



Brain & Spinal Injury  
Trust Fund Commission

# Adapting to *Change*

ANNUAL REPORT FY2015



## ***Life is forever changing.***

Every day people are faced with life-altering situations that cause them to have to adapt to new circumstances and new realities. More often than not, change is forced upon us, not something we seek. It often comes with great challenge. But change also helps us to find strengths we didn't know we had. It pushes us to cast new vision, seek new resources, be more innovative, and better prepare for what is to come.

When someone is struck by a life-altering brain or spinal cord injury, nothing is more true. The Trust Fund was established to help Georgia's valiant survivors adapt to the engulfing change they face in their lives. But our world is changing too. Funds are dwindling. The healthcare and legislative landscapes are in constant flux, causing continual modifications to how we work. We are working hard to adapt to the change, but we are having to delay and deny support for survivors more than ever before.

2015 has been a year of careful analysis and evaluation about where we are and where we need to head. One thing is very clear – we need to adapt the way we work and address the many mandates of our mission. The model we have is not working and cannot be sustained long-term. We are seeking new partners, exploring new methods and strategically planning for the change ahead. We simply need more support and more champions for the cause. We invite you to join in our mission.

***The mission of the Brain & Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission is to enhance the lives of Georgians with traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries. Guided by the aspirations of people with traumatic injuries, the Commission supports lives of meaning, independence, and inclusion.***

# INTRODUCTION

The Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission is Georgia's only state agency that offers dedicated funding and support for individuals who have sustained a traumatic brain or spinal cord injury. Created by Constitutional amendment, the Commission's mission is to distribute much needed resources to eligible Georgia residents via direct grants for their post-acute care and rehabilitation. The Commission does this through three major avenues: The Central Registry, the Trust Fund, and as Georgia's Lead Agency for Traumatic Brain and Spinal Injuries.

**The Central Registry** identifies newly-injured individuals and their families and enables us to reach out to each one personally to educate them about and connect them to the resources they need to rebuild their lives. The registry allows us to efficiently gauge the needs across the state and the gaps we still need to address.

**The Trust Fund** is funded through a surcharge on DUI and reckless driving fines upon conviction. We provide much needed monetary resources for those who simply cannot afford necessary goods and services they need post-injury or whose insurance benefits have become depleted. Estimated lifetime costs of care for a person with a severe TBI can reach \$4,000,000. Care for an individual with a severe SCI can reach upwards of \$3,000,000. Alleviating even a small portion of this financial burden or resource obstacles for those working to define a new way of life and strive for rehabilitation can leave a lasting impact across their entire lives and open the door to greater independence.

**As the Lead Agency**, we are collaborating with stakeholders across the state to make sure that Georgia has a system of care that truly meets the needs of people with traumatic brain and spinal injuries. Our State Action Plan partners are a collaboration of agencies, hospitals, schools, and service providers to improve comprehensive care. Our social media and internet outreach helps potential applicants with the application process for receiving a Trust Fund award and connects them to services in their local community. Our legislative efforts have impacted laws that will reduce injury and make available added resources for Georgians with traumatic injuries.

***With the ever-changing landscape of the economy and healthcare coverage today, services and resources for individuals with traumatic injuries continue to be more expensive and harder to find.*** Hence, the role of the Brain & Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission has become more valuable than ever before. We are focused each day on making a difference across our state – through public awareness, grant administration and developing new partners. For so many across our state the Commission has proven to be a dependable resource they can count on to help them adapt to their new lives.

*With the ever-changing landscape of the economy and healthcare coverage today, services and resources for individuals with traumatic injuries continue to be more expensive and harder to find.*





## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S LETTER

**Dear Friends,**

The Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission touches the lives of thousands of Georgians every year as it provides direct grants for individuals with traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries. These funds are multiplied to great effect beyond the initial amount granted to the recipient. Funds are distributed to service providers to assist the grant recipient in any number of ways necessary to provide valuable post-acute care and rehabilitation.

The Trust Fund can provide funds for a vehicle or have it modified for the particular disability so a student can go back to school or a parent can return to their occupation. Physical and occupational therapy can restore physical function so daily activities like bathing, dressing, cooking and housekeeping can be maintained. With a Trust Fund grant, recipients can purchase a mobilizing wheelchair, hire a much-needed in-home care attendant, make necessary home adaptations, and seek job coaching that enables them to find new employment. Just about anything a person genuinely needs can be provided. Then, think of all the other people involved...the persons and businesses who provide services. They have additional employment opportunities, wages paid, goods purchased, vehicles sold, doctors and dentists visited.

***The Trust Fund dollars thus spent are all multiplied and they all add up, both the tangible and the intangible...real benefits for many, unless the funding declines.***

The Trust Fund, unfortunately, has less funding. The lives of your family members, neighbors, co-workers who have had devastating injuries depend on a state agency like the Trust Fund to provide for those gaps in funding that savings or insurance companies can't fund. The average American has only \$700 for emergency spending according to a recent poll by the American College of Emergency Physicians. And the average affordable healthcare plan has an annual deductible of \$6,000. Yet a 25 year-old with paraplegia will face an average cost in the first year of injury of \$518,904 according to the National Spinal Cord Injury Statistical Center.

Your Trust Fund needs to address these gaps in funding. Over the last fourteen years the Commission has authorized grants with a value of over \$22 million dollars. But our funding is dwindling fast. Year to year for the last five years funds have declined by 8.7% each year. In fiscal year 2008 the Trust Fund monthly budget for grant awards was \$165,000. This year only \$80,000 per month is budgeted for grants.

Revenue derived from convictions of driving infractions continues to decline even with new fines authorized for reckless driving just last year. Our service delivery and the Georgians we serve are too important to be left further depleted as we look to the future. This newest issue of our Annual Report will attempt to give you more insight into what we do, how we are funded and why new dependable revenue streams need to be found. We look to you to help us identify where and how resources can be obtained so that we can continue our mission of providing home and community based care that benefits every Georgian that needs it.

Best regards,

Craig Young  
Executive Director, BSITFC



# THE CENTRAL REGISTRY

Developing effective, focused programs to address the needs of injury survivors requires accurate data. This was the intent of the legislation that created the Central Registry, and that's the intent of the Commission as we work with communities, local and statewide organizations, schools, and government entities to improve opportunities for Georgians living with TBI and SCI.

## We use the Central Registry data to:

**Contact** each newly-injured Georgian with information on available resources.

**Identify Trends** – Information on increases or decreases in causes of injury and affected age groups is vital to our community partners for needs assessment and injury prevention.

**Educate** policy-makers and community stakeholders about the incidence of traumatic brain and spinal injuries, which ultimately illuminates the needs of injury survivors.

The Commission is committed to gathering accurate and useful information that will tangibly help the thousands of Georgians coping with new injuries each year and the agencies and service providers that support them. In addition, our data is used by other state agencies, hospitals, and non-profits to support grant requests and strategic planning for the TBI and SCI populations.

## TRAUMATIC BRAIN & SPINAL INJURIES

Total Injuries: 26,463 (2013)

	Emergency TBI	Hospital TBI	Hospital SCI	Hospital TBI+SCI
<b>By Age in Years</b>				
0-4	1326	280	11	*
5-9	1237	88	*	*
10-14	2232	124	11	*
15-19	2934	349	48	12
20-24	1615	485	66	13
25-29	1230	352	43	*
30-34	1078	326	53	15
35-39	855	282	36	12
40-44	893	323	48	11
45-49	826	364	49	*
50-54	851	427	81	16
55-59	705	451	79	*
60-64	527	428	63	11
65-69	519	433	44	*
70-74	400	401	47	*
75-79	449	471	34	*
80-84	396	550	28	*
85-89	340	449	18	*
90-94	180	236	*	*
95-99	50	50	*	*
100+	*	*	*	*
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>18643</b>	<b>6869</b>	<b>759</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>By Sex</b>				
F	8132	2676	220	26
M	10,523	4214	553	113
U	*	*	*	*
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>18,655</b>	<b>6890</b>	<b>773</b>	<b>139</b>
<b>By Race</b>				
White (1)	11001	4473	440	82
African American (2)	4583	1608	257	37
American Indian/ Alaskan Native (3)	42	13	*	*
Asian (4)	135	71	*	*
Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander (5)	43	27	*	*
Other (6)	1073	322	32	*
refused (7)	1778	378	30	11
Unknown (8)	*	*	*	*
(blank)	*	*	*	*
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>18655</b>	<b>6892</b>	<b>759</b>	<b>130</b>

\*fewer than 10

Note: The total injury incidence report reflects a decline from previous years because the Trust Fund no longer tracks ICD-9 code 959.01-959.99 as the CDC no longer considers it valid to TBI.



# EVER-CHANGING REVENUES

The Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission is one of just a few state of Georgia agencies that does not receive any funding through the state's General Fund. Only funds that are collected from convictions for Driving Under the Influence of Alcohol or Drugs (1998) or convictions for Reckless Driving (2014) are remitted to the Commission. In both cases a surcharge of ten percent of the original fine can be collected. In many cases, however, less is collected because of some individuals' inability to pay or fines being reduced or waived at the court's discretion. The Commission receives funds via local courts who remand these collections to the Georgia Superior Court Clerks Cooperative Authority (GSCCCA). The state of Georgia has a priority list (in statute) of surcharge collections and the Trust Fund is 12th in priority. This means that as fines are collected for different state programs or entities the Commission has a greater chance of collecting only fractions of the original fine levied.

The greatest single reason for the decline in collections remitted to the Commission is the overall decrease in DUI convictions.

## DUI conviction data CY2010-2014

Process Year	ALS	Refusals	Convictions
2010	10,658	6,227	41,819
2011	9,726	7,071	38,315
2012	13,335	11,978	34,950
2013	11,391	11,480	35,514
2014	9,970	12,021	28,909
Jan 2015 thru July 29, 2015	5,166	7,826	16,581

Process Year	DUI 1st	DUI 2nd	DUI 3rd*	Total for Year
2010	34,875	6,039	905	41,819
2011	31,605	5,853	857	38,315
2012	29,040	5,204	706	34,950
2013	26,892	4,963	659	32,514
2014	24,373	3,993	543	28,909
Jan 2015 thru July 29, 2015	14,039	2,224	318	16,581

\* Note: This is counted as a Habitual Violator with 3rd DUI conviction

The decrease in convictions is due to a myriad of factors, but the bottom line is that with fewer DUI convictions there is less revenue available for the legislature to appropriate to the Commission each year. The trend is not reversing or leveling-off and is expected to continue to decline. Between 2010 and 2014 the change in DUI convictions fell by 30.9 percent (from 41,819 to 28,909) according to the Georgia Department of Driver Services records. This has brought about a corresponding drop in funds of 8.7% year to year over the same period of 2010-2014.



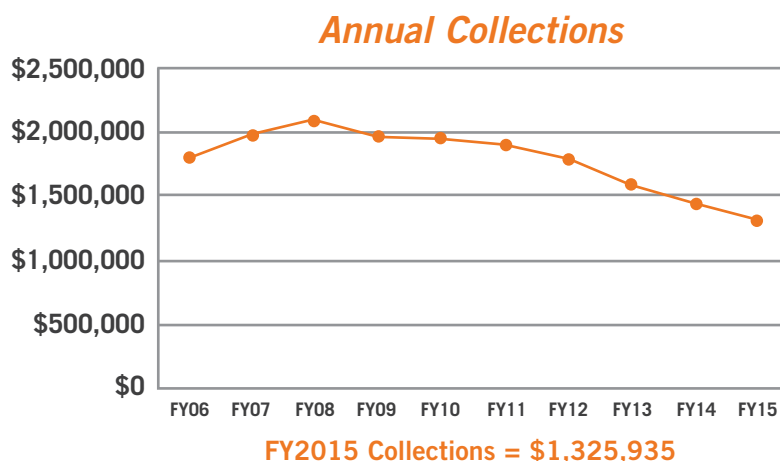
To help frame the issue consider that the Commission had a monthly budget for distribution of direct grants to individuals of \$165,000 per month in FY2008. For FY2016 the Commission's monthly grants budget is \$80,000 per month.

Year	Surcharge Collected	Avg Conviction Collected
2010	\$1,933,528	\$46.23
2011	\$1,896,580	\$49.50
2012	\$1,770,818	\$50.67
2013	\$1,579,626	\$48.58
2014	\$1,449,027	\$50.12
		<b>Total Average \$49.02</b>

However, requests for Trust Fund grants have increased to a factor of 3:1 by injured Georgians, up from 2:1 prior to this year. There is more demand for fewer grants. The Commission reluctantly had to cut the amount of funds available for grants down from \$15,000 to \$10,000. This cap on funds is for the lifetime of eligible applicants unless new funding is found.

The addition of a 10% surcharge upon conviction of Reckless Driving has not stemmed the decline in revenue as was anticipated when the legislature and voters approved the Constitutional Amendment to generate additional funding for the Commission. The latest data shows that since January of 2015 the -8.7% drop in fine revenue has slowed to a -7.9% drop, a change of less than one percent.

**What does it all mean? Fewer funds remitted equals fewer grants of lesser amounts for eligible Georgians who have suffered life-changing injuries.** This loss of revenue also impacts the ability of the Commission to provide other services such as administering the Central Registry for Traumatic Injury. The Commission has prudently cut administrative costs and continues to look for ways to operate as efficiently as possible without cutting the capacity of our office to provide direct service to those who rely on the Commission for the assistance they often cannot obtain anywhere else.







# DIRECT GRANTS FOR GEORGIANS

The primary purpose of the **Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission** is to fund direct grants for Georgians who have survived neurotrauma i.e. traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries. (OCGA 15-21-140). This Commission was authorized in a Constitutional Amendment ratified by voters as approved by the state's General Assembly and Governor's office.

The mission of the Commission is to administer the Central Registry to identify the injured, distribute resources (grants) through the Trust Fund and support improvements in state services. The Commission believes that by supporting home and community based services for the care and rehabilitation of those injured we will foster lives of meaning, independence and inclusion. Our vision is a Georgia where people with traumatic brain and spinal injuries are valued, have equal opportunity and real choices.

Applicants to the Commission choose the type of assistance they need to get on with their lives. The Commission has a very wide range of categories of goods and services available for our applicants to apply for: home modifications, transportation, medical services and therapies, personal support and respite, vocational training and supports, durable medical equipment, health and wellness activities are just some of the areas that the Commission routinely funds.

To this end, since 2002 the Commission has approved over \$22 million worth of direct grants to Georgians with traumatic brain and/or spinal cord injuries.

## ***Commission Grant Statistics: FY2002-2015***

People Submitting	4077
<i>Online</i>	1261
<i>Paper</i>	2814
TBI	1611
SCI	2148
Both	318
Applications Submitted	6608
Number of Items Requested	9463
\$ value of requests	\$47,677,124.51
Applications Approved	3720
<i>47% of requests were funded</i>	
\$ value of items approved	\$22,497,474.21
Items Approved	4955
All applications received (includes incomplete, withdrawn, submitted, completed and awarded).	8786

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***As of December 2015 there is a 7-Month Wait List with 76 applicants awaiting word on funding.***

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For many recipients of our direct grants the Commission is the only funder available. (The Commission reviews all requests to be sure that there are no other funders or programs that an applicant can take advantage of). The Trust Fund can augment existing funding sources; insurance (either private or public), waivers from state and federal programs, and applicants own resources. The Commission accepts applications from all Georgians who are medically eligible. With costs of lifetime care in excess of \$4.5 million for the most severely injured (SCI high tetraplegia) the Commission is composed of individuals who have first-hand knowledge regarding cost of care for post-acute care and rehabilitation over the lifespan.

A traumatic injury is not a one-time event like a broken arm that is treated and returns to more or less pre-injury function. Brain and Spinal Cord injury is disease causative and accelerative. Those with severe injury have recurring issues with the original injury and often, shortened life-spans. Even mild brain injury can, over time, cause cognitive and functional deficits that negatively impact the individual and their family.

### *A Letter of Thanks*

*On behalf of my family, I want to thank the Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund for your financial support and your encouragement regarding my son Robert. Robert suffered severe brain injuries in a car accident May 2013. He spent weeks in a coma and then months in rehab learning how to live again. With the help of the Trust Fund, Robert was able to continue physical, vocational and speech therapy after his insurance coverage and financial resources were depleted.*

*His doctors told us Robert would be spending the rest of his life in a nursing home, but with outside support and through his own determination, he beat the odds. As of last month, Robert has returned to work full-time, and his current goal is to get off disability! He continues to work diligently to stay in top physical shape and does everything he can to give his brain all the possible chances of a full recovery.*

*We understand that Robert has a balance of \$5,681 in his Trust Fund. Since Robert has completed his therapy, we would like for you to return this money to the Trust Fund in order to help someone else in Georgia who has suffered from traumatic brain injury.*

*Gratefully,*

*The Trigg Family*



Since 2008, the Commission has been focused on its State Action Plan to help mold the state infrastructure and aid in the development of services to improve the lives of Georgians with traumatic brain injuries and spinal cord injuries. State Action Plan activities focus on seven core areas to ensure an individual's needs are being met: Screening and Identification; Training and Awareness; Rehabilitation and Wellness; Service Coordination; Long Term and Life Long Supports; Independent and Integrated Living; Community Participation. Representatives from advocacy organizations and service providers across the state as well as individuals with traumatic brain injury and spinal cord injuries and their family members serve as members of three strategic committees and multiple work groups. These dedicated members work tirelessly throughout the year to plan and assess the statewide service structure and recommend changes to ensure care needs are being met and supports are available to promote community integration and independence for all individuals.

The Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission is the lead agency for traumatic brain injuries and spinal cord injuries in the state of Georgia. We work with our state and community partners to ensure that the work we do has a sustainable impact on the lives of the individuals we serve.

For more details about the State Action Plan, visit [www.bsitf.state.ga.us](http://www.bsitf.state.ga.us)

## COLLABORATION AIDS ADAPTATION

The Commission is pleased to have many partners within state and federal government as well as national, state and local nonprofits and other businesses and organizations. Some collaborations are formal with intergovernmental agreements, or grantee and grantor contracts. Others are business relationships that inform our service delivery and best practices which our vendors share with us.

The Commission is pleased to continue our collaboration for our home modifications program with the Georgia Department of Community Affairs in our current fiscal year. Commission appointees from other state agencies ensure that the voices of survivors of TBI and SCI are heard and transmitted as appropriate throughout Georgia.

Our partners are growing each year in their ability to provide the Commission with the cooperation, knowledge, tools, and resources necessary to provide effective and efficient programs that improve the lives of all Georgians. Listed below are some of the many entities we work with throughout the year:

- Brain Injury Association of Georgia
- Georgia Departments of Public Health, Community Affairs, Education, Human Services, Community Health, Drivers Services, Transportation and Public Safety
- The National Association of State Head Injury Administrators
- The Centers for Disease Prevention and Control
- The Governor's Office of Highway Safety
- The Emory Center for Injury Control
- The Shepherd Center
- Children's Healthcare of Atlanta
- The Georgia Hospital Association
- The Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation
- State Centers for Independent Living

*The Commission also does business with 394 vendors in Georgia such as Project Walk, AMS Vans, Mobility Works, Side by Side Clubhouse, Beyond Therapy, FODAC and many others that provide valuable goods, services and expertise for our grantees' needs.*





## CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

### Dear Georgia Friends:

I am pleased to reach out to you again this year as Chairman of the Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission. I have served the Commission for eight rewarding years doing work that brings me great satisfaction, but there is much to be done. As rewarding as eight years may feel to some in many contexts, it is a short stint compared to the challenging lifelong journey one endures with a traumatic brain or spinal cord injury, especially when the fundamental needs of Georgians with SCI and TBI are not being met.

While the money your Trust Fund grants to injured Georgians makes huge improvements in many lives, the ongoing financial costs they face, after the initial hospital and rehabilitation bills, remain staggering both by amount and duration. Just a modest amount of home care at the lowest skill level can be completely unattainable or unsustainable by most families. Insurance benefit programs cannot support a lifetime of necessary care, hence lifetime caps are often hit just a few years into the journey.

According to the 2015 US Census Bureau the median household income in Georgia is \$49,179. The cost of an attendant to provide just 12 hours of care per day, at only \$10 per hour, computes to \$120 per day, which adds up to \$43,800 per year. If you need the exact same hours, but with a skilled nurse, a very conservative annual cost would jump to \$83,000 annually. The cost for basic care wipes out the average family's household income quickly. And that doesn't factor in medical bills, hospitalizations, rehabilitation costs, equipment and supplies, home modifications, transportation, and more. Keep in mind too, the injured person's income goes away most times and someone in the family has to assume the role of full-time caregiver. Disability benefits are nominal and a downward financial spiral is inevitable.

As a real-life example, I am a high quad (no use of my body from the shoulders down) lucky enough to be able to work full-time in my chosen profession earning a good salary. I use the lowest skill level of caregivers possible to still remain healthy given the care and observation needed to get me up, get to work, then get home and go to bed. I have no supportive care from 11 pm to 6 am. As most insurance plans, my health insurance (the "best" I can get) does not pay for home care. My direct care costs are well above the estimated amounts shown above. So many others I know with similar or worse injuries need far more support than I do to remain reasonably healthy and not stay confined to a bed in a facility or die prematurely. The reality is, contrary to popular belief, many of our expenses are not covered by public or private benefits.

Your Trust Fund makes a huge difference for those lives it touches. I assure you we make every dollar count and give it to those in real need. When injured Georgians are lacking resources, we are here. The huge challenge we face is that we have hundreds of applications that we cannot fund because of limited resources. Annual collections continue to fall and thus we are hard pressed to help Georgians who have nowhere else to turn for much needed rehabilitation goods and services. We must adapt and grow our revenue streams to help mitigate the growing financial hardship born by our families with SCI and TBI injuries and change lives for the better. That is what we are charged to do.

Thank you for your support.

JD Frazier  
Chairman, C4 Quadriplegic



# MEET OUR COMMISSIONERS

Our Commission Members are a dedicated, diverse group of individuals from around the state. Each one is committed to improving the effectiveness of the Trust Fund by overseeing its operations and disbursements.

The Governor appoints 10 members for two-year terms, although many of our members serve longer. To ensure a breadth of experience and opinion, the Commission's Governor appointees must consist of: seven individuals or family members with traumatic brain or spinal cord injury and three representatives from medical or other relevant professions. Six Commissioners are appointed by state agencies.

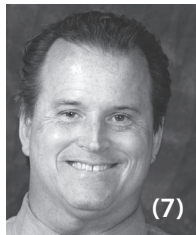
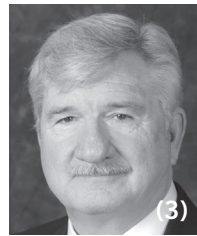
**Bob Bauer, PhD (1)** was appointed by the Governor in 2011. Bob is a retired chair of the Dept. of Psychology & Counseling at Valdosta State University and a former Peace Corps volunteer. Bob is a board member of Georgia Family Connection, chair of the Lowndes/Valdosta Commission for Children and Youth, and a board member of Elderhostel, Inc. Bob is Chairman of the Commission's Advisory Committee.

**Kate Brady, PhD (2)** was appointed to the Commission as a representative of the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency where she serves as the Statewide Quality and Innovation Department Director of the Vocational

Rehabilitation Program. Kate has previously served as Customized Employment Coordinator at Cobb Community Services Board, Director of Employment Policy and Programming for Georgia's Office of Developmental Disabilities, and Director of Research at National Organization on Disability. She has also consulted for the Institute for Human Development and Disability at the University of Georgia, as well as with the National Center on Workforce and Disability at the University of Massachusetts on best practices in the support of employment for people with disabilities.

**Henry Craig (3)** was appointed by the Governor in 2010. Henry's son sustained a TBI in a motorcycle accident. Henry is retired from the United States Army and Continental Airlines. He is active in local community organizations and is a Baldwin County Commissioner. Henry chairs the Commission's Distribution Committee and is a member of the Executive Committee.

**Lisa Dawson, MPH (4)**, was appointed to the Commission as the representative of the Georgia Department of Public Health. Lisa is the Director of Public Health's Injury Prevention Section and is active as a member of the Governor's Office of Highway Safety - Safety Advisory Board, Emory Center for Injury Control, and SAFE KIDS Georgia.





*In April of 2015, Susannah Kidwell and Gwen McKee were sworn in by Governor Nathan Deal as new Trust Fund Commissioners, with Chairman JD Frazier as witness.*

**Andrew Dennison, MD (5)**, Treasurer, is a Governor's appointee. Andrew is a physician at Atlanta's Shepherd Center. Dr. Dennison attended medical school at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia and completed a residency in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at the Baylor College of Medicine/University of Texas-Houston. He also completed a fellowship in Traumatic Brain Injury at Carolinas Rehabilitation in Charlotte, NC. He is board certified in physical medicine and rehabilitation and is an active member in the American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation and the American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine. He is a member of the Commission's Executive Committee.

**Brian Dowd (not pictured)** was appointed to the Commission as the representative of the Georgia Department of Community Health where Brian is Program Director - Waiver Programs in the Division of Medicaid/Aging and Special Populations. Brian is a member of the Commission's Distribution Committee.

**Major Henry Fielding (6)** is the appointee of the Georgia Department of Public Safety where he has served over thirty-six years with the Georgia State Patrol and is currently Headquarters Adjutant.

**Joseph D. Frazier, Chairman (7)**, is a Governor's appointee. He is President and CEO of the Specialty Nurse Company. J.D. has been the recipient of numerous honors and awards; was the Immediate Past President of the Kennesaw State University Alumni Association; is the treasurer of the Georgia Association of Community Care Providers; and is a registered peer supporter for Shepherd Center and a certified Medicaid Peer Supporter. He speaks publicly about diversity awareness and is an advocate for disability rights. In addition to serving as Commission Chairman, he also serves as Chair of the Executive Committee and a member of the Communications, Finance and Public Policy Committees.

**Gina Gelinas (8)**, joined the Commission as the representative for the Department of Education. Gina is the Program Manager of the Georgia Project for Assistive Technology. Certified in speech-language pathology, she provides learning and technical support services to local school system personnel who work with students who need assistive technology. Gina serves on the Executive and Children & Youth Committee.

**Cheryl Harris (9)** was appointed to the Commission in 2012. She has worked in the Georgia Department of Human Services Division of Aging Services since 2007 and has served as the Program Manager for the Aging & Disabilities Resource Connection for four years. Cheryl is responsible for expanding aging & disability partnerships statewide and for providing technical assistance and guidance to local ADRC programs. Cheryl has served as a Long-Term Care Ombudsman for 20 years. She is committed to providing information and assistance that will help individuals avoid institutionalization or transition from institutions back to their homes and communities. Cheryl serves on the Communications Committee.

**Chase Jones (10)** is a Governor's appointee from Carroll county. Chase has worked for the Georgia Department of Public Safety and was employed by the Georgia House of Representatives as a legislative analyst. He is a member of the Commission's Finance and Public Policy Committee. Chase lives in Carrollton, Georgia.

**Randy Owens (11)** is a Governor's appointee from Hall County. Randy is currently employed at Gainesville Internal Medicine. He serves as a board member of Challenged Child and Red Rabbit Transit and is an advisor to Northeast Georgia Medical Center. He is co-founder of Our Neighbor Inc., a nonprofit that serves the needs of those with limitations and enables them to be active in the community. Because of Owens' permanent injury that resulted from a car accident, Challenged Child and Friends was founded. He has been an impactful advocate for young adults with disabilities.

**Timothy Wall (12)** was appointed by the Governor in 2010. He is a Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist with a BS and MS in Sports Psychology. He is a wheelchair tennis enthusiast, having competed in regional championships since his spinal cord injury in 2001. Tim brings valuable recreation/respite background to the Commission and first-hand experience working with organizations that provide recreational opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Tim serves on the Distribution Committee.

**Jane Warnock (13)**, is a Governor's appointee that has been an advocate for people with disabilities since her daughter, Christy, sustained a traumatic brain injury in a car crash in 2002. Jane serves on the Commission's Finance and Public Policy Committees.







# TIM WALL: A TESTIMONY FOR CHANGE

**O**n February 22, 2001 Tim Wall decided to take a break from his studies at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College and make a trip home to Brooklet for the weekend. In a split second his world came crashing down. Tim ran off the road, hit a ditch, went airborne across two lanes of traffic and his truck came crashing down against a pine tree. Tim has no memory of what caused him to run off the road. He just recalls waking up momentarily after impact surrounded by people trying to help him. Once cut from his truck, Tim was rushed to Coffee Regional Hospital and then transported via LifeFlight to the Level 1 Trauma Center at Memorial University Medical Center in Savannah. Tim passed out on the scene of the accident and didn't wake up for 43 days.

Tim's injuries were so massive that the doctors kept him in a medically induced coma and a state of complete paralysis for almost three months. At least once a week he coded and was brought back to life. The steering wheel had crushed his chest. His aorta was torn. He lost a kidney and his lungs struggled to function. He had a compound fracture of the right leg with significant nerve damage. An L2 incomplete fracture of the spine left Tim with almost no movement in his legs.

For the next year Tim moved from hospital to hospital to do everything he could to rebuild his body and his life. Tim defied all odds. By January of 2002 he returned to college to complete his degree in commercial turf management. After graduation, Tim worked with a multitude of vocational rehabilitation services to find a job but it wasn't viable for Tim to work on a golf course in a wheelchair. In 2003 Tim went back to school at Georgia Southern University and earned a recreational therapy



degree, which opened up so many new opportunities for him.

Tim was offered an internship at the National Ability Center in Park City, Utah. That opened doors for Tim with AmeriCorps' National Civilian Community Corps. These opportunities showed Tim how, even with his limited mobility, he could channel his love for the outdoors into great occupations. He moved back to Georgia and worked with Blaze Sports in Atlanta. In 2009 he went back to school again to pursue a Master's degree in Kinesiology and Sports Psychology.

Over the course of the next few years, to pay for his schooling, Tim managed an archery shop in Statesboro and worked as a 4H archery coach, a Junior Olympic Archery Development coach and a collegiate archery coach. Tim found his traditional wheelchair to be very limiting. He really needed a modified sports chair to enable him to continue to pursue the career path he sought, so he applied for a Trust Fund grant. Unfortunately, with limited funds to grant, Tim's application was denied. A sports chair was considered a luxury, not a necessity, but for Tim, it was the key to his independence and livelihood.

Tim didn't let that stop him. He respected the process and accepted the decision. It took a while, but he eventually gathered the resources he needed to get the chair. But when he was asked by the Governor to serve on the Trust Fund Commission years later, Tim seized the opportunity to be a new voice on the Commission. Tim shares, "I realize to some recreational equipment seems frivolous, but to so many like me it is a huge part of life. As a trained Recreational Therapist I know first-hand the value of recreation to the recovery process. It improves overall physical fitness, emotional well-being, and socialization." Tim continues, "It is hard as a spinal cord injury survivor to see the funding continue to diminish for the Trust Fund and to have to deny grants for things that I know would have a huge impact on the quality of life for my fellow survivors. We fight so hard to live, and when we do, we then work so hard to adapt to a new life based upon our new physical state. It's tragic sometimes how the system defines what that can and should look like." When asked why he serves on the Commission Tim explains, "I have limited opportunities on my own to create change. Serving alongside my fellow commissioners allows me to do so much more. I want to be a part of something bigger than myself that touches the lives of many. I believe great purpose can come from my circumstances. It's my goal to help find new resources for the Trust Fund that will allow us more flexibility to customize our grants to the unique lives, talents and abilities of every brain and spinal cord injury survivor in Georgia."

**“Be the change you want to see in the world.”**  
- Mahatma Ghandi

Members of the Commission staff (standing) are dedicated professionals focused on connecting survivors and their families with the resources they need to rebuild their lives. Our Commission Members (seated) are a dedicated, diverse group of individuals from around the state committed to overseeing the operations and disbursements of the Trust Fund.



## APPLYING FOR A TRUST FUND AWARD

The Trust Fund welcomes applications from all Georgia residents who have sustained a traumatic brain and/or spinal cord injury.

**To qualify, applicants are asked to submit:**

- medical documentation stating the nature and cause of their injury
- proof of Georgia residency and U.S. citizenship
- at least one quote for each service and/or item requested
- a completed application, including a daily living survey
- statement of annual income

**Additionally applicants are asked to:**

- explain how an award will increase their independence, offer long-term benefit and promote inclusion in their community
- sign and forward all release forms to the Commission

*Applications are reviewed every month.*

We are committed to improving the quality of life for the more than 30,000 Georgians who sustain a TBI/SCI each year. Applying for an award can be easily done online. If you are unsure about applying, feel free to call us toll free at 1-888-233-5760. We are happy to help you find the resources you need.

**Four Steps to an Award**

**Step 1:** Apply online at [www.bsitf.state.ga.us](http://www.bsitf.state.ga.us) or call 1-888-233-5760 (toll free) for an application. As soon as your application is complete and all supporting documents have been received, your application packet is sent to the Distribution Program Staff.

**Step 2:** The Distribution Committee reviews applications to ensure they conform to distribution policy and makes a recommendation to fund or not to the Commission.

**Step 3:** The Commission votes to adopt the recommendations made by the Distribution Committee, approximately four to six weeks from full completion of an application.

**Step 4:** The Commission sends funding recommendations to the Governor's Office for approval as required by our legislation. Applications that gain approval from the Governor are notified via letter from the Commission.

# COMMISSION AT A GLANCE

## We Have Strong Citizen Support

In November 1998, Georgia voters overwhelmingly approved (by 73%) a constitutional amendment to create a Trust Fund for traumatic brain and spinal injuries, paid for by a surcharge on drunk driving fines. This landmark legislation won by a margin of greater than 2-to-1. Nearly 70% of voters approved an additional fine on reckless driving convictions in 2014 that is directed solely to the Trust Fund.

## We are Guided by Those with Firsthand Knowledge

The idea of the Trust Fund and the advocacy efforts on behalf of the founding legislation was driven by people with traumatic brain injury and spinal cord injury and those that serve them. Because of their first-hand experiences, they knew what was most important for people with these traumatic injuries--and what was missing in the range of services and resources available. They dreamed of an agency that understood the lifelong needs of people with traumatic injuries and that was committed to supporting injured individuals at different stages in their life – not just in the critical moments after the injury occurs.

Additionally, more than half of the people who serve on the Commission must have a brain or spinal cord injury or be a family member of a person with an injury. Other members are specialists in the field, or work with organizations that provide services to people with traumatic injuries. Their collective knowledge and experience governs our day-to-day decisions, guides our recommendations for award distributions, and informs our public policy agenda.

## We Connect People to Their Communities

Georgians with traumatic brain and spinal injuries deserve lives of independence and inclusion, lives rich with vision and possibilities. Trust Fund awards assist individuals with injuries in reaching their chosen goals.

## We Cast Vision

Our Vision is a Georgia where people with traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries are valued, have equal opportunity and real choices.

**We Must Adapt.  
Trust Fund awards change lives.**



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