

# Decidedly DECAL

*Highlighting the Events That Shape Who We Are*



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## DECAL By the Numbers

**4,907** - Licensed child care programs in Georgia

**6,928** - Child care program visits thus far for FY2017

**80,723** - Four year olds enrolled in Georgia's Pre-K Program

**3,864** - Funded Georgia's Pre-K classes

**1,202** - Quality Rated programs in Georgia

**78,563,727** - CACFP meals served in FY2016

## Commissioner's Corner

*by Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs*



Dear DECAL Co-workers,

Happy New Year...and welcome to 2017! In last month's Decidedly DECAL, I mentioned that in this month's letter we would look ahead to some of what the department will be working toward in 2017. This department has been dynamic...growing...evolving...constantly changing ever since it was created in spring 1996 as the Office of School Readiness (OSR).

Some of the MAJOR growth spurts: 2004 when the Georgia General Assembly merged OSR, the child care licensing unit from the Department of Human Resources, and the Georgia Child Care Council to create the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL). 2012 when Governor Nathan Deal designated DECAL as the Lead Agency for the Child Care and Development Fund thereby moving the administration of the Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program to the department.

Our NEXT significant growth spurt...planned for 2017: completing the transfer of CAPS from DFCS to DECAL by moving the CAPS eligibility function to our department. The move will occur in phases with a scheduled completion date of October 31, 2017 (subject to change depending on factors such as space and telecommunications requirements). The eligibility move should begin as a pilot in DECAL's four Early Education Empowerment Zones (E3Zs) and in Douglas County in the spring of 2017. Similar moves in other parts of the state should occur later in the summer and fall.

Moving CAPS to DECAL will result in early childhood care and education programs, such as CAPS, Georgia's Pre-K Program, child nutrition, Quality Rated, child care licensing, and the Head Start State Collaboration, being housed under one roof, providing a more comprehensive approach to early child care and education in Georgia. The move also aligns with recent changes mandated by federal

## Quick Links

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## Decidedly DECAL CALi Quiz Winner

Georgia's Pre-K Program Consultant Valerie Coulton is the winner of this month's Decidedly DECAL CALi Quiz. She won two tickets to the College Football Hall of Fame. Valerie'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!

## January Birthdays



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

1 - Stacey Foston  
2 - Tu Bui  
5 - Kimberly Mitchell  
6 - Mark Dock  
7 - Kristin Bernhard  
9 - Tajha Harden  
9 - Sheryl Irwin  
10 - Phillip Jessup  
11 - Sherrie Mullis  
14 - Elisabetta Kasfir  
19- Sharon McPherson  
20 - Nicole Cook  
21 - Susan Breheny  
21 - Amy Jacobs  
21 - Margaret Pringle  
22 - Chad Paul

law. This transition will begin to shift the CAPS program from a public assistance program to an integral component of early education.

As you will read in this newsletter, Assistant Commissioner for Federal Programs Elisabetta Kasfir has named her new leadership team that will play an integral part in leading this transition. Interested in being a part of this new effort? Later this month DECAL CAPS positions will be posted on the DECAL website at <http://decal.ga.gov/BfIS/DecalJobs.aspx>. Hiring preference will be given to qualified applicants with current or previous CAPS work experience and to current DECAL employees. Hiring will be done in "waves" throughout the year.

We acknowledge that completing the transfer of this important program to DECAL is a major task that will succeed only with the collaborative efforts of all involved. To that end, we thank everyone from the respective departments/organizations for the thoughtful planning that has occurred and will continue. DECAL appreciates and takes seriously this opportunity to restructure, re-envision, and re-define CAPS for its integral role in early childhood education in Georgia.

Again, Happy New Year and thanks in advance for your efforts and contributions in making 2017 another banner year for DECAL!

Sincerely,

## New CAPS Leadership Team Announced

In July 2012, Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) Program officially transferred 10 employees responsible for administering the program from the Georgia Department of Human Services' (DHS) Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) to DECAL. Governor Nathan Deal directed the move as part of his FY2013 state budget. The move was originally proposed under DECAL's application for the \$51.7 million federal Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grant. CAPS employees moved into their new offices on the sixth floor of the Twin Towers on June 22, 2012.

Plans now call for transferring the eligibility function of CAPS to DECAL by October 2017.

"DECAL sees this as an opportunity to transform the CAPS program from traditional public assistance to becoming a part of the early education system...a program that offers scholarships to families with low incomes instead of financial assistance for child care," said Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs. "CAPS will support families as they navigate their children's early years, using family support field staff with specialized training."

For over a year now, a team of DHS and DECAL employees, including DFCS Director Bobby Cagle and Commissioner Jacobs, has been working to make the transition as efficient as possible. DECAL has contracted with the Atlanta consulting firm North Highland to manage the project.

24 - Christina Clayton  
26 - Leigh Ann Hendrix  
26 - Mary Jerrell  
28 - LaQuita Clark  
29 - Crystal Germany  
29 - Morgan Stahl  
30 - Rosheda Doe  
30 - Rhonda Parker  
31 - Laura Reid  
31 - Tanya Rowe

## Day in the Lives of Angela Butler and Liz Young

DECAL Human Resources Assistant Angela Butler is a Georgia native who grew up in southwest Atlanta - a Grady baby! She has worked for DECAL since 2010.

In her new job as HR assistant, she processes leave, audits timesheets, and works with new hire prep. Something she loves and looks forward to every day at her job is assisting others. If she were Commissioner for a day, she would do Sandra's job: be the receptionist!

Outside of work, she loves to travel, read, walk, and be outside - especially while camping! Her favorite motto is simply the golden rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

Liz Young, DECAL Director of Government Relations and Special Projects, also grew up in Georgia on St. Simon's Island. She has worked for DECAL just a year longer than Angela, since 2009.

Every day for her is different at DECAL. She works with a variety of issues and projects, covering most divisions. In fact, that's something she loves about working here; she loves that her expanse of experiences gives her "great perspective on the tremendous amount of work we do at DECAL," and she likes to see how everyone's work intertwines.

If Liz were Commissioner for a day, she would travel with CALi to visit classrooms, because "It's so much fun to see the kids smile and dance with her."

Outside of work, one of her biggest stress relievers is playing tennis. She also has a 13-year-old boy and a 17-year-old girl who keep her busy with everything from

Last month, Assistant Commissioner for Federal Programs Elisabetta Kasfir introduced her new CAPS leadership team:

- Rita Lang, Scholarship Administration Director, responsible for overseeing the eligibility function for the CAPS program.
- Laura Wagner, Family Support Director, responsible for co-leading the family support function of the CAPS program.
- Donna Johnson, Family Support Director, also responsible for co-leading the family support function of the CAPS program.
- Chris Linn, Program Administration Director, responsible for the CAPS program administration function, including: policy, data systems, and program integrity.
- Tamara Hall, Special Projects and Initiatives Director, responsible for managing special projects and initiatives within the Federal Programs division.

Kasfir said, "This new CAPS leadership team is a dynamic group of individuals who bring diverse backgrounds and experience to their new roles, and I am confident they will help the CAPS program become a strong component of the early education system. DECAL has the foundation and resources to transform CAPS into a program that best supports children, families, child care programs, and communities."

Plans call for completing the transfer of the CAPS program by transitioning the eligibility function to DECAL by October 2017, beginning this spring with a pilot project in four Early Education Empowerment Zones (E3Z) and in Douglas County, followed by similar transitions for the rest of the state in the summer and fall. Watch for updates each month in Decidedly DECAL.

Marvel comes to indie musicians!

One quote from her all-time favorite tennis player that is true both on and off the court is: "There's no way around the hard work. Embrace it." Roger Federer



*CAPS Leadership Team: Shown L-R are Elisabetta Kasfir, Donna Johnson, Rita Lang, Chris Linn, Laura Wagner, and Tamara Hall*

## Breaking News: Back to School For DECAL Employees

One consistent message heard loud and clear across the state during the recent All-Staff meetings was that our employees want to know more about the inner workings of DECAL. Our response: DECAL University.

DECAL University is a series of presentations, initially offered in-person and via webinar that will provide our employees an "inside look" at each of the programmatic areas and support functions within DECAL. During DECAL University, subject matter experts from our various program and support areas will give an in-depth view of what it means to work in their respective areas, giving participants a better appreciation and understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing their colleagues on a daily basis.



In addition to addressing the Internal Workforce objective of DECAL's 2017-2020 Strategic Plan, this initiative will provide a deeper understanding of the various facets of DECAL and will impart:

1. Insight into possible areas of overlap which could provide opportunities for collaboration and sharing of resources;





*Angela Butler on the job at DECAL*



*Liz Young with her children Will and Maggie*

## DECAL Leadership Team Members Share New Year's Resolutions

**Pam Stevens, Quality Rated Director:** "My resolution is to learn how to make the most of my new empty nester status. Looking ahead instead of looking back."

**Kristin Bernhard, Deputy Commissioner System Reform:**  
1. Keep at least one workspace in my office clutter free.

2. Appreciation of what our colleagues do every day and how those activities impact the department's overall mission, and;
3. Details to enable more effective responses to the needs of our clients.

### When does it start?

The kick-off for DECAL University will be January 12th at 12 pm. The first "class" will consist of an Overview of Child Care Services (CCS), CCS Applicant Services, and CCS Field Operations. Subsequent sessions will be offered approximately every two weeks. Updated information of dates and course content will be forthcoming.

### How will it work?

The participant will participate in the various sessions in-person or by webinar, or by watching a recording of the presentation at a time that fits into his/her schedule. Following each "class," the employee will complete an "assignment" and HR will record the completion on the employee's DECAL University transcript. Upon completing all classes, our "student" will receive a DECAL University diploma.

### How can I get involved?

The first session is scheduled for January 12th at 12 pm. You can register online to attend in person by selecting the following link:

[In person, Oak Conference Room, January 12th at 12 pm](#)

Or, you can register online to attend via webinar by selecting the following link:

[Via webinar, January 12th at 12 pm;](#)

### Can't make it to class?

Don't worry if you can't make it to class the day it is offered. Recordings of each session will be made available on the g: drive shortly after the actual live presentation.

With your enthusiasm and participation in this program, DECAL will also stand for Department (where) Everyone Cares About Learning!

2. Complete the application for a one-year no cost extension for our Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant to keep our projects funded through 12/31/2018.

**Dana Bond, CCS Southeast Regional Manager:** Mine is to travel more, surround myself with positive people, and increase savings.

**Christie Bearden, Legal Services Supervisor:** Meet my 13,000 steps per day goal.

**Ray Higgins, Deputy Commissioner for Finance and Administration:** Cardio at least three times a week!!!!

**Allison Setterlind, Head Start Collaboration Director:**  
1. Finish the scrapbooks for my kids before they are grown-ups!  
2. Focus my energy on the things I can control.

**Faith Duncan, Georgia's Pre-K Program Field Operations Director:**

1. Move more and eat healthier.
2. Make time to read more books.
3. Take time to enjoy my life and blessings.

**Let Us Hear  
From You!**

## Summer Food Summit Is This Month

DECAL will host our 3rd Annual Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) Summit on Thursday, January 19, 2017 and Friday, January 20, 2017 at the Loudermilk Conference Center in downtown Atlanta. The day-and-a-half long summit will provide information and resources to help potential new sponsors and experienced sponsors of the SFSP offer effective and efficient meal service during summer 2017.

The SFSP, funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), is administered in Georgia by DECAL. Eligible community-based organizations can apply to serve free, nutritious meals to children in low-income areas during the summer months. Over 900,000 Georgia school-aged children are eligible for free or reduced lunch during the school year. Through the SFSP, thousands of these children have access to free meals to fill the gap when they are not in school.



Falita Flowers, DECAL's Director of Nutrition Services, details the importance of the SFSP and the benefit of the summit. "Without this important food program, thousands of children and young people might not receive well-balanced meals during the summer months. There is a critical need for more eligible community-based organizations to serve as sponsors and provide nutritious meals to children when school is not in session. The 3rd Annual SFSP Summit will inform organizations about the SFSP and about how to provide this valuable resource to children in their communities."

*Falita Flowers*

Institutions that wish to participate in the SFSP as a sponsoring organization must be a public or private non-profit school, university, college, camp, unit of local government, National Youth Sports Program (NYSP) or private nonprofit organizations considered tax exempt by the Internal Revenue Service [501(c)3].

To learn more about the SFSP and the 3rd Annual SFSP Summit, contact Shani Drake, Marketing & Outreach Manager at [shani.drake@decalfga.gov](mailto:shani.drake@decalfga.gov) or (404) 656-3221.

## Board Member Spotlight: Kay Ford

Born and raised in Garden City, Ga., Board of Early Care and Learning Member Kay Ford currently serves as the chairman of BankSouth's advisory board for the Savannah market, where she further promotes the bank's commitment to serving the Savannah community. She was recently named the 2016 General Campaign Chairman for the United Way of the Coastal Empire.

The former president and CEO of SunTrust Bank, Savannah, Ford retired after serving 41 years at Suntrust where she held numerous senior level positions within retail banking and private wealth management, including the position of senior

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have for our agency?

We cannot read your **mind**.

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# ESP

Employee Suggestion Program



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*Kay Ford*

vice president of Private Wealth Management. She is a graduate of Leadership Savannah and Leadership Georgia and a member of the Finance Committee for the Catholic Diocese and the DECAL Board, representing Georgia's 1st congressional district.

Throughout her career, Ford has also served on a wide range of community-driven boards of directors including the United Way of the Coastal Empire; the Memorial Health Medical Center; the Savannah Fund for Excellence in Education; and St. Mary's Home.

Ford was an only child and was very close with her parents. Her mother lived with her before she passed away. She always told herself, "She got to kiss me goodnight for 18 years and I got to kiss her goodnight the last 3 years of her life. Not quite the tradeoff but close."

Ford and her husband, Bob, have three children: Poppy Brown and Jaime Miller, both of whom reside in Pooler, Ga., and their son, Bobby Ford, who is currently stationed in Hawaii. Together, they have six wonderful grandchildren.

Ford enjoys boating, fishing, and the beach. She loves traveling and spending time with her grandchildren, because she was very career focused when her children were small, and she hopes to make that time up with the grandchildren. She likes fast cars, good friends, Georgia football, and a few swings around the dance floor!

• **SAVE THE DATE** •

**THURSDAY, JANUARY 19, 2017**

*and*

**FRIDAY, JANUARY 20, 2017**

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

PRESENTS

*The 3rd Annual*  
**SFSP Summit**

Expanding the SFSP in Georgia to Eliminate Childhood Hunger

*at*

**The Loudermilk Conference Center**  
40 Courtland Street, NE • Atlanta, GA • 30303

**MORE DETAILS TO FOLLOW!**

Direct all questions to Shani Drake, Nutrition Services  
Marketing & Outreach Manager, at [shani.drake@dec.al.ga.gov](mailto:shani.drake@dec.al.ga.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  
(Vice Chair)



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

- ★ Wesley Chapel Child Care, Decatur
- ★★ Growing Minds Christian Academy, Fayetteville
- ★★ New Beginnings Child Development Center II, Atlanta
- ★★ Little Angels Child Development Center Inc., Columbus
- ★★ Sweet Peas Day Care, Albany
- ★★★ Candi C. Geter, Newnan
- ★ Grannies' Playcare Center, Kingsland
- ★ Treasure's Academy, Rock Spring
- ★ Maria E. Okwara, Norcross
- ★ All My KIDZ Academy LLC, Ellenwood
- ★★ Doreen's Nursery School Inc., Savannah
- ★★ Jeannette A. Anderson, Townsend
- ★★ Discovery Montessori School, Waycross
- ★ Early Start Learning Center, Decatur
- ★★★ Julia Bardsley, Fort Gordon
- ★ Lacora Y. Thomas, Savannah
- ★★ Cassandra E. Harris, Savannah
- ★★ Noah's Ark Child Care & Learning Center, Thomaston
- ★★ Heaven's Rainbow Learning Center LLC, Athens
- ★ Krayons Academy 2, Kingsland
- ★★★ Shaleah J. Zambino, Lilburn

Kathy Howell, Carrollton  
Third Congressional District

Phil Davis, Stone Mountain  
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  
(Chair)

Jerri Kropp, Statesboro  
Twelfth Congressional District

Melissa Boekhaus, MD., Mableton  
Thirteenth Congressional District

Tangela Johnson, Cohutta  
Fourteenth Congressional District

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### The Faces of DECAL

*DECAL faces featured in the banner of this issue are (L-R) Santeria Brown, Connie Fisher, Donna Johnson, Allison Setterlind, Susan Winston, Jahmeka Jones, and Kathryn Cosby.*

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# CONGRATULATIONS!!!

TO OUR 1,200 QUALITY RATED PROVIDER!



NOAH'S ARK CHILD CARE & LEARNING CENTER  
THOMASTON, GEORGIA

