Local tattoo artists join forces to raise funds for mental health services at the U of L

Their tattoo designs may be different but their desire to build community is the same. When tattoo artists from Libertine and Nectar tattoo studios teamed up for a fundraiser, they were unanimous in wanting to support mental health services for students at the University of Lethbridge.

"All of us are trying to create community and we also rely on students," says Brendan Browne (BFA '09), a tattoo artist at Nectar Fine Tattooing & Art Collective. "We're kind of like walk-in therapists. None of us are formally trained but we become aware pretty quickly of where people are at. We hear and share a lot of the same struggles."

"Our clients are primarily students and young adults. I've had a lot of clients who, during appointments, mention the U of L mental health services and how they use those resources," says Selena Osborne, a tattoo artist at Libertine Tattoo. "When we were deciding where to put the funds, I advocated for mental health and everyone was on board."

Their Halloween Flash fundraising event went from 11 a.m. to 1 a.m. on Oct. 31. They reached out to fellow tattoo artists and other small-business owners for support. During the event, nine local tattoo artists donated their time to complete 67 tattoos. People selected a tattoo from an array of pre-drawn tattoos ranging in price from $100 to $300. Along with donations from other local businesses, they netted almost $13,000 for student mental health services at the U of L.

"We are tremendously grateful to Libertine and Nectar for this donation," says Jennifer Ellis-Toddington, manager of Counselling and Career Services at the U of L. "We will put this significant contribution towards funding front-line services to our students, such as mental health outreach and group counselling offerings. The mental health needs of our students grow every semester and we feel very fortunate that our community partners recognize and support this need. This donation comes at a time of year when counselling services are vital to many of our students' well-being and success."

"I used the services here when I was a student; I just knew how invaluable it was," says Browne.

Other tattoo artists involved in the fundraiser include Stephen Barnard, Craig Salomons, Kelsey Nicole (BFA'17), Ro Curran and Andrew Page (BFA '10). Volunteers Odessa Salomons and Paige Hopper, a U of L student, skillfully managed the front of house.

—30—