



The Connector

SPEAKING UP FOR US
OF MAINE

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January 2021 Newsletter

Greetings to our self-advocates, family members and supporters. Welcome to the January 2021 Newsletter. We hope this finds you well, and warm!



What does Self-Advocacy or being a Self-Advocate mean to you?

We recently asked our self-advocates what does self-advocacy or being a self-advocate mean to you. To each person this is a very personal question and can mean something different. We know that each person's self-advocacy journey is different and everyone is on that path.

Our self-advocates wanted to share their answers with you.

From our **Caribou** chapter, Kaitlyn shared "Being able to do my own things, being independent. Someone who stands up for people cannot stand up for themselves." Also from Caribou is Georgia who said "You have the right to stand up for yourself with other people"

In **Presque Isle**, Regina responded to the question with "Live up to your best expectation." For Rose it means "Standing up for yourself when needed. Do what is necessary to get your opinion out." Mary Ann added "Have respect, decency, and kindness to others. Speaking up for yourself." For Hope it means "Speaking up for myself and SUFU" and lastly Bobby added "Speaking Up For My Rights"

Our **Houlton** chapter also talked about this question. Mike, shared that for him it means "Standing up for yourself, and speaking up for yourself." Josh added that it means "Speaking up for myself, asking a lot of questions, and speaking up for my rights." Kelly added to for her it means to "Change for the better." while Jim shared that it meant to "Speaking up to help others, including myself."

MaryAnn Preble was able to join us twice that week and shared in both Portland and Bangor. In her words self-advocate means "Learning to speak up for yourself and helping others. Being my own person."

In our **Bangor** chapter we were able to discuss this further with other chapter members. Brian shared that for him it meant to "Help others and to share information." Sarah added to that by saying "Speaking up for yourself." Marco said that for him it meant "Leading by example, holding yourself and others to a higher standard." MaryAnn Preble also contributed to this by sharing that it meant "Being a good leader and helping people find their voice"

Thank you all to the self-advocates who shared what this means to them.



Throw Back - Look Forward

We want to take time to look back at where SUFU was and forward as to where we are headed. We spoke with Jim Oldenburg (pictured, right at our leadership conference) of Houlton about his experience in SUFU.

"When I first started with SUFU it was fun. They surprised me when I started. It turned out that I was getting a Marcia Rosen award at my first conference and was elected to the board. I had a good time. I wish new members luck and we'll have fun when we are able to get back together again."



Laurie Coldwell, Program Coordinator, shares a look forward:

"We know this is really a difficult time for all of us as we approach a year of dealing with a pandemic. Our self-advocates have really shown the way in moving towards technology, reaching out to each other and being creative in our chapter meetings. Self-Advocates have worked hard to say what they need during this extremely difficult time. While we look forward to being back together again in person, we hope that self-advocates will keep pressing forward"

Jon's Corner

This month has been very busy for me. I have my papers from my doctor to get my covid vaccine. I am hoping to get my vaccine either the first or second week of February. I was hoping to go to the Hope Conference to hear Brian Harnish talk about Art Therapy. Unfortunately that was cancelled so we hope to have Brian talk about this at an upcoming statewide.

I have been helping a friend of Sarah's to get on the Bangor meeting. It is exciting to have new people join chapter meetings!



At one of our recent SARTAC meetings we went into breakout rooms on zoom and talked about what does it mean to be a self-advocate. The questions we discussed are listed below. What would your answers be to these questions?

Breakout Room Discussion



1. What does self-advocacy and self-advocate mean to you?
2. What does the self-advocacy movement mean to you?
3. What are current problems you face with self-advocacy?
4. What are solutions?
5. How do we keep the self-advocacy movement alive?



Kile's Corner

Happy New year

Hi It is Kile Pelletier again! I recently did a supported decision making training with Staci Converse from Disability Rights Maine and we had 85 people participate in this training. In our training we were also able to answer questions of the participants that were there. I am still calling members to let them know about upcoming meetings whether it is the statewide or their chapter meetings. There are more trainings coming up with Mary from Disability Rights Maine that we are working on. Look for those upcoming trainings on our website and Facebook page. We will continue to share information that will make your life better.

Staff Highlight

Each Month we are going to Highlight our Staff members at Speaking Up For Us. As we have been meeting over zoom we have found ourselves virtually traveling around the state and meeting new people. We hope this helps you all get to know us a bit better!

Our Staff Highlight is Kile Pelletier, who is one of our Job Associates. .



Where in the state do you live? I live in a small town in the tip-top of Maine. If I wanted to I could walk to Canada!

What is a typical work day like for you and what do you like about working for SUFU? There is no typical work day for me. Each day is very different. I get to help people just like myself, to listen and mentor them to live a better life. Instead of others telling them what to do they can make their own choices.

Who is someone you admire and why? I admire my dad because he is a single dad with two kids. Even though I live with a disability he always believed in me and told me he did. He wanted me to make my own decisions as an adult and he helped me get to that point before I turned 18.

When you are not working what could we find you doing? You would find me spending time with my wife Stephanie, and her family.



Finally

We invite you to check out our [website](#) . Read our most recent [blog post](#) and subscribe to future blogs. You can also find the list of our chapter meetings, or follow us on [Facebook](#). If you are a SUFU member we want you to join our members only Facebook Group. To do that please email [Laurie Coldwell](#) or [Jon McGovern](#). We don't want you to miss anything.



Have an Idea for Something to be in The Connector?

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