



# The Connector

SPEAKING UP FOR US  
OF MAINE

## Happy New Year, SUFU!

It's 2017! A brand-new year  
and a brand-new issue of  
The Connector is here!

We hope that you enjoy it!



### Going After His Dream: Abbot Philson

By Avery Olmstead

Abbott Philson is really dedicated to SUFU! Not only is he on SUFU's Board of Directors and on the Chapter Representative Committee, but at the 2016 Conference, he won the Paige Barton Award for being a SUFU member who is committed to helping other SUFU members realize their potential! I interviewed Abbott about what it was like to receive the award and I also asked him about one of his passions that a lot of you might not know about: Competitive Horseback Riding...



**How did you feel when you found out that you had received the Paige Barton Award?**  
Receiving the reward really touched my heart. It was a surprise but it was worth it.

**How has being a part of SUFU helped your leadership skills?**  
Inside, I knew I could be a leader but being a part of SUFU helped me gain more confidence and realize that I was a leader. I've also had opportunities to speak about self-advocacy to other groups about how important it is. I also enjoy being a role model to other SUFU Members and helping other people realize that they have the potential to be leaders, too.

**How did you become involved in competitive horseback riding?**  
I started horseback riding when I lived in California. When I moved to Maine, it's something that I wanted to continue to do. I train to compete in a type of horseback riding called Dressage, which is where you assist the horse to perform a series of skills and tricks, and you get scored on them.

**What do you enjoy most about competitive horseback riding?**  
Well, for one thing you really get to bond with your horse, because you need to brush and clean your horse and help him/her get ready. The staff where I ride have become like another family to me. It's also a great form of exercise.

**Do you have a goal that you want to work towards with your competitive horseback riding?**  
I have a dream to compete in the Paralympics (Olympics for people with disabilities), in Dressage!

*Something tells me that Abbott is going to do just that!*



**Be a Leader!**

**Have Fun!**

**Learn New Things!**

**Meet People!**

**Work As A Team!**

**Nominations Now Being Accepted!**

**Spring 2017  
SUFU LEADERSHIP PROGRAM!**

*What Leadership Program Members Have To Say...*

"I learned that I need to speak up more, to be a more effective leader. I didn't know that before coming into the program."

– Tucker

"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!" – Abbott

"I improved my listening skills. I learned I could help other people and the Leadership Program inspired me to join the SUFU Board!" – Jeanette

Strengthening leaders,  
organizations and communities



**HAVE QUESTIONS?**

**MONIQUE STAIRS**

SUFU Program Director  
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## SUFU's Employment Program is Almost Ready to Launch!

**Kile Pelletier, SUFU Member from Eagle Lake is SUFU's New Employment Associate! Welcome, Kile!**

**Kile will be working to make sure that SUFU's Employment Program runs smoothly.**

**If you are a SUFU Member in Southern Maine who would like to look for a job, SUFU's Employment Program, could be for you! More Details Coming Very Soon...**



**Questions? David Unger, SUFU Executive Director, (207) 956-1004, [exdirectorsufu@sufumaine.org](mailto:exdirectorsufu@sufumaine.org)**

*SUFU's Employment Program is sponsored by the [Maine Developmental Disabilities Council](#), and a private family foundation.*

## Get to Know the SUFU Staff... 5 Questions With... **Laurie Bernier**

### **What is your job at SUFU?**

I'm Advisor of the SUFU Sports Chapter, which is statewide and I'm also Advisor to a few other Southern Maine Chapters.

### **What do you do?**

As far as the Sports Chapter, Tyler Ingalls and I host regular meeting where people can participate all over the state by phone or computer.

I also travel around the state helping members find sports or recreation programs in their own communities, among people with and without disabilities.

In all Chapters, helping members get involved in their local communities is very important to me.

I also work with members to help them figure out what parts of being a self-advocate are important to them and what they would like to advocate for.

### **Why did you want to join the SUFU Staff?**

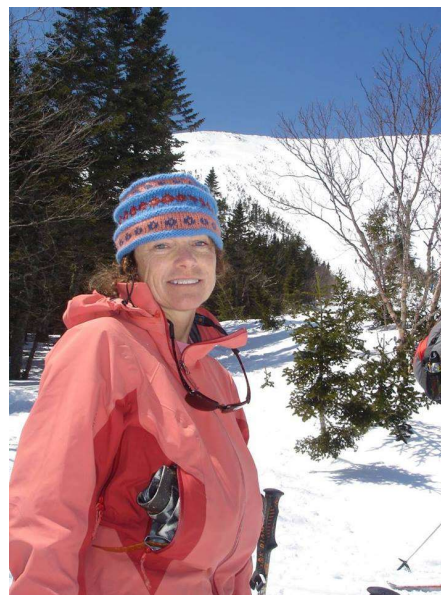
The original ad I saw in the paper was for someone who enjoyed helping people with disabilities get involved in community sports and recreation programs. That's always been a passion of mine!

### **What do you like most about your job?**

The best part of my job is seeing people change right before my eyes. Seeing people accomplish something that they never thought they could do, laughing and having a great time!

### **What do you like to do for fun?**

I love being outdoors, no matter what the season!



## Have an Idea for Something to be in the March Issue of The Connector?

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