

decision to get a tattoo is not something you do on the spur of the moment — it's permanent.”

The recent popularity of tattoo shop-based reality shows may have brought tattooing to mainstream audiences, but Kat and Rusty say it also has had adverse affects.

“People, especially young people, should understand that this kind of career choice is simply not as easy as reality shows make it out to be,” Kat said. “Buying a cheap kit online and practicing on others can turn disastrous.”

Kat said many teenagers see the “glamorous” lifestyles of the reality show tattoo artists and think, “I can do that,” but proper training through years of apprenticeships and study is vital to success.

“Also, there is no 401k plan or health insurance,” she said. “There is no guarantee that tattooing will even remain legal. Formal professional training for years and knowledge of art and drafting are a plus. This isn't a career you can just pick up overnight or by watching a DVD. It takes time, dedication and commitment.”

Kat enjoys speaking at high schools and handing out pamphlets about the safety concerns involved with teens tattooing each other.

“I like to speak at high schools to enlighten young people on the ins and outs of careers in the tattoo field and the dangers of placing one on friends or receiving one unprofessionally,” she said.

Although there are laws concerning tattooing in South Dakota, Kat and Rusty are advocates of stricter enforcement. One problem they see in South Dakota is that each city and county is charged with writing and enforcing their own laws. Kat said currently Sioux Falls has clearly written codes, but Yankton has none.

“We would like to see the laws adjusted to require health inspections in all areas,” she said. “We would like to see requirements on cleanliness and mandatory drug testing, and for all cities and counties in the state to adopt and enforce laws.”

She also sees a need to hinder the more and more common



Kat displays two of the tattooing machines used at 5 Star Tattoo in Yankton. Kat and Rusty have portfolios filled with pictures of tattoos they have done.



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