

YOURSTORY

P.Ink tattoo day

We gathered October 10, 2014, at Twilight Tattoo in Minneapolis. We were breast-cancer survivors who had scars from our mastectomies. Six tattoo artists donated their skills and time to the healing cause, P.Ink Day Minneapolis — a journey to wholeness.

The intention was to give each of the women the opportunity to develop a new relationship with her body with body art, placing a chosen image — a tattoo — on her body to diminish the presence of the disfiguring scars.

Six women — Cindy, Amy, Janine, Kathy, Sarah and Missy — described their relationships with their bodies the same way that I did before I got my lotus tattoo at the first P.Ink, Personal Ink day, in October 2013 in Brooklyn, NY.

"I hate looking in the mirror."

"I put on a shirt as quickly as possible."

"I hate seeing myself naked."

"The scars really bother me."

"I don't feel sexy at all."

"I hate what happened to my body."

The six tattoo artists — Erin, Matt, Joe, Ariel, Chelsea and Shane — were all ready.

Each survivor got in her chair and the artist put a temporary outline on her body. It was amazing to see the images they had created together. So much beauty!

Family members sat with the artist and the woman as the tattooing took place. Four husbands, a daughter and a sister attended.

As everyone finished up, it was fun to see the women walking around topless, glancing in the mirrors, sharing their tattoos with one another. Breast-cancer survivors have shown their breasts to lots of people, and usually it's been medical — and not by choice. It is healing on a very deep level to have a beautiful tattoo that was chosen, not forced.

We did a closing circle at the end of the day to acknowledge the transformations that took place.

Everyone participated — the "warrior survivors," their families, the tattoo artists, the owners of the shop, the photographers, media and film crew.

We talked about the circle of life, the connections we all made throughout the day. We passed a special basket filled with washers for everyone to put on their keychains, to take and hold as a symbol of the life-affirming special day and a reminder that we are all connected to this circle of people who understand.

It was incredible to be a part of the 12 cities that did P.Ink Day. The healing journey has turned the corner for 37 more women, including the six here in Minnesota. GO PINK!

We will again meet on October 10, 2015, at Twilight Tattoo in Minneapolis. Six more breast cancer survivors have been chosen: Luella, Deb, Monica, Becky, Kari and Jennifer. They will meet with the six tattoo artists who have volunteered their time: Remy, Erin, Matt, Alex, Ariel and Joe. Healing magic will again occur.

Mari Ruddy is a speaker, writer and educator. She lives in Minneapolis. Learn more about P.Ink and Mari at www.mariruddy.com and www.p-ink.org

MARIRUDDY



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