

## Owners from page A1

tattoo and body piercing shop. But make no mistake, Red Crown Body Art isn't your father's tattoo parlor.

"This is our shop, and we want it to be homey," Davis said in an interview Tuesday, a day after permit approvals cleared the way for the shop's opening. "We want people to come in here and have a really good experience."

Davis and Rekiel looked very much at home as they relaxed on a tan leather, over-stuffed couch in their business reception area. Behind them, the shelves of a tall, glass-fronted cabinet stand empty, though portfolios fill the storage space underneath.

"A lot of clients are tired of going into areas that are so-so, and they don't want to sit in a shop where people are disruptive," Rekiel said. "We want a place where anyone can walk by with their kids and not look into the window and see nothing offensive."

Though the partners understand the community's misgivings, they bristle at any negative assumptions about the way they do business. In fact, some of their decisions have been designed to reassure parents and city officials.

Stings possible  
Hills council member Vicki Barnett has made no bones about her reservations over having a tattoo parlor located just down the road from Harrison High School.

"I believe the location was chosen to entice students who are

underage to go in for tattooing and piercing," she said at a recent council meeting.

The business is considered a "personal service" and is allowed under the city's existing zoning ordinance. However, as city attorney John Donohue pointed out, officials can't "zone out" certain types of businesses.

"Under the zoning statutes, we are required by law to give them a location in the city," he said.

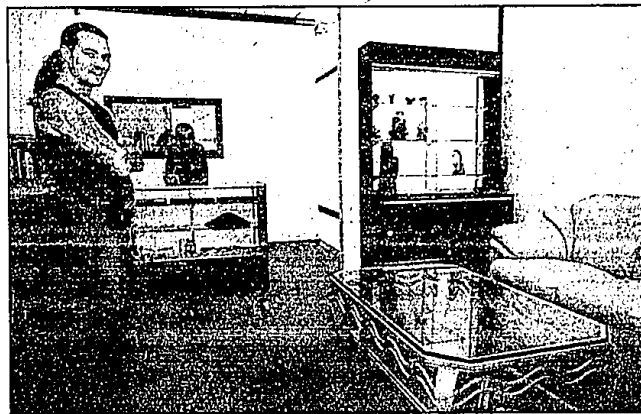
Barnett has recommended a city policy that would include "sting" operations wherein Hills police would send in underage decoys to try and obtain services. Chief Bill Dwyer said his department is looking at all state laws applying to tattoo and piercing businesses.

Police will probably take the same approach as with businesses that sell liquor or tobacco, Dwyer said. Decoys are used primarily when officials receive a complaint about under-age customers, he added.

"You always get concerned anytime you have a new business that has any potential to attract undesirables or cause the youth of the community to be in violation of a city or state law," Dwyer said. "Certainly, if we think there are any violations, it's our responsibility to enforce the law."

However, Hills police may not have to wait for a call from a concerned citizen.

No loitering  
Davis and Rekiel said they simply won't provide services to



Just like home: Ken Rekiel and Todd Davis have decorated the reception area of Red Crown Body Art to create a "homey" feel. The blank walls will soon be filled with framed art. Rekiel is pictured with employee Jerry Duchene.

anyone under 18, even with a parent's permission. Every customer will be asked to present identification to the receptionist and the tattoo or piercing artist before the first needle is freed from its sealed, sterilized, one-time-use package.

Those who can't prove they're of age won't even be allowed to stay inside Red Crown Body Art.

The partners said they'll expect their customers to treat the busi-

ness with respect.

"We've worked awful hard to get this place where it's at," Rekiel said. "If someone doesn't conduct themselves in a mature manner, that's a reflection on us."

Davis said the partners chose the Hills because both have lived in this area all their lives, and they wanted a "high traffic" area with a more upscale atmosphere. In fact, they've decided to close

an hour earlier than allowed in their lease - 9 p.m. instead of 10 p.m. - so they're locked up for the night before the pizza and subway shops in the same mall close.

"This isn't going to be a local hang out," Rekiel said. "We will call the police, if necessary."

Classy clients  
With just two artists working - by appointment only - on any given day, Red Crown probably

won't generate an abundance of traffic. Davis acknowledges the occasional "goofball" might show up, but strict policies about loitering, business hours and the general atmosphere - including security cameras - will likely keep most away.

"Our number one clientele we love to do business with is permanent cosmetics," Davis said, defining the "target market" as women ages 20-40. The process can also help cover up scars. Some of Rekiel's clients have been referred by a physician.

Rekiel shows off a portfolio of work he's done to correct badly done tattoos. He has also helped out folks who may have gotten a tattoo years ago they no longer want.

In fact, he himself has a few tattoos he now regrets.

"I was extremely young when I was first tattooed, and I regret a lot of what I did," he admitted, displaying the skull tattoos on one forearm. "I wish I would have given it some more thought. Now I'm more into spiritual things, and things that reflect an inner peace."

Anyone considering getting a tattoo won't have a chance to make a hasty decision at Red Crown. The artists will encourage their clients to give it a lot of thought, and if they do go ahead with the art, to select a design that reflects something important to them.

"You should definitely think before you ink," Rekiel said. "Because once it's on, it's on."

## Rules from page A1

Plenty of talk about the new popularity of tattoos and piercing got him wondering what was being done to protect the public.

"I found out we had nothing to govern the safety of this in Oakland County," he said. "After a series of meetings with concerned tattoo parlor owners, we came up with a resolution that was presented at a public hearing."

The initial resolution, which set rules that would be enforced by the public

health department, was accepted, but is in the process of revisions based on what commissioners heard at the hearing. Coleman expects to see it come before officials for final approval in early May.

He said the bill's primary components protect customers. Regulating body art and piercing shops will mean licensing operators and inspecting facilities on a regular basis, to ensure safety and cleanliness.

Legitimate owners, like Ken Rekiel and Todd Davis of Farmington Hills' new Red Crown Tattoos, believe in regulating their business.

"I'm all for that," Rekiel said. "I would love to see them impose some restrictions. I think everyone should be doing it right."

"Here, everything's sterile, and one-time use... I go to greater lengths than some doctors and dentists."

Rekiel participated in the develop-

ment of rules for shops in Wayne County, which went into effect last year.

Coleman said the rules are designed to weed out the characters who are piercing and tattooing in their own homes, in barrooms, or out of the backs of trucks and vans.

"With body piercing, you have some of it going on in beauty shops and nail salons," he said, noting those are some of the more "tame" locations. "You would never believe some of the places we've

found that are doing body piercing."

Or some of the people. Coleman said officials know about an 18-year-old girl who has been tattooing customers in the basement of her home.

"Legitimate owners have gone through the necessary training," he said.

"We have heard from a number of legitimate owners (who support the rules). The reason is, frankly speaking, it protects their business."



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