

# ANNUAL REPORT 2024



## Office of Special Disability Programs

Traumatic Brain Injury &  
Spinal Cord Injury Trust Fund  
Program



MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF  
REHABILITATION SERVICES

*Opportunities for Independence*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>3</b>	Welcome	<b>8</b>	Expenditures By Service Category
<b>4</b>	Eligibility	<b>9</b>	Grant Projects
	Funding	<b>11</b>	Total Expenditures
	Program Administration		Annual Nursing Home Survey
	Advisory Council		Other Activities
<b>5</b>	Advisory Council Members	<b>12</b>	Sub Grant Recipient Testimonies
<b>6</b>	TBI/SCI Waiver		
<b>7</b>	Direct Client Services		

## Mission Statement

It is the mission of the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services (MDRS) to provide appropriate and comprehensive services to Mississippians with disabilities in a timely and effective manner. Programs and services assist individuals with disabilities to gain employment, retain employment and to live more independently.

## Vision Statement

In an effort to enable Mississippians with spinal cord injury and traumatic brain injury achieve their maximum level of independence, the 1996 Mississippi Legislature established the Traumatic Brain Injury/Traumatic Spinal Cord Injury (TBI/SCI) Trust Fund. The goal of the Trust Fund Program is to assist individuals who are severely disabled by traumatic spinal cord injury or traumatic brain injury to resume activities of daily living and to reintegrate into the community with as much dignity and independence as possible.



***Billy Taylor***  
***Executive Director***

**Dear Governor Reeves**  
**and members of the Mississippi Legislature:**

As the Executive Director of the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services, I am proud to present the 2024 Traumatic Brain Injury/Traumatic Spinal Cord Injury Trust Fund Annual Report. The Trust Fund Advisory Council Members, along with other individuals interested in expanding services to people with spinal cord and traumatic brain injuries, have generously contributed their time, expertise, and enthusiasm in carrying forward the intent of the original legislation. It is a privilege to report the continued good progress of the Trust Fund and its partners who provide the much-needed resources for Mississippians with traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries.

Every effort has been made by the members of the Trust Fund Advisory Council and the staff of the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services to identify, address and implement the components and objectives of the Trust Fund. Because of the services made possible by the Trust Fund, Mississippians with traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries are better able to strive for and achieve an improved quality of life following injury. The continued administration of the Traumatic Brain Injury/Spinal Cord Injury Home and Community-based Waiver, which utilizes dollars from the Trust Fund to match federal dollars to extend services to more individuals with a traumatic brain injury or spinal cord injury, has been fundamental to the success of effectively serving these individuals. This program allows individuals to live in their own homes surrounded by their families and caregivers instead of a nursing or institutional facility.

During FY 2025, we will continue to pursue all possible funding alternatives and resources to leverage the maximum draw down of available federal funds. We will continue our efforts to encourage inter agency collaboration while working to develop new services for our clients. The staff of the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services continues to work diligently to ensure that the necessary resources for individuals who have sustained a traumatic brain injury or spinal cord injury are available today and in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Billy Taylor". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Billy Taylor, Executive Director

## Eligibility

Any resident of Mississippi, regardless of age, who has a severe disability as a result of a traumatic spinal cord injury or a traumatic brain injury and is medically stable, shall be eligible for services. Medical stability is defined as the absence of (a) an active, life threatening condition (e.g., sepsis, respiratory, or other condition requiring systematic therapeutic measures); (b) IV drip to control or support blood pressure; and (c) intra-cranial pressure or arterial monitoring.

For the purposes of this program, traumatic brain injury is defined as an insult to the skull, brain, or its covering, resulting from external trauma which produces an altered state of consciousness or anatomic, motor, sensory or cognitive/behavioral deficits. Spinal cord injury is defined as an acute traumatic insult to the spinal cord, not of a degenerative or congenital nature, but caused by an external trauma resulting in any degree of motor or sensory deficit.

The Trust Fund Program is the payer of last resort. An individual must seek assistance from all available resources prior to the Trust Fund's participation in a service.

## Funding

Motor vehicle accidents is one of the leading cause of both traumatic spinal cord and traumatic brain injuries in Mississippi. Funding for the TBI/SCI Trust Fund is provided through fees and surcharges on moving traffic violations. Collection of these surcharges began July 1, 1996. A \$25.00 surcharge is collected from every violation of the Mississippi Implied Consent (Driving Under the Influence) Law, and \$5.45 from all other moving vehicle violations.

## Program Administration

The Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services (MDRS) was designated by the Legislature to administer the Spinal Cord and Brain Injury Trust Fund Program. The MDRS Office of Special Disability Programs coordinates the direct services to eligible consumers, and a full-time program coordinator oversees the coordination of services. A variety of community-related integration programs are also provided through the Traumatic Brain Injury/Spinal Cord Injury Trust Fund via contracts with community organizations and agencies.

## Advisory Council

A seven-member advisory Council provides advice and expertise to the MDRS in the preparation, implementation and periodic review of the TBI/SCI Trust Fund Program. The composition of the Advisory Council was designated by legislation to include a maximum of ten members who are comprised by the following: (1) A physician with expertise in areas related to the care and rehabilitation of individuals with spinal cord injuries or traumatic brain injuries, (2) A professional in a clinical rehabilitation setting, (3) A representative designated by the Brain Injury Association of Mississippi, (4) A representative designated by the Mississippi Paralysis Association, (5) Three individuals with spinal cord injuries or traumatic brain injuries, and (6) Three family members of individuals with traumatic spinal cord or traumatic brain injuries.

## ***Current Advisory Council Members***

**Dr. Edward Manning, Chairperson, Psychologist (Professional in Clinical Rehabilitation Setting)** – Dr. Manning is a faculty member (Professor) in the Department of Neurology at the University of Mississippi Medical Center. He has worked extensively in the assessment and treatment of neurobehavioral aspects of brain injury. He is active in the Brain Injury Association of Mississippi and is past president of the association. He is a active member of a number of national professional associations in the fields of Clinical Psychology and Clinical Neuropsychology.

**Dr. Howard Katz, Psychiatrists, Brain Injury Specialist (Designee of the Brain Injury Association of Mississippi)** – Dr. Katz has been chairman of the Board of Directors of the Brain Injury Association of Mississippi since its inception in 1989. In addition to his active involvement in organizations that promote services to individuals with brain injuries, he is well known for his individualized patient care. As the medical director of 5 post-acute residential rehabilitation facilities, including the only facility in Mississippi, and running a private practice at Mississippi Baptist Medical Center, Dr. Katz works closely with brain and spinal cord injury survivors and their family to maximize independence and provide long-term medical care management.

**Mr. Adrian Benson, (Designee of the Mississippi Paralysis Association)** – Mr. Benson has been on the Board of Directors for MS Paralysis Association (MPA) since 2014 and currently serves as President of the Board. He survived a spinal cord injury in November of 2003. He is also a board member for MDRS as well as Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA).

**Ms. Susan Marquez, Family Member** – Susan learned about the world of TBI/SCI in 2008 when her daughter, Nicole, fell six stories off the roof of her New York apartment building. A freelance writer and marketing/public relations professional, Susan is an avid advocate for the advancement of Mississippians with disabilities, reaching out to families touched by TBI/SCI to help them navigate the system and encouraging them whenever possible.

**Mr. Cameron Stubbs, SCI Survivor** - Mr. Stubbs previously worked for the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services as an Outreach Coordinator and returned to MDRS in 2019 as a Business Development Representative for the Office of Business Development and is currently the Special Projects Coordinator. Cameron returned to The University of Mississippi in the fall of 2013 to pursue his Master's Degree in Higher Education. Upon completion of his Master's Degree in Higher Education in December of 2015, he was hired by the University of Mississippi School of Pharmacy where he served as an Admission Counselor and instructor of EDHE 105: First Year Experience. A spinal cord injury survivor since 2003, he works with multiple organizations advocating for the advancement of Mississippians with disabilities by being Chairman of the Oxford's Mayor's Commission for Disability Issues. As a SCI survivor and advocate, he engages the public with disability awareness presentations and motivational speaking to relay his message and story of living with a spinal cord injury to help support families in similar situations.

**Nikosha Anderson, SCI Survivor** - Nikosha is a busy mom of two boys who obtained her degree in Psychology from Jackson State University and is pursuing her Master's in Social Work. She is an SCI survivor as the result of a motor vehicle accident in June 2013, and has spent many hours volunteering at Methodist Rehabilitation Center's QUEST Program.

**Amanda Gatlin, TBI Survivor** - Amanda was born and raised in West, MS and currently resides in Jackson with her husband and four bonus children, three girls and one boy. She has a bachelor's degree in Business Administration. For over eight years she has been working in the medical insurance field as a Collections Special Lead. Amanda's favorite things include spending quality time with friends and family, baking, decorating, hosting parties and riding four wheelers. By the grace of God, Amanda survived being struck in the head by a stray bullet.

# TBI/SCI Waiver

## 864 Individuals Received Services

MDRS received approval from The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) in 2002 to implement the TBI/SCI Waiver. In 2023, the TBI/SCI Waiver was renewed for another five years. This home and community-based services program is operated in partnership with the Mississippi Division of Medicaid. The program utilizes matching dollars from the TBI/SCI Trust Fund to draw down federal dollars to extend services to individuals with traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries. Individuals enrolled in the TBI/SCI Waiver may receive attendant care, respite care, Environmental Accessibility Adaptations (EAA), medical equipment, and supplies and transition assistance services. All services are provided pursuant to an individualized plan of services and supports. During Fiscal Year 2024, a total of 864 individuals received services through the TBI/SCI Waiver.

## Direct Client Services

### *Durable Medical Equipment and Supplies*

#### 103 Individuals Received Equipment and Supplies

Durable Medical Equipment and Supplies enable individuals to increase their ability to perform the activities of daily living, perceive, control, or communicate with the environment in which they live. Because of these services, their independence is greatly enhanced. An example of such services is specialized wheelchairs. There is a \$50,000 lifetime cap for Durable Medical Equipment, Environmental Accessibility Adaptations and Vehicle Modifications combined when provided by the Trust Fund. A total of 103 individuals received Durable Medical Equipment and Supplies.

### *Environmental Accessibility Adaptations*

#### 13 Individuals Environmental Accessibility Adaptations

Many times an individual is restricted in his/her activities due to limited access to their environment. EAAs enable the individual to function more independently in their home by making their home environment accessible. Examples of such services are: widening doorways and installing grab bars. A total of 13 consumers received EAAs.

### *Vehicle Modifications*

#### 2 Individuals Received Vehicle Modifications

Vehicle Modifications are provided to accommodate specialized wheelchairs or other mobility devices. These services are also provided to enable the individuals to transport themselves or be transported in the community. Vehicle Modifications are a service component through the TBI/SCI Trust Fund but not the TBI/SCI Waiver. A total of 2 consumers received vehicle modifications.

### *Respite Services*

#### 36 Individuals Received Respite Services

Respite Services gives short-term, temporary relief to the family caregiver because of the absence or need for relief of the caregiver. Respite helps reduce stress and maintain family relations by providing the caregiver with time to rest, relax and re-create. Payments are made for the following levels of care, based on a physician's determination of need: (1) Companion, (2) Nurse Aide, (3) Licensed Practical Nurse, and (4) Registered Nurse. A total of 36 consumers received Respite Services.

# Direct Client Services

## ***Personal Care Attendants Services***

### **790 Individuals Received Personal Care Attendant Services**

Personal Care Attendant Services provide human assistance to individuals that enable them to accomplish tasks they would normally do for themselves if they did not have a disability. Personal Assistance may be in the form of hands-on assistance to assist with eating, bathing, dressing, personal hygiene, and transferring or assistance with cognitive activities such as planning daily schedules, grocery shopping, and banking. Transitional Personal Care Attendant Services are limited to 12 months. During this time, the survivor and family members will be assisted with seeking other attendant care services that can go beyond the 12-month limit such as attendant care services provided under the Waiver. A total of 790 consumers received Personal Care Attendant Services.

## ***Emergency Services***

### **0 Individual Received Emergency Services**

Emergency services provide assistance of a short-term, urgent nature that is considered critical for the individual's survival, general health or welfare, or the maintenance/enhancement of their independent living capacity. Emergency services are capped at \$1,000.00 one-time expense per lifetime.

## ***Case Management***

### **908 Individuals Received Case Management Services**

Case Management involves assisting individuals in gaining access to needed services. Case Management may be used to locate, coordinate, and monitor necessary and appropriate services. Case Management also serves to provide necessary coordination of multiple services and/or Providers. Case Managers are involved in developing an individualized plan of services and supports with the consumer. At a minimum, the case manager maintains monthly contact and conducts quarterly face to face visits with the individual. A total of 908 individuals received case management services through the TBI/SCI Waiver and TBI/SCI Trust Fund.

## ***Transition Assistance Services***

### **0 Individuals Received Transition Assistance Services**

Transition Assistance Services are services provided to a Mississippi Medicaid eligible nursing facility resident to assist in transitioning from the nursing facility into the Traumatic Brain Injury/Spinal Cord Injury Waiver Program. Transition Assistance is one-time initial expense required for setting up a household. The expenses must be included on the plan of services and supports. Transition Assistance Services are capped at \$800.00 one-time initial expense per lifetime. Transition Assistance Services are a service component through the TBI/SCI Waiver but are not a service component of the TBI/SCI Trust Fund.

# Expenditures By Service Category

## TBI/SCI Trust Fund and TBI/SCI Waiver

The following chart is an overview of the number of clients served, the types of services received and funds utilized through the TBI/SCI Trust Fund and the TBI/SCI Waiver for Fiscal Year 2024.

Attendant Care	\$14,840,962.87
Equipment	\$47,024.26
Home Modifications	\$243,075.00
Respite	\$87,943.45
Specialized Medical Supplies	\$55,971.98
Assistive Technology Services	\$127,158.16
Vehicle Modifications	\$2,522.03
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$15,404,657.75</b>

**Total Number of  
Clients Served**  
**908**

## Prevention and Education Projects

Mississippi has one of the highest incidence rates of traumatic brain injuries in the United States. However, most spinal cord and brain injuries are preventable. If Mississippians practiced better safety measures such as eliminating drunk driving, wearing motorcycle/bicycle helmets, properly using safety belts/child restraints and fall prevention, the number of SCI and TBI injuries would be drastically reduced.

The TBI/SCI Trust Fund promotes prevention activities by annually funding projects that increase awareness and acceptance of safety practices. These campaigns may be targeted toward a specific activity (e.g., diving safety, seat belt usage, drinking and driving) or a particular age group (children, teens, etc.) or they may be more general in scope.

Projects may also be funded to promote awareness and education regarding SCI and TBI. Target groups could include any of the following: individuals with SCI and TBI; family members; employers; professionals such as educators, social workers, and health care providers; or the general public.

**The following Prevention and Education Projects were funded for FY 2024, beginning July 1, 2023:**

### ***Brain Injury Association of Mississippi (BIA) and United Spinal Association, MS Chapter***

The mission of the BIA and United Spinal Association, Mississippi Chapter is to enhance the quality of life for brain and spinal cord injury survivors and their families along with developing programs to prevent these injuries.

#### ***2 B Lazy Farm - "Equine Awareness Safety Division"***

The 2 B Lazy Farm promotes the importance of using equine and rough stock safety equipment, such as helmets and breakaway stirrups for all age riders. This program promotes education and prevention of traumatic brain injury and traumatic spinal cord injury.

#### ***Mississippi Safety Services - "Ollie Otter and Buckle Bear Do Outreach"***

This project provides education on how to properly utilize booster seats and seat belts using the mascot Ollie Otter for students K-2nd grade and Buckle Bear for pre-school children.

## ***Transitional Living Projects***

Transition from a medical setting to the home and community after a traumatic injury involves numerous changes and adjustments for the survivor and family members. The Trust Fund Program traditionally funds projects that assist with this reintegration. These projects will address activities such as increasing accommodating physical functioning; cognitive retraining; behavior modification; socialization; recreational activities; and adjustment to disability by the consumer and family members.

### **Methodist Rehabilitation Center - “MRC Transitional Living Services and Community Integration for Individuals with Traumatic Brain or Spinal Cord Injury Program Quest”-**

This program provides transitional living and community integration services, as well as short-term housing and mileage reimbursement for patients with SCI or TBI who would otherwise not receive services.

### **Mississippi Paralysis Association - “New Life Kits”-**

One hundred kits, which include medical supplies and a first aid kit, were provided to newly injured individuals to help during the transitional phase until all needed equipment and services are received.

## ***Recreation Projects***

People with spinal cord and brain injuries may have physical limitations, but there is no limit to their desire for social and recreational activities.

**The following Prevention and Education Projects were funded for FY 2024, beginning July 1, 2023:**

### ***MACE—Metro Area Community Empowerment- “Rollin’ Tigers Recreational Services”***

“MACE” provides recreational opportunities through basketball, tennis, and softball. The Rolling Tigers program gives opportunities for individuals with spinal cord injuries to compete in wheelchair sports and promote physical fitness.

### ***William Heard -“Our Artworks” Program***

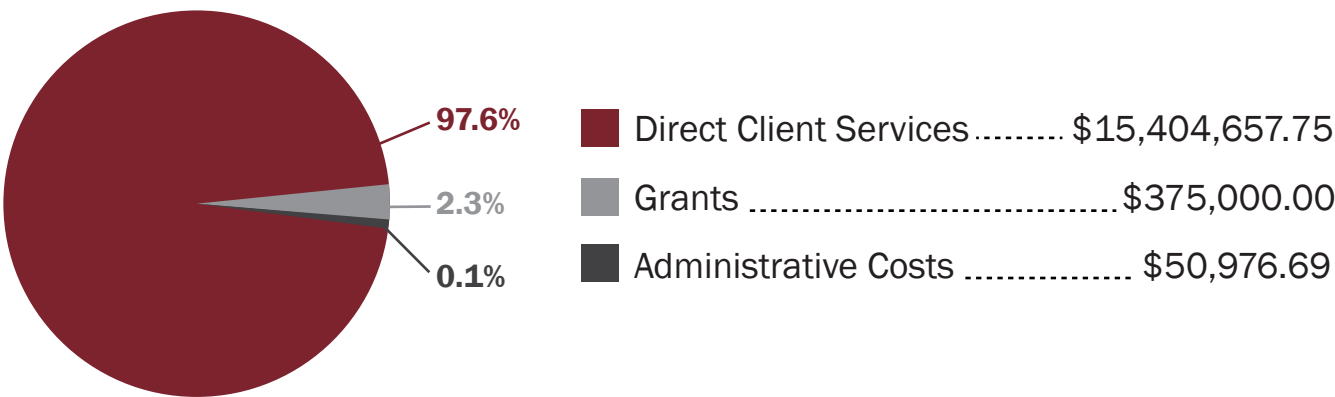
“Our Artworks” was developed as an organization to help individuals with disabilities discover the arts. It is a creative adult art program designed to bring out the creativity of individuals and build on self-awareness and self-confidence skills. Participants created paintings, drawings, photography and collages.

### ***MS Youth Wheelchair League - “MY WHEELS”***

“MY WHEELS” give children with a lower limb disability the opportunity to play competitive adaptive sports. With no cost to the player and their family, children have the opportunity to play team sports and be introduced to different paralympic individual sports.

# Total Expenditures

## FY 2024 Total Expenditures



## Annual Nursing Home Survey

The TBI/SCI Trust Fund legislation requires an annual survey of Mississippi nursing homes to identify all residents under the age of fifty-five who have traumatic spinal cord or brain injuries. Beginning June 2024, the Office of Special Disability Programs mailed out one hundred and ninety nine (199) nursing home surveys. A total of thirty-two (32) survey forms were returned. Of those thirty-two (32) survey forms, seventeen (17) nursing homes reported they had no individuals with traumatic brain injuries or spinal cord injuries. Based on the other fifteen (15) forms received, the nursing homes reported seventeen (17) individuals with a traumatic brain injury and twelve (12) individuals with spinal cord injury.

## Other Activities

**The TBI/SCI Trust Fund supports and collaborates with various organizations that provide beneficial opportunities for people living with spinal cord and/or traumatic brain injuries.**

### ***Faith Hope Love Outdoor Ministry, Inc***

Faith Hope Love Outdoor Ministry uses specialized adaptive equipment and volunteers to assist people with spinal cord injuries, traumatic brain injuries, paralysis, limb loss or developmental disabilities safely engage in hunting and fishing adventures at no cost to the participant or their families.

### ***Itawamba Crossroads Ranch (ICR)***

ICR is a non-profit organization for high functioning adults living with traumatic brain injuries and spinal cord injuries. The ICR provides a safe environment that nurtures adults, enhancing their abilities, allowing them to be productive citizens of society. The ranch includes a lodge for meals, duplexes for citizens, an education center, a gathering place, a skills depot for work, and a green house to grow their own vegetables.

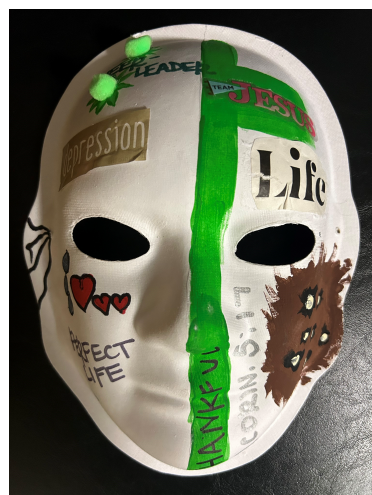
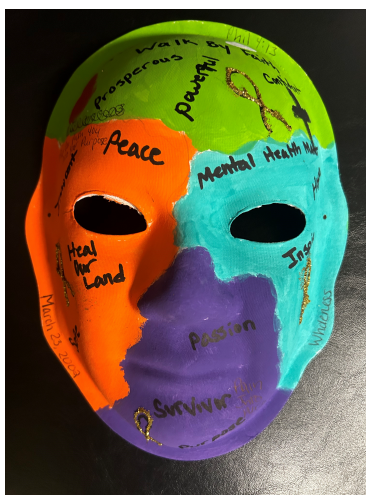
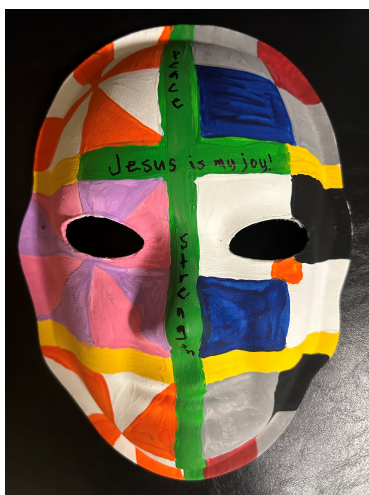
### ***Living Independence for Everyone (LIFE) of Mississippi, Inc.-Promoting Opportunities for Wellness Entertainment and Recreation (POWER)***

LIFE’s POWER project focuses on helping people with spinal cord injuries and brain injuries live an active and healthy lifestyle through a combination of yoga, cardio training, healthy eating habits, social crafts and self-defense.

# Other Activities

## **Unmasking Brain Injury Mississippi - MDRS, Office of Special Disability Programs**

Unmasking Brain Injury is an international movement and through the coordination of the Office of Special Disability Program's TBI / SCI Trust Fund, MDRS is the first agency in Mississippi to participate. The purpose of this project is to not only create awareness for brain injury, but to also give the survivors a voice. The project allows individuals with brain injury to create an art mask to tell their story as a means to educate others of what it is like to live with a brain injury. It also gives brain injury survivors an outlet to show others that those living with this disability are like anyone else. By combining therapy, art, and advocacy, this project presents an entirely unique perspective on life with brain injury for survivors, caregivers, and professionals.

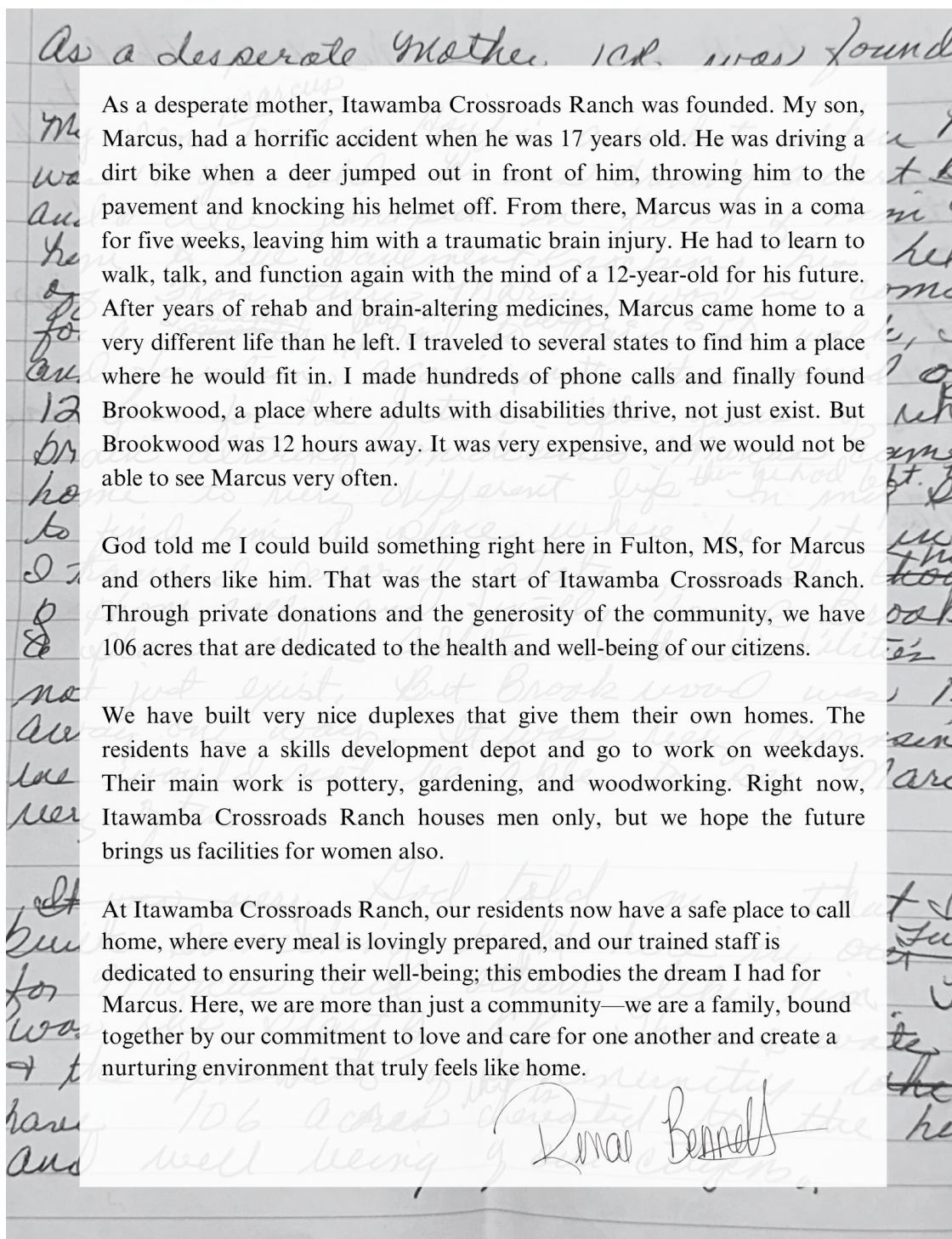


### **Trust Fund Facebook Page**

During SFY2024, the TBI/SCI Trust Fund developed and implemented a new Facebook page. The purpose of this project is to highlight and promote the recipients of our sub-grants. The intention is to connect consumers with these organizations to give them opportunities to engage and participate in activities. It will foster a sense of community with people living with traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries. Networking is the heart of this page. Events, activities, support groups and helpful information will be posted throughout the year. For SFY2025, we will continue to grow our audience to better serve survivors and caretakers in Mississippi.

<https://www.facebook.com/TrustFund.MS>

## What the 2024 TBI/SCI Trust Fund beneficiaries are saying about the Trust Fund Program:



In her own words, Renae Barnett, founder of Itawamba Crossroads Ranch.



Residents of Itawamba Crossroad Ranch create and design pottery for recreation and independence.

***"It's not the life that they wanted, but it is the best life that we can give them."***

-Renaë Barnett, Owner/Founder of Itawamba Crossroads Ranch

***“The MDRS Traumatic Brain Injury and Spinal Cord Injury Trust Fund has helped MACE get people back into sports they love. People that have given up on playing sports have the chance to travel and play sports that they never could have before. It gives them a different outlook on life!”***

-Robbie Sullivan, Coordinator of MACE-Metro Area Community Empowerment Center, Inc.



MACE's Wheelchair Softball League, the Deep South Hurricanes were crowned Division 2 Champions at 2024 Wheelchair World Series in Nebraska.



An individual living with a disability learning how to use adaptive hunting equipment with a volunteer with Faith, Hope, Love Outdoor Ministry.



MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF  
REHABILITATION SERVICES

*Opportunities for Independence*

## Office of Special Disability Programs

Traumatic Brain Injury/Spinal Cord Injury Trust Fund Program

Your perspective is extremely valuable,  
and we greatly appreciate any and all feedback!

Please send any comments or questions to:  
Post Office Box 1698 | Jackson, Mississippi 39215-1698  
1.800.443.1000 | [www.mdrs.ms.gov](http://www.mdrs.ms.gov)

The Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services is an  
Equal Opportunity Employer