

Decidedly DECAL

Highlighting the Events That Shape Who We Are



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DECAL By the Numbers

4,989 - Licensed child care programs in Georgia

1,165 - Quality Rated child care programs in Georgia

3,877 - Funded classes in Georgia's Pre-K Program

3,136 - Licensed child care learning centers in Georgia

Commissioner's Corner

by Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs

Dear DECAL Co-workers,

This month's letter is going to be short as I simply remind you about some upcoming events - involving you - that I'm really looking forward to:

1. Georgia's Pre-K Week: This year this annual event will take place October 3-7 giving DECAL board members; state legislators; other federal, state, and local dignitaries; and many of us an opportunity to visit and interact with Pre-K classes. If your job doesn't require you to visit child care programs regularly...and if your schedule allows...and your supervisor approves, I encourage you to take part in a visit. Witnessing the amazing work that goes on in our Pre-K classrooms always clearly demonstrates to me the impact our department is having on Georgia's children.
2. Customer and Employee Satisfaction Surveys Webinar: At 3 p.m. on Wednesday, October 5, a couple of your colleagues and I will present the findings from the 2016 customer and employee satisfaction surveys. These instruments provide insights into how DECAL is doing as we serve child care providers and into how you feel about your work here at the department. The findings from the employee survey are especially important to me. As your commissioner, I want to create a climate at DECAL that is conducive to professional and personal satisfaction. This annual survey is your way of letting me know how I'm doing.
3. ALL STAFF Meetings: In October the first two ALL STAFF meetings of 2016 will take place: October 18 and October 20. Last year, we held two ALL STAFF meetings to make it more convenient for travel and to have smaller groups to make it easier to engage each other in activities and fellowship. This year we are holding four meetings for convenience and to make our interaction even more personal and engaging. The other two meetings will take place in November.



1,844 - Licensed family child care learning homes in Georgia
69,301 - Total registrants served by Georgia Professional Development System
2,000 - Days from when a child is born to when they start kindergarten
700 - New neural connections formed EVERY SECOND in a young child's brain



Quick Links

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Decidedly DECAL CALi Quiz Winner

DECAL's Application Developer Sarswathi Seelam is the winner of this month's Decidedly DECAL CALi Quiz. She won two tickets to Zoo Atlanta. Sarswathi's name was drawn from all employees who took the online quiz and scored 100.

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

I hope you're looking forward to these events as much as I am...and more importantly, I believe we will all benefit from them as we make time to honestly look at and celebrate our work; to discuss ways I can better support you and we can better support our customers; and to get to know each other as colleagues and as individuals.

Sincerely,

First Ever Georgia's Pre-K Teachers of the Year Named

For the first time in its 24-year history, Georgia's Pre-K Program with support from the Naserian Foundation is recognizing two outstanding educators --- one from a public school system and one from a private child care center --- as Georgia's Pre-K Program Teachers of the Year for 2016-2017. After an extensive review process that included personal interviews and classroom evaluations, the winners are Connie Ellington of Bethlehem Elementary School in Barrow County and Channie Frazier of Kids World Learning Center in Statesboro/Bulloch County. Ellington and Frazier will serve as ambassadors for Georgia's Pre-K Program, making presentations, attending meetings, and modeling effective classroom practices.

"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 DECAL 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. We are thrilled for Connie and Channie and look forward to working with them this school year."

"Our agency appreciates this opportunity to recognize the hard work of our Pre-K teachers who are working every day all over the state to ensure that our kids have a great Pre-K experience," said Susan Adams, Assistant Commissioner for Georgia's Pre-K Program and Instructional Services. "We know that the quality of the teacher in the classroom determines the quality of the classroom instruction."

In May, six finalists for Georgia's Pre-K Program Teachers of the Year were announced. This fall, all of them were interviewed and had a classroom evaluation. They were also visited by Commissioner Jacobs and Stephanie Blank, CEO for the Naserian Foundation which is sponsoring the statewide program.

This school year approximately 84,000 four year olds are attending Georgia's Pre-K Program. The voluntary, lottery-funded Pre-K program has been recognized as one of the top programs in the nation, based on quality standards, teacher qualifications, and enrollment. Georgia's Pre-K Program is universal, meaning that any age eligible child residing in Georgia may attend the program regardless of family income. Georgia's model for providing the Pre-K program is unique in that it is offered through a public-private partnership in local school systems, in private child care centers, and in other facilities.



October Birthdays



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

- 3 - La Tonya Bonner
- 4 - Clayton Adams
- 4 - Craig Detweiler
- 7 - Julia Strickland
- 8 - Andrea Marable
- 10 - Kathleen Jayson
- 11 - Diane Swift
- 12 - Melissa Herndon
- 12 - Christopher Linn
- 14 - Deidrea Thompson
- 16 - Danna Foster
- 16 - Aneshia Harris
- 16 - Sherika Hough
- 17 - Paula Jones
- 18 - Rebecca McDonald
- 22 - Audrey Lampkin
- 26 - Lari Lyn Beyer
- 31 - Sherry Beckett

Day in the Life of Arlene Green

Arlene Green starts her day at the office with a quote: "Nothing can happen today that the Lord and I can't handle."

In the pictures below, Connie Ellington (center in photo on left) and Channie Frazier (center in photo on right) are shown with DECAL Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs, Georgia's First Lady Sandra Deal, CALi and Stephanie Blank, CEO for the Naserian Foundation.



Georgia's Pre-K Week Begins Today

Leaders from around the state will show their support for early childhood education this week by visiting early learning classrooms as part of this year's Georgia Pre-K Week. The event is organized each year by Voices for Georgia's Children, a policy and advocacy non-profit organization, and supported by more than 15 child-focused partners.



Launched six years ago, support for Pre-K Week from government, business and community leaders continues to grow. Georgia Power and Synovus return as corporate sponsors for the third year in a row. In addition, the Georgia School Board Association returns for a second year recognizing the important role school districts play in supporting early learning. Additional key supporters include various state commissioners, elected officials, as well as Gov. Nathan Deal and First Lady Sandra Deal.

"Such broad support from so many of our state's most influential citizens shows us that Georgians really understand the long term value of quality early learning for each and every child," said Emily Pelton, Executive Director of Voices for Georgia's Children. "On top of that, one could say that the steady increase in the number of early learning centers participating in Quality Rated, the voluntary, quality rating system for child care, ultimately will help give Georgia's youngest learners the



Arlene Green

Arlene, who works with program assistance and customer service, has worked in child care since 2009.

Ex-military, she came to Georgia from overseas while the Olympics were here in 1996. She says she stumbled into this department, but her wide range of experiences from being in the military helped her find her place quickly.

Day to day, she supports the team where she is needed, and she helps external and internal clients concerning benefits, adding, in her words, "stellar customer service." This is something she loves about her job.

She always looks forward to being able to resolve a client's problem with a child care issue. And something that makes her proud to work for DECAL is when she gets back a call or email showing appreciation and thankfulness for her problem solving.

"Arlene loves serving the children and families of Georgia as much as she can, and wishes she had the ability to meet every child's needs at least for a day."

Outside of work, Arlene is a sports fan (who is obviously excited about football season). In addition, she loves seafood and spending time with her "little pumpkins."

Safe Sleep Books Available to Licensed Child Care Programs

Every week, three babies in Georgia die from sleep-related causes. Even more alarming is that most of those deaths are preventable. As part of the Georgia Safe to Sleep campaign, DECAL and the Georgia Department of Public Health are providing the book *Sleep Baby, Safe & Snug* to all licensed child care programs in Georgia. These books provide safe sleep education in an easy-to-read and vividly illustrated format.

Remember the ABCs of Safe Sleep, as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics: Alone (Babies should sleep alone in their own sleep space, close to but separate from their caregiver); Back (Babies should be placed on their back to sleep.

foundation they need to grow into productive and healthy adults."

During the week, hundreds of state, business and community leaders will visit Pre-K centers to witness early learning in action and to read a favorite children's book to the young learners. In addition to countless local mayors, city council members, public safety employees, and professionals from all walks of life, nearly three out of every four state legislators have participated, as well as almost half of Georgia's Congressional delegation.

"It is incredibly gratifying every year to experience the support of Georgia's state and local leaders as they visit and interact with children in our early childhood care and education programs," said DECAL Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs. "Their interest and involvement clearly illustrates that Georgia's policy makers, parents, and public understand more than ever that quality early education impacts the future of our students, their families, and our state."

Georgia Pre-K Week is developed with the full support of DECAL. Joining Voices for Georgia's Children as partners on Georgia Pre-K Week are Black Child Development Institute-Atlanta, Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Atlanta, Ferst Foundation for Childhood Literacy, GEEARS: Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students, Georgia Child Care Association, Georgia Family Connection Partnership, Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education, Georgia Public Library Service, Georgia Vision Project, multiple Junior Leagues throughout Georgia, Metro Atlanta YMCA, Quality Care for Children and United Way of Greater Atlanta.



Every nap. Every sleep. Every time.); Crib (Babies should sleep in a crib or bassinet with a firm, flat surface with no extra items such as crib bumpers, blankets, or toys).



Crème de la Crème Alpharetta Director Colleen Paulet (right) receives her copy of the Safe Sleep Book from CCS Consultant Shannon Curtis.

CCDF Adds More Child Care Provider Information to DECAL Website



Kristie Lewis

New requirements under the reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) will result in some changes to the DECAL website at www.dec.al.ga.gov.

Beginning this month, in addition to license revocations, all types of enforcement actions will be posted and available to the public for five years. This includes cease and desist orders, consent agreements, denials, enforcement fines, license restrictions and emergency orders.

Also beginning this month, all regulatory visits from October 1, 2014 forward will be posted to the website and remain there for five years. The immediate effect will be a two-year history of visits available for public viewing, rather than the previous 18 months.

"In addition to complying with federal requirements, the intent of

Georgia Governor Nathan Deal and First Lady Sandra Deal participate each year in Georgia's Pre-K Week, visiting Pre-K classrooms and reading to young learners.

CAPS Changes Delayed

DECAL announced last month that it is delaying certain planned changes in Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services Program (CAPS) originally scheduled to begin October 1.

In a letter to CAPS recipients and early care and education providers, Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs wrote, "We at DECAL have heard your concerns; we understand your concerns; and we have considered your concerns as we've explored options to help minimize the impact of new federal regulations on the CAPS program."

Commissioner Jacobs said the agency will take the next six to eight months to re-engage CAPS recipients, providers, early care and education stakeholders, professional organizations, and advocacy groups. The new anticipated implementation date is July 1, 2017.



DECAL recently met with members of the Georgia Child Care Association to discuss proposed changes in the CAPS Program.

FOR CURRENT CAPS FAMILIES:

- Family fees will remain the same.
- Families currently in the CAPS program will remain in the program as long as they meet the eligibility requirements at time of redetermination.
- Current CAPS recipients will NOT have to be a member of a priority group to be eligible to receive CAPS funding as long as the family meets the other eligibility requirements.

FOR NEW FAMILIES APPLYING FOR CAPS:

- The funding restrictions instituted on August 1, 2016 are still in place.
- New families applying for CAPS after August 1, 2016 must meet the CAPS eligibility requirements AND be a member of one of the prescribed priority groups.

FOR PROVIDERS:

- The new tiered reimbursement rates based on a provider's star rating in Quality Rated (5%, 10%, 25%) went into effect October 1, 2016.
- The base provider rate will remain unchanged from current rates.

Georgia's plan for CAPS was largely written to comply with new federal mandates. Georgia receives federal money to help fund the CAPS program. For Georgia to continue to receive this federal funding, the state must comply with federal guidelines.

"As an organization, we work hard to be transparent, and we want, we need to hear from the people

these changes is to provide families with complete information as they address their child care needs," said Kristie Lewis, Assistant Commissioner for Child Care Services.

Any questions regarding the changes should be sent to childcareservices@decalfga.gov.

**Let Us Hear
From You!**

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!](#)

**CALi Attends GAYC
Conference**

who are directly impacted by the policies and guidelines we create and implement," said Commissioner Jacobs.

Stakeholder engagement opportunities will be posted on www.CAPS.decalfga.gov.

Employees Encouraged to Utilize Online Suggestion Program

In each issue of Decidedly DECAL, our Employee Suggestion Program offers a link to a virtual suggestion box where you can anonymously present concerns or questions about our agency. Please take advantage of this opportunity to raise issues and share your ideas on how to make DECAL a better agency for Georgia and our youngest learners.

Here are some recent Q&As:

On the POLAR website, is there a way to make it easier to generate a group/mass email to a certain category of providers? Does an easier method already exist?

The IT team has added a new feature to POLAR to allow you to export provider search results to an Excel spreadsheet which includes email addresses. Try this option, and let us know how it works for you.

When will the PEACH program be ready? It would be nice if we talked or read about it before school starts back.

PEACH (Planning Educational Activities for Children) is our new interactive website launched August 25, 2016 that allows birth-five teachers to plan lessons using the GELDS toolbox activities. PEACH also allows teachers to create their own custom activities. Users can create a free account by visiting www.peach.decalfga.gov. PEACH will roll out in two phases. Phase 1 allows teachers to plan and build activities. Focus groups will be created to inform Phase 2 decisions. If you, teachers, or others who you may support have feedback regarding PEACH in Phase 1, contact Demetria Joyce, Instructional Learning Manager, at demetria.joyce@decalfga.gov. If teachers experience technical issues, they can contact Best Practices for technical support at bestpractices@gsu.edu. Since posting a link to the site on our Facebook page, Peach has received 177 LIKES, 27 comments, and 279 shares.

What's your suggestion or question for DECAL? Visit the Virtual Suggestion Box at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/DECALSuggestionBox?sm=IKuIGNkk%2bmmcTHfyv4UbMtXrG5k2pjyMGRM8RepbYqs%3d>

GELDS Kits Available to New Parents and Grandparents

GELDS kits are now available to DECAL parents and grandparents who have welcomed a new bundle of joy to their families this year. Each kit includes a Milestone Moments booklet and GELDS family engagement material (Activity Pad, Growth Chart, and Grocery List).

The material from the family engagement kit will enable you to engage your infant or toddler in various activities that will help



CALi was a big hit at the annual Georgia Association on Young Children (GAYC) Conference at Gwinnett Technical College in Lawrenceville. As part of Inclusive Early Learning Week, September 19-24, 2016, child care providers were invited to take the "Person First" Pledge, have their photo taken with CALi in the photo booth, and attend several sessions on inclusion with a featured session by special guest speaker Stacey Ramirez, Georgia Executive Director for The Arc, the largest national organization of and for people with intellectual and related developmental disabilities and their families.



It may be the new "Flat Stanley." At last month's GAYC conference, DECAL's Georgia Professional Development System for Early Childhood Educators handed out origami CALi, which when unfolded showed participants how to fill out their own profile on the new GaPDS website. Everyone was asked to take a picture of their CALi in the classroom, or wherever they might be, and post on social media with the hashtag #CALiInTheClassroom. We'll see just how far CALi can travel! For more information on GaPDS, go to www.gapds.dec.al.gov.

develop his or her communication skills, foster cognitive knowledge, enhance motor skills, and much more.

The cute, animated characters included in the grocery list will support your child in identifying "good and bad" foods and understand what it means to have a well-balanced plate, and it has tips to assist you at the grocery store.

With the help of the Milestone Moments booklet, parents and grandparents can track their child's developmental growth easily.

Each page of the Milestone Moments booklet contains information on important developmental milestones. The booklet also includes helpful tips on how to further foster development.

How to order: To request a GELDS kit, contact Demetria Joyce, Instructional Learning Manager at demetria.joyce@dec.al.gov. We look forward to providing new parents and grandparents with a GELDS kit. Family engagement materials are also available to parents by visiting the GELDS e-store at <http://www.gelds.dec.al.gov> by selecting the "resources tab."




Instructional Learning Manager Demetria Joyce (left) presents a GELDS tool box to new mom Shawnell Johnson, Quality Improvement and Training Unit Director for Child Care Services


CALi Celebrates Inclusive Early Learning Week




CALi celebrated Inclusive Early Learning Week with Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs last month with visits to Central Georgia Technical College in Warner Robins, Appletree-ABC Preschool in Alpharetta, D. Scott Hudgens, Jr. Early Education Center in Gwinnett, and Lifespan Montessori of Athens. All of these programs have earned the Quality Rated Inclusion Endorsement.

GET GEORGIA READING **READY4K GA TEXTS WITH TIPS, FACTS AND LINKS TAILORED TO...**

3 YEAR OLDS  TEXT "R4K GA3" TO 70138

4 YEAR OLDS  TEXT "R4K GA4" TO 70138

5 YEAR OLDS  TEXT "R4K GA5" TO 70138

The free texts are made possible by a partnership between the Georgia Department of Education and ParentPowered Public Benefit Corporation. While there is no cost for enrolling in Ready4K GA, data and message rates may apply. When parents sign up, they agree to enroll in the program, the ParentPowered PBC Terms of Use and Privacy Policy, and to receive approximately three Ready4K GA texts per week from 70138. Parents can cancel receipt of Ready4K GA texts any time by texting STOP to 70138. For help with Ready4K GA, text HELP to 70138 or email an email.

Board of Early Care and Learning

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

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Thirteenth Congressional District

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

- ★ LaTrenda's World for Learning, Inc., Macon
- ★ Barbara's Babies Learning Center, Albany
- ★ Carolyn M. Marks, Savannah
- ★★★ Tangerine R. Cobb, Hephzibah
- ★★ Petty's Preschool Daycare and Learning Center, Inc, Albany
- ★★ Tender Years Learning Center #8, Valdosta
- ★★ Abigail Jones, Valdosta
- ★★★ TSYS Learning Center, Columbus
- ★★ Saint Mark UMC Child Development Center, Columbus
- ★★ Laverne N. Singleton-Byrd, Hampton
- ★★★ Franca Zarrelli, Buford
- ★ Wings of a Dove Christian Academy, Decatur
- ★ Children's Corner Child Care Learning Center, Cairo
- ★ Cave Spring Day Care Center, Cave Spring
- ★★ Anna M. Robertson, Thomasville
- ★ Yolanda P. Tyler, Jonesboro
- ★ First Christian Academy, Richmond Hill
- ★ Sweet Peas Day Care, Albany
- ★★ Nahema M. Augustin, Marietta
- ★ Wonda M. Nobles-Williams, Brunswick
- ★★ Kelley House Kids, Camila
- ★ Little Miracles Learning Development Center, Tifton
- ★ Cheryl Stephens, Statesboro

Tangela Johnson, Cohutta
Fourteenth Congressional District

The Faces of DECAL

*DECAL faces featured in the banner of this issue are (L-R)
Mechelle Bethea, Nicole Wilson, Leslie Truman, Susan Jill
Vandenbos, Linda Norwood, Rian Ringsrud, and Carol Hartman.*
