

US group helps breast cancer survivors get tattoos

January 14 2015, by Carrie Antlfinger



In this Wednesday, Dec. 17, 2014 photo, breast cancer survivor Mari Jankowski cries after seeing her new tattoo that covers a scar in West Allis, Wis. For women who have survived breast cancer, reconstructive surgery can be a first step toward looking like their old selves. The P.ink organization is helping some of those women with a step in their emotional healing - through tattoos to help conceal their scars. (AP Photo/Morry Gash)

For women who have survived breast cancer, breast or nipple reconstruction can be a first step toward looking like their old selves. A

Colorado organization is helping some of those women, and others who don't choose reconstruction, in their emotional healing—through tattoos to help conceal their scars.

P.ink is a Boulder-based group that helps connect survivors with [tattoo](#) artists. Its first annual P.ink Day was in 2013, when it raised money and funded tattoos for 10 women in a single day in Brooklyn, New York. In 2014, the event expanded and featured all-volunteer artists in 12 cities in the U.S. and Canada who helped 38 women.

"I think a lot of survivors see this as their opportunity to define what [breast cancer](#) looks like on them, and that is the ultimate in personal empowerment we are shooting for here," said Noel Franus, who launched P.ink with the help of others at the CP+B advertising agency, where he works.

Franus got the idea after his sister-in-law, Molly Ortwein, underwent a [double mastectomy](#) and wanted something more than reconstruction or tattooed nipples. She went to the family for ideas on a tattoo and got a pernambuco tree blossom one in 2013.

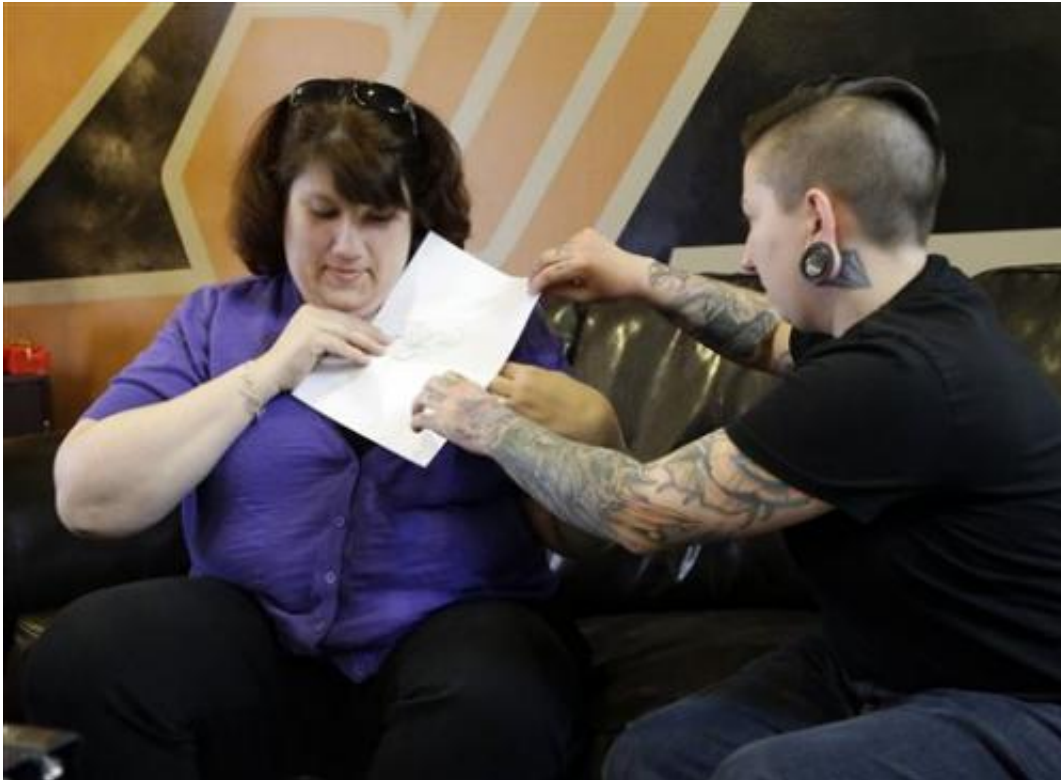
The organization also has a charitable arm, the P.ink fund, which raises money to pay experienced tattoo artists to work with survivors.

P.ink has created a smartphone app where women can look at designs and try one on via photo. And the group is considering creating a tattoo parlor dedicated to breast cancer-related tattoos and developing a training program for tattoo artists.

Diane de Jesus was among the [women](#) tattooed in Brooklyn at the first P.ink event. The 34-year-old dietitian said she requested a dove on her reconstructed left [breast](#) because she dreamed about the birds while going through treatment. She said getting her tattoo gave her a feeling of

taking back control.

"I didn't see my scar anymore, and it was the biggest surprise and biggest gift in going through this process," she said.



In this Wednesday, Dec. 17, 2014 photo, tattoo artist Ashley Neumann shows breast cancer survivor Mari Jankowski where her tattoo would be placed to cover her scar in West Allis, Wis. Jankowski wanted to cover her chemotherapy port scar on her upper left chest because she said people often mistook it for a hickey. (AP Photo/Morry Gash)



In this Wednesday, Dec. 17, 2014 photo, tattoo artist Ashley Neumann tattoos over a scar on breast cancer survivor Mari Jankowski in West Allis, Wis. Neumann, 24, had worked with cancer scars before. "It's definitely something you want to nail for them because you know that means so much to them," she said. (AP Photo/Morry Gash)



In this Wednesday, Dec. 17, 2014 photo, tattoo artist Ashley Neumann tattoos over a scar on breast cancer survivor Mari Jankowski in West Allis, Wis. Jankowski asked Neumann to come up with a design that incorporated the pink breast cancer ribbon with a lily - her mother's and grandmother's favorite flower. (AP Photo/Morry Gash)



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Citation: US group helps breast cancer survivors get tattoos (2015, January 14) retrieved 11 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-01-group-breast-cancer-survivors-tattoos.html>

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