

Decidedly DECAL

Highlighting the Events That Shape Who We Are



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DECAL By the Numbers

1,867 - Applications received for new CAPS eligibility program at DECAL

Commissioner's Corner

by Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs



Dear DECAL Co-workers,

Shortly after the last Decidedly DECAL "hit the stands," Governor Deal made his State of the State address and released his budget proposal for FY2018. Not surprisingly, the Governor continued demonstrating his recognition of and commitment to the importance of early learning by "putting his money where his mouth is."

His proposed budget includes the following items:

- \$5.5M for tiered reimbursement for Quality Rated child care programs
- \$2M for Early Language and Literacy Classroom Grants
- \$2.7M to create the Georgia Center for Early Language and Literacy

The state funds for tiered reimbursement would be added to federal funds to encourage more child care programs to participate in Quality Rated and to serve more children in the CAPS program. The goal: to increase the number of...and thereby access to...high quality child care especially for children who need it the most.

The Early Language and Literacy Classroom Grants would support 50 birth through three-year-old classrooms across the state in implementing strong language and literacy instruction for children in the earliest, and most critical, years of life. These efforts would advance the Governor's goal of every child in Georgia reading on grade level by the end of third grade by supporting their earliest teachers

5.5 Million - State dollars proposed by Governor Deal for tiered reimbursements to Quality Rated child care programs
2.7 Million - State dollars proposed by Governor Deal to create Georgia Center for Early Language and Literacy
50 - Birth through three-year-old classrooms to be supported through Early Language and Literacy Grants
80,700 - Four year olds currently enrolled in Georgia's Pre-K Program
4,869 - Licensed child care programs in Georgia
15,645,874 - Meals served so far in FY2017 through Nutrition Program
1,209 - Quality Rated programs in Georgia
59,687 - Active registrants in the Georgia Professional Development System

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Decidedly DECAL CALi Quiz Winner

DECAL's Child Care Consultant Kesha McNeal is the winner of this month's Decidedly DECAL CALi Quiz. She won two tickets to The College Football Hall of Fame. Kesha's name was drawn from all employees who scored 100 on the quiz.



To win, read this issue of Decidedly DECAL and complete the next quiz for your chance to score some fun prizes donated by local businesses!

February Birthdays



Best wishes go out to the following DECAL employees who celebrate birthdays this month:

4 - Kimberly Smith

through coaching and professional development.

The Georgia Center for Early Language and Literacy would promote research-based practices related to early language development and literacy for children from birth to age eight and their families and teachers. The Center, which would be housed at Georgia College and State University (GCSU), would conduct think tank-type research activities and provide practical supports for implementing effective early language and literacy strategies in classrooms. The Center would be a new resource for birth to three teachers.

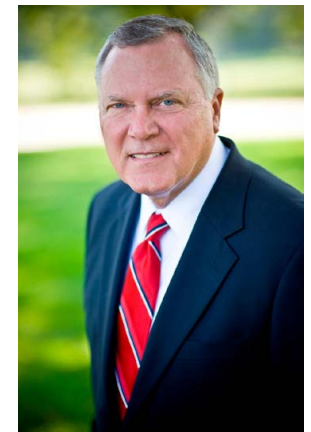
We support these proposals in the Governor's budget because each is in the best interest of Georgia's children and families. These proposals align with DECAL's vision and mission and provide additional support to Georgia's youngest citizens and the teachers and programs who provide their earliest and most critical learning experience. We also appreciate Governor and Mrs. Deal's continued support of children and children's issues, especially literacy; they clearly understand that support of children directly translates into support for the future of our state.

Sincerely,

Governor Deal Recommending Funds to Help Subsidize High Quality Child Care for Low-income Families to Work or Attend School

Governor Nathan Deal is recommending \$5.5 million in his FY2018 budget to increase reimbursements to high quality child care providers participating in Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) Program. This state investment would be added to federal funding that Georgia receives annually to help low-income families have access to high quality child care so they can work or attend school.

This state investment proposed by Governor Deal will allow the amount paid to child care providers to be based on the quality of early education services provided to children and their families, i.e., the higher the quality level (as determined by Quality Rated, Georgia's system to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in Georgia's early and school-age care and education programs), the higher the subsidy reimbursement. This model of "tiered reimbursement" will encourage child care providers to enhance the quality of care they provide and will reward them for their efforts and encourage families to enroll their children in high quality child care.



Governor Nathan Deal

"On behalf of our state's youngest learners, we thank Governor Deal for his continued commitment to high quality early care and education as demonstrated in his proposed FY2018 budget," said Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs. "These additional state funds will enhance the quality of care

- 5 - Lauris Cooper
- 5 - Christina Mitchell
- 5 - LaKisha Robinson
- 6 - Kesha McNeal
- 8 - Falita Flowers
- 8 - Charles Gore III
- 9 - Catherine Broussard
- 9 - Jacqueline Humphries
- 11 - Tamika Boone
- 12 - Stanley Cooper
- 12 - Luretha Hanson
- 13 - James Keith
- 14 - Linda Barge
- 14 - Heather Curtis
- 14 - Kristen Huie
- 16 - Angelia Boykins
- 18 - Christy McCray
- 18 - Beverly Pollard
- 19 - Bianca Staggs
- 19 - Laura Swann
- 19 - Lindsey Urry
- 20 - Judy Blasengame
- 24 - Tikiyha Ancrum
- 24 - Carrie Spangler
- 25 - Lisa Chandler
- 25 - Michele Rauton
- 26 - Jae Boyd
- 27 - Rejana Albertson
- 27 - Melissa Martino
- 27 - Kenya Taylor
- 28 - Michelle Radford
- 29 - Ciretha Harris

Day in the Life of Kay Pollard

Kay Pollard serves as a Georgia's Pre-K Program Consultant after previously having the privilege to teach young children including Georgia's Pre-K students for many years as well as being a child development center director and a Mentor Teacher for Georgia's Pre-K.

One of the great benefits of serving as a Georgia's Pre-K Program Consultant is your daily tasks vary from day to day, Kay said. On any given day, she could be conducting

provided to children eligible for CAPS and support Quality Rated child care providers."

Administered nationally by the US Department of Health and Human Services and in Georgia by DECAL, CAPS weekly subsidizes care for approximately 55,000 Georgia children. Payments for child care are issued directly to the child care provider.

Wagner receives First Lady's "Servant's Heart" Award

Laura Wagner, Family Support Director for Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) Program, received First Lady Sandra Deal's "With a Servant's Heart" award for her volunteer work outside of DECAL with the Junior League of Atlanta (JLA). Wagner serves on a voluntary basis as Director of Community Placements for the JLA, an organization of women that promotes volunteerism, helps develop the potential of women, and improves the community through the effective efforts of trained volunteers.



Laura Wagner with First Lady Sandra Deal

In her role, Wagner coordinates and manages the volunteer teams who work directly with community-based, nonprofit organizations in Metro Atlanta. Through her leadership, members of the JLA will contribute more than 100,000 volunteer hours this year, work valued at over \$2 million dollars. The group's priorities include early childhood education. Wagner is also a long-time volunteer at Kate's Club, an organization that empowers school-age children and teens facing life after the death of a parent or sibling.

"Volunteerism has been and continues to be an invaluable component of Laura's already busy life," said Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs in nominating Wagner. "She works full-time for DECAL and full-time at home as a wife and mother of a toddler. But she still makes time to serve others." When asked why volunteerism is so important to her, Laura once responded, "Being a volunteer continues to make me more hopeful about the world - that there are those who do care for others, people who demonstrate true grit and resiliency despite all odds, and that things can indeed change for the better. Every opportunity to volunteer gives a new insight and understanding about what I can do to support that change in my personal and my professional life."

Last year's recipient was Richard Bartlett, Compliance Examiner with DECAL's Audits and Compliance Team.

CAPS Holds Stakeholder Community Meetings this Month

Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) Program will host two stakeholder community meetings this month to review proposed changes relating to eligibility for receiving CAPS. Child care providers, early care and education advocates, business and philanthropic entities, and other stakeholders are invited to give their feedback on CAPS funding models. The meetings will be held on Tuesday, February 7, 2017, at 6:30 PM at the



CLASS professional development with Pre-K teachers, providing technical assistance for Pre-K teachers and directors, facilitating a meeting or work group, completing CLASS observations, gathering research for Pre-K funding, assisting Georgia's Pre-K families, as well as reviewing Pre-K lesson plans and assessments, student files, classroom learning environments, and Georgia's Pre-K Grant Requirement Checklist documentation and "any other assigned duties."



Kay Pollard Facilitating Director Work Group

If Kay was the DECAL Commissioner for a day, "we would all take the day to visit a child care center or elementary school nearby and just play with the children. Fun!"

For additional fun, Kay enjoys sitting on the beach watching the waves roll in and feeling the breeze off the ocean as well as watching college football, cooking, and playing and reading to Ella-Grace, her granddaughter.

Her favorite quote is "You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step." - MLK Jr.

Person on the Street Interviews

What would you do without your smart phone?



"I would probably not be able to concentrate on anything because I would be so anxious without it...I depend on my phone far too much! When I have an extra minute during the day, I am on my phone checking texts, emails, or Facebook." -- **Jill Vandenbos**

"My family would be searching for me, and it would be a nice, peaceful day."-- **Faith Duncan**

Anderson Conference Center in Macon, and Thursday, February 23, 2017, at 6:30 PM at the Georgia Piedmont Technical College in Clarkston.

"Your participation will help inform Georgia's plan to maximize access to quality child care; comply with the necessary federal guidelines; and ensure minimal disruption of services to children, families, and providers," said DECAL Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs.

Click on the following links to register for the community meeting you wish to attend.

Macon: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/caps-community-meeting-macon-registration-31522649092>

Clarkston: https://caps-community-meeting_dekalb_registration.eventbrite.com



DECAL Atlanta Office to "Rise Up" on Thursday

Employees at the DECAL Atlanta offices will "Rise Up" for lunch on Thursday, February 2, 2017, with a Tailgate Celebration for the Atlanta Falcons, who are playing the New England Patriots this Sunday in Super Bowl LI. All employees are encouraged to wear their best Falcons garb and bring their favorite tailgate food...from kickin' chicken wings to barbecue sliders and tailgate dip. The event will be held from noon until 1:00 PM in the Hickory Conference Room located on the 8th floor of the East Tower. Help is also needed in hosting the event if your schedule allows and your



"I would hyperventilate. It's my connection to the outside world." -- Lauris Cooper



manager approves. For more information contact Barbara Sanders at barbara.sanders@dec.al.ga.gov or 404-463-2892. Go Falcons!

Georgia's Pre-K Program Teachers of the Year Tour Governor's Mansion



Georgia's Pre-K Program Teachers of the Year for 2016-2017 Connie Ellington of Bethlehem Elementary School in Barrow County and Channie Frazier of Kids World Learning

Register for Georgia's Pre-K Program: Don't WAIT Until It's Too LATE



All across Georgia local school systems and child care providers are holding registration for the 2017-2018 school year in Georgia's Pre-K Program. Dates vary by program so it is best to locate the program most convenient for you and contact the school directly with any questions.

Children who will be four years old by September 1, 2017, are eligible to apply for Georgia's Pre-K Program. With limited spaces, early registration is encouraged.

Georgia's Pre-K Program has grown from serving a few hundred children in 1992 to being one of the most successful Pre-K programs in the country. The program has served over 1.4 million children in a voluntary, universal, lottery-funded program.

Georgia's Pre-K Program is free for all eligible four-year-old children regardless of family income. A small fee for meals and snacks may apply. Classes usually operate on the local public school system calendar for 6.5 hours a day, 180 days a year.

Georgia's Pre-K Program is different from other Pre-K or preschool programs that a child care provider may offer. Georgia's Pre-K is tuition-free, while other programs generally charge.

Locate a Georgia's Pre-K Program classroom near you at <http://families.dec.al.ga.gov/PreK/>.

DECAL University Makes Its Debut

DECAL University kicked off its inaugural session on January 12th to an audience of 108 participants, who participated both in person and via webinar.

DECAL University is an initiative tied to DECAL's strategic plan to cross train our employees as well as a response to employees' requests to learn more about the agency. Sessions bring an "inside look" of each of the units within DECAL presented by subject matter experts.

If an employee is unable to participate on the day of the session, they can view the recordings on the g drive (HR>Training>DECAL University>recordings). Also, employees may take the sessions out of order if needed due to their schedule.



Center in Statesboro/Bulloch County are shown with First Lady Sandra Deal during a recent tour of the Governor's Mansion in Atlanta.

GEEARS Receives \$750K Grant



Mindy Binderman

GEEARS: Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students was recently awarded a \$750,000 grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. The grant will allow GEEARS to collaborate with partners to improve the quality of child care programs in Georgia and increase access to Quality Rated child care for low-income, working families by creating market demand and raising public awareness about the importance of

affordable, high-quality child care.

"The funding from the Kellogg Foundation will make a significant difference in how many more Georgia families we can reach through our public awareness efforts," said GEEARS Executive Director Mindy Binderman. "This effort will help us increase the quality of child care for all children in Georgia and, we hope that we will succeed, in particular, in also expanding access to quality child care for those working families who often sacrifice quality care due to financial restraints."

Since the Quality Rated campaign's start in 2013, GEEARS has partnered with DECAL and Georgia Family Connection Partnership (GaFCP). The funds will go toward the next two years (until 2019) of the public awareness campaign, led by GEEARS.

"For years GEEARS has been an unwavering partner in enhancing the quality of child care in Georgia," said DECAL Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs. "We are especially excited about the grant recently awarded to GEEARS by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation for funds to increase public awareness about the importance of quality child care in our state.

Let Us Hear From You!

Here are just a few comments from the last two sessions:

"I thoroughly enjoyed the first session of DECAL University."

"Thank you so much for offering this so we can learn more about each other's jobs and units."

"The DECAL University is an innovative idea. Great information!"

The next sessions are:

February 2, 2017 at 11:00 AM (CCS Administrative & Operations Unit, Technical Assistance Unit, Quality Improvement & Training Unit, Exemption Unit, Process & Policy Unit)

February 15, 2017 at 11:30 AM (Audits and Compliance)

If you have any questions, please contact Julie Harnage at julie.harnage@decalfga.gov.

Applications Sought for 2017-2018 Georgia's Pre-K Program Teachers of the Year

It's that time again. DECAL is seeking applications for Georgia's Pre-K Program Teachers of the Year for 2017-2018. DECAL will select a winner from a local public school system and a winner from a private child care center.

"Now in its 24th year, Georgia's Pre-K Program is nationally recognized as an exemplary early childhood education program for four year olds that significantly impacts school readiness skills in language, literacy, and math," said Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs. "The program's success can be attributed directly to the outstanding Pre-K teachers and assistants who implement this program daily. This is a small way for us to recognize their efforts."

The application for Pre-K Teacher of the Year will be available on the home page of the DECAL website at www.decalfga.gov. Completed applications must be postmarked or hand delivered no later than 5:00 PM on Monday, February 27, 2017. Finalists will be announced in May 2017, with the winners announced in the early fall.

For more information, contact Meghan McNail, Summer Transition Program and Outreach Coordinator, at meghan.mcnaill@decalfga.gov or 770-357-4911.

You know that **great idea** you
have for our agency?

We cannot read your **mind**.

That is why DECAL has

ESP

Employee Suggestion Program



[Visit the Virtual Suggestion Box Now!](#)

Board of Early Care and Learning

*Supporting and guiding the mission and vision of Bright
from the Start:*

Board of Early Care and Learning

Kay Ford, Midway
First Congressional District
(Secretary)

Susan Harper, Albany
Second Congressional District
(Vice Chair)

Kathy Howell, Carrollton



Lewis and Frazier Speak at Southern Conference on Children

Two of the featured speakers at Saturday's 30th Annual Southern Conference on Children were Assistant Commissioner for Child Care Services Kristie Lewis and Georgia's Pre-K Program Teacher of the Year Channie Frazier. The event is held at Georgia Southern University.

Third Congressional District

Phil Davis, Stone Mountain
Fourth Congressional District

Carlene Talton, Decatur
Fifth Congressional District

Dawn Henderson, Marietta
Sixth Congressional District

Vacant
Seventh Congressional District

Luann Purcell, Ed.D., Warner Robins
Eighth Congressional District

Sheri Hooper, Gainesville
Ninth Congressional District

Janice Gallimore, Greensboro
Tenth Congressional District

Victor Morgan, Cartersville
Eleventh Congressional District
(Chair)

Jerri Kropp, Statesboro
Twelfth Congressional District

Melissa Boekhaus, MD., Mableton
Thirteenth Congressional District

Tangela Johnson, Cohutta
Fourteenth Congressional District

Congratulations to the newest  **QUALITY RATED™** child care programs!

★★★ Kimotta Jackson, Decatur

★ APEC After School Enrichment @ Randolph, Atlanta

★ Antioch A.M.E. Childcare and Development Center, Stone Mountain

★ Happy Hearts Learning Academy, Savannah

★★ Henrietta B. Yankey, Lawrenceville

★ Miss Julie's House, St. Mary's

★★★ Karen D. Hall, Grovetown

★★ Stacey A. Carey, Canon

★★★ Carolyn Q. Magee, Atlanta

★★ Edwenna H. White, Clarkston

★★ Regina A. Ellis, Union City

★ Reflections Learning Academy, Douglasville

★★★ Tiyana M. Snelling, Statesboro

★★ Crystal L. Palmer, Woodstock

★ Preferred School Care at West Manor Elementary, Atlanta

★★★ Jerry D. Perkins, Macon

★★★ Annie M. Cedeno, Lawrenceville

★★ Generational Kids Academy Inc., Columbus

★★★ Jeff Davis Learning Center, Hazlehurst

★ Childtime Childcare #1122, Kingsland

★★ Henrietta M. Cates, Sardis

★ Montessori Academy-Scott Blvd., Decatur

★ Karen L Myrick, College Park

The Faces of DECAL

DECAL faces featured in the banner of this issue are (L-R) Craig Detweiler, Angela Byrd, Jennifer Taylor, Janette Duke, Tanya Rowe, Jacqueline Humphries, and Brian McKeen.