



Traci Dastou oversees Heather Simeone as she practices tattooing on Candace Williams. (Emma Fringuelli)

Art for beauty's sake

Paul Halloran

December 29, 2023 by [Paul Halloran](#)



Traci Dastou runs Beauty and Ink, the first body art training facility in the state. Traci Dastou had 20 years' experience in body art and esthetics when she decided it was time to share her knowledge and train others. The result was Beauty and Ink Studios, which opened in Lynn in 2018 as the first body art training facility in the state.

Five years later, the business is going strong, still offering training and certifications, as well as esthetics and tattoo services.

"I wanted to provide something the industry didn't have," Dastou, who has lived in Lynn for 17 years, said.

According to Dastou, it takes 100 hours of training in order to be certified by licensing agencies. Beauty and Ink offers not only the training, but also the



Heather Simeon practices lip tattooing on her fellow student, Candace Williams.

opportunity for individuals to continue to be mentored after obtaining their license as they begin to work.

“When we opened the school we implemented an apprenticeship program,” she said. “You can work and continue to have oversight.”

Beauty and Ink also offers a business advisory program, providing guidance on effective business practices.

“This industry is challenging because there is not a lot of repeat business,” Dastou said. “We train people on brand building.”

Dastou was born without the lower half of her left arm, something she has not let hinder her in the least. As a vendor for the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, she is pleased to

offer services to people with disabilities in a field in which they can thrive.

“They can obtain significant income and work in their own setting,” she said. “Someone can make \$150 an hour after (completing) training.”

When she was trying to get her business established, Dastou found a supportive partner in the Economic Development & Industrial Corporation of Lynn (EDIC/Lynn).

“Lynn has been tremendous,” she said. “It was recommended to me that I should reach out to EDIC when I started to work on building the school. I have gotten tremendous support since that first introduction.”

That was especially valuable during the pandemic.

“It was a saving grace to have such a strong partnership,” Dastou said. “I don’t know if I would have survived without that guidance. They have always advocated for our program.”

As of last summer, EDIC/Lynn is also her landlord, having purchased the medical building at 225 Boston St.

“Beauty and Ink Studios is a success story that we have been pleased to support along the way,” EDIC/Lynn Executive Director James Cowdell said. “Traci and her team offer high-quality training that prepares people to find good jobs.”

Dastou grew up in Lowell and earned a psychology degree from Merrimack College. She moved to San Diego and got her start in the industry in 1997 when she got a job doing design work at a friend’s tattoo studio. Tattooing was legalized in Massachusetts in 2000 and she moved to Lynn in 2006.

Dastou earned a certification in Esthetic and Advanced Makeup Artistry from Elizabeth Grady School of Esthetics and a Master of Esthetics certification from Catherine Hinds Institute.

“Catherine Hinds encouraged me to open the body art school,” she said.

Similar schools started popping up during and after the pandemic, though the depth of their qualifications varies.

“A lot of people were learning online during the pandemic,” Dastou said. “But there’s a difference between someone with extensive training vs. someone who started a few years ago.”

•  **Paul Halloran**