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**Sturdivant Island Tuna Tournament to mark 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary**

SOUTH PORTLAND, Maine – The Sturdivant Island Tuna Tournament is marking its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary this summer with dozens of bluefin tuna fishermen competing for cash prizes while raising money to benefit students at Maine’s community colleges.

This year’s contest will feature up to 40 boats that will fish out of Spring Point Marina in South Portland in search of the elusive and majestic bluefin tuna. For more information about the tournament and how to register, please visit [www.mainetuna.org](http://www.mainetuna.org).

“When the first tournament was held in 1998, nobody could have predicted what a smashing success it would become among tuna fishermen throughout New England,” said Chuck Gregory, secretary of the tournament and the academic dean at Southern Maine Community College. “We are the largest tuna-fishing tournament in northern New England, and we have raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for community colleges and other worthy organizations.”

The 2017 festivities are open to the public and begin Wednesday, Aug. 2 at 5:00 pm, with a dinner buffet plus live and silent fundraising auctions that benefits students at Maine’s seven community colleges. Fishing begins on Thursday, Aug. 3, and continues through 4 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 5. An awards dinner will be held at 6 p.m. that evening with a fish fry prepared by Susan’s Fish & Chips.

Bluefin tuna, sometimes called the king of the sea, can grow to more than half a ton in size and travel faster than 50 mph while swimming thousands of miles across the Atlantic Ocean. The fish are also lucrative, with fishermen able to get thousands of dollars for a single fish. Much of the U.S. catch is shipped to Japan, where the tuna’s fatty richness is prized for sushi.

In the Sturdivant Island Tuna Tournament, captains catching the five largest bluefin tuna qualify for cash prizes, with a top prize of \$6,250. Other prizes are \$3,250 for second place, \$1,500 for third, \$1,000 for

fourth and \$500 for fifth. As an added incentive, a grand prize of \$50,000 will be awarded to any boat that catches a tuna that beats the Maine state rod-and-reel record of 819 pounds.

Last year, Captain Tom Mansfield and the crew of the F/V Allyson took home the first-place prize with an 817.7-pound fish. The all-time tournament record was set in 1999, when a 931.8-pound tuna was caught.

With the help of tournament participants and generous sponsors, the Sturdivant Island Tuna Tournament over the past 19 years has made more than \$700,000 in charitable contributions. Most of the money has been contributed toward scholarships at Maine's seven community colleges, with funds also donated to the Byron R. Gouzie Foundation, the McAuley Residence at Mercy Hospital, the Isaac Baker "Baker-Mobile" fund, and the Maine Community Foundation. In 2010, the tournament was awarded a prestigious national Benefactor Award from the Council for Resource Development for its contributions to Maine's community colleges.



**Photo caption:** Capt. Tom Mansfield (right) of the F/V Allyson and his crewman, Shane Brooks (left), won the 2016 tournament with this 817.7-pound tuna.

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