

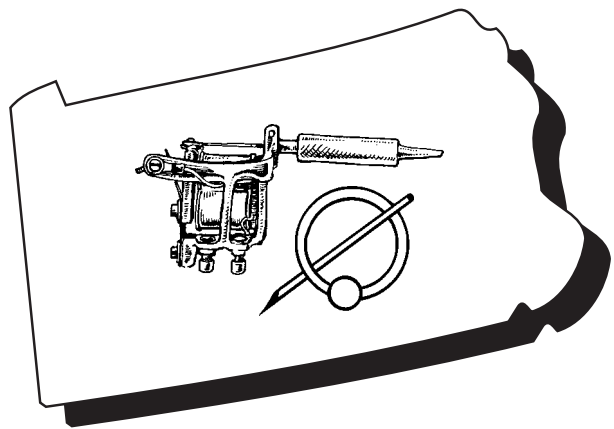
# Pennsylvania Coalition of Professional Tattooists & Body Piercers Newsletter

In  
Unity  
There  
Is  
Strength!

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Volume 1, Issue 7

## I N S I D E !

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*Coalition Hotline:*

412•531•5319

<http://www.pa-tattoo.com>

# Editor's Notes

Since legislative activity has slowed somewhat (mostly due to the Holiday's and budget and tax season) this issue is filled mainly with informational pieces - of note are some pertinent facts borrowed from an article Dr. Kris Sperry wrote for the National Tattoo Association Newsletter titled *Tattoos, Tattooing and AIDS*. Face it, just the mention of HIV or AIDS strikes panic in everyone and these phrases are used very frequently when discussing tattooing and/or piercing legislation. Unfortunately, such discussions also contain grossly exaggerated horror stories and very few facts. This article contains solid medical research and a straightforward approach to the issue - certainly, the risk is there, but the fact that to date **NOT ONE** case of HIV transmission through tattooing has been recorded speaks volumes of the way we conduct ourselves (proper sterilization techniques, et al)! The best defense we can have in the battle against misinformation is the facts!

The flurry of activity surrounding Senate Bill 847 seems to have died down for the time being, but as we witnessed last Fall, this legislation can move at any time, so we have to stay on top of the situation. Senate Bill 847 now sits in the Appropriations Committee awaiting further consideration. Other than letter writing, a public hearing would be our best opportunity to make our position (and our profession) known to our legislators. If we want a public hearing, we're going to have to push for it, so put your pens, typewriters and computers to work. Senator Richard Tilghman (Republican) is the Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman, so he's a good place to start. His mailing address is Senate Box 203017, Harrisburg, PA 17120-3017. I'm in the process of drafting a letter now, so I'll have copies available at the next meeting if you're looking for examples. In the box below is a listing of all 23 members of the Senate Appropriations Committee. If one of these people happens to be your local Senator, you're probably better off contacting them directly to voice your opinion. The Senator's party (Republican or Democrat and their District Number is included). If you need more information, give me a call. I can tell you that the Appropriations Committee is busy with Budget Hearings through March 5th, so now is the time to make contact.

Drake Cox (Once Upon A Tattoo, Warren) has already hosted a legislative visit (see the article on page 3) and he's been working on Senator Slocum (Appropriations Committee), so hopefully he'll have some luck soon. Drake's article outlines his meeting with Representative Jim Lynch and how he managed to get Lynch to his studio. Once again, education and facts are our best tools and giving the uneducated a first-hand look at our profession can go a long way!

I'd also like to thank Steve Lemak (The Quillian, Allentown) for voicing his opinion on involvement in the Coalition. Steve's correct! We have a core of individuals who attend all (or most) of the meetings and have been involved from the beginning, but to say that we represent a majority (hell, even half) of the studios in Pennsylvania is unrealistic... and that's sad. These issues involve everyone doing business in this state. I don't care what you're opinion is (of me, the Coalition, any other studio, pending legislation, whatever) you should be at a meeting voicing that opinion! I understand how busy we all are and I know that it may be impossible to make EVERY meeting, but try. Or if you can't then write or e-mail your thoughts. Every bit of information and every person helps!

-Tim Azinger

## Pennsylvania Senate Appropriations Committee

Bell (R-9th)  
Bodack (D-38th)  
Brightbill (R-48th)  
Fumo (D-1st)  
Gerlach (R-44th)  
Greenleaf (R-12th)  
Holl (R-24th)  
Jubelirer (R-30th)  
Loeper (R-26th)  
Madigan (R-23rd)  
Mellow (D-22nd)  
Musto (D-14th)  
O'Pake (D-11th)  
Rhoades (R-29th)  
Schwartz (D-4th)  
Slocum (R-25th)  
Stapleton (D-41st)  
Stout (D-46)  
Thompson (R-19th)  
Tilghman (R-17th)  
Tomlinson (R-6th)  
Wenger (R-36th)  
White (R-21st)  
Williams (D-8th)

# Getting Involved!

I have been involved with the Coalition since the first meeting and I would like to point out one particular problem. The involvement of studios and professionals is tragically low. It seems that the meetings are comprised of the same people, new faces are a rarity. We are trying to organize, rally support and prepare for an ordeal with our state government. This is a problem for us.

As it stands, the State already has the advantage. The State *IS* an organized unit. They have protocols, agendas and the support of their constituents. The important part here is SUPPORT. The officials that made these House and Senate Bills were elected into office by a majority vote.

Majority - let's make that our goal. Let's double (yes, DOUBLE) our size by the next meeting. Instead of telling another studio about the meeting - bring them! If we each physically bring one person to the meetings, the Coalition can expand exponentially each time!

-Steve Lemak, *The Quillian* (Allentown)

## Consent Forms

Many of you have been asking questions about your consent (and parental consent) forms - whether they're complete, what information should be included, etc. I put this topic on the agenda for the February 22nd meeting. I'll find as many examples as I can, but I'd encourage you to bring copies of your forms as well. The more examples we have, the better!

# Hosting A Legislative Visit?

Last July, in light of the Bills before the Senate and the State House of Representatives and in order to ensure that my local Representative and Senator knew something of what they would be voting on in their respective houses, I invited them both over for a brown bag lunch. I wanted a chance to explain my feelings and concerns about these Bills and to create an opportunity to educate our lawmakers as to the workings of a professional Tattoo and Piercing establishment.

My invitation was a simple letter asking them to come for lunch, discuss the bills and discuss information about our business. Representative Jim Lynch, (who by the way, was a co-sponsor of both the house bills), had his secretary call within a few days of the invitation. We made arrangements for a meeting on the following Wednesday, although he declined lunch.

The meeting went off without a hitch. I did my best to explain the procedures of a tattoo, the restrictions a professional places on himself (not tattooing minors, people that are intoxicated, etc.), sterilization procedures and conditions. In short, everything that I thought would be helpful to inducing a good impression and an educated vote on legislation. The shop was of course spotless, signs were all in place and consent forms were in plain view. We gave Representative Lynch as much information as we

could in a short amount of time. Based on this meeting, Representative Lynch wanted to witness a tattoo and a piercing, which we promptly scheduled for the following week. I should also say, that 15 minutes into our first meeting, Representative Lynch received the expected "here's your out, if you need it" phone call. I was glad and a little surprised that he didn't take the opportunity. Instead, he stayed with us for quite awhile longer. The second meeting went every bit as well, with the Representative Lynch joking (or was he) about getting tattooed or pierced himself.

As a result of these meetings, Representative Lynch now has valuable information about tattooing and piercing and as far as I know, is no longer a co-sponsor of any house bill concerning our professions.

The process of getting a Legislator to visit your studio is not always as easy. As of yet, Senator Slocum hasn't answered my letters, but I'll continue to send them until he does.

Get in touch with your local Representative or Senator. If they don't respond, make it your mission to get there attention with positive actions. I personally WANT to have MY voice heard when it comes to ANYTHING that affects me, my family and/or my profession

*-Drake Cox (Once Upon A Tattoo, Warren)*

## Knowing the Facts About Tattooing & HIV

In a little over a decade, the disease defined as the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), or Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) has progressed throughout the United States and the rest of the world with alarming rapidity, and it has continued to spread essentially unchecked. Conservative estimates place somewhere between two and three million people in the United States as being HIV positive. Thus, it is no wonder that any process or procedure that includes the potential for blood or body fluid exposure, whether medical or not, has come under great scrutiny for the possibility that AIDS might be transmitted unknowingly. Tattooing is no exception to this recent trend and increasing media, health department and public attention is being focused upon this ancient art as a possible way in which AIDS might be spread.

HIV transmission is entirely dependent on blood or body fluid from

an infected individual entering the blood stream of another person. Thus, the classic and usual transmission routes include sharing of intravenous needles by drug addicts, blood transfusion and sex with an infected partner. HIV is also transmitted from women to their unborn babies through the placenta. Finally, health care workers are at risk from becoming HIV positive if they accidentally stick a finger with a syringe or blood drawing needle that is contaminated.

The fact that needles are used in tattooing is the primary source of paranoia concerning the possibility that AIDS may be transmitted during the placement of a tattoo. However, there are fundamental differences between the types of needles that are used in medical procedures and those used to tattoo. Syringe and blood drawing needles are hollow and are often rather large, depending on their specific purposes. Being hollow, blood will collect and

remain within the needle's central channel and it is this blood that comes in contact with deep tissues when someone accidentally pokes it into their hand after drawing blood from an AIDS patient. HIV transmission requires the exchange of a certain amount of blood from one person to another and this quantity is much more than the single drop of blood that can transmit hepatitis B. It is really rather difficult to transmit HIV when a very small amount of blood is involved. Tattoo needles are more properly classified as pins, as they are much, much smaller than the instruments used for medical procedures and most importantly, they are solid, NOT hollow. The only blood that might be contaminating a tattoo needle is a microscopic quantity on the surface, as there is really no place for blood to collect.

Another aspect about the tattoo process that makes it even more unlikely

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## Tattooing & HIV *Continued from Page 3*

for HIV transmission to occur is the fact that tattoos are placed only very shallowly, just under the epidermis, which is the layer of skin that continually grows and is shed constantly. The tattoo needle does not pierce deep within the skin, and never into the deep fat or muscle. Also, as the needle is continually dipped in ink or pigment while it is worked over the skin, the potential for contamination is reduced even further as very little blood ever comes in direct contact with the needle surfaces.

Perhaps the best current proof that tattooing, by trained professional artists, is essentially a safe procedure and the risk for HIV transmission from customer to customer is basically nil, is the fact that there has not yet been a single documented case in medical literature of HIV transmission through tattooing. Realistically, it would be very difficult to transmit HIV through tattooing even if one wanted to do it and it would require behavior and practices that are entirely unacceptable. Practically speaking, the likelihood of contracting HIV from picking a sexual partner in a

singles bar is far, far greater than the potential for tattooing to transmit the disease!

As the tattooist has no idea whether their next customer is an HIV carrier or not, it is prudent that elementary precautions be observed in all cases. Rubber gloves must be worn at all times when tattooing and cleaning up to keep blood off of the skin where microscopic skin breaks could provide exposure. The artist should be especially careful not to accidentally stick him or herself with the tattoo needle, although the risk effectively approaches zero. All work surfaces should be cleaned between tattoos, including ink bottles, lights, counters, tables and other nonautoclavable items. Needle bars and tubes should be autoclaved. Single-service needles are completely safe and provide a great peace of mind to customers.

What chemicals that kill HIV (and also hepatitis B) can be used to clean surfaces? Household bleach (sodium hypochlorite) diluted 10 parts water to 1 part bleach is very effective, although bleach can be quite corrosive to some

metal surfaces. Rubbing alcohol of at least 70% concentration is also effective. Currently, a wide variety of pleasant smelling, very effective and non-corrosive chemical disinfectants are available through medical supply houses. Before you buy a product for use in cleaning your shop and work stations, inquire about the specific effectiveness against HIV and the hepatitis virus.

The most effective way in which to fight AIDS paranoia is through education and tattooing is no exception. As a professional artist, the tattooist should be aware of the facts of HIV transmission, and adopt work habits that protect themselves and their customers from the possibility of ANY disease transmission, not only AIDS. In this way, the real problems surrounding HIV infection in our communities may be addressed intelligently and the disinformation, lies and innuendo that erroneously link tattooing to AIDS transmission be finally laid to rest.

*From the article "Tattoos, Tattooing and AIDS," by Dr. Kris Sperry.*

## COALITION

## CLASSIFIEDS

Welcome to the Coalition Classifieds! Ads may be purchased under the following guidelines: Price is \$10 for one (1) issue, \$20 for three (3) issues. Ad size is one (1) column inch which translates to five (5) lines of typeset characters. The Editor reserves the right to edit copy to conform to space constraints. All ad copy should be typed or printed and should be mailed along with payment (check or money order payable to **Pennsylvania Coalition**) to: Pennsylvania Coalition, PO Box 502, Carnegie, PA 15106. Please indicate the number of insertions and include your phone number. Please call for pricing on larger ads.  
**412-531-5319**

**FOR SALE:** One (1) Electric Ritter Dentist Chair. Contour style, black pleather upholstery. Good Condition. \$400.  
Call Drake @ 814-726-2860.

**Artist Wanted:** Stormi Steel Skin F/X, a well established, busy studio with a large customer base, is seeking a tattoo artists. Qualified individual should have at least three (3) years experience in color/black work, cover-ups and free hand. Resume, references and samples of work necessary. A full portfolio is not required, but is and added plus. Our studio is located in the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre area of Northeastern PA. It is the largest in the area with a fantastic reputation. The studio supports separate work stations and a complete flash room. We are a professional establishment that expects the same professionalism from any/all applicants.

If you, or someone you know, is looking for a position like this, we would like to hear from you. Please respond by mail or phone.

Keith & Jullee Chamberlain  
Stormi Steel Skin F/X  
212 Wyoming Avenue  
Kingston, PA 18704  
(717) 836-5299