

Decidedly DECAL

Highlighting the Events That Shape Who We Are



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DECAL By the Numbers

303 - DECAL Employees

5,256 - Licensed Child Care Programs in Georgia

4,960 - Approved Exempt Programs in Georgia

54,097 - Total registrants in Professional Development Registry

Commissioner's Corner

by Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs

Dear DECALers:

When I joined DECAL in June 2014, I said to you that DECAL has the reputation of being the "gold standard" of state agencies serving children and families. Of course WE believe that to be true...but it is always gratifying to have our work recognized by individuals and organizations outside the agency. Last month, we experienced three special recognitions supporting our stellar reputation.

Our Nutrition Services Division was recognized not once but twice for their hard work to ensure that our children have access to healthy, nutritious meals when school is in session and when they are out for the summer. First, DECAL was selected for the Let's Move! Child Care (LMCC) Recognition Award for our work through the Caregivers Promoting Healthy Habits (CPHH) wellness grant and the Georgia Farm 2 Preschool (F2P) grant funded by USDA. DECAL was the only state/territorial/tribal agency chosen for the honor.

Within a few days of winning that national award, Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed presented DECAL the Phoenix Award -- the city's highest honor -- for our efforts to feed Atlanta's children through the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). In 2014, the SFSP, administered by DECAL, served 4.6 million meals at over 1,619 sites around the state. DECAL worked with scores of SFSP sponsors who served hundreds of thousands of meals in the metro Atlanta area.



80,430 - Students enrolled in Georgia's Pre-K Program

559 - Quality Rated Programs



Quick Links

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Under the Gold Dome: Highlights from the 2015 Georgia General Assembly



From a bill allowing DECAL to make administrative and other improvements to enhance the department's operations...to an additional \$5.4 million in lottery revenues for Georgia's Pre-K Program and raises for

Pre-K teachers and assistants, it was a busy 2015 legislative session under the Gold Dome. Over 300 bills passed the Georgia State Senate and the Georgia House of Representatives this year. Of those, more than 200 bills passed both chambers and were sent to Governor Deal's desk. Governor Deal has until May 12, 2015 (40 days after session ends) to sign, veto or do nothing to each bill.

Bills of interest to DECAL that passed

HB 401: Allows DECAL to make administrative

Also in April, DECAL was selected as a Bronze winner in the 36th Annual Telly Awards for our Look Again public awareness campaign. (The Telly Awards honor outstanding local, regional, and cable TV commercials and programs, the finest video and film productions, and online commercials, video, and films.) With nearly 13,000 entries from 50 states and numerous countries, this award is truly an honor. The Look Again YouTube video features Georgia parents who have lost children to vehicular heatstroke accidents and state leaders encouraging adults to always look again when transporting children to ensure that no child is ever left unattended in a vehicle. Since May 2014, the Look Again video has had over 19,000 views on YouTube.

Our 2015 Look Again media event is scheduled for Wednesday, June 3, 2015, 1:30 p.m., at Liberty Plaza with Governor Nathan Deal and First Lady Sandra Deal. If you are in the Atlanta office that day and your schedule allows, please plan to attend the event to support this life-saving effort.

Congratulations to everyone involved with these special honors.

I also congratulate everyone for their efforts on House Bill 401 which was passed by the Georgia General Assembly and is awaiting Governor Deal's signature. We appreciate the Legislature's support of DECAL and the early care and education industry by passing this legislation, and we especially thank Representative Chuck Efrstration for sponsoring this bill.

HB 401 will:

- Streamline the process by which independent contractors, substitute teachers, temporary employees, or technical college and university students majoring in early childhood education are screened
- Clarify DECAL's ability to accept philanthropic and corporate contributions to support enhancing the quality of out-of-home child care
- Redefine/rename Group Day Care Homes and Family Day Care Homes

In the coming months you will receive more details about how the passage of HB 401 will impact our work on a daily basis.

These are exciting days at DECAL, and I appreciate your award winning efforts as we continue to serve Georgia's youngest learners, their families, and the early care and education industry in our state.

Sincerely,

and other improvements to enhance the department's operations. It will streamline the process by which independent contractors, substitute teachers, temporary employees, or technical college and university students majoring in early childhood education are screened. The bill also clarifies DECAL's ability to accept philanthropic and corporate contributions to support enhancing the quality of out-of-home child care.

SR 491: Recognizes October 5-9, 2015 as Georgia Pre-K Week

SB 138: Addresses many of the recommendations of the Governor's Child Welfare Reform Council, including the creation of a child abuse registry

SB 126: Allows for a lay rescuer to administer or make available auto-injectable epinephrine under certain circumstances

HB 325: Relates to use of safety belts in passenger vehicles to include vehicles designed to carry 15 passengers or fewer

HB 362: Permits schools to stockpile albuterol sulfate and administer it to a student in perceived respiratory distress without a prescription.

Bills of interest to DECAL that did not pass

HB 100: Allows children who are five years old by August 1 to enroll in kindergarten

SB 34: Removes liability for damages or injuries when a person breaks into a parked car to rescue an endangered person

HB 7: Requires early care and education programs to prepare a safety plan for emergencies such as fire, floods, other natural disasters, chemical spills, and acts of violence

SB 152: Transfers membership between Employees' Retirement System of Georgia and the Teachers Retirement System of Georgia

SB 129: Georgia Religious Freedom Restoration Act

SB 130: Makes it illegal to smoke in a car with a child under the age of 15 years

Governor's Budget Report Summary

Amended FY 2015 Budget: No Changes Proposed
FY 2016 Budget: \$7,029,341 of additional state funding proposed

- \$5,443,865 of additional lottery funds for

DECAL Priority:

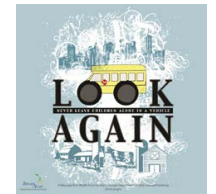
Ensure Health & Safety

"Look Again" Video Wins National Award



A video produced by DECAL to warn about the dangers of leaving children unattended in hot vehicles has won a national award. The Telly Awards has named DECAL as a Bronze winner in the 36th Annual Telly Awards for the "Look Again" public awareness campaign. With nearly 13,000 entries from all 50 states and numerous countries, this is truly an honor.

In May 2014, Governor Nathan Deal, First Lady Sandra Deal, and leaders of several state agencies called for parents and caregivers of children to have heightened awareness of the dangers of leaving children unattended in vehicles. DECAL produced a YouTube video featuring Georgia parents who have lost children to vehicular heatstroke accidents. Since May 2014, the video has had over 19,000 views.



The Telly Awards was founded in 1979 and is the premier award honoring outstanding local, regional, and cable TV commercials and programs, the finest video and film productions, and online commercials, video and films. Winners represent the best work of the most respected advertising agencies, production companies, television stations, cable operators, and corporate video departments in the world.

DECAL Priority:

Increase Quality & Access

DECAL Receives Atlanta's "Phoenix Award" for SFSP

Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed has presented the Phoenix Award - the city's highest honor -- to DECAL for its efforts to feed children through the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). The SFSP provides free meals in low-income areas during the summer months when students are out of school. Over 60 percent of Georgia's school-aged children are eligible for free or reduced lunch. The SFSP is funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and administered in Georgia by DECAL.

In 2014, DECAL and the SFSP served 4.6 million meals at over 1,619 sites - a 22 percent increase in meals from the

Pre-K funding

- \$3,036,817 to restore two Pre-K planning days for a total of 10 days
 - \$2,130,481 to provide a 1% salary increase for Pre-K teachers and assistant teachers
 - \$276,568 to provide for changes to the Teachers Retirement System benefit rate
- \$1,440,000 of additional lottery funds for 60 additional Summer Transition Program classes
 - \$1,956 of additional lottery funds for payment to SAO/GTA
 - \$102,846 of additional lottery and state general funds for changes to employee fringe rates
 - \$40,674 of additional lottery and state general funds
 - Implementation plan for merit increases must be approved by OPB

Other bills of interest that passed

HB 170: A \$1 billion transportation funding plan

SB 133 & SR 287: Helps failing schools by creating the Opportunity School District

SB 1: Requires individual insurance provider to cover autism for children age six and under

HB 177: Requires DFCS to acknowledge in writing to the reporting school employee that they have received the report of suspected child abuse

HB 1: Use of medical cannabis oil for eight medical conditions

SB 8: Creates the Safe Harbor for Sexually Exploited Children Fund

Questions about the 2015 legislative session and its impact on DECAL? Contact Director of

summer of 2013. Working in conjunction with the Georgia Department of Education's Seamless Summer Option Program, 145 of 159 Georgia counties have summer meal services.

The Phoenix Award is the highest honor an individual or group can receive from the Mayor of Atlanta. The award recognizes outstanding achievements and service to the city, state, nation, or world. Recent Phoenix Award winners include five-time world heavyweight champion Evander Holyfield, Tyler Perry, WSB-TV journalist Monica Pearson, and Turner Broadcasting System Chairman and CEO Philip Kent.

For more information on the SFSP, [click here](#) or call Nutrition Program Marketing and Outreach Manager Shani Drake at 404-656-3221.



DECAL Nutrition Director Falita Flowers (Right) accepts the Phoenix Award from Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed

April Quality Rated Programs

Government Relations & Special Projects Liz Young at 404-656-0916 or liz.young@dec.al.gov .

May Birthdays



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

- 1 - Karen Mobley
- 1 - Margaret Tarrant
- 2 - Sharon Aston
- 2 - Anthy Petropoulos
- 4 - Kriste Elia
- 4 - Jill Griffin
- 4 - Taurus Jackson
- 7 - Michelle Hughes
- 8 - Thea Stevens
- 11 - Reg Griffin
- 13 - Melissa Davis
- 13 - Melissa Donovan
- 14 - Lindsay Miller
- 14 - Niya Randolph
- 15 - Crystal Hoffman
- 15 - Maria Reznik
- 18 - Sandra McNeal
- 19 - Robyn Parham
- 20 - Mary Stoklas
- 22 - Angelette Anderson
- 24 - Iko Ezell-Blackmon
- 24 - Lakeyshia Tucker
- 25 - Jennifer Delorme

Congratulations to the newest QUALITY RATED child care programs!

| | |
|---|---|
| ABC Playschool, Smyrna ★ | ★ Jacob's Ladder Educational Childcare Center #2, Bonaire |
| Annex Head Start Center, Savannah ★ ★ | ★ Joyful Children, Odum |
| Applebrook Country Day School, Ringgold ★ | ★ ★ Kandy Kane Pre-School, Clarkesville |
| B. W. Lester Head Start Center, Valdosta ★ ★ | ★ Kayton Head Start, Savannah |
| Ben Hill Head Start, Fitzgerald ★ ★ | ★ Kidstop Daycare & Learning Center, Atlanta |
| Bridget T. Burgess, Blairsville ★ | ★ ★ Macon County Head Start, Marshallville |
| Childcare Network #206, Forest Park ★ ★ | ★ ★ Maggie's Morning School, Savannah |
| Childcare Network #219, Columbus ★ ★ | ★ New Odyssey For Children, Buford |
| Thometra Childs, Atlanta ★ | ★ ★ Patterson Head Start Center, Savannah |
| Clayton County Child Development Center, Forest Park ★ ★ | ★ ★ Polka-Dots Early Childhood Development Center, Columbus |
| Cook County Headstart, Adel ★ ★ | ★ Janette Rogers, Powder Springs |
| Cuyler Head Start, Savannah ★ ★ | ★ ★ Mary F. Rozier, Columbus |
| Duncan Creek Academy, Dacula ★ | ★ Gayle V. Sanders, Marietta |
| Eagle Springs Children's Center, Centerville ★ | ★ ★ Sheltering Arms - Cobb Center, Marietta |
| East Lake Academy, Inc., McDonough ★ ★ ★ | ★ ★ Sheltering Arms - Longview Drive Center, Douglasville |
| Especially For Kids, Riverdale ★ ★ | ★ Yolande B. Smart, Union City |
| First Baptist Church Children's Learning Center, Dalton ★ ★ | ★ Sunbrook Academy at The Bridge, Carrollton |
| Noemicia A. Garcia, Tucker ★ ★ | ★ Ethel Sutherland, Decatur |
| Generations Knowledge & Care Centers, LLC, Columbus ★ | ★ Sylvan Hills Day Nursery, Atlanta |
| Grayson Academy, Grayson ★ | ★ ★ Taylor County Head Start, Butler |
| Hallmark Heights Head Start, Valdosta ★ | ★ ★ The Sunshine House #100, Atlanta |
| Emily Hayden, Atlanta ★ ★ ★ | ★ ★ The Sunshine House #67, Tucker |
| Houston Road Day Care and Learning Center, Inc., Macon ★ | ★ ★ Wessels Head Start Center, Savannah |


 Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

DECAL Priority:

Foster Organizational Excellence

We Are Committed: DECAL Embraces Organizational Values

DECAL recently revised the department's organizational values. The product is the work of the Employee Advisory Group (EAG) and was spearheaded by CAPS Business Support Analyst

26 - Margarita Scott
29 - Amy Browder
29 - April Brown
30 - Sonya James

Let Us Hear From You!

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

We cannot read your

MIND.

That is why DECAL has



Jackie Shivers
Director of Quality Support

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

Supervisor Johnathan Davis.

"Working on the organizational values with other members of the EAG allowed me to hear how staff truly feels about the work of DECAL - and it was all positive," Davis explained. "The new organizational values will support DECAL's efforts in creating and facilitating positive and memorable experiences for our clients and employees."

After drafting the new values with the EAG, Davis presented the group's work to members of the DECAL Senior Leadership Team (SLT), who were complimentary and supportive of the efforts.

"Values, no matter the context, define and shape the experiences we want for ourselves and others," said Davis.

With feedback from the EAG and the SLT, the DECAL organizational values are:

Customer Service

We are committed to providing stellar customer services by listening to everyone who contacts DECAL, by fulfilling our commitments, by working to resolve conflicts, and by giving each client a positive experience.

Organizational Excellence

We are committed to maintaining a workplace where staff can reach their full potential and can achieve an appropriate work-life balance while developing culturally competent practices and cultivating continuous quality improvement for all business operations.

Positive Relationships

We are committed to building and maintaining positive relationships with families, early learning programs, communities, and all early learning stakeholders to "move the needle" forward to early learning environments.

Value Others

We are committed to valuing each other and all the citizens of Georgia by fostering a culture that embraces diversity, seeks to be understanding, and exercises intentional kindness.

Leadership

We are committed to exemplifying leadership qualities at all organizational levels and to leading the nation in early education.

To make the organizational values easier to remember, at the recommendation of Human Resources Director Robin Stevens, the EAG created this acronym:

- D**elivering stellar customer service
- E**xhibiting organizational excellence
- C**reating positive relationships
- A**lways valuing others
- L**eading the way

Kay Ford, Savannah
First Congressional District

Susan Harper, Albany
Second Congressional District
(Secretary)

Kathy Howell, Carrollton
Third Congressional District

Phil Davis, Stone Mountain
Fourth Congressional District

Carlene Talton, Decatur
Fifth Congressional District

Dawn Henderson, Marietta
Sixth Congressional District

Sherron Murphy, Lawrenceville
Seventh Congressional District

Luann Purcell, Ed.D., Warner Robins
Eighth Congressional District
(Vice Chair)

Tammy Lenkeit, Hoschton
Ninth Congressional District

Janice Gallimore, Greensboro
Tenth Congressional District

Victor Morgan, Cartersville
Eleventh Congressional District
(Chair)

Jerri Kropp, Statesboro
Twelfth Congressional District

Judy Neal, Stockbridge
Thirteenth Congressional District

Tangela Johnson, Cohutta
Fourteenth Congressional District

The Faces of DECAL

*DECAL faces featured in the banner of this issue are (L-R)
April Daniels, Jennifer Waters, Rashunda Williams, Margaret
Tarrant, Phonecia Pittman, Kriste Elia, and Laura Swann.*

E³Zs Celebrate "Week of the Young Child"

Libraries across DECAL's Early Education Empowerment Zone (E³Z) in North Georgia worked together to celebrate the Week of the Young Child. April 12-18 was designated as a way to help celebrate our youngest learners.

The idea of a regional approach for the Week of the Young Child celebrations first emerged from the E³Z Regional Birth to Eight Team. "Our team really wanted to show that by working together we could take good individual celebrations and have an even more powerful impact with a regional reach," Suzanne Harbin, E³Z Community Coordinator stated. "This was our first E³Z regional effort. We had no idea how it would work out, but it really went well. We now know by collaborating we can increase our strength in serving young children."

Each community's library was encouraged to participate. Each library picked a day of the week based on the NAEYC (National Association of Education of Young Children) themes:

Monday was Music Monday. Celebrations on Monday were held at the Murray County library. They had musical games and played musical instruments with the children.

On Taco Tuesday the celebration was held in Catoosa County. Children from Catoosa were treated to a make-your-own taco bar, sponsored by Primary Healthcare Centers. Special books were read to the children by community volunteers and friends of the library. The children made maracas and were encouraged to dance and move.

On Wednesday, Whitfield County held its special celebration called Working Wednesday. Children used Legos and built communities on the library floor. The floor was taped off with painter's tape to depict streets and alleys. A special guest appearance by Ms. Frizzle kept the young children entertained - especially as they were able to pet Ms. Frizzle's green lizard.

On Thursday, Gilmer County hosted special activities. Two Gilmer County Head Start classes, which are housed on the same campus as the library, were invited to attend. It was Artsy Thursday, so the children painted beautiful azalea prints using finger paint and bottles.

On Friday, Gordon County's library hosted Family Friday. Parents and grandparents brought their children to the event. They built homes and "castles" using Duplos and blocks.

Shaw Industries helped sponsor the events throughout the region. They provided door prizes for the children and also paid for necessary supplies.

"The events individually were great for the libraries, but when you string them all together and realize that this was a collaborative effort of all the libraries and communities working together to make special memories for our youngest children and to give them a love of learning- then this week became something spectacular. We are thrilled with the enthusiasm and the number of children we reached," Jessica Miles, assistant director of library services for the Northwest Georgia Regional Library system, stated.

The E³Z initiative is part of Georgia's federally funded Race to the Top Grant. The five counties within the Northern Zone include Catoosa, Gilmer, Gordon, Murray, and Whitfield. The initiative is

a concerted effort by DECAL to inundate these selected counties with resources and research to help support the youngest learners in those counties.

Pictured in the top photo below is a Music Monday celebration at the Murray County library. In the bottom photo, children are enjoying Family Friday with their parents and grandparents at Gordon County's library.



DECAL Celebrates State Employee Recognition Week May 4-8

May 4-8, 2015, is Georgia's annual State Employee Recognition Week (SERW), and DECAL is celebrating with a casual dress code, bouquets of flowers, and candy grams.

"The purpose of this week is to honor the thousands of dedicated individuals who make up the State's workforce," said Robin Stevens, DECAL Director of Human Resources. "DECAL is made up of more than 300 outstanding people dedicated to supporting parents, teachers and providers, and who know that investing in our youngest learners is critical to the long-term economic growth and potential of Georgia."

Stevens said the DECAL Employee Advisory Group (EAG) brainstormed ways to celebrate the week and is now hosting these special events:

Casual Dress: Throughout the week, unless conducting business with external agency clients.

Bouquet of Flowers: Exciting opportunity to show a fellow employee your appreciation of their work, support, help, and guidance by sending a bouquet of flowers with a note. There will be a live bouquet of fresh flowers "traveling" throughout the Atlanta office and a virtual bouquet passed among the Atlanta office and employees in the field.

Baby Photo Contest: Gift card drawing from the employees who can name the most DECAL employees based on their baby photos posted on SharePoint.

Candy Grams: Opportunity to recognize individual DECAL employees with candy, all priced at \$1.00.

"Where is DECAL?" Photo Contest: Employees are asked to provide photos of sites that are of interest or are landmarks that they pass during the course of their business. Photos will be posted on SharePoint and the employee identifying the most landmarks wins a gift card.

You can access SharePoint at <https://sharepoint.dec.al.ga.gov/SERW/default.aspx>.

The Walking Challenge Is Back!

The Walking Challenge is a friendly walking and fitness competition between DECAL departments to promote increased physical activity and optimal health. Divisions are divided into teams, and daily steps and activity are logged in POLAR.

The competition will run from May 1st through May 31st, with the winning team and individuals announced on June 2nd. Participation is not mandatory, but team walking averages will be based on the entire team's average steps. If someone on your team is not walking and recording their daily steps, team totals will drop dramatically. So encourage your co-workers to participate!

The winning team will maintain bragging rights for one year, and the Wellness Committee will award gift cards to the three individuals with the most steps during the month. Last year the HR/Research team narrowly defeated the Pre-K Twin Towers team.