

# Living



## Meet 'Tommy'

Tommy embarks on nightly adventures in fun and fantasy, led by his dream guide, Gus. The new comic strip by Jay Martin begins today in the Constitution.

See Comics, D8

● MOVIE DIRECTORY, D4-5

● TELEVISION, D6

## No Holes Barred

*Body piercing fad starting to stick with image-conscious suburbanites*

By A. Scott Walton  
STAFF WRITER

**d**on't ask Jill Hawkins, a 34-year-old public service employee in Rockmart, to explain why she had to get her navel pierced.

"I just wanted one," says the married mother of two. "I like jewelry, for one thing. And I've seen other people with them and [liked] them."

Getting an exotic piercing is no longer something done only by the alternative set that frequents Atlanta's Little Five Points district. Adults in suburban areas are experimenting with the phenomenon, which has nearly run its course with urban youths. It has spread to such outlying communities as Douglasville, Riverdale and Stockbridge.

Stephanie Blackmon of McDonough is a receptionist in an optometrist's office. She has pierced ears and navel — to name a few. The 20-year-old is already thinking about where piercing will take her next.

"My tongue," she says. "All of my friends have them ... Tongues are really popular with people my age. It's probably because walking around with a big piece of metal in your mouth is a big attention-getter."

Debi Kienel owns Illustration Tattoo shops in Acworth and Douglasville.

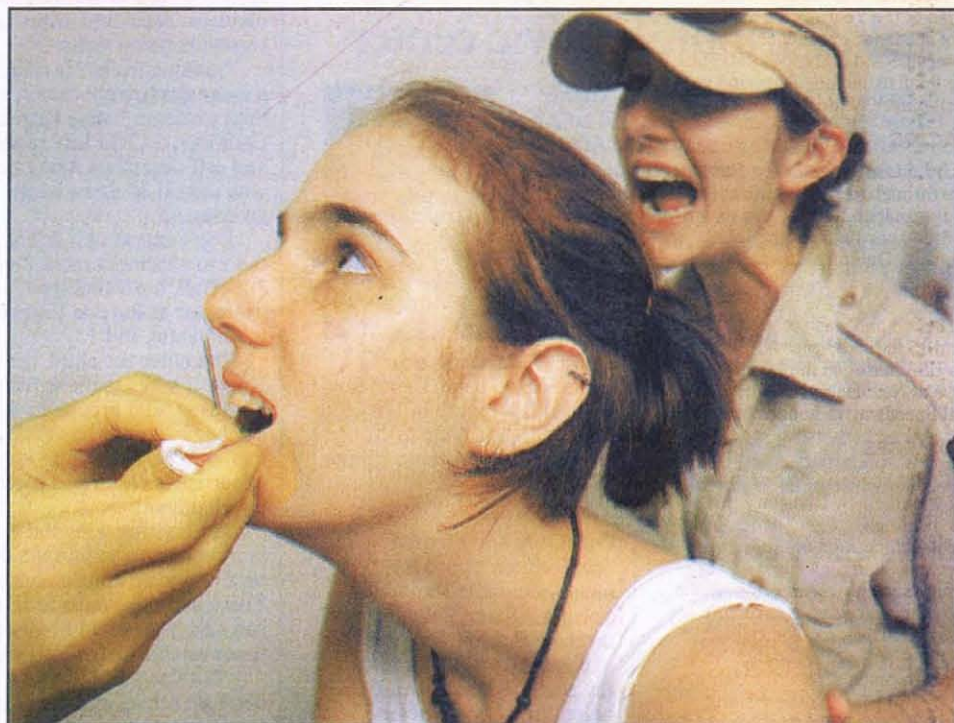
"I have a quiet, private [piercing] practice. Still, it's the pierced people in the spot-

tion."

Atlanta Braves outfielder David Justice ignited a brief media frenzy last year when he revealed the hoop through his left nipple. Justice shrugged it off: "There are a lot of people who have their whole body pierced. I'm down the middle."

Twelve-year-old AIDS activist Hydeia Broadbent had a pierced nose when she addressed the Republican National Convention. Olympian Dennis Mitchell sported a pierced eyebrow during the Summer Games. Sitcom star Malcolm-Jamal Warner recently had his tongue pierced.

And a new Gap ad campaign features models with



JUSTIN WILLIAMS / Staff

**Moment of truth:** Chandra Peterson of Athens gets her bottom lip pierced while friend Wendy Hubert offers to shriek in her stead. Both already have pierced tongues.

pierced noses, eyebrows, lips and inner ears.

Research suggests that for male and female college students, the motivation for getting pierced can be very different. Psychologists at Denison

University in Ohio asked 31 men and 19 women who had two or more tattoos or body piercings, or both, why they got them.

Men tend to do it for social and symbolic reasons — often

to identify themselves with a particular group or ideology, the researchers found. Women cite more personal reasons, such as a desire to "establish personal uniqueness."

The survey found that nose, mouth and nipple piercings were reported by about a third of the men and women, whose average age was 24. A third of the men also reported genital piercings; very few of the women did. And while only a quarter of the men had pierced navels, almost half the women did.

Teenagers younger than 18 must have parental permission before getting pierced anywhere other than their earlobes, under a state law that went into effect in July.

But this fascination really isn't all that new, says Gary Hall, owner of several Ink Wizard tattoo and piercing parlors.

"What was cool three years ago in New York, Miami or Los Angeles is just catching on here, while those cities have already moved on to something else."

— Contributing

## A PIERCEE'S POINT OF VIEW

By Maria Elena Fernandez  
STAFF WRITER

You are a pierced woman, he said, looking into my eyes and smiling.

I lifted my head so that I could take a peek: Brian Skellie, my piercer, had successfully stabbed me with a needle so I could wear a silver ring with a hematite stone on my navel.

I smiled slightly and let my head fall back. The process was amazingly quick and absolutely painless. Why, then, were there black specks dancing on the ceiling? Why was the room spinning ever so slowly?

It's a strange feeling, isn't it? Brian asked. "You're having a sensory overload. But it's not bad, is it?"

Sensory overload? Is that what you call this drug-free lightheadedness?

"Not bad at all," I said, and giggled.

It was my body's way of responding to being

my way, my body would've never felt overloaded. The few margaritas I had planned to drink before walking into Brian's Candler Park studio would have numbed all of my senses.

But he warned me on the telephone: "Alcohol is a blood-thinning agent. If you drink, I won't let you walk through the door."

*Ay caramba, no tequila?*

I thought of my plain bellybutton and imagined it adorned in silver and hematite, my favorite stone. I had wanted a navel ring for so long.

Then I thought of the needle. I can barely tolerate donating blood. How could I do this?

I'm pretty sure a human being can endure this without an anesthetic, he told me. "Just think how pretty it's going to look."

So I walked into the studio, alone and sober, expecting the worst. I walked out thinking, "That's it?" That was it. In less than 10 seconds, I had a '90s bellybutton.