



Brain & Spinal Injury
Trust Fund Commission

Better Together

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

The Commission



We Have Strong Citizen and Legislative Support

In November 1998, Georgia voters overwhelmingly approved (by 73%) a constitutional amendment to create a Trust Fund for traumatic brain and spinal injury survivors, 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. The last legislative initiative for the Trust Fund in 2020 was passed by the General Assembly unanimously! We thank the legislature for their confidence in our mission and thank the Governor for signing this measure to sustain our revenue level.

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 was committed to supporting injured individuals at different stages in their life – not just in the critical moments after the injury occurs.

More than half of the people who serve on the Commission must have a brain or spinal cord injury themselves or be a family member of a person with an injury. Other members are specialists in the field, or work with organizations providing 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.



Trust Fund Awards Change Lives.

Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much.
~ Helen Keller

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. 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 serves through three major avenues:

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 provides 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 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. We assure them that they are not alone. We stand with them and are encouraging them, every step of the way.

As The Lead Agency, we are collaborating with stakeholders across the state to make sure 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 online, direct mail, and personal outreach efforts help potential applicants with the application process and connect 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 cultivating new partners.

For so many across our state, the Commission has proven to be a dependable resource they can count on to help them build lives of meaning, independence and inclusion.



Dear Friends:

What a year we have all experienced! Our state and nation have had constant challenges during the COVID-19 emergency and perhaps we can see some light at the end of the tunnel now. One thing we have learned at the Trust Fund is that we are "Better Together!" We have all had to evolve to maintain our relationships with family, community, healthcare and even our neighborhood grocer. We have all learned how to continue our collaborations via the internet. Zoom meetings are now the norm. E-conferences can host hundreds of individuals and we can schedule telehealth meetings with our physician's office. Equity, however, continues to be an issue. For our rural Georgia households internet access is still a work in progress. As we continue to integrate the internet into our lives, the Commission continues to operate via all modes of communication to provide direct grants to our stakeholders.

Even though we engage by way of the latest software and technology, we realize that collaboration works best when we are meeting in-person... it's better together. Virtual interaction with our community partners and vendors has sometimes been an exercise in patience. Understanding and patience is our new motto when challenges to daily operations arise. Opportunities to re-engage with state and local government agencies are created as we all come to grips with how COVID-19 has impacted the health and well-being of our stakeholders. Enhancing cooperation is always better together.

Engagement at the ground level engenders many valuable new opportunities for collaboration and education. We invite you to work with us to reach those in Georgia who need us most. Let's use these new communication tools to start a conversation in which we finally greet each other with a handshake, looking to see where we can create positive change, make impactful grants and live better together.

Sincerely,


Craig Young

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 collaborate with our state and community partners to ensure the work we do has sustainable impact on the lives of the individuals we serve.

The Commission is guided by a strategic State Action Plan designed 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 by our direct grants:

- 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 actively serve on our strategic committees and multiple work groups. These dedicated members work tirelessly throughout the year to plan and assess the statewide service infrastructure and recommend changes to ensure care needs are being met and supports are available to promote community integration and independence for all individuals.

For more details about the Needs Assessment and State Action Plan, visit <https://bsitf.georgia.gov/media-room>.

Collaboration Creates Efficiencies & Builds Trust

The Commission is pleased to have many partners within state and federal government agencies, 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.

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

The Commission also does business with 400 vendors in Georgia such as AMS Vans, Mobility Works, Side by Side Clubhouse, Beyond Therapy, YMCA, and scores of medical, therapeutic and clinical providers that offer valuable goods, services and expertise for our grantees needs.

The Central Registry

Developing effective, focused programs to address the community 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, hospitals, schools, and government entities to improve opportunities for Georgians living with TBI and SCI.

TRAUMATIC BRAIN & SPINAL INJURIES

Total Injuries: 27,796 (2018)

	Emergency TBI	Hospital TBI	Hospital SCI	Hospital TBI+SCI
0-4	1061	284	*	*
5-9	1012	90	*	*
10-14	1947	111	*	*
15-19	2794	294	37	12
20-24	1812	386	25	*
25-29	1578	347	27	*
30-34	1269	322	27	*
35-39	1193	323	26	*
40-44	903	254	37	*
45-49	966	271	47	11
50-54	880	365	54	13
55-59	868	437	56	15
60-64	716	423	53	*
65-69	702	501	44	12
70-74	675	549	48	21
75-79	546	610	30	*
80-84	479	587	24	*
85-89	383	499	12	*
90-94	195	307	*	*
95-99	48	73	*	*
100+	9	6	*	*
Total	20,036	7,039	570	151

*fewer than 10

*Note: some columns may not add up exactly because we do not report fewer than 10 individuals in a group for privacy reasons.

We use the Central Registry data to:

- Contact each newly-injured Georgian with information on available resources.
- Identify Trends - Information on causes of injury and affected age groups is vital 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. Our data is also used by other state agencies, hospitals, and nonprofits to support grant requests and strategic planning for the TBI and SCI populations.

Traumatic brain injuries cost Georgians over \$1.5 billion annually in medical costs and lost wages. Average yearly expenses for those with spinal cord injuries top \$18 million.

	Emergency TBI	Hospital TBI	Hospital SCI	Hospital TBI+SCI
Female	9,481	2,844	195	44
Male	10,547	4,190	375	107
unknown	8	5	0	0
Total	20,036	7,039	570	151
White	11,398	4,198	301	69
African American	5941	1,860	214	52
American Indian/ AK native	104	22	0	0
Asian	221	94	9	4
Native Hawaiian/ Pac island	30	6	0	0
other	1,179	424	30	11
refused	1,153	433	16	15
unknown	1	0	0	
blank	9	2	0	
Total	20,036	7,039	570	151

Grant Distributions

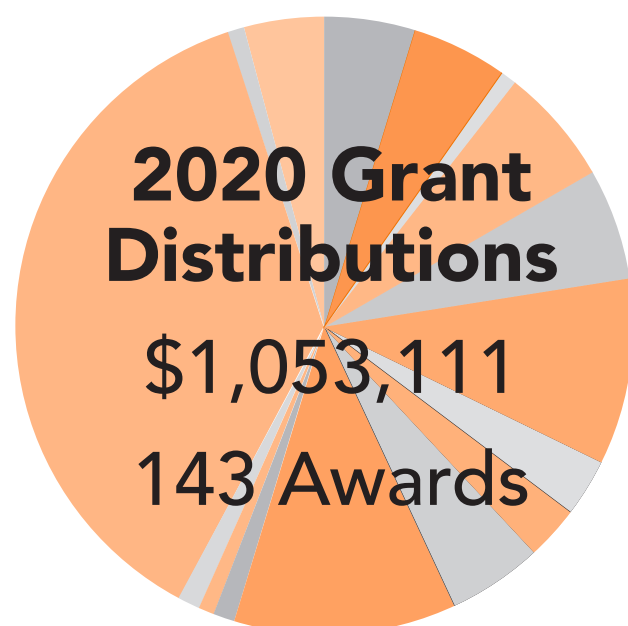
The primary purpose of the Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission is to fund direct grants for Georgians who have survived neurotrauma i.e. traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries. (OCGA 15-21-140).

By supporting home and community based services for the care and rehabilitation of those injured we foster lives of meaning, independence and inclusion. Grant applicants choose the type of assistance they need to move on with their lives. The Commission has a wide range of categories of goods and services available for our applicants: home modifications, transportation, medical services and therapies, personal support and respite, vocational training and support, durable medical equipment, health and wellness activities are just some of the areas that the Commission routinely funds.

The Commission serves as the funder of last resort. The Commission reviews all requests to be sure there are no other funders or programs

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. The Commission's Distribution Committee is composed of individuals who have first-hand knowledge regarding costs of post-acute care and rehabilitation to ensure the most efficient, effective grant distributions.

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.



5%	Assistive Technology
5%	Computers
1%	Day Support Services
6%	Dental Services
6%	Durable Medical Equipment
10%	Health & Wellness
3%	Home Modifications
3%	Housing
5%	Medical Care
12%	Personal Support Services
1%	Psychology/Counseling
1%	Recreation/Hobbies
1%	Speech Services
38%	Transportation
1%	Vision/Hearing Services
6%	Vocational Support

We're Better Together



In 1989 Donny Dicer was a sophomore at the University of Georgia. He was an accomplished artist, guitarist, an academic All-American, and a record holding, Olympic trial qualifier in backstroke and freestyle swimming.

On December 5th Donny was focused on studying for finals at UGA. He finished up at the library and headed across "old campus" on his bicycle. In an instant, the trajectory of his whole life flipped upside down. He hit a simple tree root and was tossed from his bike head-first into a pile of stones. Luckily, a professor witnessed the freak accident and

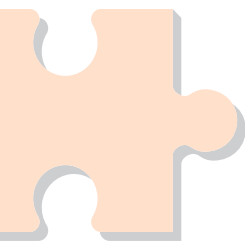
rushed to call 9-1-1. Had he not reacted so quickly Donny would not have survived.

After lying lifeless in a coma on life support for weeks, Donny finally awoke, surrounded by family, friends, and medical professionals, with a long road to recovery ahead. A severe traumatic brain injury cost him his balance, coordination, speech, and the ability to swallow and walk. When he was strong enough to begin rehabilitation, they moved him back home to Tennessee for intensive therapy at the Patricia Neal Rehabilitation Center.

Working together with his family, fiancé, doctors, and therapists, Donny was determined to get back to life. Thanks to his will power and the care, concern and devotion of his recovery team, it happened. Donny went from not being able to do one thing for himself, unable to even hold up his own head, to relearning to walk, talk and function again. Donny says, "There's no doubt I cheated death. My TBI journey is a constant reflection of the miracles surrounding me."

Donny went home standing on his own with the help of a walker. Though faced with new physical challenges, Donny was determined to reclaim his life. He returned to UGA, married his high school sweetheart Julie, finished his degree in Fine Arts, and even got back up on his bike. After another bike ride resulted in a broken ankle due to his balance issues, Donny retired his bike.

After graduation Donny began his career in graphic design. He worked for a newspaper, a design firm, and CNN in Atlanta. Ten years later he and Julie moved back to Athens. Donny launched his own freelancing business and earned a master's in educational technology. Every day struggling greatly with double-vision and balance issues.



"The reality is when you sustain a brain injury you have a brain injury for life. You don't just 'get better.' You have to accept and adapt." – Donny Dicer

Donny recently began to attend a brain injury support group in Athens, as well as several others online. Shared dialogue with fellow brain injury survivors made Donny realize there were still so many things about his TBI journey he had yet to process and accept. His connection to the larger brain injury community was a game-changer. Donny explains, "It helps me so much to share with people who understand. It's exhausting to constantly pretend you are 'normal' and that nothing happened. Everyone around you pushes you to resume normal, to be normal, but there is nothing normal about living with the aftermath of a brain injury." He continues, "I pushed myself so hard to hit all of the social norms – to work, to provide for my family, to pursue higher degrees, to overachieve. I have to constantly tell myself to accept and adapt. I have no choice but to press on."

After struggling for so many years to fit into social norms, Donny made the decision to support his family in a new way - to be a stay-at-home dad. He shares, "I love being home serving as the butler, laundress, and short-order cook. It's great to be ever-present for my family and let go of the pretense of what I'm supposed to be. It's been so freeing to quit pretending to be normal and to just accept myself for who I am. I'm as unnormal as it gets."

Donny began to focus more time on his health and wellness. His lack of activity due to physical challenges had caused him to push close to 300 pounds. He ached to



ride a bike again. Not only would it allow him much needed physical exercise, but it would also allow him to move about and feel a part of the community again. But his lingering balance issues made riding a traditional bike impossible. Then, memories of his grandmother's old tricycle triggered an idea he had to explore. He began the search for a recumbent trike.

After much research, Donny found just what he needed – a TerraTrike - but the cost was out of his budget. That's when he reached out to the Trust Fund for a grant. When he got word that his grant was approved, he was elated. He placed the order right away. Donny shares, "Riding my trike is one of the few things in my life I feel I can control. It has helped me deal with my brain injury more than anything else. On my trike I have freedom, ability, and independence. I control where I go. It allows me to exercise, make myself stronger, and connect with others in a unique way. Riding with others gives me comradery and community. On my trike I don't battle with my balance. I am able, stable and secure. To

some it is just a trike, but to me it is life."

If you find yourself driving through Athens, be on the lookout for Donny Dicer in his plumed pirate hat and his trike "Annie" (short for Queen Anne's Revenge) sporting the Jolly Roger flag. He rides at least 4 days a week logging over 700 miles per month. Donny says, "Annie and I have now traveled together further than the circumference of this planet. In my mind we have circled the Earth and it's amazing!"

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”

Donny Dicer is a living testament to the fact that we are all Better Together. Together with his family, friends and medical community he not only survived, but thrived. Together with his wife and children, he has love and joy. Together with fellow TBI survivors, he has found acceptance and peace. Together with the help of the Trust Fund, he has found health, strength, independence and inclusion. Together we improve lives.





Administration for Community Living

Traumatic Brain Injury Grant

The goal of the Georgia TBI Partnership Project is to strengthen and expand sustainable TBI services in Georgia that are best practice, person-centered, and maximize independence across the lifespan for individuals with TBI and their families. The grant coordinated by the Administration for Community Living and administered by BSITFC provides the Commission an opportunity to achieve grant goals in several ways and has been very impactful since awarded in 2018. Commission staff collaborates with mentor states to build and enhance infrastructure while also collaborating with partnership grantees and other stakeholders (federal and state) to maximize the health and independence of individuals who sustain a TBI. These collaborations include monthly and bi-monthly meetings with our assigned workgroups to engage with partner states and determine best practices for all TBI programs.

Workgroups

- The **Advisory Boards and Survivor Engagement** workgroup is comprised of Mentor states West Virginia and Tennessee, along with Partner states Alaska, Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Minnesota, and Rhode Island, and focuses on best practices for advisory boards and survivor engagement.
- The **Using Data to Connect People to Services** workgroup is comprised of Mentor states Virginia and Nebraska, along with Partner states Alaska, California, Georgia, Idaho, Kansas,

Minnesota, Missouri, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Utah, Vermont, and focuses on data and services that are imperative to those living with brain injury.

- The **Sustainable Partnerships** workgroup is comprised of Mentor states Iowa, Massachusetts, and Tennessee along with Partner states Georgia, Kansas, Maryland, and Rhode Island, and focuses on creating, building, and maintaining sustainable partnerships

Partners

State Partners include the Department of Human Services Aging and Disability Resource Connection. The ADRC's No Wrong Door program provides information and referral services by credentialed information specialist with a Certified Brain Injury Specialist. The commission has access to the Empowerline housing over 20,000 resources in partnership with the ADRC and the Brain Injury Association of Georgia (BIAG). This partnership has led to trainings with ADRC Advisory Councils across the state.

The Commission partnered with Georgia Public Broadcasting to run a public service awareness campaign including digital 15-second TV and 30-second radio ads. This PSA campaign resulted in over 5 million impressions statewide and reached over 500,000 internet users. The campaign provided a great opportunity to reach the public and inform them of the services offered by the Commission. To learn more about the TBI Grant, contact Kenisha.Tait@dph.ga.gov

Community Outreach

Collaboration with Brain Injury Association of Georgia

Thanks to the TBI Grant, the Department of Human Services now contracts BIAG to greatly expand TBI resource facilitation in Georgia. BIAG's Information and Resource Program, led by their Certified Brain Injury Specialist, supported more than 6,500 survivors, families, and healthcare professionals in 2020. BIAG also provided over 1500 referrals to Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) statewide and also provided direct referrals to TBI patients and families for grant opportunities with the Trust Fund.

Starting in March of 2020, with COVID-19 impacting Georgians, BIAG pivoted to a virtual service platform. Referrals are now provided electronically to IRP from area hospital health care professionals who are working with TBI patients and families. The statewide network of support groups was trained on using Zoom for virtual group meetings. As a result, support group members could continue to receive socialization, education and not feel isolated during this pandemic. Patients are still able to connect with BIAG IRP as they adjust to a new normal in their home environments. We direct them to a variety of resources available virtually or on the phone ranging from BIAG support groups to therapy to counseling, food delivery and many other resources and services.

Online Resources

The Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commissioners was excited to launch a new website in 2019. This web project had one overarching goal...to make applying for a Trust Fund grant easier. We have eliminated extraneous materials to make it easy, both visually and cognitively, to find what you need. The application packet has been simplified and downsized by twenty percent to minimize necessary documentation needed to determine an applicant's grant eligibility.

Hence, we have seen a significant increase in the number of applications submitted via the web - from 18.1% in 2008 to 83.5% in 2019. Also notable is the number of applications being submitted via smartphone or tablet. We will continue to evolve our application process as new technologies evolve to be ready for the next generation of communication devices.

We invite you to visit our site **bsitf.georgia.gov** and share your thoughts on how we can continue to improve. Feedback can be sent to our web specialist at dph-info-bsitf@dph.ga.gov.

Chairman's Letter



My fellow Georgians,

2020 has been a difficult year for many of us. If you've felt a sense of isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic this year, you're not alone. I hope you've regained the company and comfort needed to remove any feeling of isolation you've felt. With each new experience life brings, pleasant or not, there lies an opportunity for learning and understanding. COVID-19 introduced a very different set of living conditions for us all. The way the pandemic changed and shaped our daily lives this year mirrors many experiences common to those had by survivors of both spinal cord injury or traumatic brain injury.

With these experiences, it can seem as if the world changed overnight. Our minds and bodies must fight to adjust and navigate shifting paradigms around us. The world we knew so well must now be looked at from a different view. Things don't work as they did before. You can do nothing but await medical advances to improve your life.

Furthermore, the underlying change from each experience creates a sense of vulnerability. New danger lurks where there once was none. Unknowns all around us heighten our anxieties. Safety feels beyond our personal control and can leave us, at times, feeling hopeless.

Lastly, SCI/TBI disability and the virus both isolate those affected. Be it social stigma, physical barrier/distance, or our own developed fears of harm in some fashion; any of these can distance us from those we love and the help we may need.

The isolating effects COVID-19 on society are likely temporary given the recent breakthroughs in vaccine research. However, for those living with SCI/TBI long term, solutions are not as readily available. Consequently, the isolation and challenges that accompany these disabilities will persist. I hope you can take a moment to think about your experience during the pandemic. Think about ways you've been affected. Use this experience to gain a greater perspective on daily life for those of us with disabilities.

Knowledge and understanding beget empathy and change. I'm looking forward to 2021 when we can all hopefully be better together. We thank you for your ongoing support for the Trust Fund, our mission, and those we serve.

Kindest regards,

Chase Jones
Chairman – Georgia Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission

Commission Members

Our Commission Members are a dedicated, diverse group of individuals from around the state. They are committed to improving the effectiveness of the Trust Fund by overseeing its operations and disbursements to give Georgians exciting new opportunities.

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) - Buford

- was appointed by the Governor in 2011. Bob is the retired chair of the Dept. of Psychology & Counseling at Valdosta State University and

an EX-Peace Corps Volunteer. He has served as a: board member of Georgia Family Connection; chair of the Lowndes/Valdosta Commission for Children and Youth; board member of Elderhostel (now Roads Scholar), Inc. Bob has held several positions on the BSITFC Executive Committee and sub-committees, with particular interest in data evaluation and measurement.



Lisa Dawson, MPH (2) - Atlanta

- 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.



Andrew Dennison, MD (3)

- **Atlanta** - 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.



Rebecca Dugger, MA (4)

- **Atlanta** - appointed by the Georgia Department of Community Health. Rebecca is currently the Director of Programs and Community

Support with the DCH, where she has oversight of the Home and Community Based waiver services, Behavioral Health and Long-term care programs. Rebecca earned her BA and MA in Communications from Georgia State University, and another master's in human services (MHS) from Capella University. She also holds several certifications including Six Sigma Black Belt, Medical Coding and Billing, Medicaid Certifications and Project Management. Volunteering at the High Museum of Art, Rebecca developed art programs for the families with special needs by working with the Green Family Learning Center.

Commission Members



Paula Gumpman, MS, EdS (5) - Atlanta - is a Program Specialist with the Georgia Department of Education with the Division for Special Education Services and

Supports, in the Post School Outcomes unit. Her work in the Division for Special Education and Supports is to support districts and administrators in realizing how using good instructional design can support all students including students with disabilities. Paula's focus is assistive technology and she trains district leaders and administrators on how to consider technology for students with disabilities as well as sharing new and innovative approaches to support students with disabilities in their classrooms. She received her Ed.S. from Tennessee Technological University in Cookeville, Tennessee and her Masters of Science degree from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.



Chase Jones, Chairman (6) - Carrollton - is a native of Carrollton, Georgia

where he currently resides and works in real estate investment and property management. Chase has previously worked for the Georgia Department of Public Safety and Georgia House of Representatives focusing on government affairs, project management, and budget analysis. He is a proud graduate of the University of Georgia's School of Public and International Affairs, and holds additional certification from Georgia State University's Andrew Young School of Policy Studies. Chase is a spinal cord injury survivor, and advocate for the disability community. He has served as a Governor's appointee to Georgia's Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission

since 2014. In addition to currently serving as Commission Chairman, he is a member of the Commission's Executive, Public Policy, and various Ad Hoc Committees.



Susannah Kidwell (7) - Atlanta - is a Governor's appointee from Fulton County. Susannah is Director of Rehabilitation Services at Children's Healthcare of

Atlanta, where she has worked for the past 15 years. Kidwell has worked in the field of brain injury rehabilitation for more than 25 years. Kidwell received a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in Speech Language Pathology from Florida State University.



Gwen McKee, Vice Chairman (8) - Savannah - is a Governor's appointee from Chatham County. Gwen is past board chairman of the Brain Injury Association

of Georgia and also serves on numerous non-profit organization boards in the Savannah area. She is a tireless advocate for individuals with physical and mental disabilities. Gwen is a member of the Commission's Distribution committee and the Traumatic Injury Advisory committee.



Randy Owens, Treasurer (9) - Gainesville - 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.



Stephanie Stallings, Lt. Col. (10) - Atlanta - appointed by Georgia Department of Public Safety/Georgia State Patrol, Stephanie serves as GSP's Director of Support/

Administrative Operations to include the Capitol Police Division, Dignitary Protection Unit, the Special Services Mansion Security, Regional K-9 Task Force, Honor Guard, Governor's Task Force, and the Agency's Support Detachments. Prior to this appointment, Lieutenant Colonel Stallings served as the Director of the Public Information Office for the Georgia Department of Public Safety since March 2019. She began her career with the Georgia State Patrol in 1997 when she became a radio operator at Post 4 - Villa Rica. Lieutenant Colonel Stallings is an active member of the Department of Public Safety's Critical Incident Support Team which provides peer support to public safety personnel across the state during their time of need.



Chuck Stone, MPA (11) - Atlanta - appointed by the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency, Chuck serves as the Constituent Services Manager for GVRA

which assists individuals with disabilities to become prepared for and find employment to become as independent as possible. Chuck went through the Vocational Rehabilitation program due to difficulties from childhood rheumatoid arthritis. As a result, he has gone through four joint replacements and is passionate about

helping those in need. After graduating from the University of West Georgia with a Master's in Public Administration he began to work for GVRA as a Constituent Services Specialist.



Timothy Wall (12) - Brooklet - was appointed by the Governor in 2010. He is a Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist with a BS and MS in Sport

Psychology. He is a wheelchair tennis enthusiast, having competed in regional championships since his spinal cord injury in 2001. Tim's 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 as Chairman of the Distribution committee.



Jane Warnock, Vice Chairman (13) - Eastman - 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 is the Commission's Vice Chairman and has served on the Executive committee as Secretary and Treasurer.

We can all do small things, with great love, and together we can do something wonderful.

~ Mother Teresa

Special Recognition

Lifetime Achievement Award

The Commission has voted to create a new Lifetime Achievement Award for Georgians who have made remarkable contributions to improve the lives of Georgians with traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries. The Commission makes this first Lifetime Achievement Award posthumously to E. Culver "Rusty" Kidd III for his long public service and personal advocacy for Georgians impacted by traumatic injury. The Commission will present this award to Rusty's daughter and son with honor and profound thanks.

Remembering Rusty Kidd

When Rusty Kidd was elected to the Georgia House of Representatives we knew he would be a great ambassador for the disability community. A serious motorcycle accident had injured his spine, but not his spirit. Subsequently, Rusty began his rehabilitation at Shepherd Center. That engendered Rusty's new journey of advocacy in from his hometown of Milledgeville to Georgia's State Capitol in Atlanta. Rusty became involved with Special Olympics, community access for the differently-abled, and the Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission.

Appointed as Chairman of the Trust Fund by Governor Perdue in 2005, Rusty began working to augment Trust Fund resources for grants to injured Georgians. When elected to the Georgia General Assembly in 2012, Rusty sponsored numerous House bills that expanded resources available via the Trust Fund. Upon leaving public service, Rusty continued his efforts to support the mission of the Trust Fund and to serve as a



strong voice for the disability community. In 2020 Rusty championed one last highly impactful legislative effort (HB576) that will benefit Georgians with brain and spinal cord injuries for decades to come.

Rusty was all about personal relationships and using those to improve the lives of those who, like himself, were dramatically changed by traumatic injuries. Rusty understood the value of collaboration and how we are all "Better Together." Thanks to Rusty thousands of Georgians have and will continue to access vital financial resources that can be used for needs not covered by insurance. Rusty Kidd will be gratefully remembered by the Trust Fund and the state of Georgia for his advocacy, empathy and friendship.



Rep. Rick Williams



Sen. Burt Jones

Pathfinder Awards

The Commission was pleased to present two 2020 Pathfinder Awards for notable service to the Commission to **Representative Rick Williams** (145th) and **Senator Burt Jones** (25th) for shepherding House Bill 576 through the General Assembly during the 2020 legislative session. We thank both for their steadfastness in the wake of the Covid-19 emergency and the on again, off again legislative calendar. Their combined efforts resulted in unanimous votes for HB576 in the General Assembly and subsequent signing by Governor Kemp. The legislation adjusted the Trust Funds funding mechanism to prioritize its mission in the state.

If everyone is moving
forward together, the success
takes care of itself.

~ Henry Ford

Apply online at bsitf.georgia.gov

3 Easy Steps

STEP
1



Determine Eligibility.

You must be a U.S. citizen, a Georgia resident, and have a traumatic brain injury or spinal cord injury.

STEP
2



Identify your need.

Select an item or service that will improve your quality of life, independence and participation in the community.

STEP
3



Submit the required documents.

Complete the application and all required materials (see list below) and submit for review.

Required Documents



Injury Documentation

Medical documentation or letter on medical facility letterhead describing **nature, cause, and date** of your injury.

Affidavit of Citizenship

Present a Notary Public with a valid proof of U.S. citizenship; sign and notarize the affidavit and submit with original application.



Cost Quote

Include one cost quote or estimate from a vendor for each request.

Proof of Georgia Residency

Submit a copy of proof of Georgia residency (e.g., valid driver's license, utility bill from past 60 days, paycheck stub, etc.)



For additional support, call us toll free at 1-888-233-5760.

