



JUST FOR KICKS

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF AMERICAN KARATE-DO SHOTOKAI



Message from the Presidency



Greetings, Karateka, and Happy 2024!

The year 2023 was wonderful for our organization. We were blessed to receive guidance from overseas instructors like Marie Kellet, Roy Margetts, Mark Hallam, Andy Lightfoot

and Dave Adams. In addition to Simon and myself, other AKDS instructors hosted courses or assisted 5th Dans—some for the first time!—like Rebekah, Rachel, Debbie, and Aisha. Together at our courses we have enjoyed practicing with friends from three different countries and nearly ten different states. Thanks to all of you for some great times this year!

In 2023 we also invited all AKDS members nationwide to join us for our VIP (Virtual Instructor Practice) sessions over Zoom. It was great to see clubs gathered together in their own areas while joining in a coordinated practice effort. Because VIP sessions help Instructors learn to develop exercises and create practice progressions, and also benefit all other club members, we will continue our open attendance at all VIP sessions.

Something new that will take place in 2024 is our first annual Black Belt Retreat! In order to help set the focus for each year of practice, our first course of the year going forward will be for all Black Belts (and other instructors by invitation). Some things will set this course apart from others: (1) Practice will be at black belt level for all sessions; (2) There will be no course fees charged, and (3) Those who need assistance will have their travel cost completely covered. This benefit for black belts is made possible because they and all other AKDS members have for years now been faithfully paying their monthly dues and course fees—in addition to some generous donations by kind benefactors to our 501(c)3 non-profit organization! We are very excited to see EVERY black belt attend, and further information will be sent to all black belts shortly.

Congratulations to all those who received belt gradings in 2023—keep up the great work! I cannot express how proud I am of our organization and every individual in it. Thank you all for being an integral part of our very special martial arts family!

Sincerely,
Jeremy Crook, 5th Dan Instructor
President, American Karate-Do Shotokai

30 Years of American KDS

2024 marks 30 years of American Karate-do Shotokai! In preparation for this, we would like to call for submissions for T-shirt designs. The creator of the winning design will have their next course fee waived!

Guidelines:

- The design must have the AKDS logo along with the phrase *30th Anniversary, 1994-2024*. This could be on the front of the shirt, leaving the back open for creativity, or it could be placed on the back, leaving the front open for new designs. The design file for this logo is already created and is available upon request.
- Submissions must be in a vector file.
- Due date for submissions is February 15, 2024.

Questions? Reach out to Gina Cooley at gcoolkarate@gmail.com. We look forward to reviewing your designs!

AKDS National Contact Information

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Questions or comments about the newsletter? News to report? Contact Rebekah Call (editor) at AKDSsecretary@shotokai.org.

2024 Course Schedule

Feb 15-17	Thu-Sat	San Diego Black Belt Retreat
Mar 16	Sat	VIP (Virtual Instructor Practice)
Apr 25-27	Thu-Sat	3-day course, Oregon
Jun 8	Sat	VIP (Virtual Instructor Practice)
Jul 26-27	Fri-Sat	2-day Course, SLC
Aug 10-17	Sun-Sat	Summer School, England
Sep 14	Sat	VIP (Virtual Instructor Practice)
Oct 14-18	Mon-Fri	BYU weeklong course
Nov 9	Sat	VIP (Virtual Instructor Practice)

For other courses worldwide, please visit
<https://www.karatedoshotokai.com/courses/>

Gradings

Congratulations to the following karateka for grading!

4th Kyu Red Belt

Alyson Brewer
 Bruce Holmes
 Nadia Jensen
 Makenzy Lyons
 Kaitlyn Rose
 Chimille Sass

3rd Kyu Orange Belt

Ryanna Eyre
 Danica Foltz
 Justin Kester

2nd Kyu Green Belt

Angie Burgoyne
 Alex Cotton
 Trisha Yeager

1st Kyu Brown Belt

Matthew Bohman

1st Dan

Kiyah Ahmadizadeh
 Jesse Huston

2nd Dan

Aisha Huston

3rd Dan

Kyle Brunner

We thank you all for your diligence and offer
 congratulations on your well-earned advancements!

Meditations

When I first started practicing and was told to focus on my partner, I would try to shut off my mind to avoid distraction. Practicing with Marie Kellett at our last course made me think about how this connection should not be an empty, passive state of mind. Rather, it is an active state in which observing our partner and readying to act and respond fills our focus. It is easy to mistake chatty thoughts or an empty head as this active state of connection, but there is a different mental muscle we build through practice.

This type of active connection lets us react more quickly to what we observe, giving us more time to choose our response and distance. Essentially, split second reactions in kumite become more intentional, informed, high-speed choices. Active connection also helps us train the structure, form, and body condition we need to act effectively in those moments. Connection helps us read more from demos and ask better questions. Connection to ourselves in kata and exercises can lead us to make needed adjustments or lean more into challenges. More connection in exercises allows partners to give better feedback to each other. In fact, the strongest connections lead to lots of non-verbal feedback that improves the practice without disrupting it.

Quotes

“Attack and defense are the two faces of the same coin. . . . Both involve equally strongly positive concentration.”

Mitsusuke Harada Sensei, *The Voice of the Mountain Dragon*, by Bernard Mathieu, 89.

“To act without strain [is] a fundamental truth that should govern us all.”

Mitsusuke Harada Sensei, *The Voice of the Mountain Dragon*, by Bernard Mathieu, 54.

“There is no such thing as a better or best technique, [this] is a widespread myth which must be abandoned.”

Mitsusuke Harada Sensei, *The Voice of the Mountain Dragon*, by Bernard Mathieu, 84.