

# Arts & Features

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{THE BLUE BANNER}

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## Tattoo shop funds breast cancer research

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"Tits and Tats" might sound vulgar, but that's part of what the owners of Freaks and Geeks Tattoo Sideshow are counting on.

It is an event name glorifying permanent body art and financial aid to breast cancer research.

"My impression is, with a name like that, there's no embarrassment," said Galen Holland, co-owner of the parlor. "You have to have a bright outlook."

"Tits and Tats" is a fundraising event that lasts all of October. According to Holland, since October is national breast cancer awareness month, \$5 of each tattoo purchased at Freaks and Geeks will go to the Breast Cancer Research Foundation.

Then, on Oct. 18, the only tattoos given will be pink ribbon tattoos, he said.

"On the 18th, the ribbon tattoos are \$35, and all of it goes to the Breast Cancer Research Foundation," he said. "It's going to be first come first served."

An area body piercing artist, Daron James, will provide piercings for \$15 as well, Holland said.

"Hopefully it'll be a good day," he said.

The inspiration for the fundraiser came from a similar fundraiser a motorcycle club held, Holland said.

"By bringing awareness of it to another culture, we thought we could get in the younger crowd and the hip crowd. We also like to do things for nonprofits," Tiffany Leach said.

Leach is the founder and co-owner of Freaks and Geeks.

She said breast cancer awareness is one of many issues the parlor

cares about.

Leach was the driving force in the parlor to do a fundraiser, Holland said.

"I've had several clients that are breast cancer survivors, and recently I had one that really touched me," Leach said.

That touching survivor had an emergency double mastectomy, Leach said, which made the tattooing difficult.

"I had to work with her doctor," she said. "There were only certain areas we could tattoo."

Leach said the client, who was an older woman, was getting a tattoo for the first time in her life.

"She said that she wanted the tattoo because she was tired of looking at her chest and feeling ugly," Leach said. "She said that now she can look at her chest and see something beautiful. It's kind of like a badge of honor."

According to Holland, the impromptu nature of the fundraiser means they don't have an official agreement with their charity, the Breast Cancer Research Foundation.

"We're just going to cut them a check," Holland said.

Because of this, the Breast Cancer Research Foundation could not comment on the event. According to their communications director, Anna DeLuca, it's official policy to protect the organization.

"You have to kind of dig through and find the good ones," Leach said of charities.

She also said she thinks the Breast Cancer Research Foundation is one of the good ones. According to Leach, out of every dollar donated to the organization, 85 cents goes to research.

"Out of all the foundations, they give the largest percentage," she said.

Holland said the fundraiser was a natural extension of the trends he's



Ian Hayes - Staff Photographer

Tiffany Leach, co-owner of Freaks and Geeks Tattoo Sideshow, draws a tattoo on January Carter's arm. Freaks and Geeks donates \$5 per tattoo to the Breast Cancer Research Foundation this month.

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*— Tiffany Leach*

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seen in business with the economy's downturn.

"We've noticed a difference in the amount people are spending," he said. "Business hasn't drastically changed. Where people might have

taken a family vacation, it's now guilty little pleasures," he said.

So, why not follow the trend and do a lot of smaller tattoos for a fundraiser, Holland said.

"At around this size in a relatively easy place, it should only take 30 to 40 minutes," he said. "But Tiffany and Gabe are faster."

Gabe is the third artist at the parlor. Leach said the word is getting out quickly.

"We've had a really good response so far," she said. "We've already had, I would say, 20 or 30 people (interested) and it's just been advertised since the first."

"A friend of mine is coming in to get a piece done, and she just finished chemo," Holland said.

The largest response is from one group, Leach said.

"We have one girl who's bringing 10 herself," she said. "They were all gung-ho about it."