



*Life. Vision. Possibilities.*

BRAIN & SPINAL INJURY TRUST FUND COMMISSION

CENTRAL REGISTRY FOR TRAUMATIC BRAIN & SPINAL INJURIES

ANNUAL REPORTS 2004 AND 2005



**Brain & Spinal Injury  
Trust Fund Commission**

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“THE FUND HAS HELPED ME TO BE INDEPENDENT WITH MY DAUGHTER SO WE CAN HAVE A NORMAL MOTHER/DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIP AND DO THE THINGS OTHER KIDS ARE DOING.”

# Franchklins

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Lately, three-time world champion wheelchair racer SHANNON FRANCKLIN, 42, is more likely to be chasing her toddler around the house than competitors around a track. And that’s just how she likes it.

“I’ve got loads of trophies and, when I race, my times are still very good, but I just want to be with Kira right now,” says Shannon. Which is why the effervescent Atlantan traded working as a civil rights investigator at the U.S. Department of Education for full-time motherhood.

Enduring the stress of infertility made Shannon all the more determined to dedicate the next few years to her daughter.

“Fertility treatments were more agonizing than my accident,” she confesses, referring to the horseback riding incident that broke her neck 15 years ago.

While the accident left her a quadriplegic, it also put her on the path to meeting her husband Mike, an engineer at Georgia-Pacific. Like Shannon, Mike is a world-class wheelchair athlete so it’s no surprise that they fell in love at a track meet. (He sustained a C5-C6 incomplete injury after a motorcycle accident as a teen.)

Today, as parenting takes the lead in their lives, Trust Fund awards are helping to smooth the way. An award for attendant care helps with the heavy lifting – getting Kira in and out of her car seat, pushing her stroller up steep hills – as well as the intricacies of daily family life. Having a little support goes a long way. Or, as Shannon says with a laugh, “hair bows and quads don’t mix.”

“The Fund has helped me to be independent with my daughter so we can have a normal mother/daughter relationship and do the things other kids are doing,” says Shannon (pictured on the cover with Mike and Kira). Taking their little daredevil to the neighborhood playground figures high on the list.

On the homefront, Shannon manages the inside of their home, while Mike takes care of the outside. And thanks to a recent Trust Fund award, Mike has made their driveway safer.

“We had a bumpy, crooked driveway with very bad drainage,” he says. “It was hard to navigate.”

To accommodate their larger, adaptive vehicles, the drive was leveled and enlarged. Although more work is necessary, this investment means they can stay in their home, which they spent quite a bit of money on to make universally accessible.

“The Fund has made a huge difference in our lives,” says Shannon. “We are so grateful to the Trust Fund for what they’ve done for us – it’s a great opportunity for people with disabilities.”

## LIFE, VISION, POSSIBILITIES

**LAST YEAR** I gave birth to our first child, Matthew Isaac. Along with the incredible joy that comes with being new parents, my husband and I have been navigating the steep learning curve required to raise an infant. One of the many emotions we never anticipated is the depth of our concern to keep him safe.



Our anxieties may be magnified by the fact that we both work with people with brain and spinal injuries. During the three years I've been at the Commission, Max has been a chaplain for the Acquired Brain Injury Unit at Shepherd Center. No wonder the joke in our house is that Matthew may have to wear a helmet every day of his life!

Fears aside, our work has taught us that if Matthew were to sustain a traumatic injury or other disability, more than anything, we would want him to have choices and opportunities for a full life. We would want him to have possibilities.

Providing these possibilities is why my work with the Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission is so rewarding. Here, I am able to see how people with traumatic injuries are returning to lives of independence and inclusion. In their applications to the Trust Fund, Georgians detail their visions: returning to work, leaving a nursing home, or realizing their dream of becoming an artist, an equestrian, or an auctioneer. Each person brings their vision and possibilities, and through the Trust Fund, we are honored to help bring their dreams to life.

In the past two years we have seen hundreds of people achieve their potential with help from the Trust Fund. During fiscal year 2004, we awarded \$1,061,742 in Trust Fund dollars; and the next year we awarded nearly two million (\$1,978,861). These distributions were used in rich and diverse ways to help people live quality lives, full of possibilities.

Another recent accomplishment came with the passage of Senate Bill 582, which gave the Commission administration of Georgia's Central Registry for Traumatic Brain and Spinal Injuries. Overseeing this Registry will allow us to provide people with timely information on available services and options soon after their injuries. It will also enable us to monitor and act upon shifting demographic trends, ensuring that Trust Fund dollars are being used to help those most in need. We've taken steps to increase awareness about our services, including a new website that makes the application process easier and encourages Trust Fund recipients to share their experiences. But more can be done. Please let us know your ideas about how we can reach those most in need.

As we take on the challenges of the coming year, I find it helps to think of Helen Keller. She was once asked if it was a terrible thing to lose one's sight. "No, it is a terrible thing to see and have no vision," she answered. The Commission envisions possibilities for people with traumatic brain and spinal injury. Do you?

Sincerely,



Kristen E. Vincent, Executive Director

# GROWING AWARENESS, GREATER GIVING – THE TRUST FUND IN ACTION

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Welcome to the 2004-2005 annual reports for the Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission. The past two years have been dynamic ones for our organization, with accomplishments that include:

- As of June 30 2005, more than \$3.5 million has been distributed.
  - More than 1,000 Georgians with a traumatic injury have received distributions from the Trust Fund.
  - As we've raised awareness about the Trust Fund, the number of applicants has grown each month.
  - We have strengthened our role as Georgia's lead agency for coordinating the state's delivery system of services for people with traumatic brain and spinal injuries. With the leadership of our Traumatic Injury Advisory Board, we are making improvements to the way our state provides services for people with injuries and other disabilities.
  - We have taken on the administration of Georgia's Central Registry for Traumatic Brain and Spinal injuries. Thanks to the new data collection system we've created with the Georgia Hospital Association, we know at least 45,080 Georgians had a traumatic injury in 2004. (For more information, see the Central Registry report, pages 11-13.)
- Our new website allows Georgians to apply online for distributions from the Trust Fund, as well as connect to their legislators and link to resources. (see [www.bsif.state.ga.us](http://www.bsif.state.ga.us)).

Our strategic plan, developed with input from recipients and other concerned citizens around the state, is on track. We are increasing awareness of and distributions from the Trust Fund; strengthening the statewide infrastructure for people with traumatic injuries; and enhancing the effectiveness of the Commission by improving its financial systems.

In addition, we are fostering reciprocity. As the payer of last resort, our mission is to help people when all other resources are exhausted. However, our budget for awards is limited by the amount collected from DUI fines. As we work to meet the growing need, the Commission is encouraging Trust Fund recipients to share their resources. Whether it's help with a Trust Fund application or words of reassurance, we all have a role to play in supporting our community and ensuring the longterm sustainability of the Trust Fund.

This spirit of giving was summed up best recently by Trust Fund recipient Tyrone Johnson. He plans to open his own business and when he does, he says, "I want to make money so I can donate some back to the Trust Fund."

## AT-A-GLANCE

**WE HAVE POPULAR SUPPORT.** In November 1998, Georgia voters overwhelmingly approved (by 73%) a constitutional amendment to create a Trust Fund for 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.

**WE KEEP TRACK.** As the new administrators of Georgia's Central Registry for Traumatic Brain and Spinal Injuries, we collect quarterly data about the number of injured Georgians. One of the many benefits of having accurate information is that we are now able to provide the newly injured with a resource guide for all state services. This is especially important given that the majority of patients are discharged to their homes and may not know about other available resources.

**WE ARE GUIDED BY THOSE WITH FIRSHAND KNOWLEDGE.** Unlike other state agencies, more than half of the people who serve on the Commission must have a brain or spinal cord injury (or be a family member).

**WE CONNECT PEOPLE TO THEIR COMMUNITIES.** Too often the assumption is that an injured person will spend their life in an institution. Our goal is to get people into the community.

Georgians with traumatic brain and spinal injuries deserve lives of independence and inclusion, lives rich with vision and possibilities. Trust Fund awards change lives. Even modest financial support can be the spark that ignites a dream.



“EVEN THOUGH MY CAR ACCIDENT WAS HORRIBLE, I WOULDN’T HAVE IT ANY OTHER WAY NOW, BECAUSE IT GAVE ME A CHANCE TO SEE LIFE FROM A DISABLED PERSON’S PERSPECTIVE AND SEE THAT THIS VIEW IS AS GOOD AS ANY OTHER PERSON’S VIEW.”

# Brian

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BRIAN EDMONDS’ impish grin, twinkling green eyes and devilish sense of humor are hard to resist. Friends delight in his “Brianpalooza” parties. Even animals respond to his expressions of inner joy.

That’s why “Lilly,” his canine assistant, is featured on the business cards for the “Golden Graphics” design business he runs out of his apartment. And that’s also why therapeutic horseback riding has been instrumental to his ongoing recovery from a traumatic brain injury 13 years ago, when he was 16.

Brian recently used a Trust Fund award to continue therapeutic horseback riding, an activity he loves for its athleticism and competition. And its results.

“Eighteen months after his accident, he had to be cued three times per minute to stay on task,” says his mother, Sue. “Today, he can work for as long as 50 minutes sequencing information.”

Brian agrees. “The horseback riding and cognitive therapy complement each other in my life,” he says. “They both work on attention, memory and posture.”

A disciplined taskmaster in the ring, Brian says horses respond to his consistent, firm guidance. They can also sense that he is fearless – riding anything from a quarter horse to a Tennessee Walker.

This persistence was recognized in April 2005, when Brian, 28, excelled at yet another event. This time he received a blue ribbon in independent horse handling at the Chris and Merry Carlos Horse Park at Chastain.

Brian has come a long way from the car accident that changed his life just two months after he got his driver’s license.

As he says, “I went from accelerated classes to special education; from running track to physical therapy; from being a popular guy to being someone people did not know how to react to.”

“Even though my car accident was horrible, I wouldn’t have it any other way now, because it gave me a chance to see life from a disabled person’s perspective and see that this view is as good as any other person’s view.”

So, what lies ahead? Brian is eager to travel, to find a girlfriend, and perhaps compete in the Special Olympics. But in the meantime, he remains dedicated to his therapy.

“The doctors and therapists who worked with Brian in the early years would be surprised and very happy with his life today and what he has achieved,” says Sue. “He’s come to this point in his recovery through the hard work he does every day. Brian doesn’t stop, even when he loses ground; he just keeps at it until he’s able to make progress again.”

“The Trust Fund has given Brian a number of opportunities,” she adds, “and he has made the most of them.”

## SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENTS



**In 2004**, we achieved significant milestones. The Commission transitioned from a tactical day-to-day management role to one of strategy – providing fiscal oversight, setting policy, and defining long range plans. This shift has been seamless, thanks to our remarkable staff and to our commission members. Thank you all for your dedication, especially to those who make personal sacrifices so they can participate. Your long hours of volunteering are deeply appreciated.

Given our new designation as Lead Agency on Traumatic Injuries for Georgia, our role has expanded. In addition to disbursing funds, we are charged with monitoring service delivery among all state agencies for people with traumatic brain and spinal injuries. No small task, but one we are eager to take on. And one which enhances our ability to distribute the Trust Fund effectively.

At the same time, we have taken on the management of the Central Registry, which monitors traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries in our state. Together with the Georgia Hospital Association, we are reorganizing the way data is gathered. By having more accurate information about who has had a traumatic injury and why, we can ensure that our services reach those who need them most. And ensure that information gets to individuals immediately post-injury.

As these new systems enable us to get a clearer picture about traumatic injury in Georgia, we must anticipate that the way the Trust Fund operates will change. The Commission has begun the process of revising and enhancing its distribution policies to ensure the effective use of Trust Fund dollars in Georgia, as well as the long-term financial viability of the Trust Fund.

Finally, I must share that the highlight of my year was the wonderful presentations given by Trust Fund recipients at our Commission retreat. Their words grounded our thoughts and notions about the difference an award can make in a life. And they reminded us of the importance of choice – that it is up to an individual, not an institution or an expert, to determine what he or she needs most to succeed.

As I turn the chairmanship over to Rusty Kidd, an outstanding member with tremendous insight, I am optimistic about our mission and feel certain that the Commission will prosper under his leadership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "D. B. Skelley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dennis B. Skelley, PT, MSA, FACHE  
Chair (2002-2005)



# Buddy

For JAMES “BUDDY” LEE, JR., 30, there is no better place than his bedroom. The cowboy-themed murals painted by sister Babs Labrador (left) – complete with a black buzzard – calm him when nothing else will.

Despite the challenge of frequent physical outbursts Buddy’s mother and primary caregiver is resolute. “I won’t put him in a nursing home as long as I draw a breath,” says Betty Lee (right).

Buddy’s behavior stems from brain damage caused by a motorcycle falling on him when he was 16 months old, and subsequent complications.

Buddy’s family has been able to keep Buddy at home thanks in part to Trust Fund awards for a roll-in shower and a ceiling lift in the living room.



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“WE ARE REALLY PLEASED WITH THE WORK THAT THE COMMISSION HAS DONE OVER THE PAST COUPLE OF YEARS TO GET THE TRUST FUND GOING. I HAVE HEARD FROM MY CONSTITUENTS THAT THEY ARE RECEIVING AWARDS AND HAVE BEEN ABLE TO USE THE MONEY TO IMPROVE THEIR LIVES SIGNIFICANTLY. I WANT TO CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE VERY IMPORTANT WORK OF THIS COMMISSION.”

– The Honorable Don Thomas, Senate District 54

# FINANCIAL INFORMATION FOR FISCAL YEARS 2004/2005

## THE COLLECTIONS PROCESS

Each year, hundreds of courts throughout the state impose and collect a 10% surcharge on “driving while under the influence” (DUI) fines, required by state law OCGA 15-21-149.

During fiscal year 2004, court clerks remitted these funds to the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), which then transferred them to the Georgia Office of Treasury and Fiscal Services for deposit into the Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund, a separate account in the state treasury.

However, during the special summer legislative session that year, the General Assembly passed HB1EX, changing the way fines and fees are remitted, collected, and allocated. As a result, court clerks now remit funds to the Georgia Superior Court Clerks’ Cooperative Authority (GSCCCA), which then transfers the funds to the Commission’s account in the state treasury.

## COLLECTIONS DECLINE

Fiscal year 2004 (July 1, 2003 – June 30, 2004) was a good one for the Commission. We experienced a significant increase in funds: \$2,250,724 was collected and deposited into the Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund account.

Fiscal year 2005 was not as favorable. The amount collected for FY ’05 (July 1, 2004 - June 30, 2005) was \$2,003,410 – a drop of approximately \$200,000. Efforts are underway to determine what has caused this decline.

## OUR PROUDEST ACCOMPLISHMENTS DISTRIBUTIONS 2004/2005

As awareness of the Trust Fund has grown, so has the number of our awards. More than 1,000 Georgians have received distributions that are improving their lives.

Other Trust Fund milestones include:

- The second year the Commission dispensed monies from the Trust Fund was in fiscal year 2004. That year the General Assembly approved an appropriation of \$2,000,000 to the Commission. We awarded a total of \$1,061,742 in distributions, and spent \$291,479 (or 21.5% of all expenses) on operating costs. Unused funds were rolled over into the next year’s budget.
- Of the \$2,042,500 budgeted for distributions in fiscal year 2005, the Commission awarded \$1,978,861 – nearly the entire distribution budget for that year. Operating costs were \$517,544 (20.7% of all expenses).

Our proudest accomplishment to date is having awarded \$3,854,397 to Georgians who need it most.

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“AS GWINNETT COUNTY RECORDER’S COURT CLERK, ONE OF MY RESPONSIBILITIES IS TO COLLECT FUNDS FOR THE BRAIN AND SPINAL INJURY TRUST FUND. OF ALL THE FUNDS THAT TRAFFIC COURTS COLLECT, THESE FUNDS DIRECTLY AFFECT CITIZENS IN A POSITIVE WAY. THE RECIPIENTS ARE CITIZENS WHO HAVE BEEN INJURED ON GEORGIA’S ROADS AND OFTEN LEFT WITH NOT ONLY LIFE ALTERING INJURIES, BUT FINANCIALLY DEVASTATING MEDICAL EXPENSES. BY HAVING THE TRUST FUND ASSIST WITH THESE MEDICAL EXPENSES, CITIZENS CAN FOCUS ON THE HEALING PROCESS. I AM PROUD TO ASSIST THIS AGENCY IN ITS ENDEAVORS TO HELP OTHERS.”

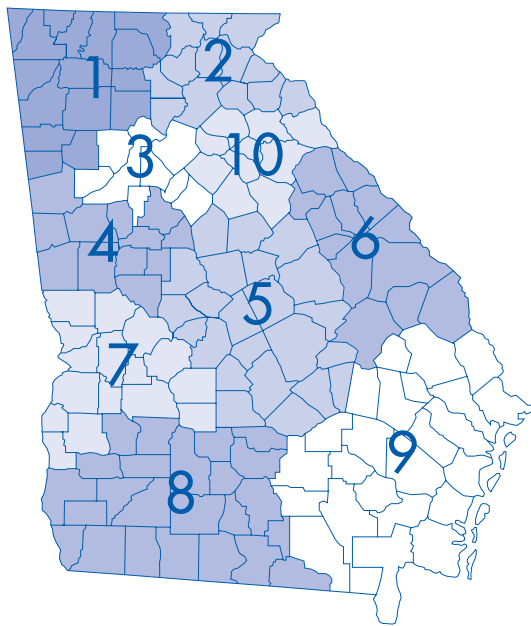
– **Libby Blackwell**, Clerk of Recorder’s Court, Gwinnett County

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# DISTRIBUTION DATA

	2004	2005
<b>Total Awards</b>	252	523
<b>Total Award Amount</b>	\$1,061,742	\$1,978,861

## AWARDS BY REGION

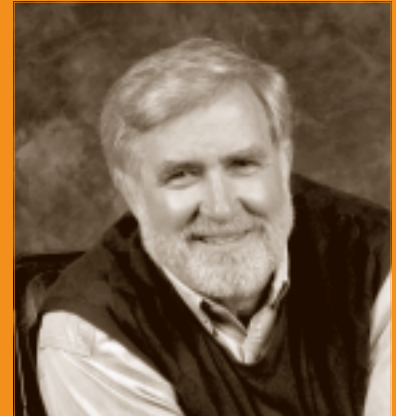


	2004	2005
<b>1</b>	16	40
<b>2</b>	19	41
<b>3</b>	97	196
<b>4</b>	25	42
<b>5</b>	22	34
<b>6</b>	26	70
<b>7</b>	3	13
<b>8</b>	18	25
<b>9</b>	9	31
<b>10</b>	17	31

## AWARDS BY TOP FIVE CATEGORIES

2004		2005	
<b>Transportation</b>	22.92%	<b>Transportation</b>	19.68%
<b>Home Modifications</b>	12.32%	<b>Durable Medical Equipment</b>	15.80%
<b>Housing</b>	11.17%	<b>Home Modifications</b>	11.51%
<b>Medical Care</b>	10.89%	<b>Personal Support Services</b>	8.84%
<b>Durable Medical Equipment</b>	9.17%	<b>Housing</b>	8.30%

## VISION FOR THE FUTURE



**IN FEBRUARY 2005**, I was honored to have Governor Perdue appoint me Chairman of the Commission. I am fortunate to follow in the footsteps of David Renz and Dennis Skelley – men who've laid a strong foundation for the challenges ahead. My thanks to you both.

The Commission has much to be proud of. More than \$3,500,000 has been distributed to Georgians with traumatic brain and spinal injuries. Yet, as we go forward, one of my deepest concerns is the anticipation of a fourfold increase in applications this year. With 723 applications received in the first half of 2005, we've doubled the amount of requests for all of 2004.

Though the Commission is pleased to reach more Georgians, difficult decisions must be made to ensure the equitable distribution of funds.

One step we've taken is to evaluate how much is designated for certain goods and services. For example, we have proposed to place caps on computer requests in order to increase our funding for transportation. This does not mean we don't value computers. Rather, we determined that our transportation awards were not sufficient to truly help our applicants.

Another issue we are wrangling with is the best way to diversify our source of revenue. Currently, our awards are limited by the amount of DUI fines collected annually. But, the number and needs of Georgians with traumatic injury is growing. We can't depend solely upon DUI surcharges to achieve our goals. Complicating this is that while the Commission is legally prevented from soliciting funds, we can accept donations. Solving this financial conundrum is sure to occupy the Commission for some time to come.

These are just a few of the issues we must resolve soon, especially given new research about the extent of traumatic injury coming out of the Central Registry. In 2004, 45,080 Georgians experienced new traumatic injuries. Yet, there are thousands of people who, like myself, were injured years ago and may not have been included in the Registry. We must find better ways of identifying them and making sure their needs are met.

As you can see, the Commission has a full plate, but we look forward to helping each and every Georgian with a traumatic brain and spinal injury to obtain the maximum amount of assistance we can provide.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rusty Kidd". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rusty Kidd, Chair (2005)

# CENTRAL REGISTRY

## FOR TRAUMATIC BRAIN & SPINAL INJURIES

*I*n order to deliver resources to Georgians most in need, it's crucial for the Commission to have an accurate count of people with traumatic injury in Georgia. That's why we're delighted to have become the administrators of the Central Registry for Traumatic Brain and Spinal Injuries as of July, 2004.

For more than 20 years, the Division of Rehabilitation Services, through the Roosevelt Warm Springs Institute for Rehabilitation, took on the task of monitoring how many people sustained traumatic injury. The Institute worked hard to collect the data but was challenged by a low rate of reporting from hospitals. In addition, hospitals provided data only on hospital admissions, but not on those who sustained mild traumatic injuries and were treated and released from the emergency room.

Today, thanks to our partnership with the Georgia Hospital Association, more detailed information is being gathered on a quarterly basis. We are also working with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Division of Public Health's Injury Prevention Section, to analyze the data.

For the first time, the Commission is receiving information from all of Georgia's hospitals on inpatient admissions, emergency department visits, and visits to ambulatory surgical clinics.

As a result we've seen an enormous increase in the number of people registered as having traumatic brain and spinal injuries. Instead of gathering 7,000-10,000 names as we had expected, improved accounting identified 45,080 newly injured people who were hospitalized or treated in emergency departments in Georgia in 2004.

Clearly, the rate of injury, and the accompanying need for services and supports, is greater than anticipated.

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“ONE STRENGTH OF GEORGIA’S CENTRAL REGISTRY IS THAT IT IDENTIFIES NOT JUST SEVERE TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURIES (TBI), BUT MILD ONES AS WELL. MILD INJURIES DON’T ALWAYS MEAN MILD OUTCOMES, THEREFORE IT’S IMPORTANT THAT PEOPLE WITH THESE INJURIES RECEIVE INFORMATION AND SERVICES. THE GEORGIA BRAIN AND SPINAL INJURY TRUST FUND COMMISSION EXCELS BECAUSE THEY CONTACT EVERYONE WHO IS HOSPITALIZED OR TREATED IN AN EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT FOR A TBI.”

*Wes Rutland-Brown, MPH, Epidemiologist, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Division of Injury and Disability Outcomes, and Programs*

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# CENTRAL REGISTRY

## FOR TRAUMATIC BRAIN & SPINAL INJURIES

As you can see from these charts, most people are injured during their most productive years. Years when they are launching careers and starting families. And, typically, they are discharged from the hospital to their home (71%) rather than to a treatment center (18%). Unfortunately, this can mean newly injured people do not receive adequate information about their recovery options.

That's why we believe gathering data is only the first step. After the Central Registry receives names and contact information, the Commission sends information on resources to all those who are newly injured. This information advises them and their caregivers about how to access resources available across the state.

The Commission remains optimistic about what will be accomplished with this new data. We plan to conduct more in-depth analysis of this information as well as find ways to identify the people who do not go to a hospital facility for treatment. Ultimately, as we reveal the extent of traumatic injury in our state, we are confident that this new information will enable us to reach more Georgians who are eligible to benefit from the Trust Fund's resources.

**Note:** While 6,677 people were hospitalized for traumatic injuries, 110 of them sustained both a traumatic brain and spinal cord injury. As a result, in the chart you will notice that they were counted twice to show the total number of traumatic brain injuries, and the total number of traumatic spinal cord injuries.

### THE CENTRAL REGISTRY DATA HAS YIELDED THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION

#### HOSPITALIZATIONS\*

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There were 6,677 people discharged from hospitals with new traumatic brain or spinal injuries in 2004.

**Children** and young adults under age 24 are at highest risk of sustaining a traumatic brain or spinal injury (31%).

**Motor vehicle accidents** lead (43%) as the primary cause of traumatic brain injury, followed by accidental falls (34%) then homicide or inflicted injury (7%).

**Males** are 2.5 times more likely to sustain a spinal cord injury, and 1.7 times more likely to sustain a traumatic brain injury, than females.

#### EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS\*

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There were a total of 38,403 people treated and released from emergency departments for new traumatic brain injuries in 2004 (emergency department data included only traumatic brain injuries because spinal cord injuries require hospitalization.)

**Children** four years and younger are at greatest risk of traumatic brain injury (18%).

**Accidental falls** (41%) are the leading cause of injury seen in emergency rooms, followed by motor vehicle accidents (21%) and being struck by an object or person (19%)

\* For more detailed information about the Central Registry data, see: [www.bsitf.state.ga.us](http://www.bsitf.state.ga.us).

## Central Registry Data Jan. 1 – Dec. 31, 2004

		Hospitalization Data		Emergency Dept. Data
		All TBI	All SCI	All TBI
<b>BY AGE</b>	<b>0-4 years</b>	359	9	6967
	<b>5-9 years</b>	172	3	3353
	<b>10-14 years</b>	277	15	3128
	<b>15-19 years</b>	593	54	4252
	<b>20-24 years</b>	561	58	3225
	<b>25-34 years</b>	737	109	4513
	<b>35-44 years</b>	716	125	3938
	<b>45-54 years</b>	695	131	2937
	<b>55-64 years</b>	507	91	1781
	<b>65-74 years</b>	452	56	1341
	<b>75 years +</b>	1011	55	2965
	<b>Missing</b>	1	0	3
<b>BY SEX</b>	<b>Female</b>	2253	199	17031
	<b>Male</b>	3827	507	21370
	<b>Unknown</b>	1	0	2
<b>BY RACE</b>	<b>American Indian</b>	2	0	58
	<b>Asian</b>	59	6	387
	<b>Black</b>	1565	236	10899
	<b>Hispanic</b>	338	18	2090
	<b>Multi Racial</b>	203	15	869
	<b>Non-white Hispanic</b>	55	14	426
	<b>Pacific Islander</b>	1	0	4
	<b>White</b>	3724	401	22838
	<b>Unknown</b>	133	16	832
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>6081</b>	<b>706</b>	<b>38403</b>





“GOD WAS LOOKING OVER ME BECAUSE THE TRUST FUND HAPPENED AT JUST THE RIGHT TIME”

# Kathy

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The man who hit KATHY ADAMS' car head-on had spent the afternoon drinking at a bar.

“I had just turned 19 when I had the accident on January 27, 1981,” says Kathy, recalling her life-altering event as though it was yesterday.

At the time, Kathy was an ambitious, outgoing student attending Floyd Junior College and dreamed of owning a house. That night she didn't make it home from class.

“I was hit by a drunk driver who had no insurance. He didn't pay restitution or anything,” she says. As Kathy was taken to the hospital, police searched for and found the drunk driver who had left the scene of the crime.

In a coma for 11 days, Kathy wasn't expected to live, much less walk. “Three weeks after the accident the neurosurgeon gave us no hope,” remembers her mother Louise (pictured at left with Kathy). “They wouldn't let the orthopedic surgeon set her bones because she was too weak.”

After 67 days of intensive care, nearly a dozen surgeries and three years in a wheelchair, Kathy has pieced together a new life, one that includes brain and physical injuries – and her own home.

Nestled at the foot of Mt. Alto, near Rome, Georgia, Kathy's home is cozy and well-maintained – what she calls her “pride and joy.”

“I get to look out over the trees,” she says of the view from her living room. At 43, she could easily pass for someone ten years younger. Her waist-length brown hair sways as she slowly guides visitors through her home, pointing out the amenities she loves most: a gas light fireplace, cathedral ceilings, and porches front and back.

Kathy takes particular pride in her bathroom. “I wanted a sit-down shower and that's exactly what I got,” she says. “I can't get into a bathtub real easily so they put in handles so I don't have to worry about falling down.”

Best of all, her backyard, dotted with flowers and bird feeders, is adjacent to her parents' house, providing easy access to dinner companions and her groundskeeper.

“Daddy is my handy man,” she says with a grin. “He tends to my weeds.”

Kathy is quick to attribute her home ownership to her determination and a well-timed Trust Fund award.

Eager to build a home, she didn't have the money for a down payment. Fortunately, her father learned of the Trust Fund at a meeting of their local Brain Injury Support group (which he and his wife founded soon after Kathy's accident). Kathy's Trust Fund award covered the cost of her down payment.

“God was looking over me because the Trust Fund happened at just the right time,” she says. “You wouldn't believe the smile it put on my face when I heard I got it. I thought, ‘Finally, something good came out of all this.’”

Her family feels blessed, too. “When she was granted this money, it enabled Kathy as well as us,” says Louise. “We want to make sure that when we're gone she can live comfortably and be secure.”

(1)



(2)



(3)



(4)



(5)



## OUR 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 Commission comprises 15 members, ten of whom are appointed by the Governor and five by state agencies. To ensure a breadth of experience and opinion, the Commission's statute requires that at least seven of the 15 members be people with traumatic brain or spinal injuries or family members of people with these injuries. Other members include representatives of the medical profession and other experts.

**ANNETTE BOWLING (1)** has served on the Commission since the Governor appointed her in 2000. She is the Executive Director of the Albany Advocacy Resource Center and is also involved with the Georgia ARC Network and the Commission on Mental Health/Mental Retardation/Substance Abuse (MH/MR/SA) Commission. She has served on the Georgia Rehabilitation Advisory Council, the Georgia Department of Medical Assistance Consumer Advisory Committee and many other boards.

**LARRY HUGGINS (2)** was appointed by the Department of Labor in 2000. After his spinal cord injury in 1968, he became a rehabilitation counselor which led to his working at the Roosevelt Warm Springs Institute for Rehabilitation. He was their director of marketing until he retired. Larry serves on several boards including the Georgia Rehabilitation Association and the Professional Rehabilitation Specialists of Georgia.

**J. HUNTER HURST, Treasurer (3)** was appointed by the Department of Community Health in 2000. He is Executive Director of the Georgia Infirmity, Inc., a provider of home and community-based services, and the Georgia Infirmity Non-Profit Housing Corporation, a provider of affordable housing options for elderly and disabled persons in Savannah, Georgia. Hunter has worked in home- and community-based services for nearly 25 years.

**SUSAN JOHNSON, Vice Chair (4)** was appointed by the Governor in 2004 and serves as chair of the advisory board. A speech language pathologist, Susan works at the Shepherd Center as Director of Brain Injury Services. She has held leadership positions at the National Brain Injury Association and the Brain Injury Association of Georgia. Her husband, Mark, is a C-5 quadriplegic.

**RUSTY KIDD, Chair (5)** was appointed to the Commission in 2004 by the Governor, who made him Chairman in 2005. A native Georgian, Rusty consults with state and local governments on behalf of associations and businesses that range from the Georgia Association of Home Health Agencies to Merck. Rusty's other Board positions have included Shepherd Center and Habitat for Humanity.

**ESTELLE LEE MILLER's (6)** passion for this field grew after her daughter, Linda Jean, experienced a traumatic brain injury. A Charter Member of the Commission, Lee was appointed by the Governor in 2000. She is active in numerous organizations including the President's Council on the 21st Century Workforce, Skills Gap committee; the World Committee on Disability; the Georgia State Rehabilitation Council and both the Georgia and the National Rehabilitation Associations. Lee has been honored twice for Distinguished Contributions toward the Full Employment of People with Disabilities by the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities and has many other awards for her work. An attorney and consultant, Lee lives in Columbus, Georgia.



**JOHN O’CONNOR, Secretary (7)** was appointed by the Department of Education (DOE) in 2005. As Education Program Manager with the DOE, John manages professional development initiatives designed to increase the educational performance of students with and without disabilities. Currently, he is the director of the Georgia State Improvement Grant. Before joining the DOE, John taught special education, focusing on students with orthopedic impairments.

**JUSTIN PRESSLEY (8)** was appointed by the Governor in 2000, after a motorcycle accident left him a quadriplegic. In addition to his work as a consultant on the internet and disability issues, he serves on the board of the Access Center for Independent Living in Gainesville.

**DAVID W. RENZ (9)** was the first Chairman of the Commission having been appointed by the Governor in 2000. He brings a wealth of personal (he’s a T-8 paraplegic) and professional experience to the organization. He has held positions such as Dalton Whitfield Disability Awareness Chair and Deacon at First Presbyterian Church.

**DENNIS B. SKELLEY, Past Chair (10)** was appointed to the Commission in 2000 by the Governor and served as Chair from late 2002 through February 2005. He began his career as a physical therapist and later helped launch Walton Rehabilitation Hospital where he is now President and CEO. He continues to develop medical rehabilitation programs, residential settings, and assistive technology offerings. Dennis was part of the grass roots effort that educated the public and legislature about brain and spinal cord injury and led to the creation of the Commission.

**MICHAEL RAY SMITH (11)** works as Director, Environmental Health and Injury Prevention Branch, Division of Public Health, Department of Human Resources, the agency that appointed him to the Commission in 2005. He has been involved with injury prevention programs in public health for more than 20 years. He contributes to many organizations including the Executive Committee of the Georgia Traffic Records Coordinating Committee and the Agroterrorism Subcommittee of the Georgia Homeland Security Working Group.

**KEITH EDWARD SORRELLS (12)** a major with the Georgia State Patrol, has worked in law enforcement for more than 30 years. His postings have included working at headquarters and the Governor’s Mansion. He joined the Commission in January, 2004, and represents the Department of Public Safety.

**SHREE DENISE STRICKLAND (13)** became her son Jeremy’s caregiver after he was injured in a motorcycle accident in 1999 and sustained both traumatic brain and spinal injuries. She was appointed to the Commission by the Governor in 2005. Shree currently works as a secretary for her husband. They have five sons and live in Bowdon, Georgia.

**MITCH WARNOCK (not shown)** was appointed to the Commission by the Governor in 2003. He is an attorney living in Dublin, Georgia, and has a spinal cord injury.



# Tyrone

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TYRONE JOHNSON, 29, achieved these milestones after being told he'd never walk again. And now he has set his sights higher: owning a business.

"My dream is to open Tyrone's Gym," he says. Frustration with the lack of accessible equipment and supportive trainers at his local gyms is fueling his entrepreneurial zeal.

"This will be a place in Macon where people who are and aren't disabled can exercise and do other activities," he says, adding he'd like to offer a range of recreational options like a music studio. "I don't want just a wellness center; what I want is for people to feel free."

After reviewing his business plan, Tyrone's teachers at Central Georgia Technical College encouraged him to seek investors even before graduating in 2006 with a business degree.

"My mind is going at 100 miles an hour on this idea," he says.

Tyrone's Gym is the logical progression for this natural athlete. As the youngest of 16 children, this 6'2" "baby" of the family was a popular football, basketball and track star at Crawford High School in Roberta, a small town outside Macon. His awards filled a room. But, 12 years ago, on a sunny morning in May, his car careened off a treacherous, narrow road. (Ten years later, his best friend would die at the same bend in the road.)

"I broke just one bone – and that was my neck," he says with a smile.

After his C5-C6 injury, he returned to live with his mother briefly in Roberta but found life "too easy." He wanted independence. And for him that meant having access to transportation.

Tyrone applied for an award from the Trust Fund to help pay for a van so his family could drive him to appointments. Tyrone assumed he couldn't drive. But after reviewing his goals, the Fund's Director of Distribution suggested he take a driver's evaluation. The Trust Fund paid for driver's education and training from rehabilitation specialists on how to use digital controls, then referred him to a car loan from CreditAble. Soon, Tyrone will be back in the driver's seat taking control of his transportation – and his destiny.

"I want to make money so I can donate some back to the Trust Fund," says the budding entrepreneur.

# APPLYING FOR A TRUST FUND DISTRIBUTION

All too often, there's too much paper work involved in securing services for people with disabilities. That's why we've kept our process simple and consistent. Our goal is to help people be as independent as possible – and that includes freedom from unnecessary paper work.

The Fund accepts applications on a daily basis and we strive to respond within eight weeks, despite receiving as many as 100 applications per month. To speed up this process, individuals are encouraged to visit our website, [www.bsitf.state.ga.us](http://www.bsitf.state.ga.us), to file online and to check the status of their application.

An individual may receive up to \$5,000 per year; however, applicants must explain how the award will foster their independence.

Likewise, applicants must demonstrate that their requested funds are not available from insurance or governmental sources or are beyond the scope of other organizations.

The Trust Fund is not an entitlement – it's a resource to turn to when all others have been exhausted.

## ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for the funds, an individual must:

- Be a resident of the state of Georgia
- Have sustained a traumatic brain or spinal cord injury
- Have exhausted all other resources

*(Note: Although nearly 80% of applicants receive awards, eligibility does not automatically mean funds are granted.)*

## REVIEW AND DISTRIBUTION PROCESS

1. Applicants can 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 form.
2. A person with a traumatic injury, acting individually or with assistance, completes and submits the application.
3. The Commission office receives and processes the application, then forwards it to the Distribution Committee for review.
4. The Distribution Committee makes award recommendations, which are presented to the Commission members for vote.
5. The Commission's final recommendations are sent to the Governor's Office for approval.
6. The Governor issues award approvals and Commission notifies recipients.
7. Recipients receive services from approved service providers and submit invoices to the Commission for payment.

## MEET OUR STAFF



*(left to right):*

**Dionne White**, *Administrative Assistant*; **Leslie McNely**, *Financial Officer*; **Lori Rosichan**, *Distribution Program Associate*; **Dionna Littlejohn**, *Executive Assistant*; **Anna Santiago**, *Director of Distribution*; **Kristen E. Vincent**, *Executive Director*



## VISION

A GEORGIA WHERE PEOPLE WITH TRAUMATIC BRAIN AND SPINAL CORD INJURIES ARE VALUED, HAVE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AND REAL CHOICES.

## MISSION

THE BRAIN AND SPINAL INJURY TRUST FUND COMMISSION IMPROVES THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF GEORGIANS WITH TRAUMATIC BRAIN AND SPINAL CORD INJURIES BY DISTRIBUTING FUNDS AND RESOURCES, AND MAKING POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO ENHANCE STATEWIDE INFRASTRUCTURE.

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“THE COUNCILS ON INDEPENDENT LIVING (CILs) HELP PEOPLE WITH ALL TYPES OF DISABILITIES IDENTIFY THE RESOURCES AND SERVICES NECESSARY TO ACHIEVE GOALS FOR INDEPENDENCE. FOR MANY PEOPLE WITH BRAIN AND SPINAL INJURIES, THE TRUST FUND HAS PROVEN TO BE A CRUCIAL – AND FLEXIBLE – SOURCE OF FUNDING. RARELY A WEEK GOES BY THAT I DON’T HEAR ABOUT HOW THE TRUST FUND HAS MADE A DIFFERENCE.”

– **Pat Puckett**, *Executive Director, Statewide Independent Living Council of Georgia, Inc.*

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“MANY OF OUR GEORGIAN CONSTITUENTS HAVE CONTACTED THE BRAIN INJURY RESOURCE FOUNDATION ABOUT NEEDING FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE. IT IS WONDERFUL TO BE ABLE TO TELL THEM THERE IS A TRUST FUND IN GEORGIA TO WHOM THEY CAN APPLY FOR FINANCIAL HELP. MANY WHO HAVE APPLIED HAVE LATER TOLD US THAT THEY DID RECEIVE THE MUCH NEEDED FUNDING TO ASSIST IN ACQUIRING EQUIPMENT AND SERVICES – AND THEY HAVE TOLD US IT HAS MADE A REAL DIFFERENCE IN THE QUALITY OF THEIR LIVES. WE ARE SO GLAD THE TRUST FUND IS THERE TO HELP GEORGIANS LIVING WITH TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURIES!”

– **Mary Sloan**, *Executive Director, Brain Injury Resource Foundation*



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