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**MORE THAN 50,000 TREATED FOR TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY
IN GEORGIA IN 2005 ALONE**

Brain Injury Awareness Month a Time for Advocacy, Education

ATLANTA, MARCH 21 – Traumatic brain injury (TBI) is the leading cause of death and disability for anyone under age 45. In Georgia, 1 person out of every 170 sustains a TBI doing everyday activities like working around the house or driving.

As new, more accurate data emerges from the Central Registry for Traumatic Brain & Spinal Injuries, the only centralized source of information on traumatic injuries in Georgia, the impact of TBI is finally being brought into focus.

“The Commission has identified areas of great unmet need as we tally the true extent of traumatic injury each year,” said Rusty Kidd, Chair of the Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission (Commission), which administers the Registry. Kidd added the Commission has corrected a vast undercount since taking on the Registry three years ago: more than 50,000 people were treated in Georgia for traumatic injury in 2005 alone; compared to the 2,401 injuries identified in 2003.

In conjunction with better record keeping, better reporting is helping people to understand what has become the signature wound of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The recent investigative report, *To Iraq and Back*, by ABC World News Tonight anchor

FACTS ABOUT TBI

- U.S. citizens are five times more likely to sustain a TBI than multiple sclerosis, spinal cord injury, HIV/AIDS, and breast cancer combined. (www.biausa.org)
- Even though the direct and indirect costs of TBI in the U.S. are estimated at \$60 billion annually, the federal government currently only spends about \$3 per TBI survivor on TBI research and services. (www.biausa.org)
- Children and young adults under the age of 24 are at a greater risk for sustaining a traumatic injury (31%), with children under the age of four being the highest-risk group of all (18%). (www.bsitf.state.ga.us)
- In 2005, motor vehicle accidents were the leading cause of hospitalization for all traumatic injuries (40%), followed by falls (33%), then violence (7%). Accidental falls, were the leading cause (40%) of all TBI-related ER visits, followed by car accidents (22%), being struck by an object or person (18%), or violence (10%). (www.bsitf.state.ga.us)
- Males are 1.7 times more likely to sustain a traumatic brain injury than females. (*BSITFC*)

Bob Woodruff, detailed the extensive rehabilitation required to treat the severe brain injury he sustained in Iraq.

“We need more reports like Woodruff’s so people will understand the pervasiveness and complicated nature of TBI,” said Karen Parsley, the newly-appointed Director of the Brain Injury Association of Georgia (www.birf.info). “TBIs tend to multiply. If you’ve had one TBI, the risk for another injury is three times greater; and after a second TBI, the risk for another is eight times greater. TBIs snowball.”

Traumatic brain injuries continue to be under-diagnosed, because symptoms may appear days, weeks, or even months after the injury occurs. Also, the medical profession is still learning about TBI.

“It’s the most complex injury to the most complex organ of the body,” says Lt. Col. Rocco Armonda, M.D., a neurosurgeon at the Bethesda Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, MD featured in Woodruff’s documentary.

Fortunately, advocates are working to make sure those with TBI can get the help they need to live independent, inclusive lives. To learn about important legislative issues and upcoming initiatives for people with traumatic injuries, see www.bsitf.state.ga.us.

The Trust Fund

The mission of the Brain and 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.

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