

ALLIANCE OF PROFESSIONAL TATTOOISTS
Professional Business League since 1992

2025 ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT



Preserving
the Past.

Advancing
the
Present.

Protecting
the Future.

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Letter from the President



Mick O'Herien
APT President

Thank you to our members for your continued support of the Alliance of Professional Tattooists. Your commitment makes it possible for us to advocate for tattoo artists, educate, and support the long-term strength of our profession.

This Impact Report highlights what we accomplished in 2025 and how your membership directly supports advocacy, education, outreach, and meaningful engagement within this craft. We invite you to explore the report and see the progress made possible through this shared effort.

As we look ahead to 2026, we remain focused on continued growth, thoughtful innovation, and serving our members and the broader tattoo community with intention and integrity. We're grateful for your support and excited for what lies ahead.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mick O'Herien". The signature is fluid and stylized, with a long, sweeping tail.

At-a-Glance Impact

A snapshot of APT's work in advocacy, education, research, and community engagement.

138

NEW MEMBERS
2024: 155

277

RENEWALS
2024: 195

63

EVENTS
HOSTED

45

PDTT™
STUDENTS

1,018

BBP
Students

\$94,226.40

INCOME

\$89,518.47

EXPENSES

ADVOCACY & REPRESENTATION

- Nebraska Legislative Advocacy
- AFDO Conference Participation
- Public Health Engagement

EDUCATION & RESEARCH

- Scientific Study Collaboration
- Educational Programming Expansion
- Practitioner Training Initiatives

COMMUNITY & MEMBERSHIP

- Convention Presence
- Member Programming
- Resource Development

In 2025, APT expanded education, research, and advocacy efforts while strengthening resources for professional tattooing around the world.

Advocacy in Action

World Congress on Tattoo and Pigment Research (WCTP) May 7-9, 2025 in Rome, Italy

APT participated in the World Tattoo Pigment Conference (WCTP), an international, science-focused forum bringing together researchers, regulators, manufacturers, and industry stakeholders to discuss tattoo ink safety, pigment behavior, and regulatory challenges. APT Board member Selina Medina represented the organization at the conference, where APT also participated as a sponsor, reinforcing its commitment to supporting informed, science-based dialogue within the global tattoo community.



Attendance at this event allowed APT to engage directly in cross-border conversations on how tattoo inks are evaluated, regulated, and understood worldwide, ensuring that professional tattooer perspectives and real-world practices were represented in discussions often dominated by laboratory or policy-only viewpoints. This engagement further strengthened APT's role as a credible practitioner-led voice in international conversations shaping the future of tattooing.



APT VP, Selina Medina (Right) with Milena Foerster, PHD of International Agency for Cancer Research. Photo from Selina Medina.

WHY IT MATTERED:

WCTP provides a rare forum where tattoo artists, researchers, regulators, and medical professionals engage directly on tattoo safety, pigments, and practice. APT's sponsorship and representation ensured that professional tattooer perspectives were included in global scientific discussions influencing research priorities, public perception, and future regulation—helping bridge the gap between laboratory science and real-world tattoo practice.

Advocacy in Action

Nebraska Tattooers Stopped a New Sales Tax on Tattooing March 13, 2025 in Lincoln, NE

In 2025, Nebraska lawmakers proposed expanding sales tax to include tattoo and body modification services. When tattooing was placed on the taxable list, the Alliance of Professional Tattooists (APT) mobilized tattooers across the state to speak with one unified voice in support of working artists, shops, and clients.

APT State Reps, Tyson Schaffert and Jesse Neese, testified at the Revenue Committee hearing on LB169, while tattooers statewide amplified the effort through coordinated outreach to legislators. The proposal later appeared within LB170 (AM1318), but a cloture motion to advance the package failed on May 19, 2025 (Yes 30 / No 15), and the tattoo tax was not enacted.

This moment demonstrated the strength of collective advocacy, tattooers standing together through APT to protect the profession and the people who do the work.

WHY IT MATTERED:

This advocacy effort helped prevent a proposed tax that would have increased costs for tattoo artists and clients, while demonstrating the strength of organized, practitioner-led representation. By empowering knowledgeable tattooers to engage directly with lawmakers, APT ensures that state-level decisions affecting tattooing are informed by real-world experience and protect the profession through credible advocacy.



Jesse Neese



Tyson Schaffert

Nebraska Legislature public hearing on LB169/LB170 (March 13, 2025). Official legislative proceeding screenshots used for educational and informational purposes.

Advocacy in Action

**129th AFDO Conference
June 21-25, 2025 in Dallas TX**



The Alliance of Professional Tattooists was represented by Board member and Director of Research, Mikayla Hyland, at the 129th AFDO Annual Educational Conference, where APT engaged directly with public health professionals, regulators, and cross-industry stakeholders. The organization’s presence was positively received, reinforcing the importance of practitioner-led perspectives within regulatory and public health conversations surrounding tattooing.

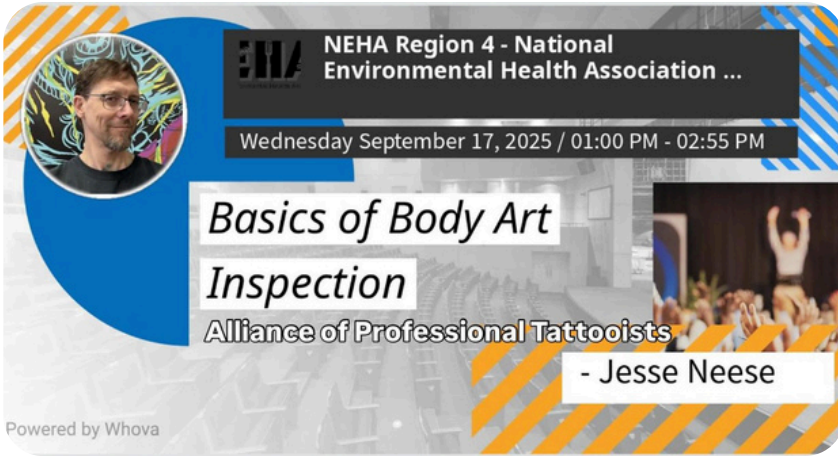
Educational sessions offered valuable insights into both the historical evolution of tattooing and the role of language and classification in regulatory interpretation. Discussions around terminology highlighted how precise definitions can influence policy development and help protect the autonomy and integrity of professional tattooing within public health frameworks. Participation in AFDO continues to strengthen APT’s ability to advocate effectively, build relationships, and bring informed perspectives back to the community.

WHY IT MATTERED:

APT’s presence at the AFDO conference ensured that professional tattooing was represented in national public health and regulatory conversations. Direct engagement with regulators and health officials reinforced the importance of accurate language, informed classification, and professional standards – key factors in how tattooing is understood and regulated. Participation in forums like AFDO strengthens APT’s ability to advocate effectively and ensures tattooing is discussed with accurate context and practitioner expertise at the table.

Advocacy in Action

NEHA Region 4 Annual Conference September 17-19, 2025 in LaCrosse WI



Building strong relationships between tattoo professionals and public health officials remains a core part of APT's mission. Many inspectors receive little formal training on body art establishments, and APT's PDTT-based seminars help bridge that gap by providing practical, industry-informed education.

In September 2025, APT advisor Jesse Neese presented Basics of Body Art Inspection at the NEHA Region 4 annual conference in La Crosse, Wisconsin, the only regional gathering that brings together multiple NEHA branches across the Midwest. The session created valuable opportunities to discuss regulatory practices across jurisdictions and provide health professionals with realistic expectations for studio standards, equipment, and tattooing procedures.

We have since submitted proposals for two seminars at the upcoming National NEHA conference in Kansas City and have been invited to present in both Nebraska and Montana, further strengthening collaboration between tattooers and public health professionals.

APT continues to encourage collaboration between tattooers and local health departments, highlighting the value of open communication and shared education.

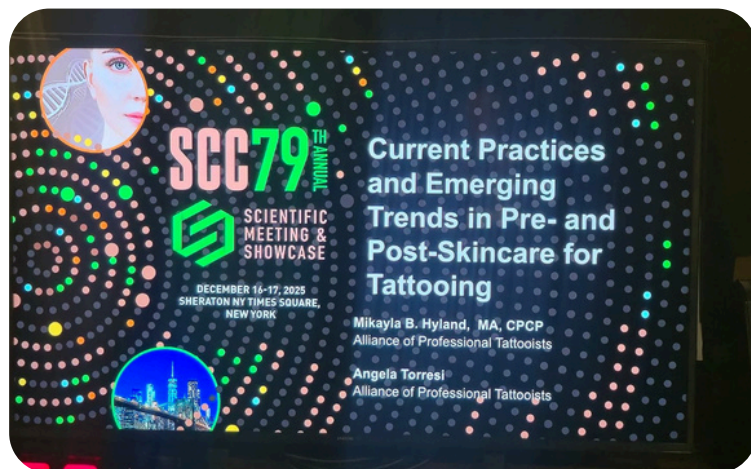
WHY IT MATTERED:

Strengthening collaboration between tattoo professionals and public health officials helps ensure that regulations are informed by real-world experience. By providing education through seminars like Basics of Body Art Inspection, APT helps bridge knowledge gaps, support consistent standards across jurisdictions, and build mutual respect between inspectors and the tattoo community.

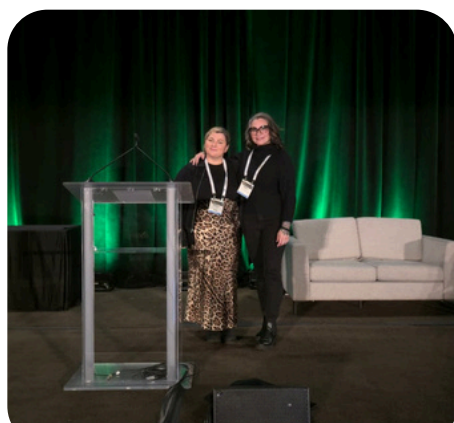
Advocacy in Action

Society of Cosmetic Chemists Annual Conference December 16-17, 2025 in New York City

In December 2025, APT participated in the Society of Cosmetic Chemists Annual Conference in New York City, engaging in discussions that explored the intersection of skincare science, formulation development, and professional tattooing. Board members Mikayla Hyland and Angela Torresi represented APT at the conference, participating in educational sessions and cross-disciplinary conversations relevant to skin physiology, aftercare, and product development. While not exclusively tattoo-focused, the sessions provided valuable insight into areas that directly influence tattoo practice and client care.



APT also helped organize and present a keynote panel highlighting the history and mission of the organization, the importance of cross-disciplinary collaboration, and the need for tattoo artist-centered product development. The presentation encouraged cosmetic chemists and aftercare professionals to engage more directly with practicing tattooers, sparking meaningful dialogue and opening the door for future collaboration.



APT Board Members Mikayla Hyland (left) and Angela Toressi. Photos courtesy of Angela Torresi

WHY IT MATTERED:

Engaging with cosmetic chemists and skincare professionals helps ensure that tattoo-related products and research reflect real-world tattoo practice. By bringing practitioner perspectives into scientific and formulation spaces, APT strengthens collaboration across disciplines and supports the development of products and standards that better serve tattoo artists and their clients.

Advocacy in Action

National Standards & Regulatory Collaboration: APT representation on the NEHA Body Art Committee

APT continued its collaboration with the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) through participation in the organization's Body Art Committee, where APT Board member, Tyson Schaffert, and several APT members contribute practitioner insight to ongoing public health discussions. In August 2025, NEHA released the Annex to the Body Art Model Code (BAMC), 3rd Edition, a significant technical resource designed to support consistent interpretation of body art regulations.

Throughout the year, NEHA also expanded educational outreach through Virtual Body Art Facility Inspector Training and quarterly Body Art newsletters, providing updated research, regulatory insights, and inspection guidance. These efforts included coverage of tattoo ink regulation topics, sterilization practices, and evolving policy conversations impacting the body art community.

NEHA's presence across conferences such as FEHA, AFDO, NEHA AEC, and the APP Conference further strengthened collaboration between inspectors, researchers, and practitioners. APT's continued involvement in these spaces helps ensure that professional tattooer perspectives remain part of conversations shaping future standards, education, and regulatory interpretation.

NEHA RESOURCES:

Body Art Model Code (BAMC) Annex, 3rd Edition
<https://pubs.neha.org/annex-bamc-3rd-ed/>

Body Art Facility Inspector Training
<https://www.neha.org/bafit>

NEHA Newsletters
<https://www.neha.org/body-art-newsletter>

WHY IT MATTERED:

NEHA's Body Art Committee serves as a bridge between public health professionals and the tattoo community. APT participation helps ensure that practitioner experience informs education, research, and regulatory resources such as the BAMC Annex and inspector training programs—supporting more consistent, informed oversight of body art practices.

SCIENCE & INDUSTRY PROTECTION

Research Study Participation

APT participated in a collaborative research study exploring tattooing from both scientific and public health perspectives, contributing practitioner-informed insight into how tattoo inks behave in skin and how tattooing differs from topical cosmetic use. This involvement helped bridge the gap between academic research and real-world tattoo practice, ensuring that study design and interpretation reflected actual tattooing conditions.

By supporting research grounded in practitioner experience, APT continues to advance evidence-informed dialogue, responsible regulation, and a more accurate understanding of tattooing within scientific and policy discussions.

Research Contribution: Evaluating Tattooing Mechanics

In 2025, APT funded a study and had contributors collaborate on a peer-reviewed publication in *Acta Biomaterialia* that critically examined how tattooing functions mechanically and whether it should be described as an “injection.”

Traditional regulatory language has often categorized tattooing as an injection process, a classification that—if codified—could dramatically change how inks are regulated and interpreted under medical device frameworks. This work systematically reviewed existing literature on injection mechanics vs. tattoo pigment deposition, brought forward practitioner-informed insights on how tattoo inks are actually deposited and interact with tissue, and made the case that tattooing **should not be classified as a traditional injection process**.

By clarifying the fundamental mechanics of tattooing from both scientific and industry perspectives, this research helps inform regulators, clinicians, and scientists, reducing misclassification risk and supporting evidence-based policy development in tattoo ink regulation. **Read the study here:**

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1742706125006452>

WHY IT MATTERED:

Research shaped by practitioner experience helps ensure that tattooing is understood accurately within scientific and regulatory spaces. By supporting studies that examine how tattoo inks behave in skin and challenge the misclassification of tattooing as a medical injection process, APT helps bridge the gap between laboratory science and real-world tattoo practice—protecting the trade through evidence-based dialogue and more informed policy development.

Education & Professional Development

Education Committee 2025 Summary

Led by APT Board Member and Director of Education, Kate Connors, the APT Education Committee oversees the development and ongoing refinement of APT's educational programs, ensuring they remain accurate, relevant, and grounded in real tattoo practice. In 2025, the committee focused on strengthening professional education through clearer standards, updated curriculum development, and forward-thinking training models designed to support artists at every stage of their careers.

2025 Accomplishments

- Updated and finalized the copyrighted Apprenticeship Curriculum.
- Advanced the structure and content of the Preventative Disease Transmission in Tattooing (PDTT™) curriculum, including scenario-based learning.
- Developed advanced assessment tools focused on real-world competency.
- Began development of the Mastery Examination and explored implementation strategies.
- Laid groundwork for expanded delivery formats, including video-based and modular education.

Impact

This work strengthens a unified educational foundation for APT members by prioritizing clarity, relevance, and accountability. By positioning education as an ongoing professional standard rather than a one-time requirement, these efforts support safer practices, greater public trust, and long-term sustainability within professional tattooing.

WHY IT MATTERED:

Strong education standards protect both tattoo artists and the public. By modernizing curriculum, developing competency-based assessments, and expanding advanced training pathways, the APT Education Committee helps ensure that professional tattooing evolves with clarity, accountability, and real-world relevance—supporting safer practices and a more sustainable future for the trade.

Looking Ahead: Education in 2026

Education Committee 2026 Direction and Priorities

2026 Education Committee focus:

- Finalizing and launching key educational programs developed in 2025.
- Expanding access to education through scalable, modern learning formats.
- Strengthening apprenticeship and professional development pathways as tattooing moves toward broader trade recognition.
- Continuing to review and evolve educational standards in response to industry changes, regulatory developments, and member feedback.
- Developing a seminar training course for health inspectors to support consistent, high standards across jurisdictions.

Our goal for 2026 is not only to deliver education, but to ensure it remains relevant, adaptable, and rooted in the realities of professional tattooing.

Education & Professional Development

Prevention of Disease Transmission in Tattooing (PDTT™) Course

APT's Prevention of Disease Transmission in Tattooing (PDTT™) course is the organization's flagship education program and a core part of its health and safety mission. Developed with experienced tattoo professionals and public health experts, PDTT™ goes beyond minimum bloodborne pathogen training by addressing real-world tattoo practice, infection prevention, cross-contamination, and regulatory expectations. The program emphasizes practical, evidence-based education that supports safer studios, informed compliance, and consistent professional standards across jurisdictions.

45 Artists Reached

Online Bloodborne Pathogen Course

APT's Online Bloodborne Pathogens (BBP) course offers accessible, on-demand training focused on foundational infection control and exposure prevention. Designed as an entry-level or refresher option, it reinforces core safety principles while helping artists meet basic education requirements across varying regulatory environments. The Online BBP course serves as an accessible starting point for continued professional development within the trade.

1,018 Artists Reached

Education & Professional Development

Webinars, Q&As and Other Member Events

Throughout 2025, APT hosted a wide range of webinars, launched the Living Legends Live Q&A series, and continued recurring member events focused on professional development, business sustainability, and cultural literacy within tattooing. Webinar topics explored research practices, employment law, inclusive language, cosmetic and mastectomy tattooing, cover-ups, financial efficiency, career development, documentation and software, and tattoo history, honoring where the trade comes from while addressing the realities of modern practice.

APT launched its Living Legends Live Q&A series, featuring conversations with respected figures in tattooing including Sailor Jerry Swallow, Kari Barba, Guy Aitchison, Charlie Cartwright, Joe Capobianco, Larry Brogan, Paul Booth, and Tom Strom. Members were also supported through ongoing Monday Mojo Meetups and a monthly live Q&A series with The Tattoo Tax Guys, providing consistent access to guidance, peer discussion, and community connection.

63

EVENTS HOSTED

ATTN: APT MEMBERS
JOIN US FOR OUR LATEST IN THE LIVING LEGENDS LIVE Q&A SERIES!
GOOD TIME CHARLIE CARTWRIGHT
Innovator. Trailblazer. Storyteller. Icon.
LIVE Q&A
7th August 2025
1:00 PM PST
Link will be available in our Circle Community
Not a member yet? NOW would be a real "good time" to join!
www.safe-tattoos.com

THE TATTOO TAX GUYS
ARE HERE TO HELP!
Join us for a FREE monthly Q&A with tattoo-savvy accountants. Ask anything. No pressure. No invoice.

- 1st Monday of the Month
- 9am PT / Noon ET
- APT Circle Community

PAUL BOOTH LIVE Q&A
ALL ARE WELCOME!
Instagram Live Q&A with Paul Booth
October 20th
5pm PT / 8pm ET
@APTINC

She's changed the face of tattooing.
But who is KARI BARBA?
@APTINC

Community Events



Shahn Anderson, Troy Timpel and Mick O'Herien

APT at Villain Arts in New Orleans

Events like Villain Arts offer a valuable opportunity to step away from behind-the-scenes work and maintain a visible presence within the tattoo community. During the New Orleans convention, the Alliance of Professional Tattooists engaged with attendees, shared organizational resources, and reinforced its role as a practitioner-led voice supporting professional standards and education.

APT's presence focused on visibility, outreach, and strengthening connections within the broader tattoo community. Being present in shared industry spaces allows the organization to remain accessible, maintain relationships, and stay grounded in the evolving realities of professional tattooing.

Participation in events like this helps ensure that APT remains connected to working artists and continues to represent the interests of the trade through consistent, community-facing engagement.



Jack Rudy's legacy and memory remain present, carried forward by the artists, traditions, and history he helped build.



Honoring a Lifetime of Contribution: Shahn Anderson



2025 Lifetime Achievement Award Winner, APT Board Member, Shahn Anderson

One of the most meaningful moments of the weekend was honoring Past President Shahn Anderson with the APT Lifetime Achievement Award. Shahn's decades-long commitment to tattooing, and to APT, has helped shape both the organization and the profession. From building a career rooted in integrity and opening Electric Dragonland, to repeatedly stepping forward to lead APT through pivotal moments, Shahn has consistently answered the call when it mattered most. Recognizing his lifetime of service felt especially fitting.

Our time in New Orleans was also a reminder of the importance of leaving the "virtual" world behind for a while, getting to hug our friends, and sharing some actual face-to-face human connection.

Why It Mattered

Recognizing leaders within the profession reinforces the importance of mentorship, institutional memory, and long-term stewardship. Celebrating contributions like Shahn's highlights that APT's strength comes not only from programs and advocacy, but from the individuals who invest their time, experience, and leadership into supporting the tattoo community. These moments remind members that the organization remains people-driven and grounded in real relationships, not just policy or programming.

"When others step back, Shahn steps forward."



APT Board Members Tyson Schaffert, Shahn Anderson, President Mick O'Herien, Ryan Roi and Executive Director, Julie

Financial Snapshot

Funds were primarily directed toward education, advocacy, and operations that support members and the profession.



Income

\$94,226.40



Expenses

\$89,518.47



Net Operating Result

\$4,707.93

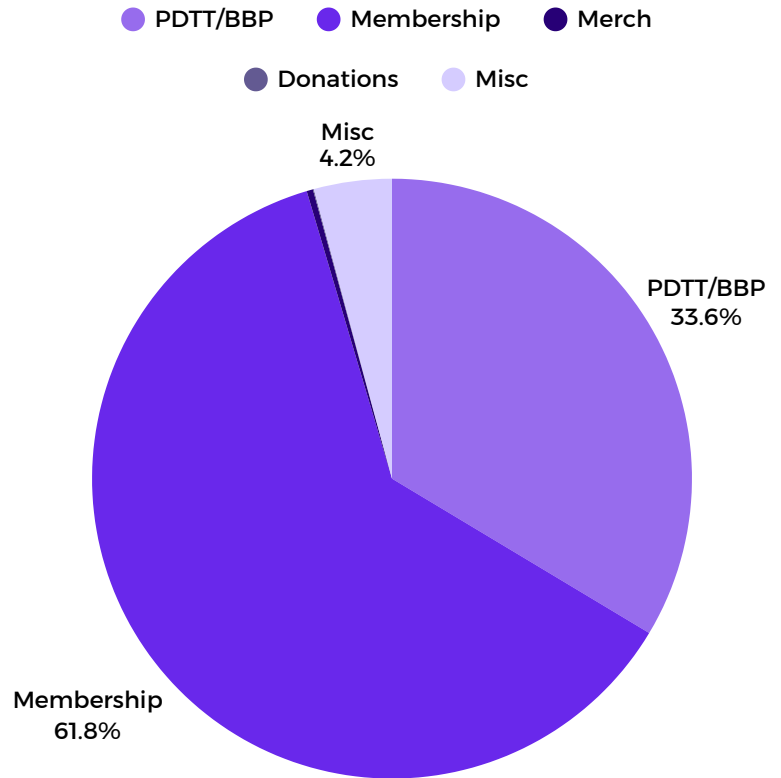


Financial Breakdown

Membership and education programs continue to serve as the primary drivers supporting APT's mission and operations.

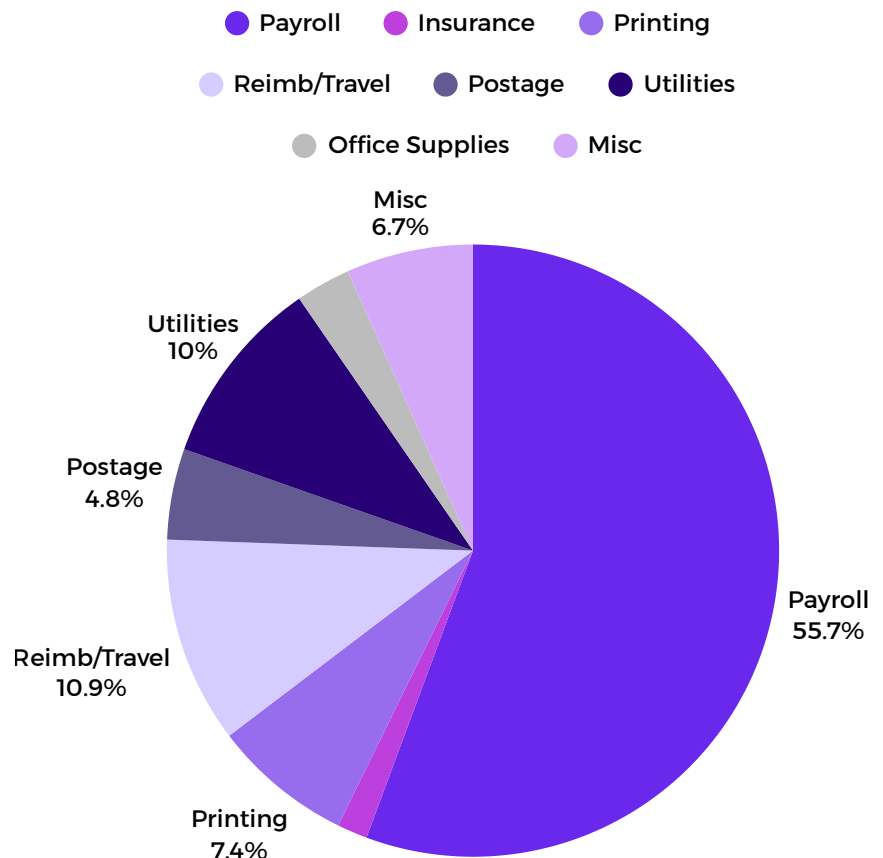
INCOME

Membership - 61.8%
PDTT™ / BBP - 33.6%
Misc - 4.2%
Merch - 0.34%
Donations - 0.05%



EXPENSES

Payroll - 55.7%
Reimb/Travel - 10.9%
Utilities - 10%
Printing - 7.4%
Misc - 6.7%
Postage - 4.8%
Office Supplies - 2.9%
Insurance - 1.6%



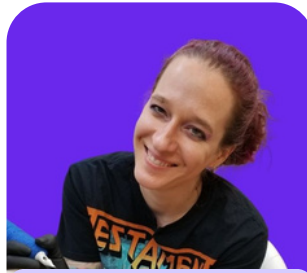
Board of Directors



Mick O'Herien
President



Selina Medina
Vice President



Caroline Evans
Treasurer



Angela Torresi
Secretary



**Shahn
Anderson**



**Matt
Thrash**



Kate Connors
Director of Education



Mikayla Hyland
Director of Research



**Stacie-Rae
Weir**



Ryan Roi
Director of Marketing



**James
Wisdom**



Dr. Matt Davis
Board Clinician



**Tyson
Schaffert**





**Pat
Sinatra**



**Jesse
Neese**



**Armadillo Red
McCloughen**



**Don
Corah**



**Troy
Timpel**



**Lori
St. Arnault**



**Julie, Executive
Director (Home
Office)**

Want to read more
about our Board,
Advisors or staff?

Check out their bios
[here.](#)



Member Testimonials



Salem Wheeler
Chicago, IL

I'm Salem and I'm a queer tattoo artist in the Chicago suburbs. I've wanted to be a tattoo artist since I was 10 years old and now that I'm doing the damn thing I want to support the trade that I love so much and help make it a safer for clients and artists alike!

Kelly Martin
Kingman, AZ

My name is Kelly and I've owned my own shop for almost three years. I have a bachelor's degree in art and education and as it happened, I fell in love with tattooing in all its forms. I joined the APT because I believe that continuing education is extraordinarily important in elevating our profession and keeping us and our clients safe and happy.



Every member story is different, but the work we do is rooted in the same shared commitment to the craft.



Andrea Valbuena
Oakland Park, FL

Joining APT represents another step forward in my professional journey, surrounded by artists who share the same respect and dedication for this craft.

Check out our APT Members Gallery [here.](#)

Looking Ahead to 2026

As we move into 2026, APT remains focused on strengthening the systems, programs, and infrastructure that support our members and the tattoo community. The year ahead centers on refinement, accessibility, and long-term sustainability.

EDUCATION & CREDENTIALING

- Continued expansion of APT's education programs and online learning platform
- Implementation of verified digital certificates for secure, trackable credentials
- Increased opportunities to access the Prevention of Disease Transmission in Tattooing (PDTT™) course through expanded scheduling and delivery formats
- Ongoing PDTT™ updates aligned with current science and public health standards

MEMBER SUPPORT & BENEFITS

- Rollout of the Member Insurance Benefits Program, with coverage options tailored to professional tattooers and working studios
- Expanded member-focused programming, including webinars, live Q&As, and community events that support professional growth and peer connection
- Ongoing development of practical resources that help members navigate evolving regulatory, professional, and operational challenges

WEBSITE & OPERATIONS

- Continued development of APT's website to improve navigation, expand practitioner-focused resources, and strengthen access to education and organizational updates
- Implementation of digital workflows and automation to improve operational efficiency and support sustainable organizational growth
- Ongoing refinement of internal systems and governance infrastructure to ensure consistency, clarity, and long-term stability
- Rollout of print-on-demand merchandise, increasing access to APT-branded materials while maintaining responsible operational overhead

APT enters 2026 focused, steady, and firmly rooted in its role as a practitioner-led organization, committed to supporting artists, protecting the craft, and building systems that serve the community now and into the future.

Thank You for Being Part of This Work

The Alliance of Professional Tattooists exists because of the people who show up, for the craft, for each other, and for the future of tattooing.

Thank you to our members, volunteers, board, committees, and advisors for your continued trust, time, and support. As we look ahead to 2026, we remain committed to doing the work with integrity, transparency, and care, together, as a practitioner-led community.



Contact Us

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Website

www.safe-tattoos.com

Online BBP
Course
Website

tattoosafety.org

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Not a member yet?
JOIN TODAY!



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