



RESILIENCE



Brain & Spinal Injury
Trust Fund Commission

ANNUAL REPORT FY2014

Life as we know it can change in an instant.

Sometimes life takes joyful turns, while at other times change brings about great pain and tragedy. Stop and think for a moment ...

How do people deal with difficult events that truly change their lives forever?

What gives them hope and strength to press on and face the adversity ahead?

It's RESILIENCE.

Brain and spinal cord injury survivors embody the very meaning of resilience.

They have had to fight for life itself.

They have had to struggle to reclaim and adapt to bodies in new form and define a new reality for their lives.

They inspire us daily to be strong, to persevere, to overcome, to rebound, and to never ever give up.

RESILIENT LEADERSHIP

The Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission is Georgia's only state agency that offers dedicated funding and support for individuals who have sustained a traumatic brain or spinal cord injury. Created by Constitutional amendment, the Commission's mission is to distribute much needed resources to eligible Georgia residents via direct grants for their post-acute care and rehabilitation.

The Commission does this through three major avenues: The Central Registry, the Trust Fund, and as Georgia's Lead Agency for Traumatic Brain and Spinal Injuries.

The **Central Registry** (p. 5) 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** (p. 8) is funded through a surcharge on DUI fines and will begin receiving funding from convictions of reckless driving in 2015. We provide much needed monetary resources for those whose

The Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund grants much-needed resources to support the care and rehabilitation of Georgians with brain and spinal injuries. Since 1998, the Trust Fund has granted over \$20 million to eligible applicants that resulted in over 4,600 grant awards.

insurance benefits have become depleted or who simply cannot afford necessary goods and services they need post-injury. 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** (p. 9), 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 working 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.

In these tight economic times, 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 every 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 and resilient resource. ★

The vision of the Brain & Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission is to create a Georgia where people with traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries are valued, have equal opportunity and real choices.

Executive Director's Letter



Dear Friends,

Georgia voters have spoken and overwhelmingly agreed that a new source of revenue for the Trust Fund was needed to offset the decline in DUI convictions/remittances. On November 4, 2014 Constitutional Amendment B appeared on the ballot for voters' approval. The results? Nearly 70 percent of Georgia voters agreed to the additional fine for drivers convicted of reckless driving. The Commission is very grateful that 1,735,432 Georgia voters affirm our mission and wish to mitigate the high cost of rehabilitation for our neighbors who have been impacted by traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries.

The approval of this new statute for the Commission also underscores the realization by the public that DUI arrests are often dismissed or reduced to a lesser charge in Georgia. In many instances driving offenses are changed to non-driving offenses and not only are surcharges not collected but points are not placed on the driving record. I feel that this is a public safety issue – points on a driving record has the effect of changing driver behavior and makes them more aware of the hazards of their actions and the consequences of continued dangerous driving. The Commission will continue to educate the public and public officials regarding the dangers of driving under the influence and reckless driving while seeking improvements in policy to support law enforcement.

Finally, support of Amendment B also adds the necessary dimension to Commission discourse when sitting at the table with other state of Georgia entities to find ways to solve this public health issue of drinking and reckless driving. We pledge to you that this new revenue will yield dividends to the state of Georgia far beyond what the final collections may tally each year. And we further pledge that direct grants for rehabilitation will continue as you, the voters, have approved.

Best regards,

Craig Young
Executive Director, BSITFC

The mission of the Brain & Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission 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.

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: 75,835 (2012)

	Emergency TBI	Hospital TBI Only	Hospital TBI+SCI
0-4	10,454	310	*
5-9	5,407	102	*
10-14	5,450	132	*
15-24	12,004	908	30
25-34	7,583	776	24
35-44	5,733	573	21
45-54	5,850	896	27
55-64	4,435	866	26
65-74	3,589	905	10
75+	6,817	1,995	14
Total	67,322	7,463	

	Emergency TBI	Hospital TBI Only	Hospital TBI+SCI
Male	35,459	4,472	126
Female	32,850	3,407	31

	Emergency TBI	Hospital TBI Only	Hospital TBI+SCI
White	37,631	5,015	109
African American	19,281	1,569	35
Asian	579	79	*
American Indian/Alaskan Native	119	11	*
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	88	*	*
Unknown	6,069	391	*
Other	3,496	295	*

*fewer than 10

IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE

In one moment 19 year old Emily Bowman was full of life, standing at a crosswalk in Athens, Georgia bantering back and forth with a friend following close behind about the birthday party they had just come from, and in the next she lay crushed and nearly lifeless on the cold, hard ground. In the blink of an eye a hit-and-run driver veered off the roadway and brought Emily's world to a screeching halt. Her friend Kyle rushed to her side and frantically called 911, begging Emily to hold on.

It was February 16, 2013. When Dale and Debbie Bowman got that call in the middle of the night from Athens Regional Medical Center that their only daughter was clinging to life, their world shattered too. Life as they knew it changed forever.

As Emily lay comatose for 2-1/2 weeks at Athens Regional, Dale and Debbie held vigil. Her brain had suffered severe trauma. All they could do was wait and pray that Emily's mind and body would be restored and that she could return to her playful college life at Kennesaw State, but when she began to regain some consciousness, it was clear that hers was going to be a long, tough journey.

Emily couldn't move her limbs on her left side, couldn't talk, couldn't swallow, and the doctors couldn't say for sure just how much she was cognitively processing. She was able to track activity with her eyes, which gave Debbie and Dale hope that their Emily was in there and ready to fight.

When she was stable enough, they moved Emily to Shepherd Center where she spent 2-1/2 months in an intensive brain injury treatment and rehabilitation program. Progress was slow and steady, but Emily faced an onslaught of physical challenges. Eventually they had to stop rehabilitation efforts and transfer her to another hospital to get the flow of her cerebrospinal fluid managed effectively. After 5-1/2 months in three hospitals, Dale and Debbie finally got word that they could take Emily home.

While that sounded great in theory, they weren't as equipped and ready as they thought they were to bring Emily home. They learned quickly just how unaccommodating their home was for a wheelchair. They had no lift to move Emily around like they had in the hospital. Emily's wheelchair wouldn't fit in any of their vehicles, so transportation to and from doctors appointments and outpatient therapy sessions 3-5 days a week was a real challenge. There was so much to overcome, but they worked to stay positive and focused on resilience.

One day, Emily's therapist mentioned the Brain & Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission to Debbie and encouraged her to apply for some transportation support. After learning more about the application process the Bowman's decided to apply for a distribution to help them buy an accessible van that would allow them



to transport Emily more easily. Debbie shares, "Our distribution from the Trust Fund was life-changing. It was the best thing to happen to us. We can come and go so easily now with our van. I don't know what we would have done without the Trust Fund's help." Having the ability to get Emily to and from her therapy sessions without obstacle was just what the Bowman's needed to remain hopeful about the future.



"Resilience means never giving up. It means staring this trauma and adversity in the face and not backing down."

Because of her regular rehabilitation therapy, Emily continues to make steady forward movement. They believe her brain is now processing information at the level of an 8 year old. She recognizes friends and family and is able to do some very simple math. Emily spoke her first word 14 months after the accident. She stunned Debbie when she said, "Home" after returning back home from therapy once day. She is desperately trying to talk but her speech is still very garbled and slurred. They've successfully repaired

the hole in her skull that left a sunken gap the size of a tennis ball. Her neuro-ophthalmologists have been able to fit her with prism glasses that have helped her vision and equilibrium. Though she struggles to swallow, Emily has learned to feed herself simple meals with some assistance. And while Emily is still wheelchair bound now, she is starting to do some pivot transfers and take some small steps with assistance. Debbie explains, "Emily finally has some movement in her left leg and there is some improvement in the muscles in her left arm. We still have great hope that one day she will walk again."

Debbie shares, "As odd as it sounds, we have so much to be thankful for. Emily is here with us. We believe that she is slowly starting to understand what happened to her and that's she's consciously working to get better." Outside therapy time Emily enjoys spending time outdoors, bird watching, playing Uno with a special cardholder, listening to music and going shopping with her mom. Debbie tells, "Emily was quite the fashionista before the accident. She dreamed of owning her own shoe store one day. We make a conscious effort to keep Emily dressed very stylishly and



have kept up her vast shoe collection. It's important we help her feel pretty too."

When asked what resilience means to her, Debbie responds, "Resilience means never giving up. It means staring this trauma and adversity in the face and not backing down. It means keeping the faith. We will never give up. We

want Emily to have her life back. She is a living, breathing example to all of us of determination, perseverance and true resilience." ★

Follow Emily  Bows for Bowman

YOUR TRUST FUND

Currently 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 way - by awarding grants that can help alleviate even a portion of the often insurmountable costs of procuring necessary equipment and post-acute care and rehabilitation services that help rebuild lives after injury. This year, the Commission was pleased to fund 271 grant requests to 216 Georgians totalling \$1,627,606.

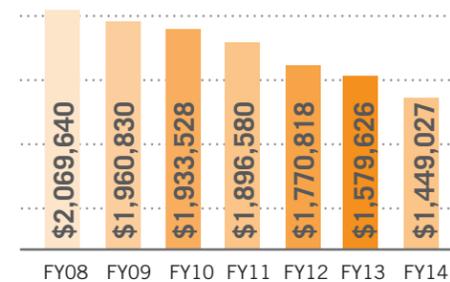
Unfortunately, as the collections chart shows, Trust funding has never been lower. We are doing our best to minimize funding gaps and stretch resources as far as possible to be able to touch as many lives as we can. We are constantly evaluating our distribution policies to make sure we are meeting the most urgent needs and providing support for those who need assistance most.

Trust Fund awards are very diverse and offer access to services and resources that enable survivors to be resilient and move on with life. Access to a modified vehicle and transportation enables access to education, medical care, and community activities. The award of a computer can allow someone to independently conduct banking online, take classes, utilize memory improvement software, attend online support groups, and stay in touch with friends and family. Awards for respite care gives a much needed break to caregivers. Counseling awards offers emotional support that helps build coping skills, personal confidence and hope. Adaptations to homes such as roll-in showers, ramps, and widened doors allow for greater mobility and accessibility that impacts quality of life every day; things most of us take for granted. We hear regularly from award recipients that they benefit in unexpected ways - improved health, greater independence, strength, self confidence, and hope. ★

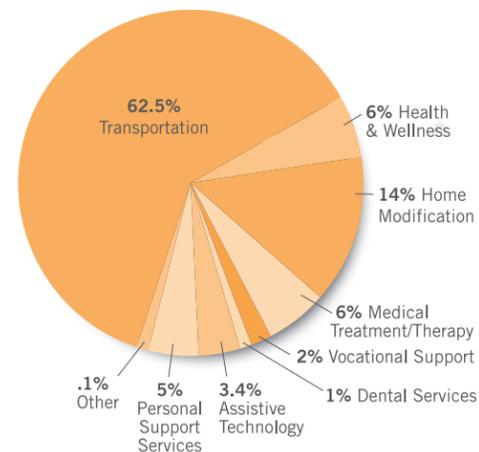
Fund Distribution



Annual Fund Collections



2014 Awards by Category



THE LEAD AGENCY

Public Policy

2014 saw the passage of HR1183 and HB870 - legislation to enable a constitutional amendment that would direct a new surcharge on reckless driving convictions to the Commission beginning in 2015. This bill engendered the two-thirds majority necessary in both chambers of the General Assembly and had tremendous bipartisan support. Signed by Governor Deal, the legislation created Constitutional Amendment B for Georgia voters to consider. Supported by legislators, grassroots community groups and organizations such as the Georgia Hospital Association, Shepherd Center, The Brain Injury Association of Georgia and others, the amendment was passed overwhelmingly by voters on November 4, 2014.

- Beginning January 1, 2015 Georgia courts are required to levy a 10 percent surcharge on all convictions for reckless driving.
- Funds will be transmitted from the courts to the Commission's Treasury account by the Georgia Superior Court Clerks Cooperative Authority.
- Any and all funds transmitted will be appropriated by the Legislature to the Trust Fund.

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 to ensure an individual's needs are being met: Screening and Identification; Training and Awareness; Rehabilitation and Wellness; Service Coordination; Long Term and Life Long Supports; Independent and Integrated Living; Community Participation.

Representatives from advocacy organizations and services providers across the state as well as individuals with traumatic brain injury and spinal cord injuries and their family members serve as members of three strategic committees and multiple work groups. These dedicated members work tirelessly throughout the year to plan and assess the statewide service structure and recommend changes to ensure care needs are being met and supports are available to promote community integration and independence for all individuals.

The Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission is the lead agency for traumatic brain injuries and spinal cord injuries in the state of Georgia. We work with our state and community partners to ensure that the work we do has a sustainable impact on the lives of the individual's we serve. For more information about the State Action Plan, please visit our website at www.bsitf.state.ga.us ★

"My family and I would like to thank you for providing such a great service for those, like my son, who have endured the devastation of SCI. The funding we received for the standing glider and exercise therapy has been an answer to our prayers. We are truly thankful for what you have done for our family and for many others. May God bless you all!" – Cina Sherriff

I'M NOT DONE YET!

Since high school Greg Harry's world has been powered by music. His tempo was naturally set to allegro. The soundtrack of his life was lively, syncopated and loud. His older brother gave him his first guitar and Greg taught himself to play. It wasn't long before Greg started his own heavy metal band, Icebreaker, and his love for playing loud and proud on stage was born.

When he graduated from high school in 1982, Greg was determined to make music his life. With grit and determination Greg put himself through music school. He juggled his shifts in a sports collectibles business around classes, and on weekends played regular gigs, taught guitar lessons, and worked on cutting his first album. He was living the dream and loving life.



"This chair does not define me."

One fall evening in September of 1991 Greg went over to a friend's house after work to hang out. They migrated out onto the back deck to enjoy the crisp air. Greg thought nothing of it when he went to sit up on the railing, but in that moment his entire world came crashing down. The railing crumbled under him, sending Greg careening two stories. His head hit first and instantly Greg's neck broke at the C3-4 vertebrae. At 27 years old, Greg Harry was a quadriplegic.

Greg was in and out of ICU multiple times and spent 5-1/2 months in rehabilitation. After hundreds of hours of therapy Greg regained limited movement in his left arm that allowed him to steer his electric wheelchair independently. That little bit of mobility gave Greg the deliverance he needed to chart a path of self-sufficiency and resilience.

Greg shares, "I could not have faced it all without the love and support of my wife and family. They helped me find the resilience within myself to pick up the pieces and put my life back together." He went back to work in 1993 and worked for two years until his wife finished her master's degree. When she finished school, he focused full-time on launching a new music business.

Greg reached out to his music industry friends and learned the business of music production. Soon thereafter Greg taught himself digital recording and composition and 3-7-12 Studio was born. Before Greg's accident he relied upon his hands to strum the strings and press the frets; now he uses his fully adapted studio with a 16 channel vertical board controlled with a mouth stick to generate his sound. He was an instrumentalist before; now he's a singer with two solo records. He continues to teach guitar and inspires new musicians to find their own unique soundtrack. Greg even launched a unique support group for fellow spinal injury survivors that involved monthly music jam sessions. The Commission is proud to have helped support Greg Harry's resilient path to recovery and self-sufficiency with two Trust Fund distributions.

Greg reflects back on the years since his accident saying, "It is possible to carry on after a traumatic injury. You're still the same person inside. You just have to accept that you might not be able to do what you could before, but with a little adjusting you may find a new passion that's even better." Greg keeps a picture of himself pre-accident on the desktop of his wheelchair at all times. He explains, "It helps remind me that this chair does not define me. I am still Greg Harry, the musician that has much to give to this world. It reminds me how resilient I am and that I'm not done yet!" ★



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Visit www.3-7-12.com to learn more about Greg's music.

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER



Dear Friends and Colleagues:

The financial and practical effects of brain and spinal cord injuries are staggering and life-long for each individual, their family and community, and our healthcare system. Each injury requires a lifetime of financial support. There are constant financial strains and expensive medical interventions required throughout their lives. In 1984 I was injured and paralyzed from the neck down. In spite of my otherwise good health after my acute care and rehabilitation, my basic attendant care costs far exceed my full-time professional income. My insurance offers no coverage for home care. Living the past 30 years as a quadriplegic, I have been lucky to not have serious conditions or complications normally associated with a spinal cord injury, but this year, that changed. I began to experience dangerous and debilitating whole-body muscle spasms. The solution required \$150,000 in tests and surgery requiring a 4-day hospital stay.

My wheelchair is my lifeline that allows me to go to work and be as self-sufficient as possible. My initial wheelchair cost \$12,000 in 1984 and now lists for \$70,000. Even with otherwise great health insurance coverage, my insurance company only reimburses \$29,000 per chair. Most will only pay for one power chair per lifetime. I'm in my 4th now. This gives you a glimpse of just some of the ongoing costs required for brain and spinal cord injury care and what the survivors have to personally absorb to live.

One of the most remarkable combinations of efforts and circumstances has occurred surrounding the recent passage of Constitutional Amendment B. Our advocates, volunteers, staff, public officials, award grantees, and others worked very hard to communicate the need for and positive effects of Trust Fund distributions. Injuries caused by DUI and reckless driving cost citizens with brain and spinal cord injuries and their families, our healthcare systems, insurance companies, and Georgia state agencies millions of dollars. Our infrastructure is unable to address the secondary effects and absorb the costs flowing directly from these costly illegal behaviors.

I say, "Thank You!" to Georgia voters, legislators, and the Governor's office for supporting Amendment B in bipartisan fashion. "Thank You!" to advocacy organizations, individual grassroots volunteers, and other agency commissioners, who helped educate citizens about the needs of those we serve. "Thank You!" to our partners at other state agencies who work in tandem with us to increase efficiencies and remain relevant to our constituents. "Thank You!" to our staff who assist applicants daily and ensure we provide grants to those that need them most. "Thank You!" to everyone who is and can be a part of the solution to increase resources while discouraging DUI and reckless driving.

I remain steadfast and diligent in service to our constituents and the citizens of Georgia. The Commission's work continues to make a real difference in the lives of so many Georgians and we are grateful for all who stand alongside us to champion the mission of the Trust Fund.

Warm Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joseph D. Frazier".

J.D. Frazier
Chairman

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 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.

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. He is active in local community organizations and is a Baldwin County Commissioner. Henry chairs the Commission's Distribution Committee and is a member of the Executive Committee.

Lisa Dawson, MPH (3), Treasurer, 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. Lisa currently serves on the Commission's Executive and Finance committees.

Andrew Dennison, MD (4), Vice Chairman, 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. 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 Brian 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, Chairman (6), is a Governor's appointee. He is President and CEO of Para/Quad Services, Inc. J.D. has been the recipient of numerous honors and awards; was the Immediate Past President of the Kennesaw State University Alumni Association; is the treasurer of the Georgia Association of Community Care Providers; and is a registered peer supporter for Shepherd Center and a certified Medicaid Peer Supporter. He speaks publicly about diversity awareness and is an advocate for disability rights. In addition to serving as Commission Chairman, he also serves as Chair of the Executive Committee.

Gina Gelinas (7), joined the Commission 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 local school system personnel who work with students who need assistive technology. Gina serves on the Children & Youth Committee.

Cheryl Harris (8) was appointed to the Commission in 2012. She has worked in the Georgia Department of Human Services Division of Aging Services since 2007 and serves as the Access to Services Section Manager for the agency. Cheryl is responsible for expanding aging and disability partnerships statewide and for providing technical assistance and guidance to local ADRC programs. Cheryl has served as a Long-Term Care Ombudsman for 20 years. She is committed to providing information and assistance that will help individuals avoid institutionalization or transition from institutions back to their homes and communities.

Chase Jones (9) is a Governor's appointee from Carroll County. Chase has worked for the Georgia Department of Public Safety and was employed by the Georgia House of Representatives as a legislative analyst. He is a member of the Commission's Public Policy committee. Chase lives in Carrollton, Georgia.

Randy Owens (10) 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.

Barbara Richards (11) was appointed to the Commission as the representative of the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency where she is a Regional Director. Barbara 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.

Tom Smith (12) is a Governor appointee from Wayne County. Tom is completing his PhD in Physical Therapy and is looking forward to using his new knowledge to benefit his clients and advise the Commission on this important part of rehabilitation therapy. Tom lives in Jesup, Georgia with his family.

Timothy Wall (13) 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.

Jane Warnock (14), Secretary, 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 Executive, Finance and Public Policy Committees.

ANNUAL MEETING 2014

On September 25, 2014 Commissioners and staff of the Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund met for the 2014 Annual Meeting to review the past year, adopt goals and objectives for the coming year, learn more about needs and resources available, and honor stakeholders who undertook special initiatives to further the mission and vision of the Commission. For 2014 the Commission honored the following individuals for their outstanding contributions to the Trust Fund and the citizens of the State of Georgia.

Outstanding Service Awards

Stephanie Lotti, Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission

Stephanie Lotti was the Director of Data & Public Policy for the Commission from 2006 to 2014. Stephanie served on multiple community boards such as the Georgia Center for Independent Living, Atlanta Homeless Coalition and many others. At the Commission Stephanie administered the Central Registry and produced high quality data for stakeholders. Stephanie also convened the Public Policy committee and was the Commission's lobbyist. Thanks to Stephanie's collaboration with Rep. Tanner on HR1183, this legislation moved through the General Assembly expeditiously and was ratified with little opposition. Stephanie was honored for her professional dedication and exemplary public service to Georgia.

Larry Huggins Memorial Award



Greg Harry, Advocate and Committee Member, BSITFC Distribution Committee

Greg has actively served as a BSITFC Distribution Committee member since 2010. As an advocate Greg has provided testimony to the state legislature for the passage of the Nurse Practice Act and

attends legislative sessions that impact funding and services for Georgians with disabilities. Greg has demonstrated an extraordinary commitment to the Commission's mission and we were pleased to award him the 2014 Larry Huggins Memorial Award for his outstanding service.

Barbara Richards, Commissioner BSITFC

The Commission honored Commissioner Barbara Richards with the Outstanding Service Award for her years of service to the Commission. Barbara was appointed to this position by the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency and served the Commission for three years. Barbara was sensitive to the circumstances of our applicants and their families and always sought to ensure that both our applicants and staff were informed regarding VR policies and processes. The Commission is grateful to have had the benefit of Barbara's outstanding advice.

Pathfinder Award



Representative Kevin Tanner - District 9 - Dawsonville, GA

Representative Kevin Tanner of Dawsonville, GA was the recipient of the 2014 Pathfinder Award, presented to Georgians who have made notable contributions to the traumatic brain and spinal cord injury community. Rep. Tanner sponsored HB870/HR1183 that enabled the 2014 Constitutional Amendment B which asked Georgia voters to amend the Commission's legislation to include a surcharge upon conviction of reckless driving. Rep. Tanner's bill overwhelmingly passed the Georgia General Assembly and was signed by Governor Nathan Deal. Georgia voters approved this amendment by nearly 70%. The Commission thanks Rep. Tanner for his bipartisan approach and skillful leadership that guided this amendment to its final approval by Georgia's voters. Georgians impacted by traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries will have greater access to care and rehabilitation services thanks to Representative Tanner.



Members of the Commission staff (standing) are dedicated professionals focused on connecting survivors and their families with the resources they need to rebuild their lives. Our Commission Members (seated) are a dedicated, diverse group of individuals from around the state committed to overseeing the operations and disbursements of the Trust Fund.

APPLYING FOR A TRUST FUND AWARD

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

To qualify, applicants are asked to submit:

- medical documentation stating the nature and cause of their injury proof of Georgia residency
- at least one quote each for each service and/or item requested
- a completed application, including a daily living survey
- statement of annual income

Additionally applicants are asked to:

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

Applications are reviewed every month.

We are committed to improving the quality of life for the more than 70,000 Georgians who sustain a TBI/SCI each year. Applying for an award can be easily done online. If you are unsure about applying, feel free to call us toll free at 1-888-233-5760. We are happy to help you find the resources you need.

Four Steps to an Award

Step 1: Apply online at www.bsitf.state.ga.us or call 1-888-233-5760 (toll free) for an application. As soon as your application is complete and all supporting document have been received, your application packet is sent to the Distribution Program Staff.

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

Step 3: The Commission votes to adopt the recommendations made by the Distribution Committee, approximately four to six weeks from full completion of an application.

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

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. In the 2014 general election, nearly 70 percent of voters approved an additional fine on reckless driving convictions that will be directed solely to the Trust Fund.

We are Guided by Those with Firsthand Knowledge

The idea of the Trust Fund and the advocacy efforts on behalf of the founding legislation was driven by people with traumatic brain injury (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.



Brain & Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission
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