

Pacific

# TATTOO

*armed forces*



*Inside /*

Styles • Stereotypes • Tattoos by Generation



Since 2007



website

# TA2YA studio



instagram



Founded in 2007 in Pyeongtaek, TA2YA Studio has been the most trusted and loved tattoo shop for nearly two decades. Starting with our founding artist DK, we have now expanded into two shops – TA2YA and Sail 412 – with a team of award-winning artists recognized both in Korea and abroad.

Our artists have earned top recognition at international conventions, including 1<sup>st</sup> place at the Korea Tattoo Convention in 2019, 2023 and 2025.

We know what our clients expect: a clean and professional environment, versatile styles and artists who understand your lifestyle. At TA2YA Studio, your next piece of art is always in good hands.

Walk-ins and appointments are always welcome – visit us anytime!

#### Location 1

2F, 34-1, Anjeongshopping-ro, Pyeongtaek-si

#### Location 2

B1, 8, Anjeongsunhwan-ro 120beon-gil, Pyeongtaek-si

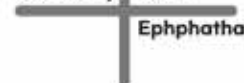
#### Location 1

Walk-ins  
Gate



#### Location 2

Sujeong  
Pharmacy



Website: [ta2yastudio.com](http://ta2yastudio.com)

Instagram: [@ta2ya.studio](https://www.instagram.com/ta2ya.studio)

~2026.12.31

# 10%

DISCOUNT COUPON



UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND  
GLOBAL CAMPUS | ASIA

## FIND YOUR NEXT SUCCESS **AT UMGC ASIA**

University of Maryland Global Campus was founded to bring a respected state university education to working adults like you. With frequent start dates, convenient online and hybrid courses, and a variety of programs in Asia, we are committed to giving you an education to help you build the career and life you've always imagined.

Register to attend a no-cost webinar at [asia.umgc.edu/webinars](https://asia.umgc.edu/webinars) or scan the QR code below. If you apply for admission within 30 days of attending an Intro to UMGC Asia or Graduate Programs webinar, your \$50 application fee will be waived!



 [instagram.com/umgc\\_asia](https://www.instagram.com/umgc_asia)  [facebook.com/umgcjapan](https://www.facebook.com/umgcjapan) • [umgckokinawa](#) • [umgckorea](#) • [umgcguam](#)

© 2025 University of Maryland Global Campus



**TATTOO Staff**Denisse Rauda  
EditorYukiyo Oda  
Layout DesignerWriters and Photographers  
Luis Samayoa  
Takahiro TakiguchiMax D. Lederer Jr.  
PublisherLaura Law  
Chief Operating OfficerLt. Col. Lucas Crouch  
CommanderJohn Albaugh  
Chief of StaffScott Foley  
Revenue DirectorChris Verigan  
Engagement DirectorMarie Woods  
Publishing and Media Design DirectorChris Carlson  
Publishing and Media Design ManagerEric Lee  
Revenue ManagerKentaro Shimura  
Production ManagerRie Miyoshi  
Engagement ManagerArea Manager  
Enrique "Rick" W. Villanueva Jr.Multimedia Consultants  
Max Genao Doug Johnson  
Hans Simpson Chae Pang Yi  
Benjamin Yoo Gianni Youn  
Robert ZuckermanSales Support  
Ji Young Chae Tomoyo Hoshino  
Dong Ju Lee Yoko Noro  
Yusuke Sato Saori Tamanaha  
Toshie YoshimizuGraphic Designers  
Kazumi Hasegawa Mamoru Inoue  
Yuko Okazaki Kayoko Shimoda  
Yosuke Tsuji Yurika Usui

TATTOO is an exclusive Stars and Stripes advertising supplement for members of the U.S. military community serving overseas. The content herein is unofficial and is not to be considered as the official views of, or endorsed by, Stars and Stripes, the U.S. government, or the Department of Defense. The advertising in this publication does not constitute endorsement by Stars and Stripes of the products or services advertised. All rights reserved. Cover and contents may not be reproduced in whole or in part without prior written permission.

Email: [carlson.chris@stripes.com](mailto:carlson.chris@stripes.com) with questions or comments. To subscribe to Stars and Stripes, email: [SSPCirculation@stripes.com](mailto:SSPCirculation@stripes.com). Mailing address: Unit 45002, APO AP 96301



FACEBOOK



INSTAGRAM

**TATTOO ARMED FORCES**

Stars and Stripes' Tattoo Armed Forces magazine pays special tribute to a popular, yet underrated, group in our military community – those with tattoos. This one-of-a-kind magazine is designed to not only feature our military audience's ink masterpieces and the stories behind them, but also the work of the artists who bring the art to life. Whether you have tattoos, or are curious about the culture, turn the pages to learn more about this creative, permanent act of self-expression.

# CONTENTS

Military Regulations **5**Stereotypes and Stigmas **6**Interesting Tattoo Facts **9**Tattoos in Land of Rising Sun **10**A blot in the ink - Luis Samayoa **11**Artist's take - Hannah Crain **12**Gen Tattooed **14**Try On These Tattoo Styles **16**Operation Tattooing Freedom - Lord Grim **18**Tattoo reveal - Julius DeAndre Harris **19**Tattoo reveal - Nicole Foust **20**Tattoo reveal - Kevin Miller **21**Tattoo reveal - Michael Gross **21**Ink at Stars and Stripes **22**

# TATTOO REGULATIONS in the Military

The military used to be particularly strict about tattoos. However, in recent years, the service branches have loosened restrictions and are increasingly accepting tattoos as a societal norm. If you are an active-duty service member and are considering getting a tattoo, be sure to inform yourself of the rules and regulations. Here is an overview of current military tattoo policies:

## ACCEPTABLE

### All branches

- No limit—in number or size—for tattoos on the chest, torso, arms, legs and feet.
- One ring tattoo.

### Army

- One tattoo on the back of the neck, not to exceed two inches in any direction.
- One tattoo behind each ear, not to exceed one inch in any direction.
- One tattoo on each hand, not to exceed one inch in any direction. No limit to tattoos between fingers that are not visible when hands are closed.
- Permanent facial makeup that adheres to grooming standards.

### Air Force

- One tattoo per hand not exceeding one inch.
- A single tattoo on the back of the neck or behind the ear, not exceeding one inch.
- Cosmetic tattoos to correct medical conditions.
- Permanent facial makeup that adheres to grooming standards.

### Marine Corps

- Ultra violet tattoos are allowed as long as they follow all standards.

### Navy

- Any number and size of tattoos on hands.
- One tattoo on the neck or behind the ear, not to exceed one inch in any direction.
- Cosmetic tattoos to correct medical conditions.
- Sailors with sleeve tattoos can now be assigned to Recruiting Command positions and Recruit Training Command.

### Space Force

- One tattoo on the back of the neck or behind an ear that does not exceed one inch in any direction.
- Cosmetic tattoos to correct medical conditions.
- Permanent facial makeup that adheres to grooming standards.

### Coast Guard

- One inch tattoo behind the ears.
- One back of hand tattoo not to exceed 2.5 inches.

- Certain duties still prohibit full sleeve or full leg tattoos due to interaction with and sensitivity to other cultures.

### Navy:

- Tattoos cannot be visible through Whites.

### Space Force:

- No tattoos on the front of the neck, front of ears, or hands beyond the allowed ring tattoos.
- Chest or back tattoos cannot be visible through any uniform.

### Coast Guard:

- No visible tattoos above the line of a crew neck t-shirt in the front.
- No visible tattoos above the line of a standard blue tropical shirt in the back.

## PROHIBITED

### All Branches:

- Tattoos are prohibited on the head, scalp, tongue or face.
- Content must not be indecent, sexist, racist, obscene, extremist, gang-related, overtly sexual, discriminatory, incite violence or represent an organization that does.

### Army:

- No tattoos on the front of the neck, or front of ears.

### Air Force:

- No tattoos above the open collar on the head, neck or face.

### Marine Corps:

- No tattoos above the seventh vertebrae on the back or above the collarbone on the chest.
- No head, neck or hand tattoos.
- Crew neck t-shirts are required if a tattoo is visible in a V-neck shirt.



©militarytimes.com

2024 was a landmark year for tattoos in the U.S. Army when Captain Isis Sake, originally from Apia, Samoa, received a waiver for her traditional Samoan hand tattoos. Known as “tuālima,” they are hand-poked by a Samoan tattoo artist and symbolize her selfless service. Sake has both tuālima and traditional Samoan leg tattoos, called “malu.” It was her tuālima, the hand tattoos, that fell outside of regulations in 2022. She sought a waiver, which was approved in 2024.

In South Korea, tattoo parlors and body-piercing shops are off limits for U.S. service members “for safety, health, or operational considerations,” according to U.S. Forces Korea Regulation 190-2.



# STEREOTYPES AND STIGMAS

## The Truth Behind Tattoos

Story by Tamala Malerk Photos by Brittany Atkins

*Many workplaces, including the military, are lessening the restrictions on visible tattoos.*





## ERICA LOCKUFF

"I'm sure a lot of women can relate to the stares you may get having so many tattoos. I've gotten used to it but there is definitely still a stigma behind tattoos and women getting tattoos in my opinion. I've been asked by parents in front of their kids to say I regret my tattoos as a way to discourage their kids from getting them in the future, but my parents were always supportive of me and my art styles and tattoos are just another medium of art and nothing to be ashamed of!"

**T**attoos used to be heavily viewed with skepticism and judgment. However, with each passing year, more and more people are getting tattooed as the stereotypes fade and the stigmas disappear. Nonetheless, there is still some outdated and overall incorrect information floating around. Here is some information to help set the record straight about tattoo stereotypes and stigmas.

### 1 Tattoo Shops are Scary and Unhygienic

Tattoo parlors are no longer the seedy shops in the underbelly of town. In fact, once the U.S. started reopening in 2021, tattoo parlors were booked far out because tattooing is a very hygienic process with its use of masks, gloves, sterile products, etc. Tattoo parlors and tattoo artists in the U.S. are required to follow certain Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and CDC rules. In many Asian countries, tattoo artists are required to have a medical license. Germany has the Deutsche Organisierte Tätowierer, or German Association of Professional Tattoo Artists, whose aim is to "to maintain and even increase the quality and performance standard in the area of tattooing and studio hygiene."

### 2 Getting a Tattoo is Not Safe or Sanitary

While getting a tattoo is not risk-free, one must research the parlor and artist before committing; the process of getting tattooed is almost equivalent to a medical procedure. The artist creates a stencil for the piece you have discussed. Before the stencil touches your skin, the artist cleans the area. The artist will then use a special type of paper to transfer the stencil to your skin (almost like the temporary tattoos you got as a kid). The artist then uses a variety of needles to tattoo you, like liners and magnums, just to name a few. Depending on the type of tattoo you are getting or even what part of the tattoo the artist is at, the needle will puncture the skin 50 to 3,000 times a minute according to [creativeinktattoo.com](http://creativeinktattoo.com).

### 3 Getting Tattooed is an Extremely Painful Process

There is really no way to “prove” or “disprove” this. It really all depends on the person as well as the placement of the tattoo. Pain levels can range from mildly irksome or annoying to intolerable. Typically, the least painful places to get tattooed can be the outer arms, forearms, calves, shoulders and top of the thigh. The most painful places can be the armpits, head, neck, elbow, knee, stomach and ribcage.

### 4 Only “Certain” Types of People Can Get Tattoos

Gone are the days of only sailors, bikers and spring-breakers in Cabo getting inked. Tattoos have evolved into a new form of art and self-expression for all types of people. Unfortunately, that does not mean that tattooed people are not being stigmatized and discriminated against. Children’s public tantrums are sometimes blamed on parents’ wayward morals of having tattoos rather than the fact that children throw tantrums sometimes. Many employers require that tattoos are not visible. Although, many more workplaces, including the military, are lessening the restrictions on visible tattoos. Tattoos do not make a person any better or worse of a human being; just a human being that decided to be permanently colored on.

### 5 All Tattoos Have A “Deep Meaning”

This is really a personal choice. Of course, something that is being tattooed on your body should have some thought put into it. Nonetheless, it is your body and if you want to tattoo it, you do not have to justify that to anyone with a ten-minute diatribe about the significance of the infinity symbol on your calf.

### 6 You Will Regret It When You’re Older

This is impossible to predict. You may regret a tattoo when you get older. But this will most likely have to do with getting a “Khaleesi” tattoo before watching the eighth season of “Game of Thrones” more so than regretting the actual process of being tattooed. The chances that you will wholeheartedly regret the tattoo is much lower than others may have you believe, if you do ...

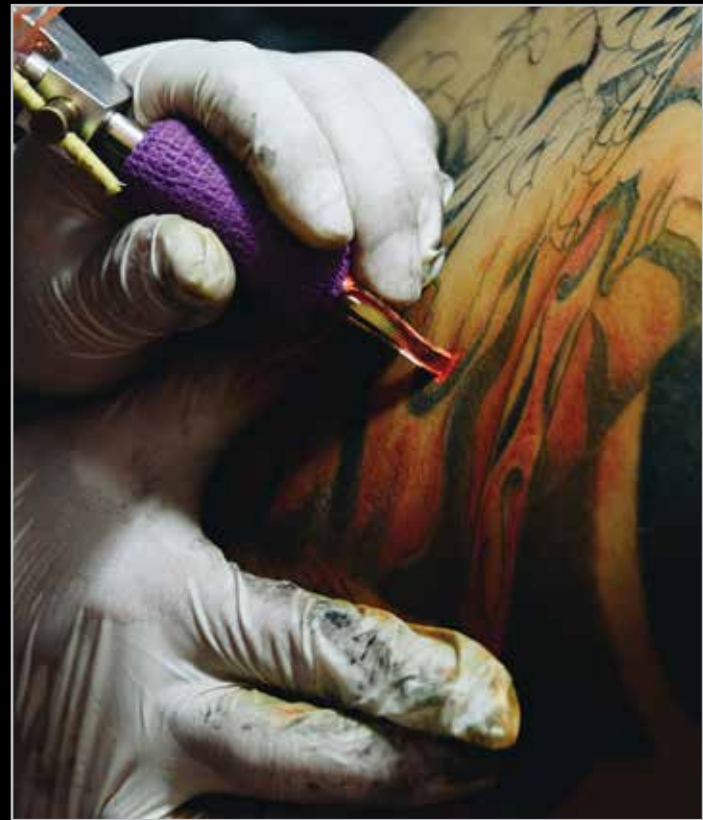
### 7 Tattoos are Forever

This is probably the most truthful of the stereotypes because the very permanency of tattoos is the point of their existence. Yet, if you want one gone, you have options. There is always the option of covering it up. Cover-up tattooing styles have advanced so much that most times you cannot even tell the rose on your bicep used to say “Lucy.” There is also the option of getting laser tattoo removal, which according to WebMD, “can significantly diminish the appearance of your unwanted tattoo with minimal side effects.” If you tattooed an ex’s name, the wrong Super Bowl winning team or something as a result of a lost bet on your body, you are not stuck with it forever.

TIFFANY WINSTON



“I believe my tattoos break the stigma associated with my various roles in life. I am a physician and 10 years ago, physicians weren’t flaunting tattoos as openly as they do these days which I still feel isn’t as freely accepted as it should be.”





# Interesting Tattoo Facts



The word "tattoo" comes from the Samoan word "tatau," imitating the tapping sound of traditional tattooing tools.

- alexie.co



38% of women have at least one tattoo, compared with 27% of men. This includes 56% of women ages 18 to 29 and 53% of women ages 30 to 49.

- pewresearch.org

39% of Black Americans have a tattoo, compared with 35% of Hispanic, 32% of White and 14% of Asian Americans.

- pewresearch.org

Among adults with tattoos, 69% do it to honor someone or something.

- pewresearch.org



Female breast cancer survivors worldwide flock to Little Vinnie's Tattoos in Baltimore. Vinnie's reknown as the "Michelangelo of Nipple Tattoos." He cosmetically tattoos highly-detailed areolas on women who lost theirs from mastectomies.

- littlevinnieswestside.com

New Zealand holds the record for the most tattooed country, largely due to the Māori population and their tradition of Polynesian tattoos.

- alexie.co

Legendary boxer Mike Tyson's tattoo artist, Victor Whitmill, sued Warner Brothers over the Hangover 2 tattoo scene. The film reproduced his copyrighted face tattoo, which can be seen on Mike Tyson in real life, for a character in the film.

- stylecraze.com

Black ink is easier to remove with laser tattoo removal than lighter colors like yellow or purple.

- alexie.co



Actor Stephen Baldwin has a tattoo on his left shoulder of the initials "HM" for Hannah Montana. He got the tattoo after making a pact with Miley Cyrus and Kayla Bell that he would be allowed to cameo on the show if he had the initials tattooed on him. He never appeared on the show and says he regrets getting the tattoo.

- Wikipedia

Clean Slate Org, a U.S.-based charity, offers discounted tattoo removal for former gang members.

- cleanslate-la.org

The art of tattooing is called "Dermatography."

- alexie.co

A tattoo artist usually starts by learning the ropes of the tattooing process by practicing their skills on fruits, such as oranges, grapefruits, and lemons, as they have the closest texture resembling human skin.

- stylecraze.com

The fear of needles is known as "trypanophobia," which can make getting a tattoo a challenging experience for some.

- alexie.co



Women mostly get tattoos on their ankles while men mostly choose their arms to get inked.

- stylecraze.com

# Tattoos in the Land of the Rising Sun



Tattoo artist by Hiroshi Nishimura

**F**or centuries, “irezumi” 入れ墨/刺青 (tattoos タトゥー in Japanese) have been frowned upon as body art marking criminals and gang members.

Though originally used as an identification method for firefighters, construction workers and mail couriers in case they died in the line of duty during the Edo Period (1603-1867), the body art’s bad reputation endures still today.

Due to this, body ink was banned in onsen (hot springs) and sento bathhouses, pools, beaches and even gyms.

However, as younger generations begin to embrace the art of tattooing as an act of self-expression and not of criminality, Japan is slowly starting to adapt. Events like the 2019 Rugby World Cup and the 2020 Tokyo Olympics held in 2021, which brought an influx of international athletes with tattoos, were a sort of turning point on views of outward displays of ink.

Though you may still find there are many places that do not allow tattoos, you may see some that allow entry if tattoos are coverable. Be mindful of the local culture and understand that some places may be strict on their no-tattoo policy.

## Covering it up

Here are some tips for enjoying Japan’s hot springs and other activities if you have tattoos.

- Before visiting onsen/sento/beach/pool/gym, check if tattoos are allowed. This info is usually on their website or Google reviews.
- Usually only guests with tattoos small enough to cover are allowed to enter.
- Full-body tattoos are usually not accepted at onsen but are okay at most sentos. Check first.
- Many establishments will post a sign out front that says “no tattoo” in English.
- Use this Japanese phrase at entrance: “Tattoo wa daijobu desu ka?” (Are tattoos allowed?)
- Some bathing facilities allow guests with tattoo covers/stickers.
- Some bathing facilities provide tattoo cover stickers, but just in case, be prepared and purchase some ahead at Don Quijote or any pharmacy.
- “Hada kakushiito” ( <https://hadakakushi.jp/>) and



“Caxel” (Find on Amazon Japan) are some of the most popular skin cover tapes for tattoos available in Japan.

- At the beach, wear a rash guard if you have full sleeves or large torso tattoos.
- Most large onsen hotels have private baths. If shared baths don’t allow tattoos, consider booking a private one.
- Some onsen allow tattoos during low attendance hours (usually one hour after the opening time and right before the closing hours).
- Refer to Tattoo-GO webpage (<https://en.tattoo-go.in/>) to pick tattoo-friendly onsen hot springs.
- Search タトゥーokな温泉 or 入れ墨okの温泉 online for onsen facilities that allow tattoos.



- Takahiro Takiguchi



Onsen. File photo



# A blot in the ink

## Luis Samayoa

I got my first tattoo at a very young age in a garage when I was living in California. My first studio tattoo was done in a parlor when I was stationed in Fort Bragg, N.C. I eventually fell into the routine of getting a tattoo or two done everywhere I was stationed or visited as a kind of stamp of memory. Now married to a tattoo artist and living in Japan, my perspective on tattoos has changed.

Although she's been a tattoo artist for years, my wife now regrets most of the pieces on her body due to the Japanese culture and views on tattoos not changing fast enough. I'm starting to feel the same way. I have learned that my tattoos have put limitations on me in Japan. Despite not having Yakuza Tebori art designs on my body, I still feel judged or excluded when I am out and about.

I can't visit most onsens, public baths and water parks because I have anime tattoos. Even at our wedding venue, we were told to cover our tattoos (per management policy) when we were inside the facility. I like Japan, but I am starting to get frustrated over the outdated stigmas.

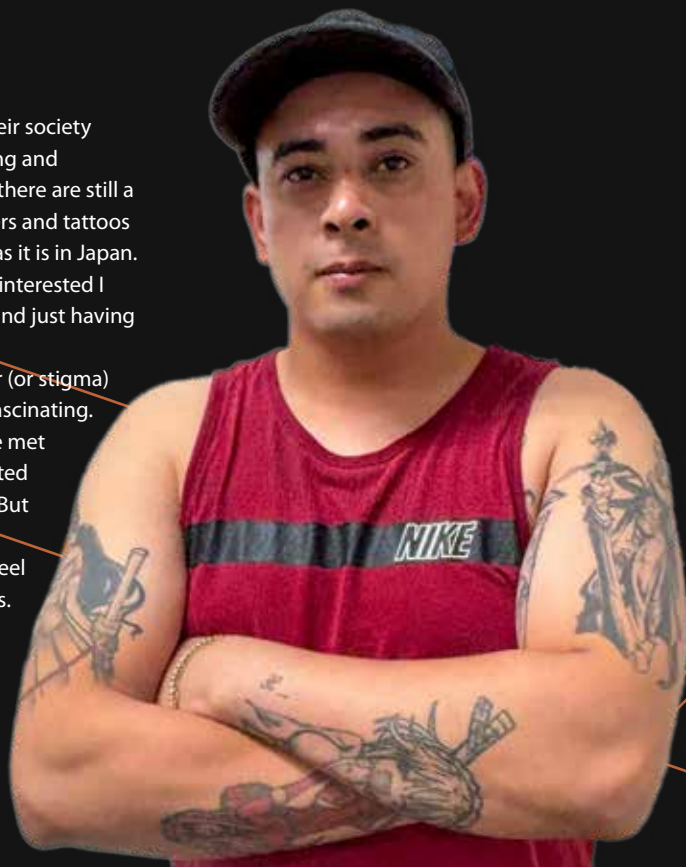
From this feeling, I have learned to appreciate

my time in Korea more since their society seems to be more understanding and accepting of tattoos. Although there are still a few places that restrict foreigners and tattoos in Korea, it is nowhere as strict as it is in Japan. The longer I am here, the more interested I am in removing all my tattoos and just having plain skin.

I have always found the the fear (or stigma) of gangs and yakuza in Japan fascinating.

The few Yakuza members I have met through my wife's work, all treated me kindly and were accepting. But when I am on the train or out in the countryside, my wife and I feel excluded because of our tattoos.

Though I'm not sure if I'll ever remove any, let alone all my tattoos, I am at a crossroads because my wife and I initially had plans to stay in Japan long-term. I never imagined I would regret getting them, but here I am.



# Artist's take



## Hannah Crain

**H**annah Crain is a tattoo artist who, along with her husband, a recently retired Special Forces medic, own Dancing Needles Tattoo in Washington state. When I was stationed at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington, a friend of mine told me that someone from our unit had a spouse that ran a tattoo parlor in Yelm. So, we decided to set up an appointment at the place, which happened to be Dancing Needles. My artist was incredibly professional with the needle. It was a good way to start the end of my chapter in JBLM with a new tattoo.

— Luis Samayoa



### Q. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself and how you got into the tattooing industry?

**A.** I am a Korean adoptee. I grew up in the small southern town of Ozark, Ala., just outside Fort Rucker. My father, a retired CW5 Blackhawk pilot, and my mother, a high school teacher, instilled in me discipline, creativity and a deep respect for community. It was in Ozark that I met my husband— then a flight medic, now a retired Special Forces medic — whose adventurous spirit matched my own. As a child, I often found myself doodling flowers and bees in the margins of my notebooks and spending hours at the piano. Art was always a quiet but steady presence in my life, a personal escape and a way to express myself. Still, in the conservative South, tattoos carried a stigma, and pursuing them as a career never crossed my mind. Instead, I focused on earning my business degree, all the while holding onto the dream of one day running something of my own, something that made a difference. That dream took shape when my husband and I opened our first tattoo studio in Fayetteville, N.C., built, quite literally, with the help of soldier friends. In the beginning, I stayed behind the scenes, managing operations, but being

surrounded by the hum of machines and the flow of ink changed everything. With mentorship from the talented artists who worked alongside us, I picked up a machine myself, discovering not just a skill but a calling. I am currently tattooing in our second studio, Dancing Needles Tattoo in Yelm, Wa.

### Q. Have you ever done any tattoo work overseas?

**A.** I've never had the opportunity to tattoo outside the United States, but owning and tattooing in my studios has connected me with people from all over the world. I've tattooed clients from different countries, welcomed guest artists from abroad, and hired resident artists with diverse cultural backgrounds. Being surrounded by such a mix of perspectives has been eye-opening, a reminder that while our cultures may differ, art has a unique way of bringing us together.

### Q. How do you balance military family life with the challenges of

### owning and operating a tattoo shop?

**A.** My husband recently retired from the military, but during his active-duty years, we faced our share of challenges. Balancing work and home life was something we were always intentional about, and still are. Different work schedules often meant we had to work harder to stay connected, making it a priority to carve out time for date nights or small getaways. When he was away, we also had the added task of juggling childcare. I was fortunate to have a strong network of fellow military spouses who helped me navigate those stretches apart, offering both practical help and a sense of community.

### Q. Is the majority of your clientele military?

**A.** Our studio welcomes a mix of both military and civilian clients, each walking through the door with their own stories and reasons for being there. I often ask what brought them to us, and the answer I hear most is that they







were drawn to the artistry in our portfolios and the welcoming atmosphere we've worked hard to create.

**Q. Do you hire veterans who want to be or are tattoo artists?**

**A.** Yes, we do! Currently, we have an apprentice who is nearing the end of his Army contract in one of our studios, and we've also welcomed former service members to our team. There's no special application process. I would encourage aspiring artists to focus on building a strong portfolio and exploring a variety of tattoo styles. Understanding light sources, color theory and being able to showcase these skills in a portfolio is a major advantage. While having a hard copy of your portfolio is valuable, a well-curated digital portfolio is also a smart way to share your work and reach more opportunities.



**Q. What has been the most rewarding part of running a tattoo studio while supporting a military household?**

**A.** The most fulfilling part has been being able to give back to our community through our business. Through fundraisers and special projects, we've been able to support fallen soldiers, honor veterans and help civilians in need. It's a reminder that the work we do with ink and needles can reach far beyond the studio walls, connecting us to something larger than ourselves.

**Q. What is your style and approach as a tattoo artist.**

**A.** I've always been captivated by the beauty of flowers and intricate patterns. Many of my clients seek me out for fine line floral designs, as well as geometric and mandala work, an art form that, in many ways, speaks for itself. Working with smaller needle groupings demands a steady hand. Ensuring

perfect symmetry in geometric and mandala patterns can be a meticulous, yet deeply satisfying process.

**Q. What advice can you give to someone who's interested in getting into the tattooing industry?**

**A.** I believe the tattoo industry is constantly evolving, and anyone considering it as a career should start by researching the laws and regulations in the state where they plan to work, as requirements vary widely. I also recommend reaching out to someone in the industry and finding a mentor who can guide them through the process. Tattooing is incredibly rewarding, but dedicating the time to learn the craft properly and uphold professional standards is something every aspiring artist should strive for.

**Q. What is the absolute best thing about being a tattoo artist and why?**

**A.** The most rewarding part of being a tattoo artist is the opportunity to help people celebrate, heal and create lasting memories through their tattoos. Forming genuine connections and witnessing the impact of the artwork is incredibly meaningful, and I feel truly grateful to be able to do this as my career.





# Gen Tattooed

## How Different Generations Navigate Getting Inked

By Tamala Malerk

I got my first tattoo in 2010, and, like many American millennials, I made sure it could be easily hidden under my shirt, safely positioned on the right side of my upper back. While tattoos weren't necessarily forbidden then, it was assumed that a potential employer spotting one could up your chances of being "non-hirable." It wasn't until July 2024, when getting inked for the 18th time, that I got my first not-so-easy to cover tattoo that branches down my forearm.

Thankfully, within the last decade, societal and workplace views towards body art have changed significantly. Tattoos are not as stigmatized as they once were, and even people in older generations, beyond the Veterans and bikers who were already getting inked, are joining in on the fun.

The cultural change may be attributed to the younger generations, particularly millennials and Gen Z. These are the most tattooed age groups. As of 2023, they make up 40 percent of the modern workforce, are promoting in their jobs (where they may be able to dictate what they wear and what tattoos may be seen) and may no longer wish to swelter at the office in long sleeves during the summertime heat. Perhaps the rise in hybrid and remote work has also made it easier for people to get inked themselves because they aren't as pressured to hide their body art.

Even the strictest of military branches no longer impede talented individuals from joining their ranks because of tattoos. With every young, new recruit, the generational demographics of the armed forces change: Gen Z makes up the largest portion of the armed forces.

In 2022, Gen Z made up 42 percent of the

Army, 41 percent of the Navy, 65 percent of the Marine Corps, 38 percent of the Air Force and 26 percent of the Space Force (Defense Manpower Data Center). With demographics like that, the military attitude toward tattoos must keep up with societal norms in order to continue recruiting talent.

Millennials are the most tattooed generation with **47%** of people getting inked, while Gen X trails close behind with **32%**

Whatever the reasons for more cultural and social acceptance, as a tattooed individual who committed herself to long pants at

the office in 2014, I became interested in learning about tattoos and tattoo culture across the different generations.

It's no secret that many in the baby boomer generation associated tattoos with shady characters, fringe members of society and sailors. Younger generations do not seem to have those connotations.

When older generations get tattoos, there is a tendency to do so with intention and meaning,



# A Quick Guide to Generations

## Baby boomers

Born 1946-1964

## Millennials

Born 1981-1996

## Gen X

Born 1965-1980

## Gen Z

Born 1997-2012

or as a form of rebellion. Whereas, younger generations get symbolic, meaningful tattoos and get tattooed as a form of identity projection or art collection.

Millennials are the most tattooed generation with 47 percent of people getting inked, while Gen X trails close behind with 32 percent (Statista). However, those who fall under Gen Z's current age demographic includes many people aged 12-17, too young for legal tattooing in most places. Even so, 23 percent are currently tattooed, meaning they may one day surpass tattooed millennials. The baby boomer generation trails behind everyone, with only 13 percent being tattooed.

It's not just who is tattooed, but what they ink on their bodies that differentiates between the generations. While baby boomers are not the most adorned, they paved the path with getting American traditional tattoos (which can be easily hidden, of course). The Gen X trend was getting ankle and lower back tattoos, particularly tribal designs, dolphins, owls, butterflies, names and, I can only speak colloquially about this, I saw a lot of cherries on upper backs and suns around belly buttons at the beach in the 1990s.

Millennials have jumped all in. Twenty-nine percent of millennials have more than one tattoo (Statista). They tend to get larger, intricate and bolder pieces, even if they wait until later in life to get them, like

While baby boomers are not the most adorned of the group, they paved the path with getting American traditional tattoos.



one particular writer. Millennials also lean towards infinity symbol, dreamcatcher and pop culture tattoos.

Whereas millennials get larger pieces, Gen-Zer's have jumped on the micro tattoo trend. They even have their own generational micro tattoo: a "Z" that is making the rounds on the TikTok app. They also place their tattoos in more subtle places including behind the ears and inner parts of the finger. Popular designs amongst this generation include sparkle designs, bows, angel numbers and fine-line script.

From dolphins to dreamcatchers, each generation has its own way of expressing themselves and what is meaningful to them. No matter the generation, it seems that tattoos aren't going anywhere anytime soon.





# Try On These

# TATTOO STYLES

By Tamala Malerk and Stripes Staff

**T**attoos used fall into one of two categories: color or monochrome. As more inks, machines and techniques became available, tattoo artwork expanded. Today, there are countless varieties. Here are some modern and unique styles that have emerged over the years.

## Japanese Irezumi

Some say that Irezumi dates back almost 10,000 years. Using an array of colors, Irezumi tattoos tell stories from Japanese history and feature waves, dragons, warriors, "kirins" and smokey patterns. Today, there is a controversial association since members of the Yakuza have Irezumi tattoos. However, as more young people get these tattoos, and as time goes on, the association with criminality has lessened.

## Kawaii

Kawaii isn't just a tattoo style, but an entire culture in Japan that was popularized in the 1970s due to the creation of the Hello Kitty brand. Kawaii is all about cute, cuddly, bright and sparkly: think fuzzy animals, cartoons, sparkles and hearts. In kanji, Kawaii translates to "able to be loved, can or may love, lovable."

## Cybersigilism

These tattoos look very similar to the tribal tattoos that donned many biceps in the 1990s and early 2000s. However, these tattoos with their mix of thin lines and sharp angles are a more recent emergence on men and women all over the body. The style emerged before the name, which was given to it by tattoo artist, Noel Garcia.

## Geometrical

These tattoos can be traced back to ancient Greeks, Mayans or Egyptians. They are known for their geometric shapes and symmetry. There are also different meanings behind the various shapes: Circles represent wholeness and unity while triangles and hexagons represent balance and harmony.

## Patchwork or Embroidery

These are some of the newest tattoos to appear on the scene with reports of them first being seen in Latin America in 2017. The tattooing technique creates the visual effect that the artwork has been embroidered onto the skin.

## Trash Polka®

Trash Polka® is a brand and tattoo style created in the late 1990s by Volker Merschky and Simone Pfaff in Germany. This style uses a blend of black ink with splashes of red, and combines surrealism and naturalism in art.





## Biomechanical

Biomechanical tattoos date back to the late 1970s and early 1980s in part because of Swiss artist H.R. Giger's artwork. Biomechanical tattoos create the illusion that mechanical parts are a part of the human body, no matter where on the skin the tattoo is located. Skin that appears to tear and reveal mechanical parts underneath are a popular choice for this style.

## Negative Space Tattoos

This style encompasses a variety of styles including Polynesian, minimalist, geometric and Celtic and its origins date back hundreds of years. This style is more about what isn't inked on the skin rather than what is.

## Watercolor

Watercolor tattoos date back to the 20th century but didn't rise in popularity until the 1980s and 1990s. With brilliant color gradients to create the effect of watercolor paintings, these pieces are often bold and unique. Some designs use black lines to create the primary image and use the color as an afterthought or to create a splattering paint effect. Others may not use black ink at all and have the colors blend into each other for a painted feel.

## Neo Traditional

Neo Traditional tattoo styles emerged in the 1970s and they twist Americana (American Traditional) artwork by using non-conventional colors and a mash-up of abstract and classical designs.

# Stay connected with Stars and Stripes

The mission of Stars and Stripes is to provide news and information to active-duty service members, veterans, government civilians, contractors and their families. Our award-winning journalists report from around the world on topics that matter most to our audience. Through our many print and digital products, you'll always have access to valuable content in the format you prefer.

### DIGITAL ACCESS

Stars and Stripes Digital Access subscribers enjoy unlimited access to Stripes.com as well as our tablet and mobile apps. Updated 24/7, you can count on Stars and Stripes for coverage on everything impacting the military community at home and abroad. Subscribe today at [stripes.com/digital](https://stripes.com/digital).

### FREE NEWSLETTERS

Sign up to receive our free newsletters which include Daily Headlines, Weekly Update, Opinion, Veteran News, Military History, Health and Fitness, DODEA and communities in Europe and the Pacific. Sign up for one or all and get Stars and Stripes delivered straight to your inbox at [stripes.com/newsletters](https://stripes.com/newsletters)

### COMMUNITY NEWS

Our community sites serving Guam, mainland Japan, Okinawa and Korea help you navigate life in the Pacific with tips, reviews, experiences, and other useful information.

Living here presents many opportunities to experience the diverse Pacific region. Stars and Stripes provides a variety of information regarding travel, culture, local news and more to help you make the most of your tour. Our community publications are distributed in Guam, Japan, Okinawa and Korea.

Look for our bright blue Stars and Stripes boxes are more than 800 locations across the Pacific to pick up your free copy or download the digital version on Stripes.com.

If you have a story idea, review or suggestion, we'd love to hear it! We accept reader submissions, which may be used in our special print publications or our community websites.

### VISIT OUR COMMUNITY SITES

[japan.stripes.com](https://japan.stripes.com) [korea.stripes.com](https://korea.stripes.com)  
[okinawa.stripes.com](https://okinawa.stripes.com) [guam.stripes.com](https://guam.stripes.com)

### SOCIAL MEDIA

Stay connected with Stars and Stripes on your favorite social media platforms. You can find us on:



**Facebook**  
 Stars and Stripes  
 Pacific Stars and Stripes



**Flipboard**  
 @StarsStripes / @StripesPMD



**X**  
 @StarsandStripes  
 @StripesPacific



**Threads**  
 @thestarsandstripes  
 @starsandstripespacific



**Instagram**  
 @StarsandStripesPacific  
 @thestarsandstripes





# Operation Tattooing Freedom

## Veterans Helping Veterans

### LORD GRIM

**M**y life has been a really tough struggle. I had felt alone through everything and even thought about suicide. But things changed and I joined a Veteran organization of tattoo artists called Operation Tattooing Freedom. We're here to help other Vets who

are going through a tough time, depression, anxiety, thoughts of suicide, etc. We have a .org where Veterans can sign up and get appointed a tattoo artist who will set up a tattoo session. While tattooing, we just talk about anything. For example, if you're stressed out, want to vent, that's what we're here for. Or if you need help and our input, we can provide it. Or even talk about how we worked through similar problems and what we did to get through things and move forward. I know we're hardheaded, but remember you're not alone. And we should stand up for each other.

Learn more about  
Operation Tattooing Freedom





# Self-Discipline

**Julius DeAndre Harris**

**Julius DeAndre Harris is soldier and bodybuilder who I first met in Advanced Individual Training at Fort Meade, Md., right before COVID-19. Soon after, we were both stationed in South Korea and stayed in contact ever since. I reached out to him to get his take on tattoos and if there was any stigma about them in the world of bodybuilding.**

– Luis Samayoa



**Q.** How has the military influenced your views on body image, tattoos and self-discipline?

**A.** I believe in the idea of getting tattoos as a representation of who you are or what you've been through. A lot of my tattoo's kind of tell a story about me. My compass tattoo on my forearm shows that I am always on a journey and follow a different path set before me. The wings on my wrist speak to my free-spiritidness and that I'm someone who likes to take off whenever and wherever. And quite possibly my favorite tattoo is my ring finger tattoo. My spouse and I have matching anniversary tattoos, and they just symbolize our love for one another. It's cutesy, but I love it.

**Q.** What made you get into bodybuilding?

**A.** I had always taken pride in how I looked and was constantly on the search for new ways to keep my body active. I just fell in love with the thought of being on stage and having people cheer for me – it was as close to being famous as I figure I would get!

**Q.** Do you hesitate to get tattoos when it comes to bodybuilding?

**A.** I think the military is ahead of its time when it comes to combining professionalism and tattoos. I got my first tattoo back in 2014, before I joined the military, and was told to be careful getting multiple tattoos or getting them in places that are visible to employers because it might affect your ability to move upwards in the corporate ladder. I think that is why I subconsciously got my first tattoo on my back, so that potential jobs would not see it (something I totally regret). But the military has always led with proficiency and capability. Tattoos aren't the topic of discussion when it comes to leading, training or mentoring. Tattoos don't hinder a person's ability to fight and win the nation's wars. And frankly, tattoos aren't something that

are seen as an issue when it comes to being a leader in the Army. Of course, there are one-off's that certainly have no place in the military – tattoos that are distasteful and crude don't belong – but for the most part, they are just an extension of people's passion and help in the humanizing aspect that behind and outside the uniform, we are people.

**Q.** Do you feel like there is a stigma in body building when it comes to tattoos?

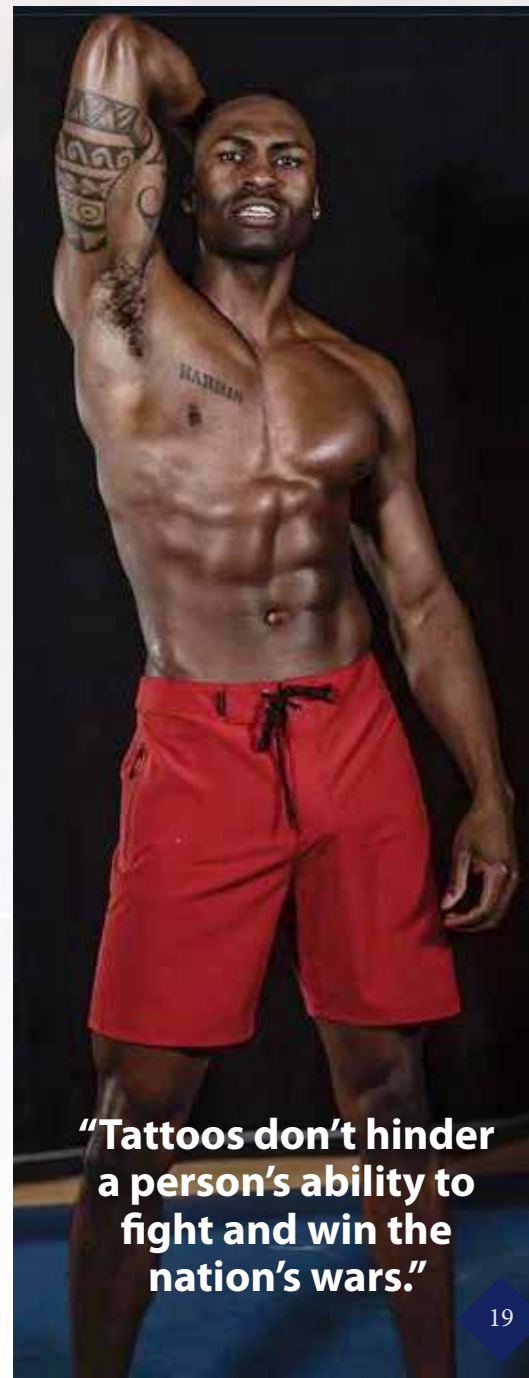
**A.** When it comes to bodybuilding and physique competitions, I feel as though the stigma of tattoos is also changing. Since I have only been competing since 2020, I don't really know how it was beforehand. So far, no one has given me negative thoughts or comments about the tattoos, but I believe with all the tanning spray that competitors use, no one really cares what tattoos you have.

**Q.** What advice do you have for others in the military or inspiring bodybuilders?

**A.** Get the tattoos that you want and don't let anyone hinder you from doing so. Depending on the tattoo, it shouldn't affect how you are as a leader or how well you do on the stage! Treat every task (or competition) with the same amount of energy and effort and let your tattoos speak about your character outside the office (or stage).

**Q.** Any last thoughts?

**A.** Tattoos can be a beautiful form of expression for one's personality. I hope that we continue the trend of not labeling or judging others by the tattoos they get or even the placement of them. A person's level of professionalism should be dictated by their actions, and someone's physique should be judged by a panel of reputable physical experts. Everything outside those realms should be up to you to decide.



**"Tattoos don't hinder a person's ability to fight and win the nation's wars."**



## NICOLE FOUST

The military and first responders are ordinary people coming together to serve humankind. We are a family, a team that stands for courage and strength. We see and do things that few people do. It's unacceptable to me that so many commit suicide due to PTSD. It's the hardest fight but you aren't alone. We are a family, and I am here. When it gets too tough just reach out. That's how we should honor our fallen. That's what my tattoo is all about.

KĪLAUEA VOLCANO

# KMC

ISLAND OF HAWAII

DISCOVER ADVENTURE AT KILAUEA MILITARY CAMP!



Ready to push your limits and experience the wild side of Hawai'i? Kilauea Military Camp is your launchpad for adventure, fitness, and unforgettable memories!

### Unleash Your Inner Explorer:

- **Epic Hiking:** Conquer the legendary Crater Rim Trails and witness the raw power of active lava flows.
- **Fitness & Fun:** Challenge yourself with bowling, pickleball, and more—perfect for staying active and connecting with fellow adventurers.
- **Breathtaking Scenery:** Wake up to misty rainforests, volcanic landscapes, and star-filled nights.
- **Rustic Comfort:** Recharge in cozy cabins and savor hearty meals at our Café and Bar & Grill.

Whether you're planning a group getaway, a fitness retreat, or a once-in-a-lifetime wedding, Kilauea Military Camp is your basecamp for bold experiences.

### Reservations:

BOOK ONLINE:

[www.kilaueamilitarycamp.com](http://www.kilaueamilitarycamp.com)

**GET 15% OFF  
YOUR LODGING!  
USE PROMO CODE:  
TA215**



SCAN ME

Phone:

+1 (808) 208-9110

Address:

P.O. Box 48  
99-252 Crater Rim Drive  
Hawai'i National Park, HI 96718

Email:

[usarmy.kmc-reservations@army.mil](mailto:usarmy.kmc-reservations@army.mil)



**KILAUEA MILITARY CAMP**  
Proudly Serving Those Who Serve Since 1916  
FAMILY • MORALE • WELFARE • RECREATION



PAGE: KMCHAWAII  
GROUP: [hellokilauea](https://www.facebook.com/hellokilauea)



[kmcvolcano](https://www.instagram.com/kmcvolcano)





## KEVIN MILLER

The tattoo on my right shoulder/chest is a nod to my military career. It's an American military issue World War II compass. It was a gift when I retired, and I decided to get it inked in recognition of my 20 years in the U.S. Air Force and all the places I travelled.



## MICHAEL GROSS

This ink represents the 13 fallen military members from the attack on Abbey Gate at Hamid Karzai International Airport during the withdrawal from Afghanistan on Aug. 26, 2021. It signifies the effort of my team and all military members there trying to save as many families as possible, and specifically children, from the rule of the Taliban. Finally, it represents the mission I was there in support of as a rescue unit: "These things we do that others may live."

# INK AT WORK

We asked our staff to weigh in on their tattoos and the meaning behind their masterpieces

## MARC CASTANEDA

From a young age I always wanted tattoos. I saw them on my uncles when I was growing up in the Philippines and thought they looked cool. When I was finally old enough to get one, I got my first tattoo when I graduated from Basic Training. It was the Serenity Prayer. My mom wrote it to me in one of the letters I received from her in boot camp.

I've acquired a lot of tattoos since then, but the one I love to show people is the full sleeve on my right arm dedicated to my wife and kids. It's in Trash Polka style, heavy contrast with splashes of red.

Below my wife's portrait is a silhouette of one of our first dates. My children's portraits incorporate anime elements, from "Naruto" to "Solo Leveling," that we've grown to love throughout the years. Apart from God, my family is the most important part of my life.

The center piece and main highlight of this sleeve is the "Kazoku no Kizuna" (家族の絆), or "family bond" or "family ties" in English.

I've been stationed in Japan for almost 10 years. From the culture, food and sites to the politeness of the people we meet, my family and I love living here. It's truly been a blessing to be able to experience it all and so the phrase was sort of an all-encompassing acknowledgment of that sentiment.





## LENNY MULROONEY

I got my tattoo in two parts, with a lifetime in between. The first was done in my 20s on the Lower East Side of New York City after the bars closed. I had no plan to get a tattoo that night. My buddy and I stumbled past a tattoo shop and, powered by a night of drinking Jack Daniels, thought, "Why not?" Inside, the lights were dim and the first thing they did was slide a form at me swearing I hadn't been drinking. I could barely balance myself, so when they asked if I'd been drinking, I just laughed and signed the paper.

After a few minutes of deliberation, I picked a turtle from the flash art on the wall. My choice was inspired by my first swim in tropical waters just a few days earlier. I watched a sea turtle glide past me on that swim, something I'd always hoped to see.

For years, that basic turtle design sat there on my leg, raw and unfinished, a symbol of youthful recklessness and the impulsive, unplanned choices that come with it. Two decades later, I completed the tattoo with an island-inspired pattern encircling the turtle. Planned and intentional, a reflection of my adulthood. What started recklessly now feels balanced and complete to me.



## ERIC MENDIOLA

I got this tattoo right after the regulation changed for getting a neck tattoo while I was on TDY at Fort Bliss, Texas. I am an indigenous person of the Nahua people, and my tattoo is of symbol of my ancestors, called Nahui Ollin.

The symbol represents the flow of life, and through that, universal balance. I got the tattoo because I really admired that concept, and having a symbol from my culture on my skin makes me feel closer to the Nahua people that came before me. They, as a people, survived multiple struggles and that is the reason why I'm here today. Having the tattoo feels like, in a way, they're with me as I move through life.



별성형외과의원  
BYUL PLASTIC SURGERY

**Donna M. Cha**

**Byul Plastic Surgery**  
USA & International Consultant

Tel : +1-917-974-1605  
Korea : +82 10-2417-2653  
Email : donna@defenderdiva.com

**Chai Sung Hoon**

**Byul Plastic Surgery**  
Overseas Marketing Director

Korea : +82 10-8666-0200  
Email : csh3230@naver.com

*The Star of Beauty* Byul Plastic Surgery Hospital



More Info

I am a combat veteran of three wars.  
The scars I carry are reminders of sacrifice and strength.  
But above all, I am proud to be a Soldier and Veteran.

**BYUL PLASTIC SURGERY HOSPITAL,**  
care goes beyond words. We don't just say thank you - we show it.  
We honor the resilience of service members and their families  
with respect, compassion and act.

As Our Way of giving back, All service members  
And their families **receive 30% off procedures.**

**The Official Grand Sponsor of  
the 80th Anniversary Gala for the Stars and Stripes**



별성형외과의원  
BYUL PLASTIC SURGERY

#Nose

#Eyes

#Jawline

#Breast

#Face Lift

#Facial Reconstruction

