RIGHT: Floral designer Lora Schnurbusch reviews an order Saturday at Kent's Floral Gallery. Many of the store's Valentine's Day delivery orders are prepared the night before, but customers still had the option to make a floral pickup Saturday.

FAR RIGHT: From left, Natalie Salazar, 9, Samantha Salazar, 9, and Sydney Salazar, 7, put the finishing touches on their paintings during an art class Saturday at The Canvas on Broadway. The girls' parents, Todd and Shawnda Salazar, chose to celebrate Valentine's Day together because of the girls' love of art.

LEFT: Designer Kyle Perry finishes a floral arrangement Saturday at Kent's Floral Gallery. Perry's coworkers say he is the "clown" of the design staff, which helps to keep stress levels down during their busiest Valentine's Day hours.

ABOVE: Patrons wait to be tattooed Saturday at Iron Tiger Tattoo. Iron Tiger typically has separate bargains for Friday the 13th and Valentine's Day, but owner Gabe Garcia decided to create a weekend-long special as a way to give back to previous customers and draw in new customers.

Creativity blossoms *on Valentine's Day* for couples, families

Photos and story by Tim Nwachukwu

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Valentine's Day takes the intangible phrase "I love you" and makes it an all-day affair of gift giving, fine dining and ... $50 tattoos?

Whether it was to treat a significant other or oneself, people flocked to Columbia businesses to find creative ways to celebrate the holiday on a blistery cold February afternoon.

Iron Tiger Tattoo began its weekend sale Friday, combining Valentine's Day with Friday the 13th. Customers could purchase select "love" or "heartbreak" inspired tattoos at a special rate of $50 and piercings at $20.

Iron Tiger owner Gabe Garcia said that the business does not make a large profit from the sale, but he enjoys doing it.

"We wanted to do something fun and to give something back to our customers," Garcia said.

Previous and new customers filled the waiting room at Iron Tiger, each with a different reason for coming. Customers like Grant Borland, 17, of Jefferson City, and Jesse McCurdy of Vandalia traveled different stretches of mid-Missouri for the event.

"She's wanted a tattoo for a while," McCurdy said, pointing to his girlfriend, Kati Dieckmann.

Couples and families could also be found creating artwork at The Canvas on Broadway, where painters of different ages and skill levels created portraits of birds perched on trees.

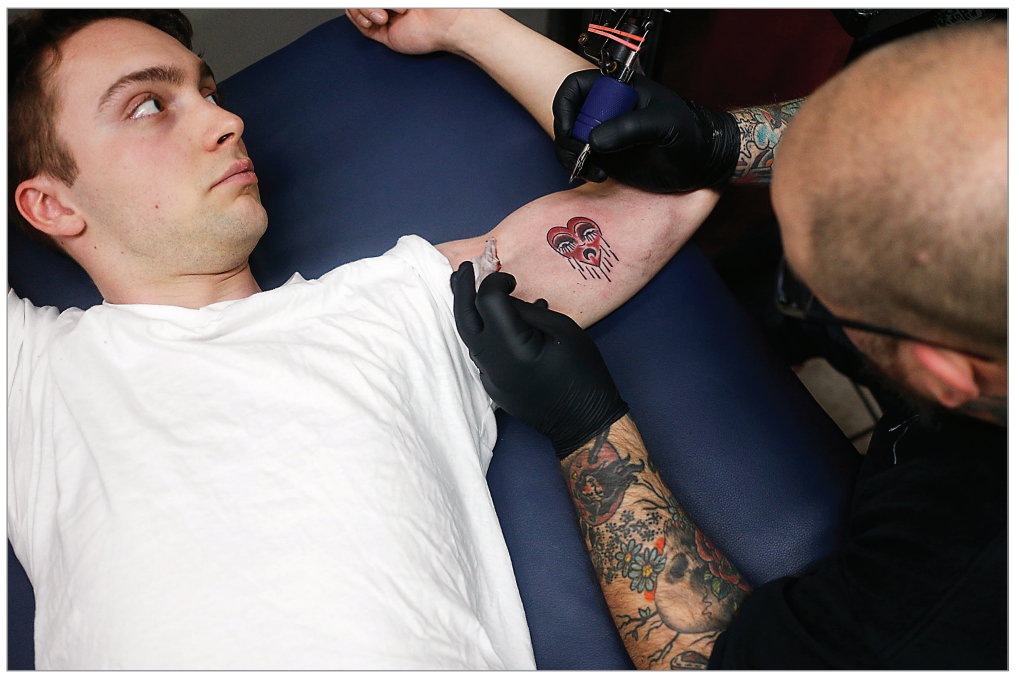
For some, it was a new way to spend time together to celebrate Valentine's Day. Participant Felicia Dilworth visited The Canvas previously and wanted to do something creative with her boyfriend, Ken Hibbler.

"I figured it would be a perfect way to do something different and fun," Dilworth said.

Supervising editor is Alexandra Menz: news@ColumbiaMissourian.com, 882-7884.

RIGHT: Leftover flower leaves and stems are strewn about the workroom Saturday at Kent's Floral Gallery.

BELOW: A patron paints during an art class Saturday at The Canvas on Broadway. The theme of the class focused on Valentine's Day, but non-couples were encouraged to register.



ABOVE: Alec Raimond, left, looks on as tattoo artist Phil Duple finishes Raimond's piece Saturday at Iron Tiger Tattoo. Raimond's reason for getting the tattoo was that "it was cheap." Duple worked for almost 13 hours during the shop's "Friday the 13th" sale.

LEFT: Felicia Dilworth sends a photo of her painting after a class Saturday at The Canvas on Broadway. Dilworth suggested to her boyfriend, Ken Hibbler, right, that they attend the Valentine's Day class because it would be an opportunity to do something different and fun.