

Decidedly DECAL

Highlighting the Events That Shape Who We Are



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DECAL By the Numbers

19 - New classes in Georgia's Pre-K Program

38 - Expansion classes in Georgia's Pre-K Program

3,794 - Continuation classes in Georgia's Pre-K Program

84,722 - Four year olds expected in Georgia's Pre-K Program for 2017-2018

4,787 - Licensed child care programs in Georgia

1,373 - Quality Rated child care programs in Georgia

Commissioner's Corner

by Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs



Dear DECAL Co-workers,

My letter to you this month is different from any I've written in over three years of Decidedly DECAL. In some ways, I feel like I should apologize; but I decided that most of you will be able to relate to what I'm going to write. So I'm just going to be honest and admit that the deadline for this letter has arrived, but because of pressures here in the office and at home, I just haven't had an opportunity to really think about what I want to share with you.

I could list all that has happened here in the office the past couple of weeks that have taken their toll on time and mental energy, e.g., the constant planning and adjusting the plans for the CAPS transition; the tragic death of a young boy at an unlicensed summer camp; federal monitoring visits, beginning of Pre-K, etc.

I could detail events at home, e.g., young children going back to school and all that entails (shopping for clothes and supplies; working out schedules; visiting new classrooms and meeting teachers, etc.) and parents with serious health problems needing support.

And I suspect what I've experienced the past few weeks is representative of what many of you may also have gone through. You've all heard me say that I firmly believe in the importance of work-life balance. Sometimes that means balancing hard, unforeseen responsibilities and issues in BOTH areas of our lives.

So, if you're feeling stressed as work ramps up and as demands at home ramp up as school begins or as other family related events occur, just know that I understand. I'm not trying to make excuses. I

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Decidedly DECAL CALi Quiz Winner



Cassa Andrews

DECAL's Statewide PBIS Manager Cassa Andrews is the winner of this month's Decidedly DECAL CALi Quiz. She won two tickets to Stone Mountain Park. Cassa's name was drawn from all employees who took the quiz and scored 100. 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!

Celebrating Georgia's Pre-K Program



have...we all have...our jobs to do and as stewards of state resources, we are obligated to do what we've been hired to do. But sometimes, life happens - professionally and personally - and we keep going until we get back on track.

Thank you for your understanding and flexibility. I PROMISE this letter will be more substantive in September. Hold me to it.

Sincerely,

Nominations Open Soon for Commissioner's Spirit of DECAL Awards

For the second year, DECAL will recognize employees who consistently embody and model DECAL's values in an exemplary way by awarding the Commissioner's Spirit of DECAL Awards. Nominees are submitted by any employee of DECAL, and awards will be presented during the all-staff meeting in October.

Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs will open nominations soon when she sends an e-mail to all employees. Begin thinking now about colleagues who demonstrate one or more of the following:

- Delivering stellar customer service
- Exhibiting organizational excellence
- Creating positive relationships
- Always valuing others
- Leading the way

The link to the nomination form will be sent to all DECAL staff on or before August 29th and nominations will close on September 16th. Any DECAL employee can to nominate any other DECAL employee without regard to seniority or division; full-time or part-time; or temporary or contract employment status with the agency.

Employees may submit more than one nomination, and employees may be nominated by more than one co-worker. Nominations will not be anonymous, but they will be scored blindly by a review committee composed of members of the DECAL Employee Advisory Group (EAG). Commissioner Jacobs will review the nominees based on the recommendations of the EAG review committee and announce the winners at an all-employee meeting later this fall.



Radford Selected as a White-Riley-Peterson (WRP) Policy Fellow

Georgia's Pre-K Program Consultants Jan Duke, Nicki Underwood, and Susan Winston show their excitement for #GaPreKFirstDay and for our 25th birthday during South Georgia regional meetings for Pre-K teachers and directors.



Pre-K Consultant Megan O'Bara celebrated Pre-K's 25th Birthday with the Ware County Pre-K teachers and director, Dr. Linda Houseal during the Regional Back-to-School Meeting at Daffodil Preschool in Waycross.

New Faces and Places

Congratulations to the following employees who joined the DECAL team in July:

Child Care Services welcomes Administrative Assistant Ericka McCrary and Child Care Consultant Valarie Strickland.

Instructional Supports welcomes Georgia PDS User Support Representative Stephanie Banks.

System Reform welcomes Administrative Assistant Jasmine Barnes.

August Birthdays



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

- 1 - Gwen Kahn
- 2 - Brittany Sams
- 5 - Paula Lawrence
- 5 - Jennifer Waters
- 6 - Jasmine Barnes
- 6 - Angela Byrd
- 6 - Jennifer Collins
- 6 - Valerie Coulton
- 6 - Ira Sudman



Michelle Radford

DECAL's School Age Specialist Michelle Radford was named a Fellow of the White-Riley-Peterson Policy Fellowship, which aims to strengthen policy surrounding education and expand learning opportunities for all children. She was one of 16 leaders in the field of afterschool and expanded learning nationwide selected for the honor. The Fellowship is named for William S. White, Richard W. Riley, and Terry K. Peterson, leaders who inspire Radford because of their focus on "strengthening community foundations as well as focusing on education abroad."

Radford, a School Age Specialist, has lived the majority of her life in Georgia, and remains a Georgia girl at heart, but she recently moved to the mountains in Hayesville, North Carolina. When her youngest of three children moved out and empty nest set in, she and her husband decided to move to their "happy place."

Her husband travels extensively around the United States working on nuclear power plants, and she noted that she is fortunate to be able to visit him on weekend trips when he is in exciting places. In their free time, they love to ride their horses.

Radford is a graduate of the University of Georgia, where she earned her Bachelor of Science in early childhood education. She also earned a Master of Education in educational leadership from Northcentral University. With Radford's nearly three decades of experience working with children, she has devoted her career to "helping ensure that all children have access to high quality care and excellent education."

The honor of becoming a WRP Fellow is accompanied by intensive learning opportunities and the duty to develop state-level policy projects. Issues specifically pertinent to Radford are "making sure that school-age programs have resources, training and tools available to them, professionalizing the school-age workforce, and including a social/emotional learning component in programs."

In addition to these obligations, Fellows have the option to attend the National Network of State Afterschool Networks. It is not required, but Radford plans to attend, she says, because "any time we can gather together and learn from each other or brainstorm ideas, the experience will be enhanced."

Radford believes that it is important to remember that all children, across the nation and worldwide, deserve quality child care and education. All three of the Fellowship's original leaders inspire Radford to "strive for excellence for all of our children in Georgia, both in rural locations and larger cities."

While Radford looks to learn best practices for creating quality school time programs and for creating a professional workforce, she is most excited to build relationships with her peers in the youth development field, while learning how other states seek to build quality from afterschool time.

The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation generously supports the Fellowship, which Radford agrees provides the means to unite leaders across the nation while fostering "deep discussion" of case studies, providing those leaders with understanding of the "art, science, possibilities and realities of policy making around afterschool and expanded learning time."

Person on the Street Interviews

If you were a new addition to a crayon box, what color would you be?

- 7 - Carrie Ashbee
- 7 - Ericka McCrary
- 7 - Kay Pollard
- 10 - Quandra Collins
- 10 - Linda Norwood
- 10 - Yvonne Sinclair
- 11 - Stephanie Banks
- 11 - Brandi Templeton
- 11 - Vicki Watts
- 12 - Kristie Lewis
- 13 - Emily Lankford Graham
- 14 - Denise Jenson
- 14 - Brian McKeen
- 16 - Shaheedah El-Amin
- 16 - Mary Houtz
- 16 - Karen McGill
- 18 - Michelle Clark
- 20 - Brian Collin
- 21 - Rachael Lee
- 22 - Karla Crawford
- 22 - Sherry Grant
- 22 - Latashi Laster
- 23 - Emmanuel Asumadu
- 23 - Susan Simpson
- 23 - Atlantis Wright
- 25 - Bart Ellington
- 25 - Fabienne Michel
- 26 - Kay Mayfield
- 26 - Keisha Pace
- 28 - Jahmeke Jones
- 30 - Sylvia Boykin
- 30 - Tamisa Sapp

Watch on POLAR



CAPS Launches Pilot Project



April Brown, CCS Consultant
 "I would be a multi-colored crayon because my personality is filled with lots of love and a wide variety of different friendships and hobbies that I enjoy."



Bridgette Merrett, Compliance Administrator
 "If I were a new addition to a crayon box, I'd be 'Sunshine Yellow!' Like a beautiful sunshine, I find yellow to be uplifting, creating an enthusiasm for life."



Rebecca McDonald, Pre-K Consultant
 "I would be 'chocolate cherry.' That's the color I use for my hair and everyone loves it."



for Families in 13 Counties

Georgia's new version of the Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) Program officially launched its Pilot Project for families in Bibb, Brooks, Catoosa, Clarke, Colquitt, Cook, Douglas, Echols, Gilmer, Gordon, Lowndes, Murray, and Whitfield counties on Monday, July 17, 2017. This is the first phase in moving the eligibility function of CAPS from the Division of Family and Children Services to DECAL by early 2018. Learn more about the CAPS Program and get a preview of its new offices on a NEW episode of DECAL TV now On Demand on POLAR. We talk with Assistant Commissioner for Federal Programs Elisabetta Kasfir about the program and hear updates from other DECAL divisions.

Got a suggestion for a future episode of DECAL TV? Let us hear from you at decaltv@decalfga.gov.



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
(Chair)

Kathy Howell, Carrollton
Third Congressional District

Phil Davis, Stone Mountain

The initial board members of the new Georgia Foundation for Early Care and Learning held their first official meeting Monday. The foundation will serve as the nonprofit organization through which DECAL can secure private funds to enable us to expand our support of and recognition of child care programs and early childhood educators. Shown are Governor Nathan Deal's Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy Katie Childers, Executive Director Carrie Ashbee, and Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs, who will serve as Board Chair.

Congratulations to the newest QUALITY RATED™ child care programs!

- | | |
|--|--|
| Prime Time - Wilson Creek, Duluth ★★★★★ | ★★★ Watch Me Grow Learning Center II, Forest Park |
| Prime Time - Ocee, Alpharetta ★★★★★ | ★★★ Honey Bear Day Care, Mableton |
| Preferred School Care at Benteen Elementary, Atlanta ★★★★★ | ★★★ Watch Me Grow Learning Center, Inc., Atlanta |
| Child Development Center, Columbus ★★★★★ | ★★★★★ E.E. Butler Head Start/Pre-K, Gainesville |
| 1 Love Childcare & Learning Center, Sylvania ★★★★★ | ★★★★★ Teresa D. Smith, Lithonia |
| Sharon D. Denison, St. Marys ★★★★★ | ★ Discovery Point #67, Cumming |
| Prime Time - River Eves Elementary School, Roswell ★★★★★ | ★ Open Arms Lutheran Child Development Center, Atlanta |
| Katrina L. Wilson, Albany ★★★★★ | ★★★★★ Clay County Head Start, Fort Gaines |
| Norcross Human Services Cluster, Norcross ★★★★★ | ★★★★★ Jacqueline D. Collister, Lawrenceville |
| Marsha T. Dennis, Stone Mountain ★★★★★ | ★ The Goddard School, Smyrna |
| Legacy Academy for Children, Alpharetta ★★★★★ | ★ Westside Child Development Center, Atlanta |
| Odum Learning Academy Inc., Savannah ★★★★★ | ★★★ Just Kiddin Daycare & Learning Center, Leesburg |
| Wee Care Academy Preschool & Development Center, Austell ★★★★★ | ★★★★★ Vanessa Porter, Grovetown |
| Childcare Network #267, Hampton ★★★★★ | ★★★ R. Kirk Landon Learning Center, Atlanta |
| | ★★★ Atlanta Children's Shelter Inc., Atlanta |
| | ★★★ All About Kids Early Learning Center, Douglas |
| | ★ Marsha T. Octave, Hinesville |

Fourth Congressional District

Carlene Talton, Decatur
Fifth Congressional District

Dawnn 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

Jerri Kropp, Statesboro
Twelfth Congressional District
(Vice Chair)

Melissa Boekhaus, MD., Mableton
Thirteenth Congressional District

Tangela Johnson, Cohutta
Fourteenth Congressional District



Congratulations to all of our
QUALITY RATED™ child care programs
who've increased their star rating
in July!

★★★ Train Up A Child Academy, Garden City (1 to 3 stars)

★★★ Clay De'Angela, Mableton (2 to 3 stars)

★★ Scottdale Early Learning Inc., Scottdale (2 to 3 stars)

★★ Kids 'R' Kids #36, Lawrenceville (1 to 2 stars)

★★★ Sheltering Arms - Longview Drive Center, Douglasville (2 to 3 stars)

★★★ Child's World Comprehensive Learning Center Inc., Warrenton (2 to 3 stars)

★★★ Frances Villarreal, Jonesboro (1 to 3 stars)

★★★ The Right Start Early Learning Center II, Palmetto (2 to 3 stars)

Visit qualityrated.org to find
Quality Rated child care programs in your area!

**Let Us Hear
From You!**

The Faces of DECAL

DECAL faces featured in the banner of this issue are (L-R) Paula Gordon-Near, Gail McNeely, Nicki Underwood, Cheri Smithson, Atlantis Wright, Darien Watson, and Mary Berry.

**Employee
Suggestion Program**



***Visit the Virtual
Suggestion Box now!***