



TRUST FUND AWARDS CHANGE LIVES.



# Mission & Vision



For two decades, Georgia's Brain & Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission has led the charge to enable and empower Georgians with traumatic brain and spinal injuries to live lives of meaning, independence and inclusion.

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

The Trust Fund was established to enhance the lives of Georgia's 150,000+ brain and spinal cord injury survivors and help them adapt to the challenges they face in their lives. We stand alongside them on their journeys of recovery and restoration and assure them that they are not alone. We help encourage, equip and enable them with the resources they need to build a new life that focuses more on their abilities than disabilities.

We give hope, inspire resilience and open doors of possibility.

*"I can be changed by what happens to me, but I refuse to be reduced by it." - Maya Angelou*



20  
YEARS OF TRUST

# Introduction to the Commission

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

## Trust Fund Awards Change Lives.

# Executive Director's Letter



## Dear friends:

It is with the utmost pleasure that I report to you on the occasion of the Trust Fund's 20th Anniversary. It has been a privilege to serve as the Commission's Executive Director for the past eleven years and to witness the thousands of individuals and their families that have benefited from a Trust Fund grant, learned of resources available throughout Georgia from our many partners, and discovered how significantly traumatic brain and spinal cord injury impacts our communities.

Over the last twenty years the Commission has reached many milestones and we are energized to continue to provide tangible resources that enable our grantees to enjoy better health and well-being, live independently and achieve success.

We have witnessed over \$25,000,000.00 in grants awarded to Georgia residents. We have received popular support from Georgia voters in the form of new revenue sources. We have obtained support from our elected officials as the state's Lead Agency on Traumatic Brain Injury. And we have leveraged all of this support to successfully compete for federal grants to promote resource coordination and awareness.

Nothing occurs in a vacuum, and we have been very fortunate to collaborate with many of the state's best and brightest who volunteer their time and expertise to help us reach our annual and strategic goals in service to our stakeholders in Georgia. From the first brain injury advocates that helped to shape a constitutional amendment creating the Trust Fund to the hundreds of committee volunteers who worked to create equitable policies with consumer input we have forged an effective, efficient organization that is responsive to the needs and aspirations of those with life-changing injuries.

Our mission to understand, implement and grow in service is well understood by our many past and current Commissioners who have first-hand knowledge of traumatic injury and are often personally impacted by it. Our Governor and state agency-appointed Commissioners have performed admirably, oftentimes for years in continuous service. Their guidance and vision help ensure our continued presence as a state of Georgia executive agency that is transparent and well-governed.

Finally, there is no good way to measure the unbelievable dedication of the Trust Fund's staff who live the mission and vision of the Commission every day. A more caring and compassionate group would be hard to find. Their focus and breadth of understanding enables us to take on challenges that yield new opportunities in our service to Georgia.

We can all be certain that with such human resources and mission dedication the Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund can be counted on and Trusted for the next twenty years.

Sincerely,

Craig Young

# Historical Timeline

## 1997

- A coalition of grassroots organizers from the brain and spinal injury community lobbied for the creation of the Trust Fund via a DUI surcharge

## 1998

- Georgia's General Assembly created the Brain & Spinal Injury Trust Fund via SB 110, ratified by an overwhelming 73% of voters in a referendum during the November general election
- The General Assembly established a 15-member Authority (later called the Commission) to act as the Trust Fund's board of directors

## 1999

- 10% surcharge on DUI fines began to fund the Trust Fund
- First Authority members were sworn in by Governor Roy Barnes

## 2000

- On June 22-23, the Commission (then an Authority) held its first meeting at Roosevelt Warm Springs, in Warm Springs, GA.

## 2001

- Bylaws for the Authority and distribution policies for the Trust Fund were drafted
- Legislature appropriated \$150,000 to the Trust Fund for administration and implementation

## 2002

- SB 36 changed the Authority to a Commission
- Grant application process officially opened
- First Trust Fund distributions were approved

## 2003

- The Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission operates full-time and assumed role of Lead Agency for TBI & SCI services in Georgia.
- \$810,655 awarded in first full year

## 2004

- Commission began management of the Georgia Central Registry for Traumatic Brain and Spinal Injuries

## 2005

- Within first year of the Commission's management of the Central Registry, more than 51,000 new incidences of traumatic injury were identified
- Total awards given through the Trust Fund topped the \$3.5 million mark

## 2006

- The Commission held its first SCI Summit in Atlanta, Georgia
- The Commission received a \$100,000 federal grant to support the Central Registry and Advisory Committee

## 2007

- The Commission issued its Neurobehavioral White Paper "Georgia's Neurobehavioral Crisis: Lack of Coordinated Care, Inappropriate Institutionalizations"

- The Commission funded statewide Information and Resource facilitator position for the Brain Injury Association of Georgia

## 2008

- Commission marked 10 years of service to Georgia
- Commission funded 3111 awards worth \$11,040,250 in ten years
- Released formal state-wide needs assessment and ten-year state action plan for traumatic brain and spinal cord injury
- Georgia Senate passed SR 788 authorizing a Senate Study Committee to review and make resolutions regarding Brain Injury-Related Neurobehavioral Issues in Georgia
- Intergovernmental agreement signed with the Dept. of Community Affairs to manage home modifications for Trust Fund grantees

## 2009

- Provided TBI screening and identification training to Georgia's Aging and Disability Resource Connections Gateway/ESP staff
- Created a new electronic database for all grantee records

## 2010

- Executed a state-wide concussion prevention education campaign

## 2011

- The legislature creates the Department of Public Health and the Commission is administratively attached to Public Health
- Commission's Advisory Committee established the Georgia Concussion Coalition

## 2012

- Town Hall meetings culminate with a symposium to discuss effective concussion identification, incidence and treatment protocols.

## 2013

- The Georgia Return to Play Act is passed by the Georgia General Assembly and signed into law

## 2014

- HR1183/HB870 legislation enabled additional surcharge funding for the Trust Fund on reckless driving convictions

## 2015

- Commission's surcharge revenue drops to \$1.31 million (lowest since 2001)

## 2016

- Grant awards top \$23 million

## 2017

- Commission launches new website

## 2018

- Commission awarded Federal Traumatic Brain Injury grant to improve screening and identification, information and referral, partnerships, and outreach
- The Commission celebrates "20 Years of Trust"





**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.

**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.**

## TRAUMATIC BRAIN & SPINAL INJURIES Total Injuries: 28,292 (2016)

	Emergency TBI	Hospital TBI	Hospital SCI	Hospital TBI+SCI	
By Age in Years	0-4	1224	261	1	4
	5-9	1243	100	2	1
	10-14	2353	121	4	1
	15-19	3016	367	20	8
	20-24	1895	436	39	12
	25-29	1521	405	24	6
	30-34	1232	369	19	6
	35-39	1078	349	23	4
	40-44	945	278	14	6
	45-49	926	332	28	15
	50-54	980	437	41	13
	55-59	836	453	57	8
	60-64	645	454	51	9
	65-69	627	470	31	9
	70-74	506	488	40	4
	75-79	472	529	22	6
	80-84	387	583	20	4
	85-89	375	451	13	2
	90-94	170	271	3	0
	95-99	45	71	0	0
	100+	12	9	0	0
	Total	20488	7234	452	118
By Sex	Female		143	25	
	Male		309	93	
	Unknown		*	0	
	Total		452	118	
By Race	White		202	62	
	African American		189	35	
	American Indian/ AK native		*	*	
	Asian		10	*	
	Native Hawaiian/ Pac island		*	*	
	other		20	*	
	refused		11	*	
	unknown		*	*	
	blank		8	*	
	Total		441	118	

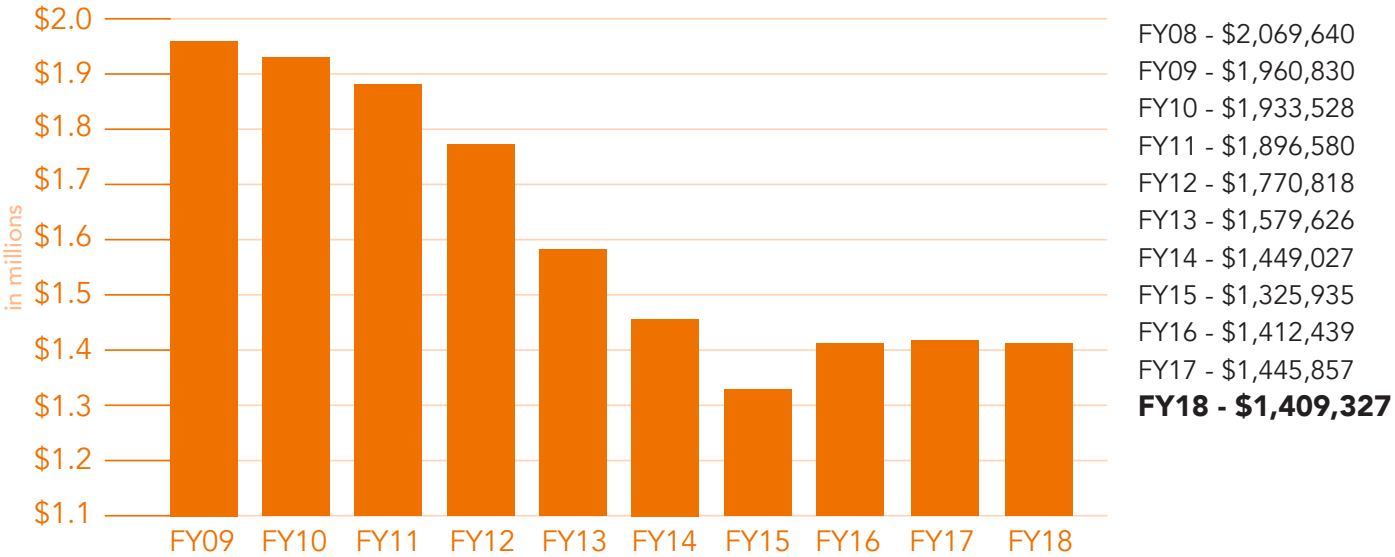
\*fewer than 10

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

**The Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission is one of just a few state of Georgia agencies that does not receive any funding through the state's General Fund.** Only funds that are collected from convictions for Driving Under the Influence of Alcohol or Drugs (1998) or convictions for Reckless Driving (2014) are remitted to the Commission. In both cases a surcharge of ten percent of the original fine can be collected. In many cases however, less is collected due to the inability of individuals to pay the entire fine or if the fine is reduced or waived by the court.

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.

## Collections Data Chart



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

**FY2018 Monthly Grant Budget: \$85,000**

**Like the survivors we serve, we are constantly working to adapt to the changes around us.** 2018 has been a year of careful analysis and evaluation for the Trust Fund about where we are and where we need to head. 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 promote and support survivors. We are seeking new partners, exploring new methods and enhancing strategic planning to stay abreast of changing trends in rehabilitation and information technology, ride-share access and autonomous vehicles to name a few. These market disrupters have policy implications that will affect us and our stakeholders in the future.



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).

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

Applicants to the Commission choose the type of assistance they need to get on with their lives. The Commission has a very wide range of categories of goods and services available for our applicants to apply for: home modifications, transportation, medical

services and therapies, personal support and respite, vocational training and supports, durable medical equipment, health and wellness activities are just some of the areas that the Commission routinely funds.

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

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

2018 Grant Distributions\*

Category	# Awards	Percent	Award Amount
Assistive Technology	8	4.97%	\$14,825.00
Computers	26	16.15%	\$20,550.00
Dental Services	12	7.45%	\$12,000.00
Durable Medical Equipment	9	5.59%	\$31,653.00
Health & Wellness	12	7.45%	\$40,768.98
Medical Care	5	3.11%	\$30,180.00
Neurobehavioral Programs	1	0.62%	\$4,590.00
Personal Support Services	16	9.94%	\$136,736.00
Psychology/Counseling	2	1.24%	\$7,000.00
Recreation/Hobbies	5	3.11%	\$6,849.00
Speech Services	1	0.62%	\$10,000.00
Transportation	59	36.65%	\$699,431.51
Vision/Hearing Services	2	1.24%	\$9,000.00
Vocational Support	3	1.86%	\$14,564.00
Total	161	100.00%	\$1,038,147.49

\*Home modifications not included in this report.

Brain & Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission  
2 Peachtree Street NW  
Suite 26-426  
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

June 25, 2018

Dear Sir:

My name is William Deloach. Following a 3 disk cervical disectomy, I received your invitation, and subsequently applied for assistance. I was granted a most appreciated award. You enabled me to purchase hearing aids and a cell phone which connects directly to the hearing aids. This allows me to finally understand the party on the other end without having to constantly ask them to repeat more slowly what they are saying. How wonderful. You also enabled me to purchase a lap top computer that I can hold in my lap, close enough not to struggle to hear the audio. Again, how wonderful.

I wanted to let you know how much I appreciate this award. Thank you so much. I am forever grateful.

Sincerely,

*William E. Deloach*  
William E. Deloach



Joseph W. Whitwell, Th.D.  
*Retired* Executive Director  
Kerry P. Duncan, D. Min.  
Associate and Clinical Director

May 26, 2018

Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission  
2 Peachtree St. NW, Suite 26-426  
Atlanta, GA 30303

Dear Commission:

For 35 years I was the Executive Director of Covenant Counseling & Family Resource Center in Snellville, GA. Our organization provided thousands of hours of low cost psychotherapy for people who could not afford the standard fee for therapy. Therefore, I have been involved in the non-profit and philanthropic worlds for years. However, in my wildest dreams I never anticipated that I would need to be the recipient of a grant. But, life can shift on a dime!

After a fall from a roof, I was paralyzed from the waist down, which forced my retirement from a very active counseling practice! Needless to say, this turned my life upside down! It was quite enough to overcome the emotional impact of this change in my life, but I quickly became aware of how limited I was --- homebound for the most part.

At some point my family and I were told about your foundation. My daughter, Christel, took the lead in putting together and mailing the required application forms. We had no idea that we would be awarded a grant for fifteen thousand dollars! This grant, in addition to funds added by my daughter and her husband, made it possible to secure a very nice van. I am now able to leave the house for doctors' appointments, lunch with friends and trips to various sites.

I cannot begin to express my gratitude to the Commission for granting me this generous gift. As indicated, it has already expanded my otherwise narrow world. THANK YOU!!

With Much Gratitude,

*Joe Whitwell*  
Dr. Joseph W. Whitwell, Jr.

2219 Scenic Drive • Snellville, Georgia 30078  
(770) 985-0837 • Fax (770) 985-6677  
[www.covenantcounseling.org](http://www.covenantcounseling.org)





My fellow Georgians,

Looking back at our year in review, it's no small milestone to report to our friends, colleagues, and grantees that the Trust Fund is celebrating 20 years of service to the State following passage of our founding legislation and subsequent state-wide referendum in 1998. Some may not believe 20 years to be a long time. However, in general contrast to America's wider acknowledgement of the disability community, their needs, and their civil rights, 20 years in fact covers more than two thirds of the period since passage of America's keystone disability legislation, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (widely known as the ADA).

I highlight this for three reasons. First, as a reminder of how briefly in the scope of America's history its disability community has enjoyed their civil rights asserted by the ADA. Second, to honor the legacy of recently passed President H. W. Bush who signed the ADA into law as President. Third, and finally, to gratefully acknowledge the efforts of those Georgian's who advocated and lobbied State lawmakers to push for a resource like the Trust Fund. Despite the recognition and guarantees the ADA provides for civil rights, resources for services and supports for Georgians with TBI/SCI and other disabilities continue to fall far short of the overall need.

Just like the early advocates who helped create the Trust Fund, we continue to seek opportunities to promote future advancement for Georgians affected by TBI/SCI. This year the Trust Fund was proudly awarded a three-year competitive grant from the Administration for Community Living (ACL). ACL's grant will be used by the Trust Fund to augment existing activities such as distributing informational materials to individuals in Georgia who may have experienced a TBI/SCI, helping identify additional individuals who may have experienced a TBI/SCI, and funding public awareness campaigns for the Trust Fund and TBI/SCI prevention. Additionally, it will provide funding for activities which will be new or may have lost funding in the past. These include funding for an Information & Referral position (to help those in need to find resources), funding a position within the Trust Fund to develop/update a statewide action plan with other partners in the state, and funding structured mentorship collaboration efforts with other states who's programs we can learn from.

While our overall revenue collections on DUI and Reckless Driving surcharges remain below historic trends, we've worked hard to leverage our resources and continued delivering services and grants to each corner of the State. Our future relies on a continued effort to diversify our funding to ensure stability. It is the only way to ensure the Trust Fund can serve Georgia another 20 years and beyond.

Cheers to 20 years and 20 more,

Chase Jones  
Chairman – Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission

Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission Awarded Federal Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Grant from the Administration for Community Living.



The Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission is the recipient of the 2018 Federal TBI grant from the Administration for Community Living for the next three years. This grant award was enabled by Governor Deal who appointed the Commission as Georgia's Lead Agency for traumatic brain injury.

The Commission's goal for this project is to strengthen and expand sustainable TBI services in Georgia that are best practice, person-centered and maximizing independence across the lifespan for individuals with TBI and their families.

The grant will fund objectives and activities in four large domains including:

- Screening and Identification
- Information and Referral Services
- Education and Outreach
- Survivor Engagement and Sustainable Partnerships

In addition to the above activities the Commission will engage with other states who have received this grant to increase participation in planning strategies by individuals with TBI, accentuating data that can lead to more services for injured Georgians and developing sustainable sources of funding through multiple partnerships at the federal, state and local levels for public and private support.



Kenisha Tait

Our goals are ambitious for a small state agency but the rewards of success are clear – independent lives that have been enhanced through real consumer choices in community-based settings. In order to provide these goals and objectives the Commission has added to its staff a TBI grant program manager. **Kenisha Tait** has joined the Commission and is tasked with managing the many activities associated with this large undertaking. Kenisha comes to the Commission with years' of experience in stakeholder training and education, child development and program management. Kenisha has a Master's degree in Education and is developing the Commission's annual TBI plan with the Commission's Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory committee.

If you have questions regarding the Commission's TBI grant please contact Kenisha at [Kenisha.Tait@dph.ga.gov](mailto:Kenisha.Tait@dph.ga.gov).

**If you have a concussion We can help!**

The Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission provides grants for individuals with post-acute care and rehabilitation for traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries.

Learn more online: [bsitf.georgia.gov](https://bsitf.georgia.gov)

Brain & Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission

The first initiative enabled by the Federal TBI is an public awareness campaign about concussions.



# 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, Treasurer (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.

**Barbara Means-Cheeley, MSW (2) - 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.

**Lisa Dawson, MPH (4) - 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, (5) - 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 (6) - 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.

**Rajaunnda D. Gandy (7) - Atlanta** - has served in the field of Rehabilitation of people with disabilities for over 21 years. Raj began her career at Goodwill industries as the Facility Based Work Transition Manager. Raj was selected as a Business Enterprise Program Counselor for the Georgia Department of Labor where she also served as Program Manager and was then appointed as the Director of the BEP for 20 years.

In January 2016, Raj began work with Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency's (GVRA) Project Horizon. Raj was subsequently selected to be the agency's first Chief of Strategy & Innovation as of June 2016. Raj received a MS in Rehabilitation Counseling from Mississippi State University, and a BA from the University of Alabama.

**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, Vice Chairman (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.





On November 1, 2018 stakeholders from around the state attended a 20th Anniversary Luncheon at Shepherd Center to celebrate two decades of service to brain and spinal injury survivors. Many were recognized and honored for their dedication to the Trust Fund's mission. Here are some highlights of the day.

## Pathfinder Award



The Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission's **Pathfinder Award** is presented each year to an outstanding individual dedicated to advancing the lives of Georgians with traumatic brain and spinal cord injury through advocacy, education, law, prevention and community living.

Our 2018 Pathfinder Award Recipient Representative **John Carson** has achieved many of our criteria by understanding and educating Georgians about the adverse human cost of driving while using a cellular handheld phone. Meeting with advocates John learned of the many tragic accidents that caused scores of deaths and lifelong disability for others. As the Commission well knows, over fifty percent of our grantees were injured in motor vehicle collisions. Thanks to Representative Carson's leadership and compelling testimony by those injured, the "Hand's Free Georgia Act" passed and now prohibits the handling of a cell phone while operating a vehicle. The Commission and its staff and volunteers all salute Representative Carson for rallying supporters and leading the effort to educate the public and fellow members of the Georgia General Assembly, thus enabling this legislation to be passed and signed in to law by Governor Nathan Deal.

## Larry Huggins Memorial Award



The **Larry Huggins Memorial Award** is named for, former Commissioner and advocate for Georgians with disabilities. Larry was instrumental to the creation of the Commission and worked tirelessly to organize the effort to pass the Constitutional Amendment to form the Trust Fund in 1998. Larry was dedicated to the Commission and worked to create Commission policies for Distribution and then Chairing that committee for years. Larry is remembered by those who knew him for his compassion and zest for life. To honor Larry's dedicated purpose the Commission created the Larry Huggins Memorial Award for Outstanding Commission Committee Member.

We think Larry would be thrilled to honor the 2018 recipient of his namesake award, **Bill Lee**. To anyone who spends time on or at the Commission it would be virtually impossible to not have spent time with Bill. As a member of the Advisory, Appeals and Finance committee Bill's thoughts and fingerprints are all over Commission policy and budgets. Bill has been serving non-stop in these important committee roles since 2006 – twelve years of wise and patient advice to the Commission to help achieve our mission and vision.

## Outstanding Service Award



The Commission's **Outstanding Service Award** is given each year to individuals that have given significantly of their time and talents to the Commission in advancement of our mission. The 2018 Outstanding service award is given **Connie McCullough-Walden** who serves on the Commission's Distribution committee. As DME Manager for Shepherd Center Connie provides insight and hand's-on experience that helps Commission staff and fellow committee members make the right decision when looking for the best way to assist an applicant for a grant. In addition to serving on the Distribution committee, Connie assists the Commission's Shepherd Center Intake Team as they work to set up appointments for Shepherd patients each month. This intake provides the face-to-face information that Shepherd Center patients and families need to find rehabilitation resources.



## In Memoriam

The Commission would like to take pause and celebrate the tremendous life and accomplishments of J. Harold Shepherd, co-founder of Shepherd Center. His vision, leadership, and dedication made Shepherd Center a world-renowned research and rehabilitation facility that has saved countless lives of those with brain and spinal cord injuries. The world is a better place thanks to his kind and generous heart. May his legacy live on for generations to come!

**J. Harold Shepherd  
1928-2018**

## Committees are the backbone of the Commission.

The Commission's success is due in large part to the work that our standing and Ad Hoc committees perform. We thank our volunteers, Commissioners and staff for their many hours devoted to these important groups:

### 20th Anniversary Committee

Bob Bauer, Chair  
Claire Creech  
Chase Jones  
Rajaunnda Gandy  
Cheryl Harris  
Craig Young

### Appeals Committee

Charles Lamb, Chair  
Bill Lee  
Rocky Rothrock  
Craig Young

### Communications Committee

Craig Young, Chair  
Chase Jones  
Cheryl Harris  
Jane Jackson  
Paige Havens  
Dionne Braxton

### Distribution Committee

Tim Wall, Chair  
Gwen McKee  
Greg Harry  
Connie McCullough-Walden  
Chantay Reese  
Dionne Braxton, Keisha Zachary,  
Tyimeka Brown, Diana Ballard

### Executive Committee

Chase Jones, Chair  
Susannah Kidwell  
Bob Bauer  
Andrew Dennison  
Craig Young

### Finance Committee

Bob Bauer, Chair  
Chase Jones  
Bill Lee  
Jane Warnock  
Leslie Collins

### Public Policy Committee

Craig Young, Chair  
Chase Jones  
Jane Warnock  
Steve Oldaker  
Beth English

### Advisory Committee and Children & Youth Subcommittee

Claire Creech, Chair  
Bill Lee  
Jane Jackson  
Susan Johnson  
Paige Havens  
Cindi Johnson  
Chase Jones  
Bob Bauer  
Mimi Gold  
Lindsey Piland  
Joe Sarra  
Gwen McKee  
Leila Hartley  
Bridget Metzger  
Maria Chininis

## 2018 Trust Fund Staff



L-R seated: Tyimeka Brown, Leslie Collins, Dionne Braxton. Standing: Keisha Zachary, Craig Young, Diana Ballard.



# How to Apply 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 <http://bsitf.georgia.gov> 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 monthly 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 and 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

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.**



**Brain & Spinal Injury  
Trust Fund Commission**

Brain & Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission

2 Peachtree Street NW, Suite 26-416, Atlanta, Georgia 30303

Phone: 404-651-5112 | Fax: 404-656-9886 | Toll-free: 1-888-233-5760

<https://bsitf.georgia.gov> | [DPH-info-bsitf@dph.ga.gov](mailto:DPH-info-bsitf@dph.ga.gov) | [www.facebook.com/BSITFC](https://www.facebook.com/BSITFC)