

# A New **NORMAL**

*Annual Report FY2016*



**Brain & Spinal Injury  
Trust Fund Commission**



## Brain & Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission

Enhancing the lives of Georgians with traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries.

Supporting lives of meaning, independence and inclusion.

**Life is ever-changing. Every day people are faced with life-altering situations that cause them to have to adapt to new circumstances, new realities and a new state of "normal." More often than not, change is forced upon us. It's not something we seek. It often comes with great challenge. But change can help us find strengths we didn't know we had. It pushes us to cast new vision, seek new resources, and better prepare for the future.**

When someone is struck by a life-changing brain or spinal cord injury, nothing is more true. They go from being healthy, productive members of society to being completely dependent on the care and support of others to keep them going. Basic tasks like walking, talking, bathing and eating feel impossible. Life as they knew it is forever altered. Every day is about defining and accepting a new normal.

The Trust Fund was established to help Georgia's 150,000+ valiant survivors adapt to the engulfing change they face in their lives. We stand strong alongside them on their journey of restoration and assure them that they are not alone. We help encourage and equip them with the resources they need to build a new way of life.

Like the survivors we serve, The Trust Fund is constantly working to adapt to the changes around us. The healthcare and legislative landscapes are in constant flux, causing continual adaptations and modifications to how we work. Though incoming revenues continue to fall, we remain diligent in our mission and are working hard to minimize the delay or denial of support to survivors. We are seeking new partners, exploring new methods and strategically planning to define a new normal for the Trust Fund too.

## 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** 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 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.



As medical treatment, safety and trauma care advance, more people survive brain and spinal cord injuries than ever before, but then face a lifetime of physical, behavioral and cognitive impairments.

As the legislative and healthcare landscapes continue to shift, the role of the Commission has become more valuable than ever. 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 and define a new normal for their lives.





## Dear Friends,

As I look back on 2016, I am thankful for the long service provided to the Commission and the state of Georgia by our former Trust Fund Chairman JD Frazier and our former Vice Chairman Henry Craig and our new Chairman Chase Jones. All served with distinction, manifested by the overriding concern and care they have for Georgians with traumatic injuries.

Each personally impacted by tragedy, they know all too well how quickly life can change and how hard it is to chart a new way of life. Their responses were similar - to serve those who had been affected as they have been. They turned their tragedy into a mission - To make the path of others easier and help fellow survivors and their families find their own new normal too.

These men have worked diligently through the years to serve others as active and thoughtful advocates and volunteers across many domains such as public service, church and charitable organizations. Chase, JD, and Henry were determined to see that the Trust Fund assists individuals across the state of Georgia in the most equitable fashion possible. Many were the conversations and committee meetings where we grappled with how to best serve the mission of the Trust Fund with well-placed funds that would yield the greatest impact. Agreement was not always easily attained, but the courage to keep the focus on our primary purpose of helping individuals would guide us to improve our planning and target new goals.

An example of this...though the Commission lowered its lifetime grant cap to \$10,000 in 2015, when subsequent data showed that such a limit did not allow the Commission to purchase roadworthy modified vans, they made adaptations and led the way to educate stakeholders that an increase to \$15,000 for modified vans, would be most beneficial for our most severely injured applicants. This change takes place in 2017.

Our focus on the real needs of the people we serve is a genuine trust and motivation that has been a hallmark not only of all our Commissioners, but also of our staff and volunteers who give their time and talents to those that the voters of Georgia mandate we serve.

Even though we have weighty challenges in front of us, we remain dedicated to our mission, alongside our many collaborative partners, to achieve life-changing results. **\$22 million in grant awards... and counting.**

Best regards,

Craig Young  
Executive Director, BSITFC

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 services providers across the state, as well as individuals with traumatic brain 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 and spinal cord injuries in the state of Georgia. We collaborate 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)



The Trust Fund staff and Chairman work daily to execute the mission of the organization.



Former Chairmen Rusty Kidd (left) and JD Frazier (center) still actively work alongside current Chairman, Chase Jones (right) to further the work of the Commission.

## Our Partners

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. 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 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, Vocational Rehabilitation, Transportation and Public Safety; National Association of State Head Injury Administrators; Centers for Disease Control & Prevention; The Governor's Office of Highway Safety; Injury Prevention Research Center at Emory; Shepherd Center; Georgia Concussion Coalition; Children's Healthcare of Atlanta; Georgia Hospital Association; The Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation; and the State Centers for Independent Living.

The Commission also does business with vendors in Georgia such as Project Walk, AMS Vans, Mobility Works, Side by Side Clubhouse, Beyond Therapy, FODAC and others that provide 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, 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 nonprofits to support grant requests and strategic planning for the TBI and SCI populations.



In 2014 traumatic brain injuries cost Georgia \$1.6 billion in lost wages and medical expenses.

Initial medical expense to Georgia for a lowest level spinal cord injury is \$218 million, with ongoing annual expenses topping \$18 million.

## TRAUMATIC BRAIN & SPINAL INJURIES

Total Injuries: 27,349 (2014)

	Emergency TBI	Hospital TBI	Hospital SCI	Hospital TBI+SCI
<b>By Age in Years</b>				
0-4	1256	210	*	*
5-9	1185	85	*	*
10-14	2299	113	*	*
15-19	2823	348	27	*
20-24	1688	476	37	*
25-29	1448	418	31	*
30-34	1234	395	35	11
35-39	991	318	18	*
40-44	905	336	29	*
45-49	918	390	37	*
50-54	899	504	57	*
55-59	707	525	49	12
60-64	601	470	52	*
65-69	571	500	33	*
70-74	485	467	32	*
75-79	384	463	32	*
80-84	395	519	20	*
85-89	304	501	19	*
90-94	174	271	*	*
95-99	37	57	*	*
100+	14	37	*	*
<b>Total</b>	<b>19318</b>	<b>7403</b>	<b>527</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>By Sex</b>				
Female	8382	2818	156	29
Male	10929	4581	371	72
Unknown	*	*	*	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>19311</b>	<b>7399</b>	<b>527</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>By Race</b>				
White	10962	4530	293	56
African American	5075	1979	191	39
American Indian/ AK native	41	10	*	*
Asian	134	84	*	*
Native Hawaiian/ Pac island	*	43	19	*
other	1134	458	22	*
refused	1713	322	12	*
unknown	201	*	*	*
blank	15	*	*	*
<b>Total</b>	<b>19318</b>	<b>7403</b>	<b>527</b>	<b>101</b>

\*fewer than 10

NOTE: 2014 data above does not include 50,611 unspecified head injury ICD-9 959.01 – estimated 75% of unspecified head injury are likely not TBI.\*

\*Bazarian et al

# TRUST FUND GRANTS

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 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 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.

The Commission has approved over \$22 million in direct grants to Georgians with traumatic brain and/or spinal cord injuries.

## 2016 Grant Distributions

Category	Award Amt	Award
Assistive Technology	\$7,600.00	0.65%
Computers	\$25,400.00	2.17%
Dental Services	\$7,000.00	0.60%
Durable Medical Equip.	\$27,315.00	2.34%
Health & Wellness	\$55,648.00	4.76%
Home Modifications	\$140,000.00	11.97%
Medical Care	\$45,865.00	3.92%
Personal Support Svcs.	\$86,156.00	7.36%
Recreation/Hobbies	\$3,480.00	0.30%
Transportation	\$751,079.27	64.19%
Vision/Hearing Svcs.	\$10,465.00	0.89%
Vocational Support	\$10,000.00	0.85%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,170,008.27</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

The Commission is a funder of last resort. All applications are reviewed carefully to ensure that there are no other funders or programs that can meet the needs of our applicants. 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 grant applications from all Georgians who are medically eligible.

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 Note of Thanks

"Our family and Chris extend our deepest thanks to you and your donors for making this special needs van purchase a reality for our family. It improved our quality of life immensely. We are able to do more and it gives Chris more independence in his day-to-day activities. He just zips in and out of his new van. Thank you so much for being a blessing to us.

Sincerely,  
The O'Brien Family

Christopher O'Brien, 28, of Alpharetta, GA, after a tragic diving accident was diagnosed with a C-6 level spinal cord injury. He applied to the Commission and was awarded funding for a modified van.



# Finding A NEW NORMAL

On January 14, 2015 LaQuan Taylor left work and headed to meet up with friends for a weekly bible study. As he drove that afternoon he was reflecting on how blessed he was.

LaQuan, just 27 years old, had so much to be grateful for. He had a wonderful, loving family. He had graduated at the top of his high school class and proudly enlisted in the Navy to serve his country as so many others in his family had done before him. He served two successful tours of duty in the Middle East without falling into harms way. After enlistment, LaQuan seized a golden opportunity to work for a private contractor in Kuwait for a short stint and then returned home to Georgia.

LaQuan enrolled at Omnitech Institute and began to re-engineer his diesel mechanic skills learned in the Navy into a dynamic IT career. It wasn't long before he landed his dream job and finally bought the Camaro he had always dreamed to drive. Life was good. Really good. But on that Wednesday afternoon, LaQuan Taylor had no idea his life was about to change - forever.

LaQuan made a last minute decision to pull into a nearby shopping center to withdraw some money to pay his car payment. Little did he know, he was being watched. As he walked back to his car, two armed men approached him and demanded his wallet and keys. LaQuan quickly complied. They told him to walk away and when he turned he heard, "pop him!" They shot LaQuan 4 times in the back as he tried to get away. As he fell to the ground, they shot him 11 more times.

As LaQuan laid on the ground in agony, people were dashing about in fear. No one came quickly to his aid. He cried out to a woman passing by to please call his mom. He wanted to tell her he loved her one more time before he lost consciousness. A nurse jumped in soon thereafter to try to minimize the bleeding until the EMTs arrived. And then it all went black. No one was sure in that moment if LaQuan Taylor would ever see the light of day again.

LaQuan spent the next two months in ICU. The bullets did serious damage. His ribs were shattered. He lost a



kidney and half of his liver and intestines. He was diagnosed with an incomplete T12 vertebra thoracic spinal cord injury and was told he may never walk again. Months later, LaQuan left the hospital with a shattered body completely confined to a wheelchair.

LaQuan tells, "All my life I was a giver and a helper to others. It was so hard to have to depend on others to help me do everything. Sometimes people wanted to help too much. I am determined to find a way to gain back my independence and reclaim my life."

Unfortunately it wasn't just his body that was shattered. LaQuan's entire life began to implode. Because he was so new to his job, none of his benefits had gone into effect. Medical bills became insurmountable. He couldn't work; hence, he lost his job. Because he was unemployed, he couldn't pay his bills. Hence, his credit score crashed and the dream car he worked so hard to get was repossessed. Relationships fell apart under the stress of it all. It was so hard to comprehend how a life so full of blessings could so quickly be destroyed.

But LaQuan did not give up. He was determined to rebuild it all. He began his initial rehabilitation locally, until he was strong enough to travel to Tampa where he was offered specialized treatment at the VA hospital's spinal cord unit. It was there in the walls of the VA hospital that LaQuan Taylor began to define what his new "normal" would be.

Twice a month he would make the trip to Tampa to seize every opportunity he could to strengthen himself. At first, someone would drive him the few miles to his appointments, but as he got stronger he insisted on wheeling himself. On hot summer days he would go extra early to beat the heat. He tells of a time that he was so tired and consumed by the heat that he actually fell asleep in his wheelchair at a crosswalk waiting for the light.

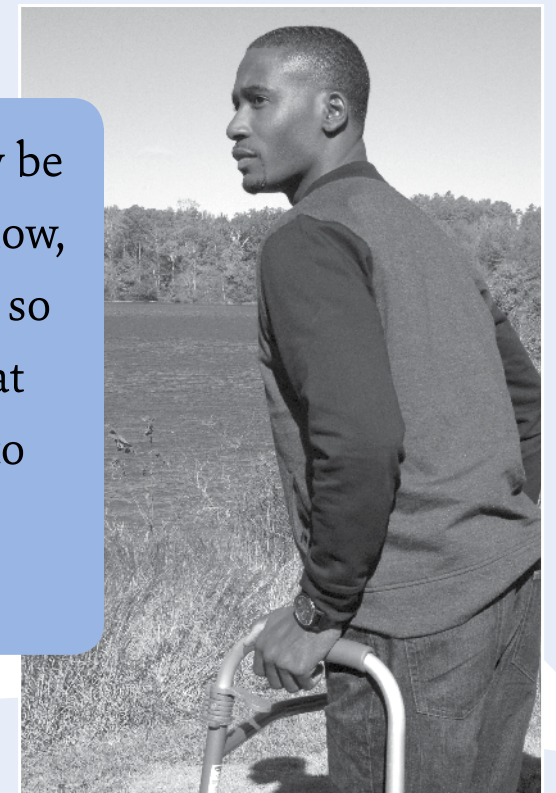
Along his journey, LaQuan has had a lot of time to reflect on the dramatic turn his life took. Though he was a victim of a random act of violence, he never latched on to the victim mentality. He isn't angry and doesn't dwell on "why me?" Instead he feels in some odd way that this was his calling. He shares, "That day they took my car, but they gave me life. This has put everything in perspective. I was made for this. It was meant for this to happen to me. I don't yet know what the purpose of it is, but my steps were ordered. I am strong enough to handle this."

Speaking of steps, LaQuan's faith and determination have paid off. In November he took his first steps and is now able to walk with the support of a walker. He has returned to school and

is working to earn a website design and development certificate, with the dream of starting his own business. And thanks to a grant from the Trust Fund, he just bought a modified car that will allow him to drive again.

LaQuan Taylor takes one day at a time and gives each his all. With a big smile and a grateful heart he says, "Some things may be out of my limits now, but there are still so many things that aren't. I intend to live my life to the fullest!"

"Some things may be out of my limits now, but there are still so many things that aren't. I intend to live my life to the fullest!"



*I want to thank everyone at the commission for everything you all have done for me. Not for just awarding me the grant, but for giving me my independence back. Words cannot express the gratitude I have. Thank you all and God bless!*

- LaQuan





# CHAIRMAN'S LETTER



## My Fellow Georgians,

Change hangs in the air among us today. The political landscape in the country, Georgia included, remains electrified following November's divisive election. Americans have once again sought change and rejected the status quo. What changes can we expect moving forward? How will we be affected? How can we prepare? Is the system ready for shocks that frequently accompany change? This atmosphere will set the tone as our legislators navigate Georgia's 2017 legislative session.

It's in this environment filled with anxious curiosity that I write to you as Chair of Georgia's Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission (BSITFC). It's been a great honor to serve the Commission for the last several years, and this year in particular serving as Chairman. As the Commission now begins its 20th year of operations serving Georgians who've suffered traumatic brain or spinal cord injuries, it has

many accomplishments to be proud of, yet much more work to do improving the lives of those we're called to serve. In these uncertain times, we continue to focus on this goal as our immediate task at hand.

Spread throughout every community in the state, thousands of Georgians, myself included, face the daily challenges associated with living with a traumatic brain injury or spinal cord injury. The effects of these injuries are often lifelong and have devastating impact on affected individual's lives beyond the initial physical trauma. High financial cost associated with post-injury care, loss of wages and employment experienced by injured individuals and affected families, complicated navigation and slow delivery of support resources, and ever present physical barriers to accessible living in our communities while disabled highlight a few challenges we face daily. Trust Fund grants, while small compared to the lifetime cost associated with living with an injury, provide critical funding to access services an individual can tailor to their own needs.

Amidst the uncertainties before us one pattern is clear, current Trust Fund revenue levels jeopardize continued access to these life changing grants. All Trust Fund grants come from a budget funded solely through collection of fees on DUI and reckless driving convictions in Georgia. Since 2008 these collections and the Trust Fund budget have dropped over 30%. Data trends suggest that there are indeed fewer individuals driving while under the influence nationwide. However, additional data shows that conviction rates following DUI arrest in courts across Georgia are falling too. One recent report cited as few as 36% of DUI arrest in the State result in convictions. This low conviction rate highlights the major funding obstacle faced by BSITFC, as well as other groups who rely on this funding source.

An attentive eye is needed to examine the ongoing disparity between arrests and convictions. Are there legal loopholes allowing those arrested to avoid conviction? Are there gaps in training that can be filled to help law enforcement and prosecutors both increase the conviction rate of arrest? More broadly, is new legislation appropriate to aid either the law enforcement community or judicial bodies regarding this low conviction rate?

As we look to the year ahead with many unknowns, these are just a few of the questions I hope can be answered. Identifying these solutions are key to the future stability of the Trust Fund. More importantly, they are key to ensure our end-goal of empowering all Georgians with traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries through grants promoting their wellbeing, independence, and inclusion in our great state.

Sincerely,

Chase Jones  
Chairman  
C-5 Quadrapalegic-Spinal Cord Injury Survivor

# FALLING 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 10% of the original fine can be collected. In many cases however, less is collected due to the inability of individuals to pay the entire fine or if the fine is reduced or waived by the court.

## DUI Convictions

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
2015	23,647	3,845	543	28,035
2016	20,856	3,283	464	24,603

\*Note: This is counted as a Habitual Violator with 3rd DUI Conviction  
All data courtesy of DDS

## Reckless Driving Convictions

Process Year	Reckless Driving
2015	9,522
2016	9,771

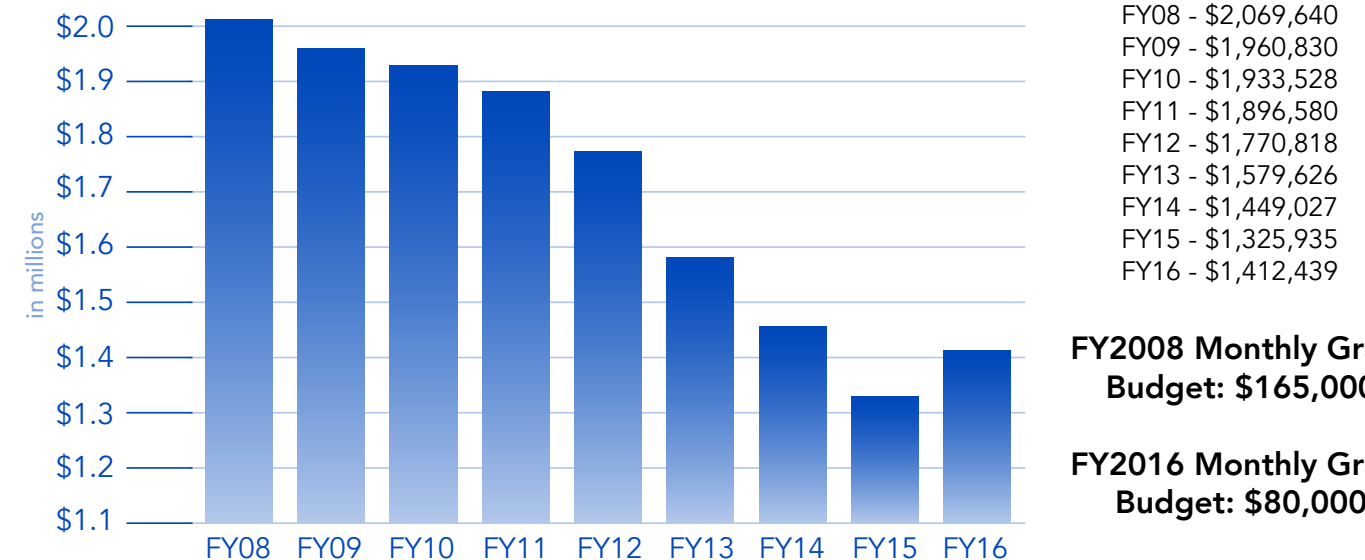
The Commission receives funds via local courts who remand these collections to the Georgia Superior Court Clerks Cooperative Authority (GSCCCA). The state of Georgia has a priority list (in statute) of surcharge collections and the Trust Fund is near the last - 12th in priority. This means that as fines 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.

The decrease in convictions is due to myriad 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 2016 the change in DUI convictions fell by 41.2% (from 41,819

to 24,6013) according to the Georgia Department of Driver Services records. This has brought about a corresponding drop in funds of -8.4% year to year over the same period of 2010-2016.

Fewer funds remitted equals fewer grants of lesser amount 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 fully 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.

## Collections Data Chart



**FY2008 Monthly Grant Budget: \$165,000**

**FY2016 Monthly Grant Budget: \$80,000**

# COMMISSION MEMBERS

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) - Valdosta** - 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) - Atlanta** - was appointed to the Commission as a representative of the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency where she serves as the State-wide 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 Develop-

mental 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.

**Barbara Means-Cheeley, MSW (3) - Atlanta** - was appointed to the Commission as a representative of the Georgia Department of Community Service. Barbara is responsible for the day-to-day management of the Independent Care Waiver Program which serves individuals with disabilities and those who have sustained a traumatic brain injury. Barbara has over 30 years experience in community-based services working in state government with elderly, maternal child health, physical disabilities and behavioral health populations. Barbara volunteers with the March of Dimes and other church and community charities that serve the disadvantaged.

**Henry Craig, Vice Chairman (4) - Milledgeville** - 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 (5) - 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, Treasurer (6) - 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.

**Major Henry Fielding (7) - Atlanta** - 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.

**Cheryl Harris, M. Ed. (8) - Atlanta** - is a Certified Information & Referral Specialist for Aging/Disabilities through the Alliance for Information and Referral Systems (AIRS). She is employed by the Department of Human Services Division of Aging Services (DAS) and serves as the Section Manager for Access to Services (AtS). Programs under her management include the Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC), Money Follows the Person (MFP), GeorgiaCares, and Elder Legal Assistance Program (ELAP). Previously Cheryl worked in the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman as the Training Coordinator. Cheryl served as a Long Term Care Ombudsman with the Atlanta Ombudsman Program from 1988-2006. She was appointed by DHS to serve as a Commissioner for Georgia's Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Trust Fund Commission in 2012 where she served as Vice Chairperson for two years and currently serves on the Communications Committee. Cheryl has over 30 years experience in the field of Aging Services.

**Chase Jones, Chairman (9) - 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 (10) - 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. She and her husband, Jeffery, have one child. They reside in Atlanta.

**Gwen McKee (11) - Savannah** - is a Governor's appointee from Chatham County. Gwen currently serves as Chair 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 Traumatic Injury Advisory committee.

**Randy Owens (12) - 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.


**Timothy Wall (13) - 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 on the Distribution committee.

**Jane Warnock, Secretary (14) - 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 serves on the Commission's Finance and Public Policy Committees.





# CHAMPIONS FOR THE CAUSE

 **The Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission held its annual meeting at the October 2016 Commission meeting.** The Commission was pleased to recognize and honor the following for their outstanding contributions to the Commission and the citizens of Georgia:

The Commission's *Pathfinder Award*, which is bestowed to an individual who has made significant contributions to the Commission, was given to former BSITFC chairman **Joseph D. Frazier**. JD generously served the Commission for eight years with great integrity, fairness and compassion.

The *Larry Huggins Memorial Award*, given to honor an outstanding committee member, was presented to **Claire Creech** for her many years of outstanding leadership as Chair of the Commission's Children and Youth Committee and member of the Advisory Committee.

The Commission also presented *Outstanding Service Awards* to the following individuals for their significant contributions to the Trust Fund and the disability community:



- Dionna Bolar** - former BSITFC Director of Application Management, Atlanta Mission
- Brian Dowd**, Program Director - Waiver Program - Department of Community Health
- Gina Gelinas** - Georgia Department of Education - Exceptional Students
- Paige Havens** - Brain Injury Association of Georgia, Advisory & Communications committees
- Rusty Kidd**, State Representative - Georgia General Assembly

Front Row - Left to Right: JD Frazier and Representative Rusty Kidd;  
Back Row - Left to Right: Paige Havens, Dionna Bolar, Claire Creech and Gina Gelinas.

# APPLYING FOR AN AWARD

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

## Four Steps to an Award

**Step 1:** Apply online at [www.bsitf.state.ga.us](http://www.bsitf.state.ga.us) or call toll-free (1-888-233-5760) for an application. As soon as your application is submitted and all supporting documents have been received, your application packet is sent to the Distribution Program Staff. After final completion the application will be reviewed in order of date stamp and as budget becomes available.

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

**Step 3:** The Commission votes to adopt the recommendations made by the Distribution Committee.

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

To qualify, applicants are asked to submit:

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

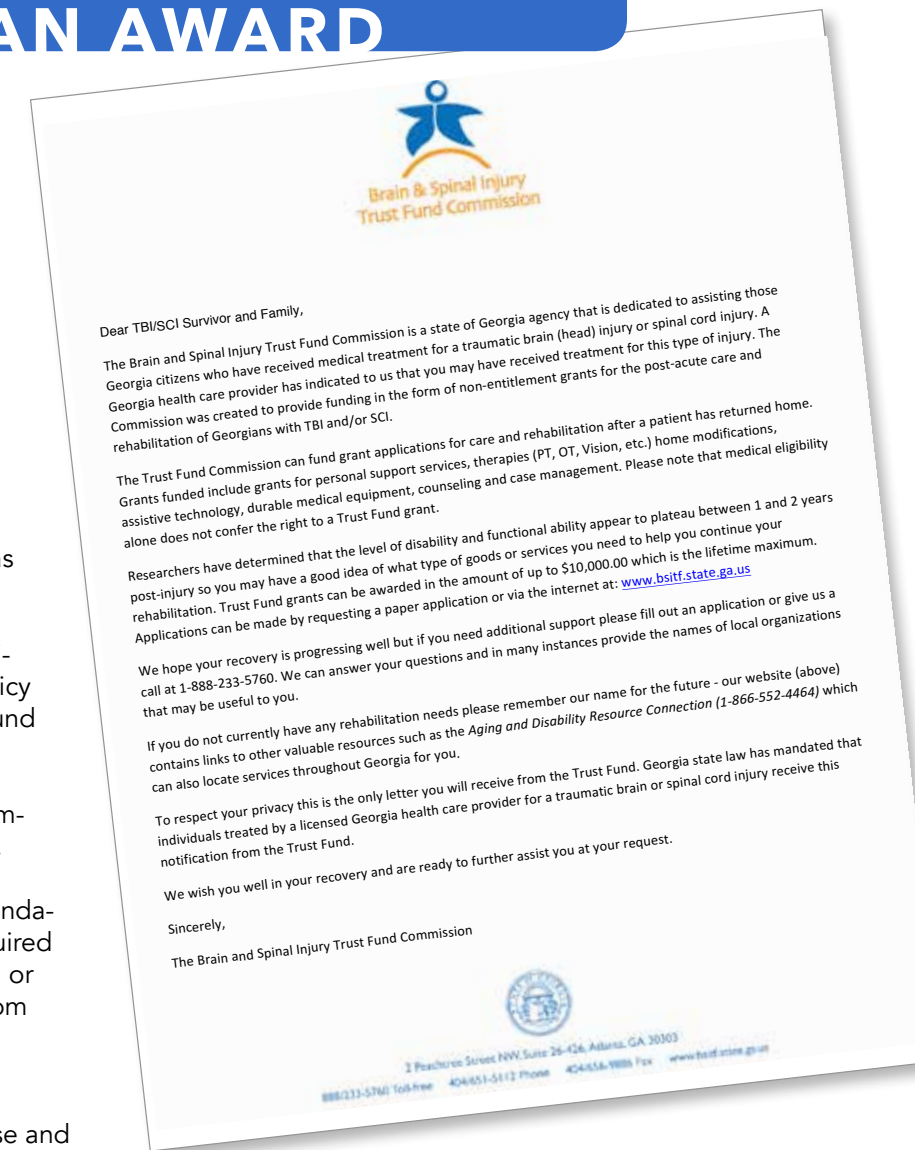
Additionally, applicants are asked to:

- explain how an award will increase their independence, offer long-term rehabilitation 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. For additional support, call us toll free at 1-888-233-5760. We are happy to help you find the resources you need.



## Remembering Annette Bowling

The Commissioners and staff of the Trust Fund remember one of our best and brightest who devoted herself to Georgians with disabilities for over forty years. Annette Bowling served as a BSTIF Commissioner from 1999 to 2010. Annette was recognized for her many contributions to the state of Georgia and the Commission with a Pathfinder Award in 2010. In addition to her service to the Commission and the brain injury community Annette was active both at work and as an advocate on behalf of individuals with disabilities. We often saw Annette at the state Capitol supporting legislative initiatives and utilizing her considerable influence to ease the burden of disability of families across Georgia.

Annette served the Southwest Georgia Cancer Coalition, Southwest Georgia Area Health Education Center, Southwest Georgia Easter Seals as its Executive Director and the Georgia Budget Policy committee. A strong role model

for all individuals, Annette also served as chairperson of the Division of Rehabilitation Services Council and co-chaired the Governor's Blue Ribbon Taskforce on Community Based Services. She was named on of the "100 Most Influential Georgians" by *Georgia Trend* magazine in 2008.



# 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.

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.

## Trust Fund Awards Change Lives.



Brain & Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission  
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