

Decidedly DECAL

Highlighting the Events That Shape Who We Are



DECAL By the Numbers

- 4,363** - Licensed child care programs in Georgia
- 2,862** - Quality Rated child care programs in Georgia
- 126** - Providers in the Quality Rated Class of 2012
- 73,000** - Students enrolled this year in Georgia's Pre-K Program
- 7,500** - CAPS applications received under the student parent priority group since May 1, 2022
- 805** - Georgia's Pre-K Classrooms (across 143 counties) participated in Georgia's Pre-K Week 2022
- 2,833,818** - Meals served by Happy Helpings during FY 2022
- 64,940,227** - Meals served by CACFP during FY 2022
- 2,847** - Quality Rated providers

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Commissioner's Corner

by Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs



Dear Co-workers,

Recently I spoke to a group of high school juniors and seniors being inducted into the National Honor Society. As I looked out at them, I wondered how many had participated in Georgia's Pre-K Program or had been enrolled in out-of-home child care. Perhaps our work years ago had in some small way contributed to their academic success today.

I titled my presentation FOOTPRINTS with the idea that every thing we do, every decision we make as we walk through life leaves a footprint on...in some way impacts...our families, our friends, our communities, our places of worship, and even history. Some people leave footprints that many others see; most of us leave footprints noticed only by the people closest to us. And most of us never see the footprints we leave, the impact we have on others.

The example I used in my presentation was Johannes Gutenberg. It took Gutenberg five years of hard work in the 1450s to invent his printing press and moveable type. He certainly revolutionized printing...but he never benefited from his invention; in fact, he died penniless.

BUT, in 1999 the editors of TIME Magazine named Gutenberg's printing press the greatest invention of the preceding 1,000 years. With it, information...knowledge...became more easily available and accessible to the masses.

Information could be mass produced more quickly and cheaply for the general population, which led to and encouraged literacy

among the masses. And as literacy increased, the course of civilization was changed forever.

Without ever knowing it, Johannes Gutenberg left a footprint that impacted all human history.

I was quick to point out to the young people to whom I was speaking that not all of us will leave footprints as significant as Gutenberg's. BUT, I assured them that they will leave footprints as moms and dads, as teachers, as policymakers, as men and women of the military, as writers, as accountants, as welders, as IT experts, as ministers and philosophers...that will affect other people and can change the course of communities and history.

The same is true for us at DECAL. The jobs we do and the way we do them are affecting the lives of children, families, child care providers, and communities in our state. As we end this calendar year and begin a new one, I hope we'll remember that our work has not been nor will be in vain as we leave footprints we probably won't ever see.

But I believe I saw some of our footprints this morning on the high school students preparing to move forward in their lives... and it made me proud of what we do.

Have a blessed, peaceful holiday season,



**New Episodes
Every Wednesday**

Jacobs, Ponder Among Speakers at 2Gen State Summit

Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs and Deputy Commissioner for Quality Innovations and Partnerships Dr. Bentley Ponder were among the speakers at the October 18 Georgia 2Gen State Summit, 2Gen in Action, held at the Loudermilk Conference Center in Atlanta. The summit was sponsored by DECAL and the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG).



www.gaprekweek.com
October 3-7, 2022



Celebrating 30 years of Georgia's Pre-K!

Champions for Early Education Celebrated Georgia Pre-K Week 2022

Voices for Georgia's Children and DECAL hosted the 12th annual Georgia Pre-K Week with state and local leaders celebrating by reading to the state's Pre-K classes from October 3-7.

For the past 30 years, the nationally recognized Georgia's Pre-K Program has provided quality early education to the state's four year olds. The lottery-funded Georgia's Pre-K Program was launched in 1992 by Governor Zell Miller as a pilot program



launched in 1992 by Governor Zen Miller as a pilot program serving 750 students at 20 sites. Since then, the program has laid a solid foundation for academic excellence and future success in the lives of nearly two million children.

Voices for Georgia's Children, the state's only comprehensive child policy and advocacy organization, coordinates Georgia Pre-K Week, to emphasize the importance of quality early childhood education by providing opportunities for state and local leaders to engage directly with Pre-K classrooms in local communities.

"The only thing more gratifying than seeing such appreciation and commitment to Georgia's Pre-K students and teachers by community leaders, branches of government, and private businesses is the fantastic return-on-investment evidenced by the millions of happy, healthy, and thriving four year olds Georgia's Pre-K continues to serve," said Polly McKinney, Advocacy Director of Voices for Georgia's Children. "A considerable amount of research over the years has proven that children from quality early learning settings consistently arrive at kindergarten prepared and ready to learn. We are excited to show our Georgia Pre-K Week visitors a little bit of how that happens."

Countless state, business, and community leaders visited Pre-K centers around the state to witness early learning in action. They also read *Hey Georgia* by former UGA football player, Super Bowl champion, and literacy advocate, Malcolm Mitchell.

"One of the goals of Georgia Pre-K Week," said DECAL Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs, "is for everyone – especially Georgia's leaders – to be more aware of the importance of early childhood education and to see and participate in what happens in a Georgia Pre-K classroom."

She continued, "We appreciate that Voices for Georgia's Children and the other sponsors of Georgia Pre-K Week recognize that the work accomplished in Pre-K classrooms around the state influences the academic future of thousands of Georgia's children and impacts the future of our state."

Georgia Power returned as a sponsor of Georgia Pre-K Week for the ninth year. Georgia Pre-K Week 2022 was supported by Governor Brian Kemp, state commissioners, state and local elected officials, and other longstanding community partners.

DECAL Employee Receives Community Partnership Award

CCS Director of Enforcement Operations April Rogers accepted the Community Partnership Award on behalf of DECAL with DFCS and the Boys and Girls Clubs of Atlanta. The award was presented recently at the Youth Protection Seminar hosted by the Atlanta Area Council - Boys Scouts of America. Shown with April is Tyrone Oliver, Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice and chair of the Youth Protection Seminar, and Tracy Techau, Atlanta Area Council Boy Scouts of America Executive/CEO.



News from Nutrition Services



A Visit to Ware County Head Start

On Thursday, October 20, DECAL's Nutrition Services Division visited Ware County Head Start in Waycross to learn more about Georgia Organics' Family Farm Share Pilot, funded through a Community Transformation Grant awarded by DECAL, to address childhood food insecurity for children ages birth to five in Waycross. The Head Start staff, alongside Georgia Organics, gathered families to plant spinach and swiss chard seeds, participate in food education, and learn about signing up for the Family Farm Share Box, a six-week program that provides families a cost-effective bag of fresh, locally grown produce weekly in partnership with WayGreen, Georgia Organics and local farmers.

After connecting with families, staff members engaged children through food education and taste testing of blueberries and watermelon, provided a tour of the center's garden beds, and cheered for the children in a bean bag race. The visit confirmed that the Farm to ECE and the Family Farm Share Box is a win-win for the Head Start community, local farmers, and our youngest learners.



CCS Develops New Logo



DECAL's Child Care Services Division has a new logo, after work that began in 2019 but was sideswiped by the pandemic. CCS employs 132 people and is dedicated to ensuring a safe and healthy learning environment through child care licensing, monitoring, and professional development to support the growth and development of Georgia's young children.

Rachael Lee, CCS Process and Quality Improvement Manager, said they first formed a Logo Committee made up of the Deputy Commissioner for Child Care Services, managers, consultants, and admins. This team worked closely with Phase 3, an Atlanta-based agency that also helped create logos for DECAL and Nutrition Services.

The first question posed by the agency was: What words best describe CCS? Helpful, Innovative, Trustworthy, Necessary, Balanced, Caring, Meaningful, Reliable, and Regulatory were among the responses. This led to the conclusion that CCS is a "work of heart."

A first round of concepts led to a second round of modified logos, and the entire team voted on the final selection. The group never envisioned this much discussion around colors and fonts. After being sidelined by the pandemic, the team picked the project back up in June, 2022, and the logo was finalized in August.

Deputy Commissioner of Child Care Services Pam Stevens appreciates the team's hard work...and patience: "Creating a logo is much more challenging than you might think," Pam explained. "Summing up the work, the intent behind it, and all the moving parts and then converting that into a symbol that truly reflects what we do is hard! I think the group came up with a great logo, and CCS certainly deserves its own identity. I'm so happy that this group of CCS team members, the group who kept going through the pandemic, has had the opportunity to leave our mark on CCS moving forward."



A Visit to Arrow Christian Academy in College Park

On Wednesday, October 26, DECAL's Nutrition Services Division and Community Partnerships Team, along with Monica Griffin, Assistant Director, Nutrition and Wellness Initiatives with Quality Care for Children (QCC), visited Arrow Christian Academy in College Park, Georgia. QCC is also a recipient of the Community Transformation Grant, awarded by DECAL, to address food insecurity for children ages birth to five in Clayton County through a partnership with Arrow Christian Academy and three Clayton County ECE sites. The center is teaching kids how food is grown from the earth and encouraging them to try new vegetables like bell peppers, eggplant, okra and swiss chard. They also incorporate nutrition education and physical activity through gardening.

Arrow Christian Academy was also awarded a \$1,500 Farm to Early Care and Education Mini Grant through DECAL. The mini grants are provided through the USDA Farm to School Grant to support planning, developing,

DECAL Announces Georgia's Pre-K Teachers of the Year for 2022-2023 School Year

DECAL named its Georgia's Pre-K Teachers of the Year for the 2022-2023 school year just before the annual Georgia Pre-K Week October 3-7, 2022. The public school winner is Shannon Gibson from Baldwin Elementary School in Baldwin, and the private child care center winner is Alaina Jones from Akers Academy in Cumming.

As Pre-K Teachers of the Year, Gibson and Jones each receive \$3,000 for themselves, \$3,000 for a classroom makeover and supplies, and \$1,500 to cover costs while they are out of the classroom representing Georgia's Pre-K Program. Winners serve as ambassadors for Georgia's Pre-K Program by public speaking, representing the program at various meetings, and modeling effective classroom practices.

The winners were selected from six semi-finalists who each received a classroom observation by a DECAL Pre-K Specialist. Each finalist submitted a small group video scored by outside judges, had a classroom observation, and faced a panel for a personal interview.

"Since the beginning of Georgia's Pre-K Program in 1992, more than 1.8 million children have benefited from the positive experiences they received in Pre-K," said DECAL Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs. "These benefits, especially in terms of early language and literacy skills and social emotional development, are the result of the efforts of dedicated Pre-K professionals who work with their students every day. Annually recognizing Pre-K Teachers of the Year is one way to thank them for their hard work."

Among other requirements, candidates for Georgia's Pre-K Teacher of the Year must have been employed as a Georgia's Pre-K lead teacher during the 2022-2023 school year, taught as a lead teacher in a Georgia's Pre-K classroom for a minimum of three years, and must be planning to continue as a lead teacher in a Georgia's Pre-K classroom during the 2022-2023 school year.

CONGRATULATIONS

and implementing Farm to ECE programs for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) operators in Appling, Chattooga, Clayton, Johnson, and Terrell counties.

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

Board of Early Care and Learning

Phil Davis, Savannah
First Congressional District
(Chair)

Susan Harper, Albany
Second Congressional District

Kathy Howell, Carrollton
Third Congressional District
(Secretary)

Karla Zisook, Decatur
Fourth Congressional District

VACANT
Fifth Congressional District

Kristy Beam, Atlanta
Sixth Congressional District

Kristin Morrissey, Cumming
Seventh Congressional District

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

Cristina Washell, Ed.D.,
Cleveland
Ninth Congressional District

Joanna Hill, Watkinsville
Tenth Congressional District

Jen Bennecke, Atlanta
Eleventh Congressional District

CONGRATULATIONS



Alaina Jones
AKERS ACADEMY
CUMMING, GA

**GA Pre-K
Teacher
of the Year
2022-2023**



Shannon Gibson
BALDWIN ELEMENTARY
BALDWIN, GA



Finalists Named for Early Childhood Educators of the Year

DECAL and the Georgia Foundation for Early Care + Learning have named their six finalists for Georgia's Early Childhood Educators of the Year for 2022-2023. The program, which started last year, recognizes outstanding early education teachers of children ages birth to preschool with an Infant Teacher of the Year (0-18 months), Toddler Teacher of the Year (18-36 months), and Preschool Teacher of the Year (36-48 months).

Finalists in the Infant Category are DiAnne Coggins from The Learning Village in College Park, and Mary Williams from Kid's Express Learning Center in Hawkinsville; finalists in the Toddler Category are Elianne Aguilera from Eli's Academy in Lawrenceville and Janet Thomas from The Right Start Early Learning Center II in Palmetto; and finalists in the Preschool Category are Ashley Langley from The Waseca School in Athens and Tierra Faulcon from Faulcon Prep Academy in Smyrna.

Each finalist will receive \$500 from the Georgia Foundation for Early Care + Learning. Three winners will be announced in December.

Faces of DECAL

DECAL faces featured in the banner of this issue are (L-R) Ha Dinh, Michael Rodgers, Monteza Wilson, Peggy Svenson, and Princess Walton.

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Eleventh Congressional District
Kimberly Neville, Brooklet
Twelfth Congressional District

Melissa Boekhaus, M.D.,
Smyrna
Thirteenth Congressional
District

Debra Brock, Calhoun
Fourteenth Congressional
District
(Vice Chair)

Employee Suggestion Program



**Visit the Virtual
Suggestion Box now!**

Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

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**Georgia Dept
of Early Care
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BRIGHT FROM THE START

