



# The Connector

SPEAKING UP FOR US  
OF MAINE

## FREEDOM OF CHOICE

At SUFU, One of the things we talk about a lot, is "Freedom of Choice." That means, having the opportunities to make choices for ourselves, rather than other people making them for us. Every day, people make choices: "Do I want an apple, or potato chips?" "Am I going to watch TV right now, or go for a walk?" Sometimes, we want the apple, sometimes we want the chips, sometimes, we really want to watch TV, sometimes we really want to go outside and go for a walk.

For those of us with disabilities, making choices can be harder. Maybe we live with other people and everybody does things together, so maybe we can't go for a walk when we want? Maybe we have help with grocery shopping and making meals and don't know what choices we can make about what to eat?

Just because we have disabilities, doesn't mean that we can't be healthy, too. Making choices that can help make our minds and bodies healthier and stronger, can be hard, sometimes. Maybe we're depressed and sad and can't see reasons to feel good about ourselves? Maybe we want to exercise but have no idea where to start?

It's ok to eat chips (kettle chips are my personal favorite), but if I eat too many chips, I feel sick to my stomach, and next time, I might have an apple, instead (the red ones). Nobody loves TV more than I do (except, maybe, Tucker Conley) but if I don't go outside and get fresh air, too, I can get really depressed. Choices aren't right or wrong but sometimes, we need to make different choices once in a while, so we can be healthier.

I hope you can attend this year's SUFU statewide conference because we can all learn ways to make our minds and bodies stronger, so that we can all enjoy life more. I know that I'm excited by it! 😊 Don't forget to bring t-shirts and sneakers, we're going to have fun! 😊

## SUFU LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Last year, SUFU Members said that they wanted an opportunity to learn leadership skills, to not only advocate better for themselves, but also advocate for other people. The SUFU Leadership Program was born! Over the past 2 years, 16 SUFU Members have improved their leadership, communication and problem solving skills, and had fun at the same time!

One of them is Abbott Philson, from Portland. He is the Chair of SUFU's Chapter Representative Committee. Abbott is a part of the SUFU 2016 Leadership Program.

Abbott said, *"Not only have my leadership skills improved, but I've also gained a lot of self-confidence. The leadership program has also showed me skills to help improve the self-confidence of other people, too!"*

One of the most important parts of the SUFU Leadership Program is learning how to work together as a team to solve problems. For example, Tucker Conley, from Portland, said that one of the activities was, "...building a race car out of materials and test seeing if it would roll downhill."

You also work on things like "conflict resolution." Conflict Resolution means working out disagreements with people and solving problems, without losing your temper.

Both Abbott and Tucker talked about how they learned a lot about themselves by being part of the leadership program. In fact, Tucker said, "I learned that I need to speak up more, in order to be a more effective leader. I didn't know that before coming into the program."

They would also recommend the program to other SUFU Members. Abbott mentioned, *"I learned a lot and had fun, too!"* Tucker added, *"It's a great chance to make new friendships with fellow SUFU members, where you won't be judged."*

If the Leadership Program sounds interesting to you, and you would like more information, please contact David Unger (SUFU's Executive Director) at [exdirectorsufu@sufumaine.org](mailto:exdirectorsufu@sufumaine.org).



## SPORTS CHAPTER

For almost a year now, SUFU has been helping members get healthier & more active in their own communities, thanks to our very own SUFU Sports Chapter! Under the leadership of Chapter Advisor, Laurie Bernier & Assistant Advisor, Tyler Ingalls, a lot of our members are participating in physical fitness and different sports that they might never have done before.

For example, Chris Heywood, SUFU member from Sanford, recently rode a bike for the first time! Chris rode an adaptive bike that allowed him to use his hands, instead of his feet, to move the bike, and work the brakes.

Chris told me, "At first, I was really nervous because I thought the bike would go too fast. But once I relaxed and went with the flow, I had a lot of fun!" Chris said that it "felt really good," to ride a bike for the first time.

If somebody wants to play a team sport, like baseball or basketball, the Sports Chapter will work with you to find a team in your area that you can play on.

Tyler explained, "It is important for us to have people with disabilities, playing sports & activities with people who don't have disabilities. It's a great way for people to learn about each other, not only how we are different, but how we are alike, also."

If the Sports Chapter sounds like something you would like to be involved in, feel free to contact Laurie at [advisorl@sufumaine.org](mailto:advisorl@sufumaine.org) or Tyler at [tingalls@sufumaine.org](mailto:tingalls@sufumaine.org).



[Click below for a video of the biking trip.](#)



## Get to Know the SUFU Staff... 5 Questions With... Tyler Ingals

**What is your job at SUFU?**  
Associate Advisor to the SUFU Sports Chapter

**What do you do?**  
I write posts about upcoming events for Facebook. I work with Laurie Bernier, Sports Chapter Advisor. We run meetings together. We work with members to find sports and activities that they would like to do in their own communities. Every few months, we also do an outing or activity as a chapter. It is really important to me that we promote integration and inclusion of people with and without disabilities, in whatever we do.

**Why did you want to join the SUFU Staff?**  
I didn't see a lot of people with disabilities playing sports in their communities. I wanted to change that, so I worked with David Unger (SUFU's Executive Director) and wrote a proposal that became the Sports Chapter.



**What do you like most about your job?**  
I love that I have a job where I can help people enjoy sports and get healthier. Also, an added benefit is teaching people with disabilities about their rights.

**What do you like to do for fun?**  
I'm on a roller derby team and I also enjoy watching TV, especially documentaries and wrestling.

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