that I had supplies in the wrong cabinets. When I sat down and thought it over with the information I picked up at Conference, it was easy to see that I just needed to move a few things around. Of course, it all seems so obvious now, after Conference, but immediately after I reorganized the supplies in my sterilization room, everything got so much faster and more efficient. It only took me a few hours to move stuff around, but I feel like it was a big improvement in the overall functionality of a central aspect of our work week. Now we can zip through our sterilization work without sacrificing safety or quality. Plus, the tattoo guys can correctly process their tools faster without getting pissy and without me staring over their shoulders.

Once I tackled the sterilization room I suddenly got really productive. I went back to my list, picked another job and followed it through to completion before starting the next one. I was finding little improvements I could make all over the place. A lot of them only took an hour out of my day, and most of them didn't cost anything. I switched our shop over from spray disinfectants to wipes and put wall mounts in each work area for them. I reworked the area where we keep our general cleaning supplies so our counter girl doesn't have to go into the sterilization room to just grab a dustpan or extra trash bags. I moved the front counter supplies like gloves, baggies, and hand sanitizer to one central drawer. They're small improvements that make the shop much more efficient and make our work day so much easier. These are things I've been telling myself I wanted to do for months, or even years, but I just never worked out a game plan to get it all done. Many little things are very attainable and add up to make a big difference.

For years I've been coming home from Conference all energetic and trying to do ten things at once, just to end up with ten half-finished things that would keep distracting me. After a while you lose that Conference high and you just go back to the status quo. This year I realized that having a system can dramatically impact the amount you accomplish. Then when you get home from Conference next year you can change it all over again! **P**

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DECIDING ON THE RIGHT POS SYSTEM FOR YOUR STUDIO



DARRIN WALTERS

Blue Star Tattoos Inc.
Concord, CA

Buying a point of sale (POS) system is a big decision and possibly one of the most important purchases you will make as a shop owner. The first question you should ask yourself is: do I really need one? While we all work in the same industry, this answer varies. In order to make this decision, several factors should be considered:

- The amount of inventory you manage
- Whether you maintain a customer database
- Individual accounting needs
- Your company's growth aspirations

Most new shops don't need a POS system. When I started out, I used a cigar box and a ledger book—and that was sufficient for many years. But as my business began to grow, I came to the realization that I needed something more. A general rule of thumb is that if your studio's gross annual sales are \$250,000 or more, you need a POS system. A good POS system will simplify your life by reducing your paperwork, controlling your operations, and increasing profitability. But if you choose the wrong system for your studio's needs, it will create nothing but a nightmare of frustration that could actually cause you to lose business and, more importantly, long-time customers.

So how do you choose the "right" system? The short answer is to do a lot of research. Just because one studio uses a certain system for their POS, it still might be the wrong one for your studio. Many software companies use the same software designed for salons, replace the word "salon" or "spa" with "piercing," and sell it as a piercing POS system. Unfortunately, most of these systems lack specific features a piercing studio needs. The first step is to sit down and make a list of features you want and need your POS system to do for you. The key, however, is making a short list; don't get bogged down in every little detail. Some products have basic software with add-on modules like time cards, e-commerce, etc. Most studios need these core features:

- Point of Sale – the basic function to ring up sales
- Customer Tracking – including purchase history, layaway/special order tracking, marketing tools
- Inventory Control Tracking – for purchase orders, transfers (if you have multiple studios), and to periodically reconcile inventory
- Reports – so you can quickly see how your studio is doing
- Accounting Software – integration for QuickBooks® or other accounting program

HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?

Unless you own a piercing empire that does sales in the millions per year, you probably want to stick with an off-the-shelf product. These are the most affordable solutions, and they can do a great job of fitting the needs of an independently-owned and -operated body art studio. However, in addition to the system/software, you'll also need specialized POS hardware.

Here's a quick rundown on what you should expect to buy and an estimate of what it may cost:

SOFTWARE

Expect to pay up to \$3,000 for your software license. If you choose software on a server system, that adds between \$50 to \$300 per month.

CUSTOMER SUPPORT

Your software may or may not include support in the licensing fee. If it does, the service might include emails only, so be sure to find out. You'll probably want phone support for at least the first few months. Sometimes you can get the salesperson to throw in three months of phone support for free—sometimes not, but it is worth a try.

HARDWARE

You will need a receipt printer, label printer and barcode scanner (if you are barcoding any inventory), credit card reader, cash drawer, and a computer. Your POS-specific peripherals should be in the range of \$800 to \$2,000 per setup. However, one way to save money is to get the specific system requirements from your provider and go shopping on eBay or Craigslist, as you may be able to find some great deals. Try to avoid equipment that has the credit card swipe built into the keyboard; if the swipe goes down, it will cost you more to get it fixed than to buy a new one. On the receipt printer, pay a little more and get a thermal instead of the dot matrix so you do not have to deal with replacing the ribbon; it also makes your receipts look more professional.

Always read the fine print of any contract for hidden charges. You may have to pay an annual upgrade fee to keep your software up to date. If you are running your system locally—the software is installed and housed on a computer—you will need to deal with backing up your own data. Some vendors have an online backup service for a monthly fee. If you are going to run multiple studios, you will need

to think about networking your studios; for that, you will need an Internet connection and phone line.

CREDIT CARD PROCESSING

Nowadays, a successful business simply has to accept credit cards. This requires signing up for a merchant account, setting up a gateway, and integrating your gateway with your POS software/system.

Important: Choose your software first, then ask your software vendor what company integrates into their software. Some vendors have a buyer group you can join, so your costs are lower than if you did it by yourself. Then, select a credit card processing solution that seamlessly integrates into your POS.

THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

After you've done some research, it is time to compile a list (say, of your top three potential choices) and go and see them in action. This can be done by simply asking the potential vendor for a list of customers who use their software in your area, which may or may not be body modification studios. While there, ask any/all questions you have in mind to determine if the system is going to work for you.

The most important step is to try it before you buy it. Take it for a test drive. Most POS systems will let you download a demo that you can actually set up and work with for a set period of time. This trial should be long enough for you to figure out if it is going to work for you.

Keep in mind, at this stage your list of questions should be substantially expanded. You should consider the following both before and during the decision-making process:

- How long has the company been in business?
- Where can you see this system in action?
- Will you go with a PC-based system or Mac?
- Does the system use proprietary equipment and supplies?
- Will you be able to manage multiple stores, if necessary?
- Is it capable of expanding with your business, and at what cost?
- Will it be able to do e-commerce? Is it an add-on feature?
- Does it have PCI DSS (the credit card security standard)?
- Does it include integrated credit card processing, or do you have to buy an add-on feature?
- Does it use a phone line, Internet connection, or both?
- Is the software hosted locally, or on a server?
- If it's on a server, is it a cloud-based server? What is the monthly fee? Keep in mind this figure does not include your monthly Internet costs.
- If you need an Internet connection, what speed is required to maintain adequate usage levels (more speed equals more money)?
- If hosted on a server, and the server goes down, can you still ring up customers? Will you be able to synchronize data with the server after connection is re-established?

- Is it easy to set up and use (consider guest artists, training staff, and back-end maintenance)?
- Is it flexible enough to be customized to your particular needs?
- Is there a limit to the amount of data it can retain?
- Are backups done onsite or on a server offsite? Are these backups automatic?
- What accounting software will integrate with it?

Once you have your POS in place, one of the most important tools is the customer database. This is where you manage a wide variety of customer information including:

- What your customers buy
- How often they buy
- Their birthdays/anniversaries
- Email addresses
- Where they live

There are many benefits to maintaining this information. For example, when a customer's birthday or anniversary comes around, it's great for business to send them a card with a gift certificate. Or, if you get in new jewelry you know someone would just love (because you are now tracking their buying history), you have the ability to drop them an email with a photo to let them know you thought this particular item would be of interest. This should be very easy with a POS system; just click and send.

Rewards programs can also be set up in your system; however, the specific reward options may vary from system to system—some track customer frequency and use a point-based system while others track rewards based upon spending levels. You can also set up marketing campaigns with a POS system. With just a few clicks, you should be able to send emails, newsletters, and customer updates, thus increasing your revenue.

Another important tool is the inventory database; this is where you manage your inventory. Your inventory database should enable you to do the following:

- Monitor stock information - see what is in stock, what is on order, and what needs to be ordered
- Automate ordering
- Barcoding
- Track which items are hot sellers
- See a picture of an item to make sure you have the right piece of jewelry before you sell it
- Control shrinkage and overstock
- Know the cost of inventory you have for tax time—your CPA will love you
- Calculate your sales tax each quarter

Good luck on your journey finding the right POS for your studio. **P**

PRE-PIERCING SKIN PREP (OR WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU RUN OUT OF TECHNI-CARE)



ELAYNE ANGEL
Medical Liaison
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So many piercers have contacted me over the past few months that it is has become evident the ongoing FDA ban against manufacturing Techni-Care has virtually caused a panic in the piercing industry. To address this issue, here is some additional information about *pre*-piercing skin prep and lubricants for use in piercing.

Fortunately, just about any product meant for surgical skin prep will be suited for piercing when used according to the manufacturer's instructions—if it does not cause irritation. To get some concurrence about this from the medical community, I sought input from Dr. Steve Lober, a piercing-friendly plastic surgeon. He shared the following information on this topic:

Technically, there is no reason why any of the preps would be unsuitable for your purposes. Most preps used today utilize either BETADINE, ALCOHOL, CHG (Chlorhexidine Gluconate), or combinations thereof.

Simple Betadine preps work well as long as they are allowed to air dry (most of the bacteriocidal activity occurs during drying). Betadine is cheap and the prepped area is clearly demarcated.

Plain alcohol preps work well and are cheap, but you can't tell prepped areas from unprepped areas.

Finally, the CHG preps have gained popularity because of supposedly greater kill rates on MRSA. The downside is that the preps are considerably more expensive, and the smaller vials that would be used for minor procedures are untinted, again making the prepped area indistinguishable from the non-prepped areas.

It pretty much boils down to cost and ease of use. If someone was having recurrent problems with MRSA infections at piercing sites, you could make a very good argument for moving to the more expensive CHG agents (chloraprep). Otherwise, use whichever prep you are the most comfortable with.

I recently tried out an individually packaged CHG/alcohol skin prep product (Chlorascrub™). It works fine for ears, nipples, and navels, but the alcohol content is high, and therefore it is too harsh for use on genitals and other mucous membranes. I think it is even too strong-smelling to be comfortable for eyebrow or most facial piercings. As a result, my opinion is that the CHG/alcohol products cannot completely replace Techni-Care, which was routinely used as a prep for all non-oral piercings.

Many piercers seem to be unaware that a povidone-iodine solution (such as Betadine®) is perfectly acceptable as skin prep, and are oddly resistant to it. I've used individually packaged swabsticks or towelettes of povidone iodine solution to cleanse the tissue for approximately 40,000 piercings in my career and have found it to be very effective. An additional benefit is that iodine leaves the skin much less slippery than Techni-Care. This makes it easier to mark

the tissue (less smearing) and to grasp it securely for piercing.

I'm not sure why people are so concerned about negative reactions because I have never seen one. Ever. I do ask if clients have any history of sensitivity to iodine, and will use an alternate product on the rare occasions in which they say yes.

The following information on skin prep is abridged from my book, *The Piercing Bible—The Definitive Guide to Safe Body Piercing*:

The area to be pierced is cleaned usually with Betadine or Techni-Care surgical scrub for body piercings or a germicidal mouth rinse for oral piercings. In the United States, alcohol is not normally used as a sole skin-cleaning product for piercing, though it may be used before the surgical scrub. Betadine and other iodine products occasionally produce skin irritation reactions, though the sensitivity is usually to ingredients other than the iodine, and true iodine allergies are reportedly a myth.^[i] Also contrary to popular lore, an allergy to shellfish or seafood does not increase the likelihood of sensitivity to iodine.^[ii]

I've heard a number of piercers express negative attitudes about iodine without ever having used it. I suspect this unenthusiastic viewpoint may be the result of confusion because using it for wound care (piercing aftercare) is not suggested. I know of some piercers who became confused about using alcohol on unbroken skin for this same reason. This is also from *The Piercing Bible*:

Studies show iodine is not suited to wound care, as it can damage new cell walls, causing cellular material to leak out.^[iii] Packaged pads or swabs are excellent for skin prep prior to piercing or other procedures in which skin will be broken, but iodine stored in plastic (PVC) bottles is susceptible to the growth of infectious organisms once opened.^[iv]

According to the Intravenous Nurses Society (INS), iodine preparations require a minimum thirty-second contact time and a two-minute drying time in order for the agent's properties to become activated.

If you're not sure what to use, contact your vendors that sell medical supplies and see what kinds of products they offer. Perhaps ask them what they suggest—and remember to follow manufacturer's instructions.

In 2005, I gave a presentation on the safe care of pierced patients at the Association of peri-Operating Room Nurses (AORN) World Congress. When I asked a room full of more than 2,000 nurses how many used Techni-Care in their operating rooms, none had ever heard of it, and all of them were still using povidone iodine skin prep. It appears that the piercing industry was led to believe

that iodine is no longer in use in the medical community, but that is not the case. And, when an alternate skin prep product is used in a medical setting, it is more commonly one that contains CHG, rather than Techni-Care.

Suffice it to say, it is still possible to do piercings safely, even if you are unable to obtain Techni-Care.

TECHNI-CARE AS A LUBRICANT FOR PIERCING

Techni-Care won't help a piercing heal (it isn't a healing agent) and it certainly isn't the mildest thing you could use. Further, it is commonly dispensed in bulk. All of that means it isn't a product I would suggest to lubricate a needle for a fresh piercing. I believe it is better suited for use as a skin prep, or as lubricant on insertion tapers and jewelry for healed piercings—but not for a new hole.

If you are using a sterile needle and sterile jewelry (which, of course, you should be!) you don't need to insert a germicidal product with the piercing. Techni-Care is a germicidal soap, and soap that is not rinsed from the body tends to be an irritant. It is appropriate to be as kind and gentle to the freshly pierced tissue as possible, so what you need is a mild lubricant product. Not soap.

Product information on Techni-Care from the manufacturer states that it is for external use only: <http://www.caretechlabs.com/cart/ctl-products-Techni-Care.html> (The page now reads "Under Monograph Review - Coming soon!") Also, the Care-Tech labs Web site had this statement posted regarding the product: "Do not leave in wound bed." That seems plenty clear to me that use of Techni-Care as a lubricant for piercing is also not advocated by the Care-Tech Labs.

Chloroxlylenol is a potent ingredient even at the concentration used in Techni-Care, and it is strong stuff to place inside of a brand new wound. The milder piercing care now advocated by the APP advises against rotating soap into a piercing—in part because the rotation itself can be traumatic, and in part because soap isn't beneficial inside a fresh or healing piercing (and may well be harmful to delicate new cells).

Sterile lubricating jelly is considered to be more inert and bio-compatible, and in my lengthy experience, I do not believe I have ever witnessed a negative reaction to it. At least it is designed as a

lubricant and is specified for safe use in body cavities. I do advise my clients not to use any ointment on healing piercings, so if you use ointment (such as A&D, or an antibiotic like Bacitracin) as you perform the piercing, this sets the rather poor precedent of, "Do as I say, not as I do."

Initially, you need something slippery that isn't going to cause irritation or introduce any undesirable elements into the tissue like petroleum products or antibiotics. You don't need a product intended specifically for preventing or treating infections (such as Bacitracin) or for healing (such as A&D ointment).

It is easy to locate packets of sterile lubricating jelly for sale on the Internet from medical/tattoo supply businesses. It is inexpensive: a box of 144 is about five cents each. It costs even less if you buy a larger quantity. The sort without Chlorhexidine Gluconate (CHG) is the milder, preferable formulation.

I prefer to employ the "Better Safe Than Sorry" philosophy for piercing, so it couldn't hurt to go for the most inert, sterile product available when you make a new piercing. **P**

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WHO'S GOTTA GRUDGE AGAINST GAUGES?



CLAY WANSTRATH

Freaks on 39th Street
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If there's one sure way to get a piercer's blood to boil it's asking him or her, "What gauge are your gauges?" That one question, which has become so infamously ridiculous that it has reached T-shirt-worthy status, has become the piercer's equivalent to screeching nails on a chalkboard.

But why? What's the big deal?

I'll tell you why.

Every piercing studio carries at least some selection of jewelry for stretched earlobes. They might stock captive bead rings, or plugs, or eyelets. Some might carry studs and some might even carry grommets. But you know what? Not a single piercing studio carries "gauges."

What? You're kidding. I saw some gauges at my local piercing studio just the other day!

No, you did not. Sit down beside me children, and I'll tell you a little story. You see, once upon a time, there was a regular guy with regular earlobe piercings who had the good intentions of making those lobes big. After seeing some folks on the street, on TV, or in magazines with stretched earlobes this good-natured person marched right down to his local piercing studio to get those ears stretched up right. The piercer at the studio probably explained the pros and cons of the process and perhaps the piercer even described the benefits of patience and perseverance. It would have been explained that there is a period of time between sizes that one must wait before one puts in larger jewelry. Opinions vary, but the sentiment would still have been the same, and I quote, "between 12 gauge and 10 gauge I suggest you wait approximately two months." Regardless of the conversation, the outcome would have been the same: the hero of our story walked out of the piercing studio with larger jewelry in his ears.

Now, what happened next children is important. Our hero was so happy to be on the righteous path to earlobe expansion that most of what the piercer told him went in one ear hole and right out the other. The experience was so gratifying and new that when his friends later asked him what he had done, the only word that stuck out was that magical unit of measurement, "What, these plugs? They're 12 gauge...yeah, I'm gauging my ears."

And so as it was said, so was it done. The word "gauge," which is a unit of measurement, somehow became an interchangeable term for both the jewelry, "Sweet gauges," and the process of stretching. It seems like some sort of mythical Hydra, every time a client is educated about the difference between stretch and gauge, suddenly 10 more clients pop up asking, "what gauge are your gauges?"

I, for one, do not lose hope for humanity over this linguistic debacle. I smile when I recall that the gentleman who taught me how to pierce would adamantly correct anyone who referred to

their navel as a "belly button," but at the same time would always refer to the clitoris as the "happy button."

I have stretched earlobes and I love them. I am thrilled that so many other people want stretched lobes too. When someone comes into the studio where I work and asks to see our "gauges" I know that they want to see our jewelry. I try to be courteous. I might wince a little bit but I try not to scold them like a schoolmarm in front of their friends.

While writing this I looked up the definition of "gauge" in the dictionary. Right below it was the word "gauger," meaning "one that gauges." With any luck this term won't catch on, because I don't know of any piercer who could handle hearing, "Look at that gauger; his gauges are the biggest gauge I've ever seen on a gauger!"

[Editor's note: The ability to add new vocabulary is one of the defining characteristics of a living language such as English. Like it or not—and I don't—the term "gauge" has come into common usage as both a noun and a verb.] P

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Streakers at the banquet dinner, APP Conference 2010