

Decidedly DECAL

Highlighting the Events That Shape Who We Are



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DECAL By the Numbers

1,764 - Child care programs participating in Quality Rated

429 - Quality Rated child care programs

3,079 - LIKES for DECAL Facebook page

5,351 - Licensed child care programs in Georgia

\$22 million - Amount of Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership Grant preliminarily awarded to Georgia in December, 2014

4.6 million - Meals served in Georgia by 2014 Summer Food Service Program

\$4.1 billion - Revenues created by Georgia child care industry in 2007

63,200 - Families that received CAPS program subsidies in FFY 2014

111,584 - Number of children impacted by CAPS subsidies in FFY 2014

313 - Programs that received tiered reimbursements as part of Quality Rated

8,618 - Number of children subsidized through CAPS who received services at high quality child care programs

114 - Jobs posted by DECAL during 2014

99 - Employees hired by DECAL during 2014

22,000 - Approximate number of birth to five teachers and administrators trained on the GELDS in 2014

Commissioner's Corner

by Commissioner Amy Jacobs

Dear DECALers,

Happy New Year! I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday with family and friends. As your Commissioner, I can't emphasize enough the importance of a healthy work-life balance. For DECAL to be the best it can be, you have to be the best you can be, which means taking care of yourself and never allowing the work - as important as it is - to overwhelm you.

This time last year, if you had told me I would attend a White House Summit on Early Childhood Education in 2014, I would have thought, "No way." Yet, on December 10, I was seated in a small auditorium in the Eisenhower Building in Washington, DC with federal and state officials, mayors, educators, and philanthropists to discuss the critical importance of a child's early years. During the Summit, Georgia was often cited as a leading state in this area, from President Obama's remarks to materials distributed to the attendees. I was proud to represent Governor Deal, our state, and our department.



Commissioner Amy Jacobs at summit in Washington, DC

While at the Summit, I learned that Georgia was preliminarily awarded an Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership Grant to expand access to high-quality services for infants and toddlers and their families. This projected funding will be used to deliver Early Head Start services to infants, toddlers, and families in metro Atlanta through partnerships with existing child care centers and family child care homes. I thank Carol Hartman and her team for all their hard work on this grant. Carol will direct this important and innovative work.

I was disappointed to also learn that we did not receive the Preschool Expansion Grant that would have enabled us to expand Georgia's Pre-K Program in areas of high-need around the state; however, our nationally recognized Pre-K program will continue to be a priority for the department. Even though we were not awarded the grant, our efforts were not in vain; the grant writing process helps us determine where we want to go as a department and helps us develop plans to get there.

Last year was a banner year for DECAL. We began implementing the projects funded by the Early Learning Challenge Grant - revised and ramped up Quality Rated - developed meaningful new relationships with advocacy, business, and philanthropic partners - enhanced the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards, professional development, and licensing rules and regulations - continued to fine-tune our Pre-K program - while experiencing major changes in the department's leadership. (Thank you for welcoming me so warmly in 2014.)

You - we - accomplished valuable work and raised the profile of quality early care and education in our state last year. But there is more to be done, and I hope you're as excited as I am about the prospects for our work in 2015. Together, we will continue making a difference in the lives of



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Tips for Success on Fitness Resolutions

By *Jennifer Popaduiik*,
Nutrition Project Manager



If your New Year's Resolution this year is to lose weight or stay fit and healthy, you're not alone. These goals were among the top 10 New Year's Resolutions for 2014 and will surely make the top 10 again in 2015. Unfortunately, all too often New Year's Resolutions last only a couple of weeks or months before work, family, and life in general get in the way and change our priorities.

This year, try something different so that you don't lose sight of your goals.

1. **Make a schedule:** Schedule time for your resolution. If you want to lose weight and stay fit, add it to your daily routine. Consider waking up 30 minutes earlier and going to the gym or doing a light walk before work.
2. **Stop the excuses:** There will always be reasons why you can't-you're too tired, too busy, too stressed, etc. Instead of focusing on why you can't, focus on how you can. Do sit-ups during TV commercials; leave lunch 5 minutes early and walk for those 5 minutes; take the stairs up to the 6th, 7th, and even the 8th floor each morning instead of the elevator.
3. **Commit to your goal with a friend:** Finding the motivation to maintain healthy habits IS difficult. Recruit a friend to help you! Together you can encourage each other to eat healthier

children, their families, and the early care and education professionals who care for them every day.

Sincerely,
Amy

DECAL Priority:

Ensure Health & Safety

DECAL Recruiting Sponsors for Nutrition Programs

With the New Year now upon us, DECAL is seeking eligible child and adult care facilities to participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) for 2015.

The CACFP is a federally-funded U.S. Department of Agriculture nutrition program available to child care centers, adult day care centers, Head Start programs, emergency shelters and before- and after-school programs. Through the program, approved facilities are reimbursed for nutritious meals and snacks served to children and adults in care.

The SFSP is also a nutrition program funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture that serves children healthy meals during the summer months when school is not in session.

The CACFP uses federal income guidelines to determine each participant's eligibility for free and reduced-price meals in the program. Children who receive benefits through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) units, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) are automatically eligible to receive free meals through CACFP. Adults who receive SNAP benefits, FDPIR benefits, or who receive Social Security Income (SSI) or are Medicaid participants are automatically eligible to receive free meal benefits.

"Providing healthy meals to Georgia children and adults is critical to their continued development and overall health and wellness," said Falita Flowers, DECAL's Director of Nutrition Services. "The success of the CACFP and the SFSP is directly impacted by the organizations that partner with DECAL as sponsors to ensure there is sufficient access to nutritious meals."

Flowers said 4.6 million meals were served to children who qualified in the summer of 2014, and she would like to see that number grow significantly this year. The following entities can qualify to serve as sponsors: public or private nonprofit schools; universities, colleges or camps; units of local government; private nonprofit organizations, including faith-based organizations considered tax exempt by the IRS. Sponsors can operate the program and feed children at various sites such as schools, churches, recreation centers, community and migrant centers and other areas where children congregate.

Mobile meal sites are also an option for sponsors - particularly those in rural areas of the state. To learn more about CACFP or SFSP, contact Program Marketing and Outreach Manager Shani Drake at shani.drake@decalfga.gov or 404-656-3221.

and get active. You may even want to make a bet with your friend to increase motivation for you both!

4. **Keep records:** Keeping records such as a food diary or a work-out log truly holds you accountable for each decision you make. Writing everything down can also show you the significant progress you have made over time!

Whatever strategies you take, just remember that maintaining optimal health and fitness is a lifelong challenge best achieved one day at a time.

January Birthdays



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

- 1 - Stacey Foston
- 2 - Tu Bui
- 3 - Nita Smiley-Smith
- 5 - Kimberly Mitchell
- 7 - Kristin Bernhard
- 9 - Sheryl Irwin
- 10 - Phil Jessup
- 11 - Sherrie Mullis
- 12 - Herline Perard-Ford
- 14 - Elisabetta Kasfir
- 16 - Brenda Grimes
- 18 - Kiejuan Davis
- 19 - Sharon McPherson
- 20 - Nicole Cook
- 21 - Susan Breheny
- 21 - Amy Jacobs
- 21 - Margaret Pringle
- 22 - Diane Naranjo
- 26 - Leigh Ann Hendrix
- 26 - Mary Jerrell
- 28 - LaQuita Clark
- 29 - Morgan Stahl
- 30 - Rosheda Doe
- 30 - Katie Farner
- 30 - Rhonda Parker
- 31 - Laura Reid

Employee Suggestion Program



Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

• INVITES YOU TO ATTEND •

The Inaugural SFSP Summit

Tuesday
JANUARY 20, 2015
9:00 AM - 1:00 PM

at

The Merle Manders Conference Center in Stockbridge, GA

111 Davis Road • Stockbridge, GA • 30281

WORKSHOPS INCLUDE:

**INTRO TO SFSP • INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES FOR DELIVERING MEALS •
LOCAL FOOD SOURCING AND MUCH MORE!**

Register Your Organization Today!

**REGISTER ONLINE VIA EVENTBRITE.COM
AT NO CHARGE!**

Breakfast will be served!



DECAL Priority:

Increase Quality & Access

Georgia Awarded Early Head Start - Child Care Partnership Grant

Georgia has been preliminarily awarded up to \$22 million in an Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership Grant that will expand access to high-quality services for infants and toddlers and their families. Administered annually over five years by DECAL, the grant will deliver comprehensive Early Head Start services to infants, toddlers, and families in metro Atlanta through partnerships with existing child care centers and family child care homes. The grant was announced December 10 by President Barack Obama at a White House Summit on Early Childhood Education.

DECAL, in collaboration with an existing Early Head Start grantee and child care resource and referral agency, will create early education hubs that will support the centers and family child care homes in providing critical family support services and high-quality instruction. Sheltering Arms and Quality Care for Children, Inc. will serve as the early education hubs for the centers and family child care homes implementing Early Head Start.

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

We cannot read your

MIND.

That is why DECAL has



Nadine Hollis
Program Operations Specialist

EMPLOYEE
SUGGESTION
PROGRAM

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

December Quality Rated Programs



We are **excited** to announce the December 2014

Quality Rated Programs

Discovery Point #65, Flowery Branch	★ ★
Eagles Nest Children's Center, Macon	★ ★
Emma Lopez, Lawrenceville	★ ★ ★
Georgia Southern University Child Development Center, Statesboro	★ ★ ★
Haralson Head Start, Buchanan	★ ★ ★
Joshua House Early Care & Learning Center, Macon	★ ★ ★
Kids 'R Kids #35, Marietta	★ ★
Miss Daisy's Darlings Day Care Center, Tifton	★
Mrs. Rhonda's Stay 'N Play, LaGrange	★
New Odyssey for Children, Hoschton	★ ★ ★
Paulding County Head Start, Dallas	★ ★ ★
Paulding Head Start, Hiram	★ ★
Polk Head Start, Cedartown	★
Samuel L. Jones Child Care Center, Atlanta	★ ★
Sanctuary Child Learning And Development Center, Savannah	★ ★
South Richmond Head Start, Hephzibah	★ ★
Sweetwater Academy, Douglasville	★
The Kids Loft, Macon	★ ★
Victorious Kidz Academy, Douglasville	★



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, Savannah
First Congressional District

Susan Harper, Albany
Second Congressional District
(Secretary)

Kathy Howell, Carrollton

"This is great news for Georgia's youngest learners and their families," said DECAL Commissioner Amy Jacobs. "This grant will build on work already being done through the \$51.7 million dollar Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) awarded to Georgia in December 2013." Commissioner Jacobs said Georgia has research to demonstrate the positive impacts of our early childhood education programs - from infants to Pre-K - and a strong early education department...one of only three in the nation... that can utilize many "in-house" resources to ensure successful implementation of this grant.

"From the launch of Georgia's Early Education Empowerment Zones and Quality Rated program to our new Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards, professional development and nationally recognized Pre-K program, Georgia is raising academic standards and providing quality early education for the state's youngest learners," added Commissioner Jacobs.

Georgia's Quality Rated Meets Year-End Goal

With help from all across DECAL and external supporters, Georgia's Quality Rated has met its 2014 year-end goal of 1,755 Georgia child care programs participating in the statewide initiative that helps parents select quality early education programs in their communities. That record stood for a short time only before the 1,756th program joined about a half hour later.

On December 18, Kids World Academy in Mableton became the 1,755th provider participating in Quality Rated. Fast on its heels was the Easter Seals Child Development Center in Roswell. Over 400 programs have been rated with one, two, or three stars.

"This was the first key performance measure of Georgia's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant, and a critical milestone towards achieving our state's ultimate goal of 100% participation by all child care providers," said Kristin Bernhard, Deputy Commissioner for System Reform. "We wouldn't have hit this milestone without the hard work of DECAL employees across all divisions of the agency, particularly our child care licensing consultants. While this is a big achievement for Quality Rated, it's a reflection of the dedication of our entire agency."

Simply by participating in Quality Rated, programs receive free approved training, free technical assistance, and are eligible for a \$1,000 Materials Mini Grant. Star-rated programs receive generous bonus packages of classroom materials contributed by private philanthropic partners and are eligible to collect tiered bonuses in the state/federal reimbursements they receive from Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) Program, which provides subsidized child care for low income families.

Ratings are posted for public inspection at www.qualityrated.org and the DECAL website www.decals.gov.

"Members of the philanthropic community continue to demonstrate their support for quality early care and education; just recently the Goizueta Foundation and the Zeist Foundation have contributed an additional \$2 million to help us provide incentives to programs participating in Quality Rated," said DECAL Commissioner Amy Jacobs.

Quality Rated was formally launched by Governor Nathan Deal and DECAL in July 2013.

DECAL Priority:

Foster Organizational Excellence

DECAL Employees Improve Charitable Giving Over Previous Year

DECAL employees raised over \$9,000 for the 2014 State Charitable Contributions Program (SCCP), over \$1,500 more than in 2013. The SCCP is an annual opportunity for State of Georgia and University System employees to contribute to the charity of their choice through payroll deduction or a one-time donation. Employees can choose from over 1,000 charities certified to be responsible, effective, and upstanding.

In addition to employee contributions, DECAL held a variety of special events to raise money for the SCCP. This year's most popular event was the SLT Ice Bucket Challenge, raising \$530, followed closely by Penny Wars with \$520.90 raised. Jeans Week raised \$355, a Sundae Social raised \$150, and the Bizarre Bazaar raised \$135.50.

This year's SCCP at DECAL was supervised by members of the Employee Advisory Group.

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

*We are committed to nurturing
Georgia's youngest children,
keeping them safe and healthy,
and to enriching their lives.*

The Faces of DECAL

DECAL faces featured in the banner of this issue are (L-R) Linda Norwood, Candace Gilbert, Tammie Baldwin, Jennie Couture, Tammy Thompson, Vanessa Selewski, and Laura Wagner.

Special thanks to Human Resources Assistant Sabrina Henry. In photo, Henry (left) is shown with DECAL Commissioner Amy Jacobs.



DECALers Share New Year's Resolutions

"My resolution for 2015 is to bring the mindfulness lifestyle I have embraced to the work environment: Being positive, appreciative, supportive, and healthy." - Pam Bojo, Pre-K Field Operations Director

"My resolution is to strive to create an environment in which all our employees are energized, engaged, and excited about the work of the Agency. And world peace." - Craig Detweiler, Chief Information Officer

"My hope is that the DECAL training portal is up and running by July." - Deanna Hibbard, Pre-K Program Initiatives Director

"Ensure that every member of my team has seen the inside of the Georgia Capitol Building!" - Kristin Bernhard, Deputy Commissioner for System Reform

"My resolution is to successfully implement the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership grant which uses a shared services approach; Sheltering Arms and Quality Care for Children are "hubs" for supporting four learning centers and a group of Quality Rated family child care homes to deliver comprehensive Early Head Start services." - Carol Hartman, Director of Policy and System Reform

"I will explore ways to have early childcare as a line item in the state budget and increase the support of programs for children 0-3 in Georgia." - Janice Haker, Georgia Head Start Collaboration Director

"Achieve 1,000 Quality Rated programs." - Kristin Bernhard, Deputy Commissioner for System Reform

"Reduce the time-frame between the on-site Environment Rating Scale Observation and the award of the quality rating." - Denise Jenson, Quality Rated Assessor Manager

"Work to ensure that each and every Georgia child has an opportunity to fully participate in a high quality inclusive early childhood experience. Support our early childhood workforce so that they feel competent and confident to support the positive social and emotional development of all children." - Jennie Couture, Inclusion Manager

"To make more field visits throughout the state with our field staff." - Robin Stevens, Director of

Human Resources

"My resolution for 2015 is to help early childhood educators improve learning outcomes and school readiness by providing more training and resources on the GELDS." - Laura Evans, Instructional Learning Manager

"I resolve to make sure that every child care provider in the state is aware of Quality Rated and increase the number of families who ask about Quality Rated when they're choosing child care." - Pam Stevens, Quality Rated Director

"Reduce the number of emails we receive. Remember no good has ever come from hitting 'Reply All.'" - Susan Adams, Assistant Commissioner, Georgia's Pre-K Program and Instructional Supports

"My resolution for 2015 is to really take notice of what others bring to the table and then make a conscious effort to express appreciation and encouragement." - Jackie Shivers, Pre-K Director of Quality Support
