



The Connector

SPEAKING UP FOR US
OF MAINE

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March 2021 Newsletter

Happy Spring!
Greetings from SUFU Staff, Members and friends. March has proven to be a busy month with self-advocates all over the state of Maine. From participating in listening sessions at the Office of Aging and Disability Services, to our Kickoff of our Advocacy Day series members and friends have opportunities to let their voices be heard.

Developmental Disability Awareness Month

March is Developmental Disability Awareness month. SUFU members were able to listen to stories of other self-advocates from around the country as they seek to bring awareness to the cause of inclusion in all areas of life in the community and some of the barriers that they face each day. Through this time of listening to others, self-advocates in chapters shared some goals that they have for themselves. Furthering their education. Getting married. Getting their driver's license. Living on their own. Self-advocates encouraged each other, believing that each one is capable. To learn more about Developmental Disability Awareness Month click [here](#).



Self-Advocates Participate in OADS Listening Sessions

Self-advocates from all over the state have been working hard to prepare testimony to share at the Virtual Listening Sessions hosted by the Office of Aging and Disability Services. These listening sessions have been centered around 14-197 C.M.R. Chapter 5, Regulations Governing Behavioral Support, Modification and Management for People with Intellectual Disabilities or Autism in Maine.

Self-Advocates worked with Disability Rights Maine to prepare their statements to share how the use of restraints affect them and others who live with disabilities. There is one final listening session on April 30th from 3-5 pm. For more information on that please go [here](#).

One self-advocate that is preparing to share is MaryAnn Preble. Mary Ann has a long history of self-advocacy in the state of Maine and shares her passion with others to use their voices. MaryAnn shares "Seclusion and restraints should not be options for dealing with a person's behaviors." If you would like to hear more of MaryAnn's story the Maine Developmental Disabilities Council has a podcast of MaryAnn and others. You can find that [here](#).

Jon's Corner

March has been a busy month. For SARTAC I have been going to their meetings twice a week. I enjoyed the one titled "Disabled I AM" and the one on Hillternships. There are many opportunities to be an intern on Capitol Hill. I have been going to the listening sessions that OADS has been having regarding restraints. I am preparing my testimony to share with Abby Silsby from Disability Rights Maine.

I have been able to go to the Casco Chapter and hearing what they share in their meeting. I like hearing with other members have to say about different topics. We can all continue to learn from each other. I like working with Kile and how he can mentor me on certain topics when we work together.



Kick off To Advocacy Day

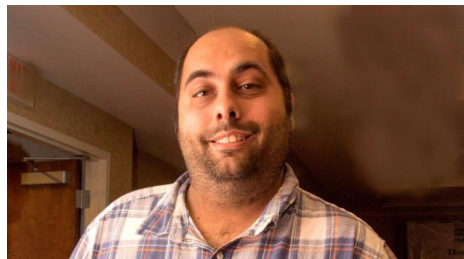


One of our favorite events is Advocacy Day at the Statehouse. Knowing that for the second year in a row we could not make that happen because of the pandemic, and with the help of self-advocates we were able to put together a 3-part series regarding Advocacy. We kicked it

off with a refresher on how an idea can become a law. We talked on why testimony at the statehouse was important and reflected on how past bills became laws with self-advocate input.

We look forward to continuing this series with topics on How does Government Work and What is Policy and our last session on Building Relationships with Legislators and why it is important.

If you would like to know more about this event and others like it, please check out our



Kile's Corner

In Honor of Development Disability Awareness Month, I want to say I'm proud to be a person with a disability and I'm happy to work with all of you. I happy to tell you I will be doing training On Supported Decision Making for Special Education teachers in the Bangor area with Foxfire Buck from

Disability Rights Maine.

I have been going to the SARTAC meeting twice a week and learning what other states are doing. This month topics that I liked is "The I in IEP." Young people with disabilities can be good self-advocates in their own Individualized Education Programs. The other was Digital Media Campaign. This was from a self-advocacy group from another state and how they can be proud of themselves.



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 Laurie Coldwell our Program Coordinator and Administrator. Laurie is currently advising the Springvale, Casco, Portland and Bangor chapters. She also occasionally hosts the Tuesday afternoon Statewide meetings.

Where in the state do you live?

I live in Southern Maine on the edge of Cumberland and

York County.

What is a typical workday like for you and what do you like about working for SUFU?

I wouldn't say there is a typical workday. Monday through Thursday I'm advising chapters which has been a fun experience. It has given me the opportunity to get to know self-advocates better and learn about them. Sometimes they ask me hard questions and I have to really dig for answers. One of my favorite things about working for SUFU is when a self-advocate shares their passion, what they want in life, or advocates for themselves or someone else.

Who is someone you admire and why?

I always admired my great grandmother. She was blind and I would sometimes "grammy sit" her. It was a time for me to sit and read her mail to her. She lived life to the fullest. We would sometimes sit in glider swing out front under the giant trees and be warned to be careful with her in it with us. However, she would always be the one to make the swing go fast. I hope I live a full life like she did.

When you are not working what could we find you doing?

As the mom of three teenagers you could probably find me driving them to their next event so they can live their best life. I do enjoy watching them participate in their activities. As a dog mom I do my fair share of walking him or napping with Bo. In the summer you will most likely find me in my happy place - the ocean.



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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