SANCTUARY TATTOO STUDIO

Eric Wagner, Owner

Photos by Julie M. Gile Photography
Written by Paige Udermann

From the moment he got his first tattoo on his 18th birthday, Eric Wagner knew it was more than just ink on skin. It was a permanent way to tell his story. What began as a personal collection soon became a calling. Originally from Marinette, Eric moved to Green Bay in 2008 to attend Tech School. During that time, he would visit local studios and continue adding to the tapestry of tattoos covering his body.

"I just loved being in the tattoo environment," Eric says. "I continued to collect tattoos on myself, and it really showed me the creativity of an individual who can showcase their work on another human being that is permanent. Whether it's a memorial or an experience, I thought it was so cool that an individual could create art that someone carries to the grave."

> "It's awesome to be a part of their journey. To help people unlock their true potential, not just as artists, but who they are as humans."

"After exploring different career paths, the tattoo industry called his name, and he answered. Eric became a receptionist at a local studio and learned the intricacies of the business. He got to know different artists and eventually began to understand the craft from the inside out. Eric's love only grew as he continued seeing how creative the industry is. After a few years of making himself indispensable and learning everything he could, the owner offered him an apprenticeship.

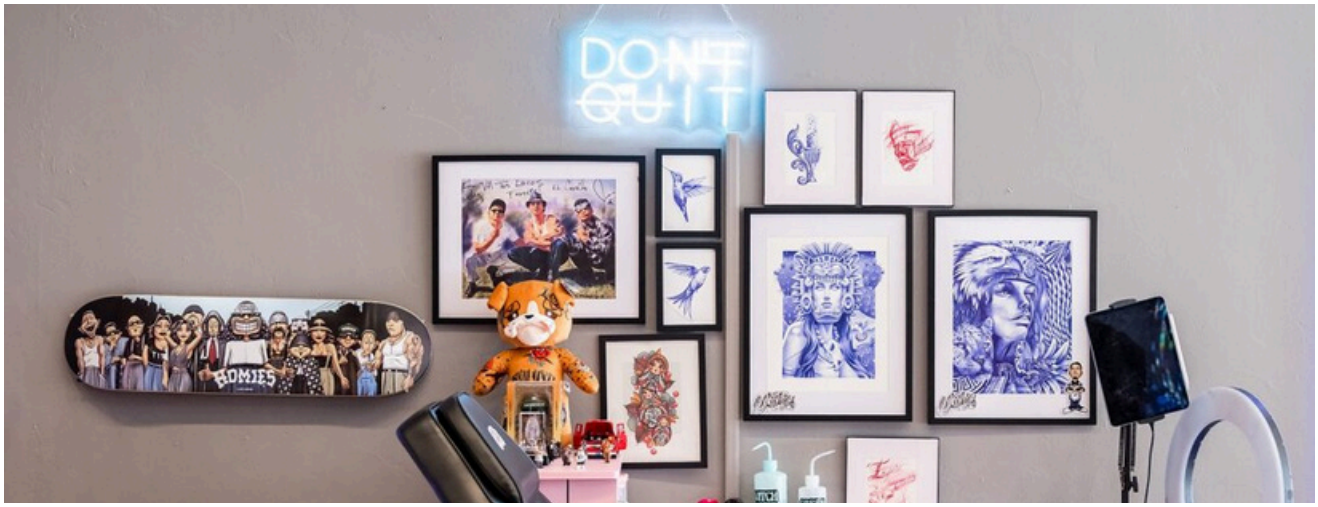
"I sacrificed everything," he says. "I was working a different full-time job at the time, and had to leave that. I got a third shift at Woodman's on the weekends while also still being the receptionist. I knew it would be sink or swim, but I knew I needed to do it."

Eric spent years mastering his craft, and he finally got to a point where he realized he needed to take a risk in order to keep growing.

"I wanted to branch out on my own and create an experience for people," Eric says. "I knew I couldn't reinvent the wheel of tattooing, but what I could do is really focus on the hospitality aspect and giving the community something that wasn't exactly here at the level I wanted it to be."

He began searching for a location to start his own studio. He was set on one area in particular: downtown Green Bay's Broadway District.

Part of the delay was the stigma. Tattoo studios often fight against stereotypes and misconceptions.



From the moment he saw the beautiful tiled ceiling, he knew the bones were there; the space just needed to be sculpted.

'The building itself was from 1894 and had hosted everything from a dentist's office to a gift shop. Eric was sold, and he was able to sign the lease immediately. Renovations began, and in May 2023, his new studio, Sanctuary Tattoo Studio, officially opened its doors.

"I had this vision and I didn't let anyone break it," Eric says. "I am doing what I love, and I am going to keep doing it and providing the experience people deserve when it comes to getting tattooed. I want to set the standard for customer service."

Today, Eric feels he has been able to rewrite the narrative for tattoo studios, and the community has been incredibly welcoming.

"The community and people are so inviting," Eric says. "With the On Broadway, Inc. organization and everything that they try to do, everything they are trying to revitalize, that's really inspiring to me. They care about people. They see the dreams of these individuals, and they're like, we love that. Let's support you."

On Broadway, Inc. awarded Sanctuary Tattoo the Diverse Business Grant, reinforcing that feeling of support and encouragement.

On Broadway, Inc. received a Diverse Business Assistance Grant from the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation and has been able to support more than 30 emerging small businesses in downtown Green Bay's Broadway District. The program focuses on helping women, minorities, and underserved entrepreneurs by offering affordable retail spaces, funding for renovations, mentorship, and resources to help them grow from home-based ventures into sustainable brick-and-mortar businesses.

"That was a fever dream," Eric says. "I thought I was being punked. I was like 'Where is Ashton Kutcher?'"

On Broadway Inc.'s support didn't end with the grant; the team stops by Sanctuary Tattoo to check in regularly. They have been warm, welcoming, and have helped further Sanctuary Tattoo's success.

Today, Sanctuary Tattoo offers a personalized experience. Eric has brought together a group of talented artists, each with their own style, so clients always have someone who fits their vision. Everyone at Sanctuary Tattoo has a true passion for the art form, which permeates throughout the space.

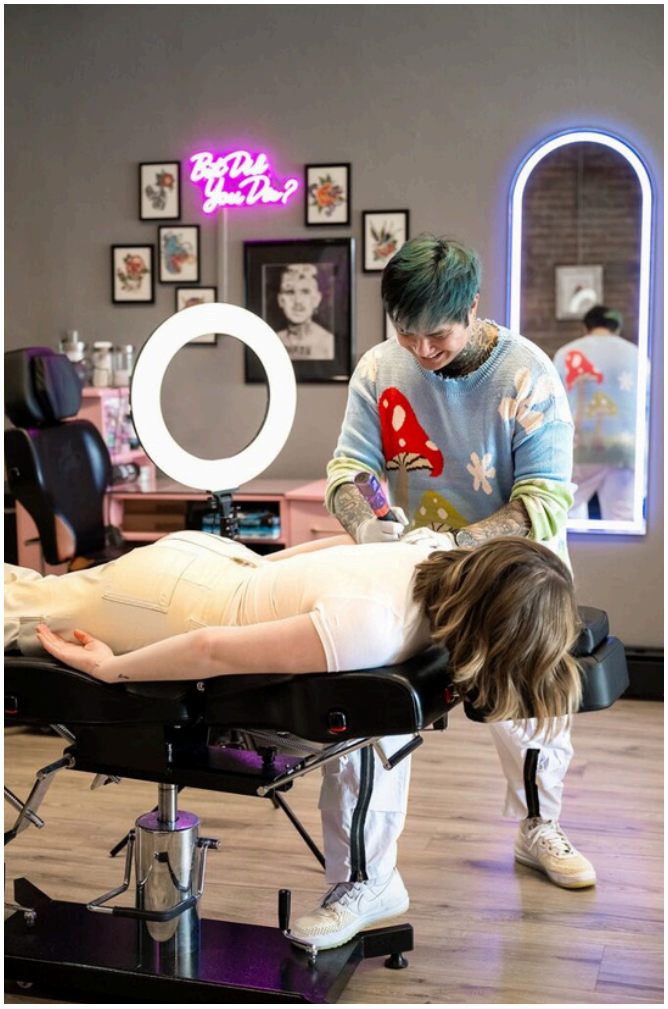
“The proudest moment in my studio’s journey is hands down seeing people leave happy,” Eric says. “It’s crazy how many times I hear that I made a client’s day.”

“It's awesome to be a part of their journey,” Eric says. “To help people unlock their true potential, not just as artists, but who they are as humans.”

When visitors walk into Sanctuary Tattoo, it is clear the studio was built with care.

“Coming here is like a first-class experience,” Eric says. “You're going to the same destination, but you have more room, more comfort, and more care. It is a warm, welcoming environment.”

From the elegant details that radiate warmth to the clean environment, Sanctuary Tattoo Studio is not just a place to get tattooed. It is a place to feel inspired and seen, and for Eric, that is the true masterpiece.



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