

USTF Newsletter

January 2026
Volume 2 Issue 1



USTF Black Belt & Color Belt Testing - Submitted by Mrs. Emily Ross, 3rd Dan, Maestas Taekwon-Do

In November, Maestas Taekwon-Do hosted both a color belt and a black belt testing, resulting in the promotion of fifteen students to new ranks.

On Thursday, November 20, the testing board proudly promoted nine color belt students. Testing for Red Belt Black Stripe, **Theodore Crandell** and **Scarlett Merrick**. Red Belt, **Gabriel Bettis**, **George Marsden**, and **Sybil Gulsby**. Green Belt, **Nicholas Bieber**. Yellow Belt, **Thea Ahn**. White Belt Yellow Stripe, **Rae Garrett** and **Cedar Ovens**. At the conclusion of the test, Sr. Master **Robert Pettijohn** awarded the high test score to **Sybil Gulsby** in recognition of her excellent technique.

Just a few days later, On Sunday, November 23, Maestas Taekwon-Do conducted a black belt test and promoted six candidates. Promoted to 3rd Degree Black Belt, **Sylas Gulsby**. 2nd Degree Black Belt, **Cary Gulsby**, **Sean Lund-Brown**, and **Evan Bettis**. 1st Degree Black Belt, **Maximilian Wiggs** and **Laura Makelky**. Congratulations to Mr. Wiggs and Mrs. Makelky on joining the black belt ranks.



Color belt testing candidates with the testing board



Black belt testing candidates with the testing board

Calendar Dates 2026

Jan 17: USTF Knife & Weapons Seminar: Senatobia, Host: MS. Master Bennett. Instructor: Master Rouse

Jan 24: Black Belt Testing: Sheridan, WY. SM Johnson

Feb 14: Black Belt Testing: Marquette, MI. Mrs. Armstrong

Mar 14: USTF Black Belt & Masters Test: Sereff TKD. 930 a.m.

Mar 28 Maestas TKD Tournament: Arvada, CO. Promoter: SM Pettijohn.

Mar 28: USTF Referee Seminar: Las Vegas, NV. Host: GM Bosse. Instructor: TBD

Jun 21-26, 2026: Sereff World Camp 2026. Limit 115 spots, reserve your spot early. [Preregister by 12/30/25](#), \$350 per camper. Final \$350 due by 5/1/26. Contact GM Sereff @ 303-466-4963 or rsereff@rmi.net



High test score - Sybil Gulsby with SM Pettijohn

USTF Black Belt & Color Belt Testing (continued)



Mrs. Makelky breaking tile with downward knife hand



Mr. Gulsby breaking with two direction kick

USTF School Participates in Kennesaw Christmas Parade- Submitted by Mr. Omar

Welch, 4th dan, USTF State Director - Georgia

On December 6, 2025 Mr. Welch's Taekwon-Do school proudly participated in the Kennesaw Christmas Parade in Kennesaw, Georgia with a decorated truck representing our organization. Pictured are the team preparing the truck for the parade.



From left to right: Ms. Jasmine Welch, Mr. William Smith, Ms. London Maddox, Mr. Christopher De Beer, Mr. Lawrence McCormick, and Mr. Omar Welch.

USTF Black Belt & Color Belt Testing - Submitted by Grand Master Todd, Axe Taekwon-Do

On December 6, 2025, a promotion testing was held at Axe Taekwon-Do in Bellevue, Nebraska. Students tested for ranks ranging from White Belt through 6th Degree Black Belt. The testing board consisted of Grand Master **Ricky Todd**, USTF Director, Region 2, and Master **April Bowing**, USTF State Director, Nebraska. Ms. **Ashleigh Ragone**, 4th dan served as the Testing Director.

Congratulations to the following students on their successful testing and promotion.

6th Degree Black Belt: Mrs. **Deborah Ragone** and Mr. **Sean Toppi**

5th Degree Black Belt: Mr. **Keith Buckley**

4th Degree Black Belt: Ms. **Amy Buckley**

2nd Degree Black Belt: Mrs. **Haylie Lewis**

1st Degree Black Belt: Ms. **Izabella Piele**

Red Belt: Mr. **Michael Williams**

Green Belt Blue Stripe: Ms. **Aurelia Steinberg**, Ms. **Addison Taylor**, Mr. **Jeremiah Steinberg**, and Mr. **Harrison Hammerling**

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USTF Black Belt & Color Belt Testing (*continued from previous page*)

Congratulations to the following students on their successful testing and promotion.

Green Belt: **Mr. Joshua Hammerling**

Yellow Belt Green Stripe: **Mr. Carson Suggs** and **Mr. Brendon Roman**

Yellow Belt: **Mr. Easton Walsh**

We welcome any USTF members traveling through our area to stop in and train. Please ensure you receive approval from your instructor prior to visiting.



Mrs. Ragone 4 tile punch



Mr. Toppi 4 tile reverse knife hand



Mr. Buckley 4 tile knife hand



Ms. Buckley 1 tile knife hand



Mrs. Lewis 2 tile punch



Ms. Piele 1 tile knife hand

USTF Color Belt Testing - *Submitted by Mr.*

Omar Welch, 4th dan, USTF State Director -

Georgia

A color belt testing was held on December 13, 2025, in Ackworth, Georgia. The students demonstrated strong technique, discipline, and spirit as they tested for their next ranks. Pictured from Left to right in the back row are: **Ms. Harleigh Walker**, and **Ms. Catherine Walsh** who tested to Yellow Belt. **Mr. Adam Welch**, 2nd dan who called the test. **Ms. Jasmine Welch**, 1st dan who assisted with Ho Sin Sul. **Ms. London Maddox** and **Mr. Christopher De Beer** who tested to Yellow Belt Green Stripe. **Mr. Cayce Flowers**, who tested to Yellow Belt. **Mr. Omar Welch**, 4th dan, test administrator, and **Ms. Jillian Welch**, 2nd dan, member of the testing board. **Ms. Swara Salagar**, who tested for Green Belt is not pictured. (*continued on next page*)



USTF Color Belt Testing- *Submitted by Mr. Omar Welch, 4th dan, USTF State Director - Georgia (continued)*

Mr. Welch relays he is very proud of the students' hard work, dedication, and positive behavior within their community. These students have collected and delivered donations for orphanages, provided Taekwon-Do training for individuals with special needs, and served in their houses of worship.

Columbia Academy of Taekwon-Do Hosts Holiday Game Night - *Submitted by Mr. Dan Pingeton, 5th Dan, Columbia Academy of Taekwon-Do*



Ms. Sierra Gonzalez, 4th Gup, attacking a Karateka while Mr. Carthron, 2nd Dan, shields his eyes while holding three lollipops grabbed in the air from the earlier destruction of a Ninja warrior (remains in the background by the kick shield)

The Columbia Academy of Taekwon-Do in Missouri celebrated the season with a Taekwon-Do Holiday Game Night on December 18. Guests included Mr. **Robert Perkins**, 6th Dan, along with students from **Harrisburg Taekwon-Do**, as well as a special appearance by Grand Master **Tom Cope**, who delivered a welcome address emphasizing the importance of unity and fellowship within the spirit of the USTF.

The evening featured a variety of creative and entertaining games, including Dark Matter Patterns, performed with eyes closed. William

Tell Accuracy; Grinch Control, a full power kick stopped just short of the Grinch's face, no damage was sustained as he ultimately proved to be a good guy. Noodle Sparring; Other Art Pinatas, where Karatekas and Ninjas were defeated, using only Taekwon-Do kicks, and Taekwon-Do Smarts, an activity in which students of all ranks shared their knowledge of the USTF and the enthusiasm for continued learning. The event provided a fun and

memorable way for students and guests to celebrate the holidays while reinforcing skill development, camaraderie, and unity within the USTF community.



Ms. Bareeah Zeeshan, 6th Gup, winning *William Tell Accuracy* with a turning kick while GM Cope and Mr. Perkins recall tournament of Christmas past.

Sereff World Camp - 2026 - YMCA of the Rockies, Snow Mountain Ranch, June 21st - 26th, 2026 - *Submitted by Grand Master Sereff, USTF Test Director and USTF Administrator*

Sereff Taekwon-Do is excited to welcome you and your family to the 2026 Sereff World Camp, a week of world class Taekwon-Do training in the breathtaking Rocky Mountains of Winter Park, Colorado. From Grand Lake to Snow Mountain Ranch, campers will experience a full week of challenging and inspiring training with some of the finest instructors in the world. The traditional waterfall and lake training sessions promise to be both unforgettable and invigorating.

Accommodations and meals: All campers are required to stay on campus. Each room will accommodate 4-5 campers in a single room. The bunks include linens, blankets, and towels. A three meal per day service is included. USTF Headquarters will handle room assignments; however, if you have a preferred roommate, please include your request in writing when submitting your registration forms.



**Sereff World Camp - 2026 - YMCA of the Rockies, Snow Mountain Ranch,
June 21st - 26th, 2026 - Submitted by Grand Master Sereff, USTF Test Director and USTF
Administrator (continued)**

Arrival and Check-In: Campers should arrive **no earlier than 3:00 p.m. on Sunday, June 21.** USTF HQ will check in the group at approximately 4:00 p.m. **Please do not check in individually at the Lodge.** Many campers will meet at Sereff Taekwon-Do in Broomfield, Colorado, to carpool to Snow Mountain Ranch around 1:00 p.m. that Sunday. We recommend flying into Denver on Saturday evening or early Sunday morning. Details on nearby hotel accommodations can be provided once your registration is received or you can search by Google for hotels near Broomfield. Dinner will be served at approximately 5:00 p.m., following room assignments. Additional information, including meeting locations will be sent about one month prior to camp. A packing list is included in the registration flyer.

Eligibility: Students under the **age of 13** must include a **written instructor recommendation** with their registration form for review and approval.

Training and Instruction: Campers will train under the guidance of USTF Grand Masters, Senior Masters, International Instructors, and selected Junior Instructors from around the world, offering unparalleled opportunity to learn from the best Taekwon-Do black belts in the world.

Travel and Departure: Please send your travel plans to Sereff Taekwon-Do Headquarters no later than one month before camp. If you plan to carpool, **arrive at Sereff Taekwon-Do by 1:00 p.m. on June 21.** If you are flying home, schedule **your departure after 5:00 p.m. on Friday, June 26**, allowing sufficient time to arrive and check in at Denver International Airport **at least two hours before your flight.**

Sereff World Camp Room & Board: \$700 per camper (t-shirt is included)
Extra T-shirts are \$15 each, hoodies are \$45 each

Non-refundable deposit: \$350, due by **December 30, 2025**

Remaining Balance: \$350, due by **May 1, 2026**

You can pay by **check or with credit card.** The flyers are attached. If you have any questions please call Grand Master Sereff at 303-466-4963 or email: rsereff@rmi.net



USTF 2025 Year in Review and Looking Ahead to 2026, - Submitted by Grand Master Sereff, USTF Test Director and USTF Administrator

The USTF was very busy in 2025. We extend our sincere thanks to all hosts, instructors, officials, and participants who supported **16 Black Belt tests, 8 seminars, 6 tournaments, and 1 camp** held from January through December. Your dedication and effort made these events successful, and we look forward to continuing our support of USTF events in 2026.

As we plan ahead, we must remain mindful of the current economic state. To ensure strong participation, provide our students with balance, and allow for important family time, we may need to limit the number of events in 2026. Additionally, to properly plan and support a successful USTF Nationals, tournaments will be limited during the year in which Nationals is scheduled.

Membership maintenance and new memberships in 2025 declined by 24% compared to 2024. Despite this decrease our goal in 2025 was to avoid increasing fees. We have maintained the same discounted rate for first-time members and continue the long-standing policy of a single-family membership fee. In addition, USTF Regional and State Directors were not charged membership fees as partial recognition of the work they provide to the organization.

To ensure the USTF can continue to operate a full-time office and provide the level of support our member expect, some financial adjustments will be necessary in 2026.

In support of our seminar programs, resumes have been requested from qualified instructors holding the rank of 6th dan and above would be interested in teaching USTF seminars. To date, five resumes have been submitted. Our goal is to establish instructors within each USTF region to reduce travel expenses while maintaining high instructional standards.

During 2025, we also addressed a conflict-of-interest issue involving one of our 5th dans, who accepted rank in another martial arts system. Consistent with a long-standing policy established by **Senior Grand Master Sereff**, this required a request for resignation. This policy has always distinguished between ranks earned prior to joining the USTF and ranks accepted afterward. As **General Choi** often stated, one may visit other schools, but his belief was that inferior technique would be observed and membership elsewhere would not follow.

We look forward to another year together as we continue to protect and preserve the legacy left to us by **Senior Grand Master Sereff**.

Grand Master Sereff
USTF Test Director
USTF Administrator

USTF Newsletter Distribution List

We encourage all instructors to share the newsletter with their students. Should anyone wish to be added to our distribution list, please submit your full name and email address directly to **Grand Master Sereff** at rsereff@rmi.net

