

## The Crown of Our Bodies

By Jennifer Boutwell

As I sit down in the chair of my friend's hair salon, I can't help but think of all the ways I am nervous. I don't normally get my haircut. It's a lot of trust to put into a person, when my hair is so hard to handle. My curls are a nightmare to style on a good day, so handing them over for someone else to chop, color, or style is a little terrifying. It was hard to show up for my appointment, but I have seen my friend's work, and while I haven't seen her work on curls, I know she cares and would take care of mine. I was also determined to experience what Legacy and Grace Salon has to offer. Ashley Cox, hairstylist and owner of Legacy and Grace Salon in Purcell, OK, takes down my hair and exclaims, "I forgot how much hair you have! It's so thick, what are we thinking?"

My mind goes back to the first time I got my hair cut. It was the day before my first day of fifth grade and I had wanted a haircut, but my parents had decided against it. I had beautiful curly hair that was long and healthy, why would I need it cut. So, I took the kitchen scissors and went to the bathroom. This was a time before YouTube, so there was no tutorial to help me, and I had no idea what I was doing. I remember getting the length of my hair done and thinking I had done a good job and decided I could give myself bangs as well.

Looking back, I am so embarrassed by how naïve but also how brave I was. After finishing my "hack job" I realized that parts were uneven, so I kept cutting. I couldn't get it even, so finally, heart beating fast, I went to my parents' door and started crying. My mom looked at me and grabbed her keys, and we were out the door. "I remember praying that a hair salon was even open," my mom shares when asked about the incident, "It was a Sunday, so everyone closed early." We did manage to find a salon inside of a Walmart and got there half an hour before they closed.

That was where I learned a valuable lesson. Cutting hair is hard, but for most people cutting curls is even harder. There was only one stylist there at the time and she was doing the last-minute cleaning and restocking and surely didn't expect a curly haired mess to enter her salon the night before school started. We entered and my mom told her what happened and asked her to just even it out. She did even it out, but curly hair is hard to work with. She cut it while it was wet, so leaving, everything looked fine, but when it was time to get ready for school the next morning, my hair was shaped like a triangle, no layers, just straight across like a poodle's ears. It was too short to braid, and this was before I understood the power of a straightener or good hair care products. I used some of the oil, the hairstylist sold us and prayed that it would help. It didn't. I didn't get my hair cut again for so long after that experience.

I tell Ashley what all I have in mind. The color is my focus and for the cut I just hope is even and will look good both curly and straight. Ashley starts to work and shares how her business started. Five years ago, in August of 2021 she finished school at Paul Mitchell Cosmetology and Beauty School and decides to go into business with her friend from school. Eventually, the partnership ended and Ashley rebranded and reopened the salon on her own. "It wasn't the best experience, but it's still one I'm thankful for because it got me started and I wouldn't have had the confidence to continue on my own."

Confidence is one of the main focuses of the salon, Ashley hopes that every client leaves feeling confident in who they are and how their hair looks. In most cases, she and her team succeed. However, in some cases she's unable to understand what the client is looking for and is okay with admitting when it might be time to part ways. Ashley and Tyler, a young stylist who has called Legacy and Grace home for a little over a year, share an encounter with a particularly picky client who shared what she wanted but wasn't satisfied when she got it. "We eventually had to admit, that we weren't going to be able to make her happy, we told her she might have to find somewhere else," Tyler shares as he works on putting a new style of extensions on his mom.

"We tried very hard for years, and so I sat her down and gently had the conversation with her," Ashley says, " She decided to stay with us, and has been more willing to see and recognize the efforts we put forth to try to make sure she gets what she wants and walks out feeling happier." Out of the approximately 651, 200 hairstylists in the nation ([according to U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)) and approximately 2,186 hair salons in Oklahoma ([according to Rentechdigital.com](#)), she wanted to remain a client at this one. She felt best and most comfortable being at Legacy and Grace Salon.

Finishing the cut, Ashley shows me what she's done and asks if I would like more layers, I look at her work, and it already looks amazing on my straightened hair, but I know my curls and a few more layers would be great. After adding some layers, she moves on to mixing and starting the coloring part of my hair appointment. She continues as she shares more of her story.

Ashley found plenty of success early, seeing growth in both business and regular clientele within the first two years of opening the salon with her partner from school. Most of those clients stayed as she made the transition from A|B Salon to what is now Legacy and Grace Salon. A lot of redecorating, replanning, and reenvisioning took place. The beginning of 2025 became a season of visualizing what Ashley wanted for the salon, as a solo venture.

Ashley's vision includes being a place for people to come and feel pampered. To bring their ideas and for the team to make it a reality. They have done everything from cuts to colors, specializing in coloring, vivid coloring and extensions. She has a team that is

ready to make hair dreams come true. “It’s so weird, because I’ve had a lot of changes in my appearance, but my hair is what gives me the most confidence. That’s what I want to bring to others, the confidence that they can have by creating something beautiful with their hair.”

Her team echoes a lot of the sentiments, with Tyler sharing that with Ashley’s guidance she has given him the confidence to try new things. Ashley introduces me to her niece Kaddee, who is scheduled to take the [Oklahoma State Board Certification Exam](#) soon and has been learning everything she can from Ashley and the other stylists at Legacy and Grace and one big thing she is learning is to have confidence in her work. “I feel nervous about doing layers, but Ashley has made it such an easy experience. She always just says, ‘you won’t learn how to do it, if you don’t try it.’”

Ashley is creating a legacy by guiding the new generation of stylists and leading them with grace and kindness. She has grown from the anxious young woman I met at my son’s kindergarten pick up lane, to a wonderful business owner who is creating a world where people can share their creative dreams, and the stylists can make their dreams a reality.

Ashley rinses the color from my hair, and while my hair is in its curly state she takes the time to check and trim where needed. She dries a portion of it and we check that the color is what I was looking for, it is and so she continues to dry my hair and style it. This was the first time I experienced that when getting my hair done, she blocked out plenty of time to focus and be attentive every step of the process.

The second time I got my hair cut was after high school. I knew what a straightener was at that point and my friend had a friend that she was sure would do a great job on my curls. She cut my hair while it was straight and washed and dried it, but the curly layers were so choppy, just blocks of curls at different levels. So, she straightened my hair instead of fixing up the curly parts. It was an interesting experience to say the least, and one that added to my anxiety when it comes to letting someone work with my hair.

Ashley finishes blowing out and straightening my hair revealing the final result, and it’s perfect. A beautiful deep red with dark low lights, layered, and shoulder length. It’s exactly what I was hoping for. The color is a little darker than I wanted but she explained that she didn’t want to lighten it more, because it could potentially harm my hair, “I’m not willing to do something if it’s going to cause harm to someone’s hair, this the crown of your body.” She did offer to plan a way for us to continue to lighten our hair, which we booked for three months out.

Over 45% of Americans visit beauty salons on a regular basis ([Sharpsheets.io](#)) and looking around at what Ashley has built, I can honestly see why. Legacy and Grace is set up in a strip mall neighboring an H&R Block, she painted the curb in front of her

salon, pink as a sign of welcome to her clients. From the moment you walk in and get greeted by such cheerful stylists who show up and look like they love their jobs, to the cozy waiting area, where snacks and beverages are readily available for clients, you can even look through several clothing and other merchandise available for purchase set up near the front in an adorably organized boutique style area. The space is kept clean and organized, the sound of 90s radio flows through the shop and the vibe is so comforting.

So, if you're ever in Purcell, look for a little salon off N Green Avenue, there you will find a cozy space filled with stylists that are ready to ease your hair anxieties and make all of your hair dreams come true. As I leave Ashley embraces me in a hug and says, "Thank you for trusting me with your hair. I know it can be hard, our hair is literally the crown of our body, so I always want you to feel confident in it." Walking away from this salon visit is the first time I can say I feel confident and comfortable with how my hair turned out.