

practice of people doing tattoos out of their homes, garages, hotels and hosting "tattoo parties."

"There should be stiff penalties for those types of things," she said. "There are very few amendments to the laws in South Dakota — if it doesn't have to do with cows or corn, nobody seems to care. Cities and counties don't take the initiative to enforce laws that are in place. We'd like to see this change."

Unsafe tattooing practices are not limited to big cities or areas other than Yankton, Kat said.

"We can't ignore the growing dangers of people tattooing in the Yankton area that are not adhering to the standards who are in place by the state of South Dakota," she said.

Although there are dangers involved with unprofessional tattoo artists, Kat said there are many, many reputable shops across the country and the old stereotypes of tattoos being just for bikers and sailors has all but fallen to the wayside.

"Some of our clientele includes physicians, lawyers, law enforcement, retirees, veterans of all ages, homemakers and families like grandpa, son and grandson all coming in for tattoos," she said, "Many people want photo realism tattoos of lost loved ones and special "in memory" tattoos."

Kat urges people who are contemplating a tattoo to do their research.

"Getting a tattoo is permanent," she reminds. "It can possibly cause health problems when they are done improperly, and

they can change over periods of time and not look as good as when first applied, so make sure it's something you're going to like and talk with your artist about it."

Kat's other tips for making sure your experience is a good and healthy one is to:

- Ask around about a reputable shop.
- Make sure the person applying the tattoo works in a clean environment and informs you that there is a healing process that may take from a week to a month.
- Look at each artists' portfolio and make sure the portfolio is for the actual person who will be doing the tattoo. It's easy to get delegated to an apprentice.
- Ask about sterilization. Don't just trust pre-packaged equipment. Look to see if the color code has changed, showing you it has been in the sterilizer at time and temp required.
- Ask the artist how long they have been doing tattoos. Kat suggests an artist with more than five years experience.
- There are no set guidelines to how much or how little a tattoo should cost, but Rusty and Kat's rule of thumb is "A cheap tattoo is not good and a good tattoo is not cheap."
- Laser removal is very expensive and can cause scarring, so make sure you're ready for a lifelong commitment.
- Redos and cover-ups are not cheap, so do your homework and pick a qualified tattoo artist.

■ Story and photos by Tera Schmidt

A successful team is a group of many hands but of one mind.

— Bill Bethel



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