



Brain & Spinal Injury  
Trust Fund Commission

# REAL IMPACT



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

**OUR MISSION** is to enhance the lives of Georgians with traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries. Guided by the aspirations of people with traumatic injuries, the Commission supports lives of meaning, independence, and inclusion. As the state's Lead Agency on Traumatic Injuries, we:

**Administer** the Central Registry to identify those who are injured,

**Distribute** resources through the Trust Fund, and

**Advocate** for improvements in statewide services.

As we move about our lives each day, we all strive to leave our mark.  
The Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission focuses solely on touching the lives of brain and spinal cord injury survivors and their families to give them hope.  
Our mission is one of Real Impact touching Real People each and every day.

# Touching Real Lives

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 accomplished through the Central Registry, the Trust Fund, and as Georgia's Lead Agency for Traumatic Brain and Spinal Injuries.

The Central Registry identifies newly-injured individuals and their families and enables us to reach out to each one personally to educate them about and connect them to the resources. The registry allows us to gauge the needs and gaps across the state.

The Trust Fund is funded through a surcharge on DUI fines. It provides monetary resources for those whose insurance benefits have depleted or cannot afford goods and services post-injury. Estimated lifetime costs of care for a person with a severe TBI can reach \$4 million. Care for an individual with a severe SCI can reach upwards of \$3 million. Alleviating even a small portion of financial burden can leave a lasting impact on their lives and open doors to greater independence.

As the Lead Agency, we are collaborating with stakeholders across the state to ensure a system of comprehensive care that truly meets the needs of people with traumatic brain and spinal injuries. Through our State Action Plan we collaborate with agencies, hospitals, schools, and service providers statewide. Our legislative efforts have impacted laws that will reduce injury and give voice to those with traumatic injury at the Gold Dome.

In these strained economic times, services and resources for individuals with traumatic injuries are 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 every day on making a real impact across our state – in service collaboration, community outreach & awareness, and resource development. For so many across our state the Commission has proven to be the vital link between simply surviving and thriving.



## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S LETTER



Dear Friends:

The Commission continued to deliver more high quality, impactful grants to Georgians with traumatic brain and spinal cord injury in our most recent fiscal year. Even with nearly 11% reductions to the Commission's revenue from the DUI surcharge we increased the number of grants approved for distribution by 14% and increased the dollars spent for these grants by nearly a quarter of a million dollars. The Commission is dedicated to achieving Real Impact in the lives of our grantees and our stakeholders. Since 2003 the Commission has awarded over \$18.5 million dollars in grants for the post-acute care and rehabilitation of Georgians with traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries.

To maintain the highest level of grant funding possible for individuals we have had to scale back on other valuable programs. The Commission has had to reduce our Stewardship and State Action Plan programs, as well as our public service announcement media campaign. The Commission will not be able to provide organizational grants in FY2014. Our partners have been very understanding and continue to collaborate with the Commission to further our mutual goals. Our team of application specialists has provided one-on-one assistance to individuals with brain and spinal cord injury in rehabilitation hospitals. We intend to expand this successful outreach in the coming years as funding permits.

Our priority is and will continue to be lean operations so we can use as much revenue as possible for direct grants. The Commission will continue to bring attention to the public safety issues surrounding driving under the influence charges and restitution. A high-priority response to driving under the influence charges will bring about a reduction in repeat offenses and safer roadways for us all.

As we anticipate a growing economic recovery from the long-felt recession we plan to reinstate valuable programs and start necessary new outreach statewide. The Commission's Constitutional amendment guarantees that funding for the Commission will not lapse. Nor will our focus to serve our most vulnerable citizens.

Trust Fund grants change people's lives. We are grateful for the letters we receive from grantees telling us about the healing, learning, moving, and doing brought about by their award. That's Real Impact.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Craig L. Young". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "Y" at the end.

Craig Young  
BSITFC Executive Director

# Real Impact as the Lead Agency

## Public Policy

In 2013 Georgia's Return to Play Act passed overwhelmingly and was signed into law addressing the vital issue of youth sports concussions.

When signing the bill, Governor Deal said "Even the mildest bump or blow to the head can lead to a concussion. I am proud to sign this bill that serves to protect Georgia's young athletes from sustaining very serious injuries if the condition goes unnoticed or untreated. A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury that should never be overlooked..."

### Requirements of Return to Play Act

- Parents/guardians of student athletes must be provided with information about concussion symptoms and management.
- An athlete showing symptoms of concussion, after a potential concussion-causing event, must be removed from play/practice.
- Once diagnosed with a concussion a student athlete may not return to play or practice until cleared to do so by an appropriate licensed medical professional.

House Bill 278 was also passed protecting disabled adults and senior citizens from exploitation. To do so is now a felony and the list of professionals required to report suspected abuse was expanded.

## State Action Plan

Since 2008, the Commission has been working through its State Action Plan to positively impact 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: Screening & Identification; Training & Awareness; Rehabilitation & Wellness; Service Coordination; Long Term & Life Long Supports; Independent & Integrated Living; Community Participation.

Representatives from advocacy organizations and service providers across the state, as well as individuals with traumatic brain injury and spinal cord injuries and their family members, serve as members of three strategic committees and 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.

### 2013 State Action Plan Highlights

**The Georgia Concussion Coalition (GCC)** grew out of reaction to the growing rates of youth sports concussions and discussion on how to effectively disseminate information to parents, youth sports organizations and other youth leaders in an effort to prevent or minimize the risk for injury. In 2013, GCC was an instrumental partner in helping to pass the Return to Play Act in Georgia.

An **Applicant Impact Survey** was developed to determine the impact of Trust Fund award(s) in terms of the individuals' ability to better integrate with their community and/or gain independence. The Commission is committed to collecting responses annually and building support around the specific needs of our constituents.

**New Curricula and Educational Tools** were developed that address traumatic brain and spinal cord injury integration into existing injury prevention program materials.

**A Caregiver Guide** was developed in partnership with The Shepherd Center for loved ones who are assisting with the care for individuals with a traumatic brain and/or spinal cord injury.

# Real Impact: Leaving a Mark

**A**nthony Kelly Foster (AK) was relishing in all of the glory of being a high school senior in 2006. He was a scholar athlete lettering in soccer, football and swimming. He was a force to be reckoned with. He was being recruited heavily by Georgetown University as a strong safety and he had an exciting future ahead.

While driving home from a friend's house one evening, AK drifted off to sleep and his world came to a screeching halt at the base of a big tree. As he floated in and out of consciousness at the scene, he had no idea how hurt he really was.

AK was rushed to Grady Memorial with a severe brain injury and a broken neck. The TBI would heal with no long-term effects, but the spine fracture at his C6 vertebrae was significant. He could no longer walk and had no dexterity in his fingers. AK was transferred to Scottish Rite for six weeks of intensive rehabilitation. Then he spent another month

at The Shepherd Center's Day Program in therapy six hours a day. AK fought depression as his friends pulled away. Their worlds were now vastly different.

**"I learned very quickly that the world isn't designed to accommodate people with disabilities."**

As AK left the bubble of The Shepherd Center, AK shares, "I learned very quickly that the world isn't designed to accommodate people with disabilities. And I learned just how expensive it was to be disabled." Social Security only paid \$448 a month for his care, so AK was forced to learn quickly how to survive on the bare minimum.

It was the athlete in him that kept AK going. He relied on lessons coaches had taught him about endurance, mental toughness, pressing through pain, and pushing to new limits. AK had to cope with embarrassment,

social isolation, and fear. It was the fear that consumed him most. AK explains, "Before the accident I was one cocky teenager. My accident humbled me to the point of fear. I became so afraid of everything. My future was so cloudy. I realized I had to conquer my fear before my future could unfold."

AK learned about the Brain & Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission while at The Shepherd Center. He knew he had to go to college if he was going to be able to support himself, so his first move was to apply for a grant for a computer and desk. With that award, AK had the necessities to get started. He attended his first two years of college at Atlanta Metropolitan College where he could live at home with family. The impact of that decision was huge. It was during those two years that he regained confidence in himself and in the world around him.

AK shares, "Going to college helped me push past the fear and pity that was crippling

*"Walking is no longer my top priority. My education and helping others is far more important."*



me more than my physical disabilities. As I began to move about campus and make new friends it helped me see that I was really no different than any other guy my age. We were all learning to deal with independence, overcome obstacles, find and accept ourselves, to impress the ladies, and more.

While I'd rather not be in a wheelchair, I learned it wasn't so bad."

When he earned his associates degree, AK decided it was time to try living on his own. With the help of a part-time aide, AK moved to Statesboro to attend Georgia Southern

University. There he earned his bachelor's degree in Psychology and discovered his calling to be a rehabilitation counselor.

AK explains, "The more I studied psychology the more I reflected on my journey. I felt a big disconnect when I was going through rehabilitation because there were people without disabilities telling me it was going to be okay. I asked myself often how they could really understand and know. So many times, I was rushed out the door without being offered emotional support. I realized how my engagement with future patients could have a big impact on their recovery. I am living proof that they can survive and thrive. It was then I knew what I was called to do."

Today, AK is pursuing his master's degree. Around classes AK makes time to serve as a student counselor and mentor at the Side-by-Side Clubhouse, which offers a workshop and recreational programs for brain injury survivors. He is being the coach, the peer, the mentor he so longed to have. "I want people to look back and say I changed their lives and inspired them to leave their own mark on this world."



CHAIRMAN’S LETTER



Thank you! Thank you to our fellow Georgians living with an SCI or TBI. Thank you for being positive, persistent, and still patient as we continue to make a Real Impact with limited dollars dwarfed by the need for grants.

I have been injured for close to thirty years and continue to track the costs of the periodic products and services I need. For just one example, my spinal cord injury requires a sip and puff wheelchair that cost \$28,000 nine years ago. Our lifetime award limit is currently \$15,000. My peers with TBI or both SCI and TBI need similar equipment and much more in services to remain as independent and productive as possible.

As encouraged as we are about making more grants, we will not settle for the status quo. We continue to provide meaningful data to constituents, legislators, and the Governor’s Office so your needs remain in focus and financial resources may increase for more grants.

The densely populated urban areas and the sparsely populated Georgia regions remain proportionately served, but we continue to seek expertise from rural Georgia citizens, a range of lay-persons and professionals with qualifying disabilities, members of the related state agencies that serve our constituents, and members of academia and the rehabilitation therapy and medical field. This diverse expertise lends insight into more effective and continued equitable Trust Fund distributions.

I have never seen more dedicated staff, Commission members, volunteer committee members and Governor’s staff contributing valuable energy and professional time.

Thank you again for all you do to push forward in the face of shrinking budgets and increasing costs of living. Thank you again – our applicants – for being persistent with us and your legislators as we continue to seek out more resources and remain good stewards of your dollars.

J.D. Frazier  
Chairman

Real Impact via  
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 non-profits to support grant requests and strategic planning for the TBI and SCI populations.

TRAUMATIC BRAIN & SPINAL INJURIES

Total Injuries: **73,770** (July, 2013)

By Age in Years		Emergency TBI	Hospital TBI Only	Hospital TBI+SCI
	0-4	10,825	312	
	5-9	5,299	133	*
	10-14	5,183	151	*
	15-24	11,506	897	22
	25-34	7,374	794	14
	35-44	5,754	653	17
	45-54	5,749	902	20
	55-64	4,241	905	22
	65-74	3,404	868	*
By Sex	75+	6,607	2,073	*
	Unknown	12	*	*

By Sex	Male	34,627	4,615	91
	Female	31,298	3,061	37
	Unknown	29	12	*

By Race	White	40,660	5,252	75
	African American	20,918	1,903	44
	Asian	772	79	*
	Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	107	20	*
	American Indian/ Alaskan Native	94	*	*
	Unknown	363	380	*
	Other	3,040	44	*

\*fewer than 10

# Every Day is a Gift

**C**hristy Thompson was a nursing student eagerly anticipating graduation in 2002. One rainy night, Christy clocked out from a long shift at the hospital but she never made it home. Her car hydroplaned and hit another car head on. Christy’s family rushed to her side where doctors explained that she had a traumatic brain injury and was not expected to survive. Christy laid unconscious clinging to life for the next 10 weeks.

Three months later, Christy came off the respirator and her family began to plan for her next phase of life. She was in a coma-like state with minimal consciousness and couldn’t react. Christy qualified for the Acute Brain Injury Program at The Shepherd Center so they headed to Atlanta.

Specialists at Shepherd determined Christy was not rehabilitative. The choice was a long-term care facility or learn to care for her at home. For this close-knit family, there was no choice... Christy was going home.

Christy’s family spent the next five weeks learning to care for her. Her mom, Jane Warnock, took a sabbatical from work. “Christy was like a newborn baby. While she could not communicate verbally, her personality, attitudes, and feelings all came through clearly. We learned to communicate with her in a whole new way.”

Living in a small rural town, Jane recounts there were few resources around them. “No one could guide us, answer questions or lead us to resources.” Doctors in their hometown didn’t have the expertise. They felt they had no one to turn to.

Luckily, Christy’s grandmother knew a local judge who suggested the Brain & Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission. That referral was a godsend. They discovered agencies, benefits, and resources that they never knew existed. They applied for a grant through the Trust Fund that enabled them to get respite care that enabled Jane to go back to work. Other grants enabled them to make their home more accessible. Jane shares, “There aren’t words to describe what impact those grants had on our quality of life. Opening up walls in our home, installing hardwood floors and building a permanent ramp allowed Christy to get around. Building a bathroom with a roll-in shower was amazing. The joy that shower gave Christy after five years of bed baths was indescribable.”

The portable ramp allowed Christy out into the world again and to give her a sense of living. Jane says, “When we made the choice to bring Christy home, we wanted to give her a life. Thanks to the Brain & Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission, Christy’s a part of us again.”

The average lifespan of a person after such a traumatic brain injury is only ten years. Jane says, “ We consider every day we have with Christy to be a gift, a true miracle. We live each day for what it is and our plan is to care for her the best we can every step of the way. We’ve seen a lot of improvement and her condition is ever-changing, but we make the very best of each day.”



*“Having somewhere to go to seek answers gives you real hope.”*  
– Jane Warnock

# Real Impact via the Trust Fund

Funded solely with a surcharge on DUI fines, the Brain & Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission assists Georgians with traumatic brain and/or spinal cord injuries in a tangible, impactful way – through awarding grants that can help alleviate even a portion of the often insurmountable costs of procuring the necessary equipment and services that help rebuild lives after a traumatic injury.

Unfortunately, as the collections chart shows, our Trust funds have never been lower.

We are doing our best to minimize the funding gaps and stretch resources as far as possible so to be able to touch and impact as many lives as we can. We are constantly evaluating our distribution policies to make sure we are meeting the most urgent needs and providing support for those who need assistance most.

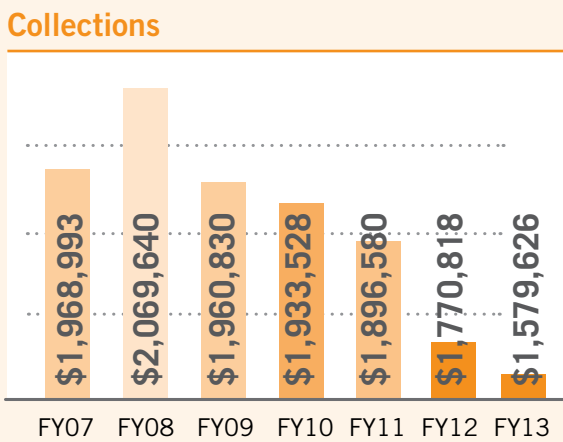
This year, the Commission was pleased to be able to grant 242 awards with a value of \$1,343,136 in goods and services to injured Georgians.

These awards have Real Impact on the lives of Georgians with traumatic brain and/or spinal injuries. Access to a modified vehicle can lead to access to education, healthcare, and community activities. The award of a computer can allow someone to independently conduct their banking online, take classes, utilize memory improvement software, attend online support groups, and stay in touch with far-flung friends and family members. Awards for respite care gives a much needed break to caregivers. Counseling awards enable essential emotional support that helps build coping skills, personal confidence and hope. Adaptations to homes such as roll-in showers, wheelchair ramps, widened doors allow for greater mobility and accessibility that impacts quality of life each and every day.

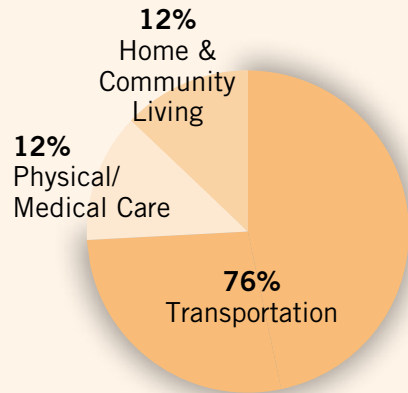


**242 awards worth \$1,343,136 in goods and services were awarded to injured Georgians in FY2013.**

## FUND DISTRIBUTION



## 2013 Awards by Category





# MEET OUR COMMISSIONERS

Our Commission Members are a dedicated, diverse group of individuals from around the state. Each one is committed to improving the effectiveness of the Trust Fund by overseeing its operations and disbursements. The Governor appoints 10 members for two-year terms, although many of our members serve longer. To ensure a breadth of experience and opinion, the Commission’s Governor appointees must consist of: seven individuals or family members with traumatic brain or spinal cord injury and three representatives from medical or other relevant professions. Six Commissioners are appointed by state agencies.



**Bob Bauer, PhD (1)** was appointed by the Governor in 2011. Bob retired from Valdosta State University as the chair of the Department of Psychology and Counseling. Bob is a former Peace Corps volunteer and is also a member of the state board of directors for Georgia Family Connection, chair of the Lowndes/Valdosta Commission for Children and Youth, and a board member of Elderhostel, Inc. He is Chairman of the Advisory Committee.

**Henry Craig (2)** 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 where he was a pilot. He is an elected Baldwin County Commissioner. Henry chairs the Distribution Committee and is a member of the Executive Committee.

**Lisa Dawson, MPH (3)** Treasurer, was appointed as the representative of the Georgia Department of Public Health. As the Director of the Injury Prevention Section, she is active as a member of the Governor’s Office of Highway Safety – Safety Advisory Board, Emory Center for Injury Control, SAFE KIDS Georgia and serves on the Executive and Finance Committees.

**Andrew Dennison, MD (4)**, is a 2010 Governor appointee. Andrew is a physician at Atlanta’s Shepherd Center. Dr. Dennison attended medical school at the University of Pennsylvania and completed a residency in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at the Baylor College of Medicine/ University of Texas-Houston. He also completed a fellowship in Traumatic Brain Injury at Carolinas

Rehabilitation in Charlotte, NC. He is board certified in physical medicine and rehabilitation and is an active member in the American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation and the American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine. He is a member of the Commission’s Executive Committee.

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

**Major Henry Fielding (5)**, is the appointee of the Georgia Department of Public Safety where he has served over thirty-six years with the Georgia State Patrol and is currently Headquarters Adjutant.

**Joseph D. Frazier (6)**, Chairman, is the President and CEO of Para/Quad Services, Inc. He was appointed by the Governor in 2007. J.D. has been the recipient of numerous honors and awards; was the Past President of the Kennesaw State University Alumni Association (2009-2010); is the treasurer of the Georgia Association of Community Care Providers; and is a certified Medicaid Peer Supporter at the Shepherd Center. He endowed a scholarship in 1996 for students with disabilities at KSU. He speaks publicly about diversity awareness and is an advocate for disability rights. He serves as Commission Chairman and Chair of the Executive Committee.

**Gina Gelinas (7)** joined in 2007 as the representative for the Department of Education. Gina is the Program Manager of the Georgia Project for Assistive Technology. Certified in speech-language pathology, she provides learning and technical support services to the local school system. Gina serves on the Children & Youth Committee.

**Cheryl Harris (8)**, Vice Chairman, was appointed in 2012. She has worked in the Georgia Department of Human Services Division of Aging Services since 2007 and has served as the Program Manager for the Aging & Disabilities Resource Connection for four years. She is responsible for expanding aging & disability partnerships statewide and providing technical assistance to help individuals transition to their homes. Cheryl has over 30 years of experience in long-term services and supports including serving as a Long-Term Care Ombudsman for 20 years.

**Randy Owens (9)**, was appointed by Governor Nathan Deal and 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 is a strong advocate for young adults with disabilities.

**Barbara Richards (10)** was appointed as the representative of the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency where she is a Regional Director. She has worked for the New York City Department of Aging and for Goodwill Industries of North Georgia. Barbara is a member of the Georgia Rehabilitation Association.

**Timothy Wall (11)** was appointed by the Governor in 2010. He is a Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist with a BS and MS in Sport Psychology. Since his spinal cord injury in 2001, he has competed in wheelchair tennis competitions and regional championships. He brings experience with organizations that provide recreational opportunities for individuals with disabilities and a recreation/ respite background.

**Jane Warnock (12)**, Secretary, was reappointed by Governor Nathan Deal to the Commission in 2010. She has been an advocate for people with disabilities since her daughter, Christy, sustained a traumatic brain injury in a car crash. Jane serves on the Commission’s Executive, Finance and Public Policy Committees.

## 2013 ANNUAL MEETING

On August 22, 2013 Commissioners, staff and invited guests convened to review accomplishments of the past year, adopt goals and objectives for the coming year, and honor stakeholders that undertook special initiatives to further the Commission’s mission. The 2013 honorees were:

### Jane Jackson (Outstanding Service Award)



is the Brain Injury Association of Georgia’s Information and Resource Director and the “go-to” person for brain injury in Georgia. Jane works tirelessly

for those in need of resources, education, information and a shoulder to lean on. Jane organizes Camp Hardgrove TBI Camp and also generously gives her time to the Commission Communications committee. Jane was honored as a dedicated professional who exemplifies the best in service to her community.

### Shannon McGhee, Esq. (Outstanding Service Award)

was appointed legal advisor to the Commission by the Attorney General. For five years Shannon served to ensure the Commission’s policies, practices and procedures met the high standards of the State of Georgia. Shannon’s sensitivity to our applicants and their families always assured consistency and fairness informed all Commission policies. The Commission is grateful for Shannon’s outstanding counsel.

### Gina Gelinas (Larry Huggins Memorial Award)



serves on the Commission’s Children and Youth Subcommittee and is passionate to improve teachers’ understanding of the needs of children with traumatic

brain injuries. Gina has championed many initiatives that have provided critical knowledge to Georgia’s administrators and special education teachers. Having served as a Commissioner, officer and Executive Committee member, Gina has demonstrated an outstanding commitment to the Commission’s mission since 2007.

### Rep. Jimmy Pruett (2013 Pathfinder Award)

sponsored the 2013 Return To Play Act that provides for concussion identification, concussion management and safe return to sports activities for Georgia’s youth. The bill overwhelmingly passed the Georgia General Assembly and was signed in to law by Governor Nathan Deal. The Commission thanks Rep. Pruett for his foresight and skillful leadership that guided this bill to its adoption. Georgia’s children will be better protected from serious injury thanks to this important legislation.



*The 2013 Pathfinder Award, entitled “Leaf Dance,” was created by Atlanta-area artist Sarah Hatch. Sarah is a fixture in the local arts community teaching, painting and sharing her vision. Sarah has previously painted two Commission Pathfinder awards and has exhibited extensively in Georgia.*

## Applying For A Trust Fund Award

Applications from Georgia residents who have sustained a traumatic brain and/or spinal cord injury are welcome.

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

- medical documentation stating the nature and cause of their injury
- proof of Georgia residency
- proof of U.S. citizenship
- a completed application, including a daily living survey
- statement of annual income

Additionally applicants are asked to:

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

Applications are reviewed every month.

### Four Steps to an Award

- 1:** Apply online or call toll-free for an application. As soon as the application packet is complete, it is sent to the Distribution Program Staff.
- 2:** The Distribution Committee reviews applications to ensure they conform to distribution policy and makes a recommendation to fund or not to the Commission.
- 3:** The Commission votes to adopt the recommendations made by the Distribution Committee.
- 4:** The Commission sends funding recommendations to the Governor’s Office for approval as required by legislation. Applications that gain approval from the Governor are notified via letter from the Commission.

*“Thank you so much for your encouraging letter back in July. It gave me a reason to complete the application... the van will make my life so much easier.”*

—JK (Jack Kovalski)



2013 Trust Fund Commission Staff



## The Commission 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 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.

**We are Guided by Those with First-hand 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 (TBI) and spinal cord injury (SCI). Because of their first-hand experiences, they knew what was most important for people with these traumatic injuries – and what was missing in the range of services and resources available. They dreamed of an agency that understood the lifelong needs of people with traumatic injuries and that was committed to supporting injured individuals at different stages in their life – not just in the critical moments after the injury occurs.

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

**We Connect People To Their Communities.** Georgians with traumatic brain and spinal injuries deserve lives of independence and inclusion, lives rich with vision and possibilities. Trust Fund awards assist individuals with injuries in reaching their chosen goals.

## Trust Fund awards change lives.



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