

2016 AMERICAN SOKOL INSTRUCTORS SCHOOL JULY 10 – JULY 24, 2016

A total of 42 students from 11 American Sokol Units (representing 5 of the 6 Districts) as well as 7 students from DA Sokol attended this year's American Sokol National Instructors School. There were 10 students from Northeastern District – all from Sokol Greater Cleveland; 10 students from Central District (from Sokols Naperville Tyrs, Spirit and Tabor); 4 students from Western District (from Sokols Cedar Rapids and Minnesota); 4 students from Eastern District (all from Sokol NY); and 7 students from Southern District, (from Sokols Ft. Worth, KHB, Zizka/Dallas, and Corpus Christi); the last 2 of those Units haven't sent students in quite a while. This is the very reason we try to rotate the School location to different districts.

There were 16 Beginners, 12 Intermediates, 13 Advanced and 1 Advanced II students of which 15 were boys and 27 girls ranging in age from 13 to 17 years old. Interesting fact, this was the largest Advance Level School we have ever had!!

This year Sokol KHB in Ennis, TX hosted the School. The last time a National Instructors School was held at this location was 18 years ago! It is a beautiful facility, ideal for a Kurz (especially since they are the only Unit with a swimming pool!). The KHB members were most helpful and accommodating in regards to handling the School. The food was great and they had many volunteers to assist. Thank you to all!

Once again the staff did an outstanding job! Most were returning staff from last year, including Bro. Todd Yatchyshyn from Sokol USA, Lodge Pen Argyl, who headed up Games, Dynamic Warm-ups, Nutrition, Conditioning, and Practice Teaching. Sis. Michelle Jirousek from Sokol Greater Cleveland, headed up Spotting & Progressions and Apparatus for all levels, and Female Judging; in addition to being School Nurse. Sis. Heidi Vencel from Sokol Greater Cleveland taught Advanced Calisthenics, Beginning Marching and assisted with Spotting & Progressions and Apparatus classes. Bro. Dan Bajek from Sokol Naperville Tyrs, taught Beginning Calisthenics, Intermediate Marching, assisted with Practice Teaching and many other classes. Sis. Alix Wilt from Sokol Spirit taught Advanced Marching, Intermediate Calisthenics, Singing class and assisted with many other classes. We also had an IT (or Instructor in Training) this year. Kristine Betik from Sokol KHB served that role. Besides learning the ins and outs from a staff member's perspective, Kristine assisted with several classes as well as led the Special Number class and Group Competitions. Besides my duties of School Director, I also taught Sokol Lectures, Folk Dance and Rhythmics. Everyone helps out where needed and we work well together.

Sis. Jane Wise, from Sokol Greater Cleveland, performed the duties of School Registrar, which primarily takes place before the school begins and local Sokol KHB member, Sis. Liz Moucka took on the duties of School Secretary. She was assisted by Sis. Alexandra Betik, who pitched in whenever needed. Sis. Debbie Slovak and her husband Bro. Darren Slovak did a wonderful job heading up the kitchen, creating well-balanced and delicious meals. There were also many other volunteers in the kitchen from Sokol KHB. We would also like to thank the children from KHB and surrounding area non-Sokols who came to participate in our Practice Teaching classes. We tried something a little different this year with 2 hours before dinner and 2 hours after dinner. Some of the children stayed the whole time! This is very important so our students are able to actually "teach" children during that practical class and get feedback from their peers as well as Staff Instructors. We wish to thank the parents who made this experience possible. And a special thanks to Liz Moucka, whose persistent effort gave us more children than we have had in recent years!

The classes and curriculum continue to evolve innovatively and progressively in order to engage and excite the students at all levels and will surely benefit each unit where these students return to teach. Because of the expertise we had on our staff, students were able to take advantage of some different classes as well as our traditional ones.

Once again, we had certifications for all students. A free certification, which is an annual course, was given to students of all levels on Concussions developed by the CDC (Center for Disease Control). This included a video instruction, practice quizzes and a final exam which they all passed and received a certificate. Intermediates and Advanced students were certified in American Red Cross First Aid, CPR and AED. Bro. Todd headed this course, which all passed and received a certificate and card as well. The Advanced students took the on line USAG U100 Course of Fundamentals of Gymnastic Instruction; while the Advanced II student took the on line USAG U200 Course – the Development Coaches Course: Sports Science. This covers L 1-4 athletes in areas of Nutrition, Psychology, Biomechanics and Injury Preventions. The students that took these USAG courses found them much like a review of things which they had learned at our school. It was a little more complicated this time, with so many students to get online and complete the course. But they all passed and received a certificate as well.

We also continued with the Adopt a Class or Adopt a Student Promotion that was initiated a couple of years ago. Several individuals and Units donated to participate in this venture. The idea is to be able to raise funds to replenish the monies in the Future Sokol Leaders Fund, which helps to financially support the National School. While successful, we did not have many contributing as last year. We had 4 students adopted and 6 classes. This raised \$650 to return to the American Sokol FSLF. It was a fun way to donate, as the individual and units received post cards and videos of the students or classes from the school. Coming soon will be a special article to thank all these generous donors.

We again used the “White Elephant Sale” as a means of rewarding positive behavior. Donations to the cause came from the Kalat’s, the Sokol Office, Sokol KHB, and Lori Laznovsky. We thank everyone for their donations. The students can check their progress every few days on the chart that is posted. We had 5 students with perfect 10’s! The students seem to revel in getting a prize for good behavior, even to the point of wearing and bringing things back the next year to show off their trophies.

The two regular outings were fun and a much needed break for all. While we took advantage of the pool on site during many of our free times and even a morning aerobics class, the highlight was one of our outings was an evening luau right there at the KHB pool. We had refreshments, races & challenges costuming and even a photo booth. It was a lot of fun and a big thanks to KHB members Debbie Slovak and Kim Hajek for organizing it.

We also went to a Bowling Alley with a Laser tag venue. The students were able to enjoy both. We played the first game of bowling pretty regular, while the second game got involved with tricky rolls and changing lanes each frame. All seemed to enjoy the R & R time!

Many of the policies & features that were already in place were again repeated this year. We also had another year of no trips to the ER this school!! That is always an encouraging relief.

We had several visitors for our Group Competitions – the majority local members and parents, even from Ft. Worth and Dallas.

Our graduation program was presented on Saturday evening, preceded by a delicious pork dinner. We had many spectators, mostly parents, family, friends and members from a variety of Sokol units both local and out of the district. Thank you to Bro. Bob Podhrasky and his wife for attending a few of our events. Bob is American Sokol 1st Vice President, Southern District and Sokol Zizka (Dallas) President. Thanks for finding the time. Also a special thanks to Sis. Cyndi Duff, Southern District Women's director and member of Sokol Corpus Christi who was there for support and helped out in many areas, including keeping the children who were involved in practice teaching classes occupied during transition and down time. And a huge thank you to Bro. Chuck and Sis. Jan Kalat for helping in so very many areas I couldn't even begin to name them all!! You definitely helped make this School a success!

As tradition, the students demonstrated many of the things and activities learned over the previous two weeks, most of which were choreographed by the students themselves. A special addition was the 2017 Slet Folk Dance performed not only by all students, but most instructors as well. The graduation program was concluded with the presentation of diplomas and special awards. The Leadership Award is given to the one student from each school level that the staff feels were outstanding in this area. The Beginner Leadership Award went to Anna Slovak from Sokol KHB; the Intermediate Leadership Award went to John Stanko from Sokol Tabor; and the Advanced Leadership Award went to Jacob Jirousek from Sokol Greater Cleveland.

Our 2016 Sokol Instructors School officially concluded with our final flag lowering and you could hear the resounding tradition of the three Sokol "Zdars!" ringing out loud and clear to conclude another successful Kurz. There was cake and socializing followed by the last night of social activities, pizza, packing and fun! It was a good time with many having a difficult time saying good-bye!

A tremendous thank you to the staff that did an outstanding job! I would also like to extend a big thanks to all the helpers and volunteers from Sokol KHB and the awesome students and once again the American Sokol for continuing to support this important and worthwhile venture!!

NAZDAR!

Sister Mary Cushing
2016 American Sokol School Director