The leopard print aprons and zebra striped decor say from the first step inside that A Perfect Spot Salon is not a traditional beauty parlor.

Nicole Mercer and Alyssa Holt pride themselves in offering something different.

With multiple salons in Gothenburg, the duo recognized from the start they would need to provide new services to compete in a tough industry.

The Joseph's College of Beauty graduates opened A Perfect Spot Salon on July 10 and they say they have been busy ever since.

The new salon at the corner of Ninth and F streets offers classic services such as haircuts, colors, highlights and perms.

Mercer is also licensed to do body waxing, "even the scary parts," she said.

The business will soon be adding spray tanning, a process which applies chemicals to the skin to produce an effect similar in appearance to a suntan.

Mercer said when the equipment arrives, A Perfect Spot Salon will be the first in Gothenburg to offer spray tanning.

“That will be a definite advantage,” Mercer said. “We’ve already had several people ask about it.”

Both women say they got into the beauty industry after serving as “guinea pigs” for relatives.

Holt said she spent a lot of time with her grandmother, who was a stylist, while growing up and it has always been her dream to have her own salon.

Holt graduated from Gothenburg High School in 2008 and Joseph’s College of Beauty in North Platte in 2010.

Mercer’s aunt was a beautician and the main influence for her desire to be in the salon business.

Mercer has lived in Maine and Arizona, graduating from Empire Beauty School in Phoenix, AZ, in 2008. When she moved to Nebraska, she said she had to fulfill more licensing requirements so she attended Joseph’s College of Beauty in Kearney, graduating in 2010.

Holt and Mercer previously worked together at another salon in Gothenburg.

“We met at work and instantly became best friends,” Holt said.

Both said providing walk-in services is another benefit of the new business.

“A lot of times, it takes three or four or even six weeks to get an appointment in some of the other salons,” Mercer said. “By taking walk-ins, we get people in the door and then take care of

them so they come back."

Combined with competitive pricing, the women hope unique services will help them survive in the beauty industry.

"You really have to be willing to stick it out," Holt said, "and that's what we intend to do."

A Perfect Spot Salon is open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays with later hours 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Wednesdays and Fridays.

Appointments are also available 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturdays as well as Sundays by special arrangements.

For appointments, call Mercer at 529-7740 or Holt at 539-1148.