

# Decidedly DECAL

*Highlighting the Events That Shape Who We Are*



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## DECAL By the Numbers

**1,087** - Georgia child care programs now Quality Rated

**128** - Classrooms in Summer Transition Program

**47** - Counties with Summer Transition Programs

**16** - Counties with Summer Food Service Program Mobile Meal Stops

**214** - Stops made by SFSP Mobile Meals in Georgia

**10,000+** - Dollars contributed by DECAL employees to 2015-2016 SCCP campaign

**1,549** - Registrants who have logged into new GaPDS since 6/27/16 launch

**114** - New Registrant accounts created on GaPDS since 6/27/16 launch

## Commissioner's Corner

*by Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs*

Dear DECAL Staff,

I've heard of people having a Christmas in July party. In fact, a friend of mine once gave another friend a Christmas in July wedding shower. But I've never heard of anyone celebrating New Years in July. Well, it dawned on me recently that on July 1, we begin a New Year...the first day of State Fiscal Year 2017.

Actually, here at DECAL we annually experience three New Years: January 1, the beginning of the new calendar year; July 1, the beginning of the new state fiscal year; and October 1, the beginning of the new federal fiscal year.

And each occasion provides us an opportunity to reflect on the accomplishments of the past year in our respective programs/units and to look forward to the future. I am excited as I think about some of the things we have to look forward to in SFY2017:

- Increased CAPS rates for families and providers
- New enforcement/compliance roll out for CCS
- Applying for additional Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership slots
- Recognizing the first Pre-K Teachers of the Year
- New compensation model for Pre-K teachers and increase for assistant teachers
- Results from next phase of the Pre-K longitudinal study
- Another All Staff meeting
- Implementation of our new strategic plan
- Continue preparing for the CAPS eligibility transition
- Getting closer to our goal of 100% participation in Quality Rated

Each of these...and the many other...events that will occur in SFY2017 aligns with our department's



## Quick Links

[DECAL on Facebook](#)

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## July Birthdays



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

- 1 - Jackqueline Lachanda Frederick
- 2 - Morlinda Dawson
- 5 - Glen Clardy
- 7 - Zara Handsford
- 8 - Allison Haley Carwile
- 8 - Laura Wagner
- 9 - Nakilia McCray
- 9 - Darlene Sims
- 9 - Robin Stevens
- 9 - James White
- 11 - Candace Gilbert
- 11 - Wakisha Newton
- 12 - Daphne Hanna
- 13 - Brandy Locchetta
- 13 - Jennifer Underwood
- 14 - Connie Boatright
- 14 - Beverly Browning
- 14 - Sonya Price
- 14 - Marsha Ruiz-Crosby
- 16 - Adrienne Hamlin
- 16 - Kimberly Pratt
- 17 - Gregory Brown
- 17 - Stephine Newberry
- 19 - Jennie Couture
- 20 - Jackie Shivers
- 21 - Jacquice Jones
- 23 - Carol Hartman
- 23 - Bridgette Merrett
- 25 - Pam Stevens
- 28 - Christie Bearden
- 28 - Shannon Curtis
- 28 - Glenda Davis
- 28 - Arielle Deadwyler
- 28 - Rhonda Gunn
- 30 - Demetria Joyce
- 31 - Judy Carter

mission and vision and supports our work on behalf of children, families, and child care providers in our state. And none of these would be possible without each of us faithfully fulfilling our individual roles day in and day out. Thank you.

I hope you've taken my advice from last month's Decidedly DECAL about work-life balance and making time for yourself and your family this summer. If not, I hope you're planning to do so as soon as possible, so you can begin SFY2017 refreshed, energized, and ready to go.

Happy New Year,

## School Is IN for Georgia Pre-K's Summer Transition Program



For the seventh year, Georgia's Pre-K Program is offering a six-week Summer Transition Program (STP) for rising kindergartners who did not attend Georgia's Pre-K or Head Start, or attended but need additional support before entering kindergarten next fall. The program, targeting children whose families meet 85% of the state median income, is currently being offered in 128 classrooms located in 47 counties.

Funding was prioritized based on several factors including poverty level, Pre-K waiting lists, and local unemployment rates. Participating programs were required to be in compliance with other DECAL programs, such as Child Care Services, CAPS, Nutrition, and Audits and Compliance. The response from providers and parents has been great.

"We are pleased and proud to offer Bright from the Start's Summer Transition Program each year," said Julie Barnett with KinderCare Learning Centers. "This program targets some of Georgia's neediest students and helps give them a boost before they begin kindergarten. The children make remarkable progress in their language and self-help skills but also their confidence level."

"We provide children with quality classroom experiences, books, and kindergarten supplies," Barnett added. "The parents receive training on topics to help prepare them for kindergarten as well."

In 42 classrooms across the state, DECAL is also offering a Rising Pre-K (RPK) Summer Transition Program. This six-week intensive academic program is designed to support children registered to attend Georgia's Pre-K or Head Start in the fall whose home language is Spanish. Programs offering the Rising Pre-K STP are selected by DECAL.

"Our students are here ready to work," said Joyce Hudson with the Bartow County Public Schools. "At our first parent meeting, the parents expressed how pleased they were with the program already." The Summer Transition Program has been evaluated by independent researchers with results indicating strong impacts for the children served -- especially in crucial language and literacy skills.

## DECAL and City of Atlanta Launch "Mobile Meals"

31 - Patty Malone  
 31 - Bentley Ponder  
 31 - Jacquelyn Sims

## Day in the Life of Emily Smith

Emily Smith began working as DECAL's Family Engagement Coordinator on January 19, 2016 and currently oversees the 21 Family Engagement Community Grants awarded by DECAL to Family Connection Partnerships across the state.

"Most of my day is spent working on grant agreements and answering any questions the grantees may have," she said. "I also spend time looking at what we are currently doing in family engagement in Georgia and how we can improve upon our family engagement practices."

Smith's responsibilities include the following:

- Developing and maintaining current resources on supporting parent, family, and community engagement in early learning and development programs;
- Providing input to policy development to ensure that parent, family, and community engagement principles are incorporated;
- Supporting the family engagement standard in Quality Rated by providing training, technical assistance, and resources to early care and education teachers, directors and others; and
- Developing training modules, webinars, podcasts, and other tools targeted to child care providers, Pre-K teachers, local school systems, and others on parent, family, and community engagement strategies and principles.

If given the opportunity to serve as DECAL Commissioner for one day, Smith said she would hold family and community events across the state to educate families, child care providers, and the community at large about the importance of family engagement in early childhood education.

Her favorite quote illustrates her commitment to family engagement. It is from Joyce L. Frett: "We cannot pretend to work for the best interests of children while ignoring the needs of their parents."

Born and raised in Georgia, Smith has a B.S. degree in Child and Family Development from Georgia Southern University.

"I have spent the last 10 years in Tennessee first getting my M.A.R. in Church History from Emmanuel Christian Seminary and then working with child care providers, families, and the community on Family Engagement in Early Childhood Education in East Tennessee," she said. "I also spent two years as an assessor for Tennessee's Quality Rating and Improvement System. I enjoyed my time in Tennessee but am excited to

DECAL joined Georgia's First Lady Sandra Deal and Candace L. Byrd, Esq., Chief of Staff to Mayor Kasim Reed, last week at the city's Metropolitan Library to launch a new mobile meals program, part of the statewide Summer Food Service Program. The SFSP is a nutrition program that provides children 18 and under (and some eligible adults) free, nutritious meals during the summer months when school is not in session. The SFSP, funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, is administered in Georgia by DECAL. The City of Atlanta is a sponsoring organization of the program in the metro Atlanta area.



Transportation is often a barrier that prevents children from benefiting from these needed resources. This year the City of Atlanta will experiment with a mobile meals model to ensure more children in metro Atlanta have access to these meals. "Ensuring Atlanta's young people are safe and have access to essential services year round is one of my top priorities," said Mayor Kasim Reed. "When children are hungry, they lose out on key educational opportunities and can fall behind their peers. I want every young person in the City of Atlanta, no matter their family situation or their zip code, to have access to a high-quality education and a bright future."

Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs said, "Over one million children in Georgia rely on free and reduced-price breakfast and lunch during the school year. However, during the summer only about 15% of those same children participate in summer meals. And one of the reasons is a lack of transportation. Through their Lunchtime Locomotive, the City of Atlanta is eliminating one barrier to accessing summer meals - and doing so in an innovative way."

Pictured below are DECAL mascot CALi and Georgia's First Lady Sandra with children at Atlanta's Metropolitan Library welcoming the Lunchtime Locomotive.



be back in Georgia closer to my family and continuing my work with family engagement here."

When not working, Smith (pictured below) enjoys reading, taking walks with her dog, Midnight, and spending time with her two nieces, Clara and Rose.



### New Georgia Professional Development System Goes Live

On Monday, June 27, 2016, the Georgia Professional Development System (GaPDS) went live.

DECAL's mission is to enhance children's early education experience and promote their academic, social-emotional, and physical development in partnership with parents, communities, the early care and education industry, and stakeholders. To support this commitment, DECAL has developed the GaPDS, a website where early care and learning professionals can create and maintain a GaPDS Profile, as well as search and register for DECAL trainings. If a user has a GaPDS Profile, they will automatically receive credit for DECAL trainings, with no need to keep track of paper certificates. Users can use their profile to keep track of training hours, credentials, certifications, uploaded certificates for non-DECAL trainings, and employment history - all in one location. GaPDS replaced the Professional Development Registry (PDR). A PDS number is the same as a former PDR number.

THE GaPDS IS UP AND RUNNING!

CLICK HERE to enroll now

**iGaPDS**  
Georgia Professional Development System for Early Childhood Educators

Create a GaPDS profile between now and July 31!

You'll be entered into a drawing to win a bag of office supplies, a GELDS Teacher Toolbox and a GELDS Family Engagement packet.

The winner will be drawn at random on August 1.

You've enrolled GREAT! Then you're already entered in the contest.

Follow us: [Facebook icon] [Twitter icon] [LinkedIn icon]

BRIGHT START  
Georgia Department of Early Childhood

[Click here to access GaPDS](#)

Special thanks to the development and support team: Craig Detweiler, Connie Fisher, Traci Bronner,

## Summer Food Service Program Kicks off in Decatur

Georgia's First Lady Sandra Deal and Freddie the Falcon helped DECAL kick off the Summer Food Service Program in Decatur with a special event held June 16 at Mason Mill Park.



## DECAL Recognized for Charitable Contributions by Employees

DECAL Deputy Commissioner for Finance and Administration Ray Higgins and E3Z Subsidy Co-pay Business Operations Specialist Taijha Harden recently attended the State Charitable Contributions Program 2015-2016 Annual Campaign Awards Ceremony at the Georgia Railroad Freight Depot. At the ceremony, DECAL was awarded the Commissioner's Award presented to the runners-up for highest contribution per employee population. DECAL employees contributed over \$10,000 for the 2015-2016 SCCP campaign.

Mike Chandler, Prashanth Podduturi, Bal Thapa, Sunil Gavini, Paul Ominde, Crystal Hoffman, Christi Moore, Micca Burris, Gary Amos, Alisia Pickett, and Shannon Johnson. Also, thank you to all of the divisions that helped with input, testing, and entering data.

For GaPDS Support, please call 404-267-2760.

Members of the development and support team are pictured below.



## "We Care, Child Care" Challenge Returns

From teaching shapes and colors to making boo-boos better, child care programs throughout Georgia play a critical and necessary role in a child's life. Within these four walls, the building blocks of education begin for a lifelong learner to blossom and grow. While we may not realize it on a day-to-day basis, child care teachers and staff have a lasting impression on the future minds of Georgia and instill a desire for higher education that leads them down the path towards college.

This desire will be the driving force behind the all-night study sessions and final exams that will ultimately be exchanged for a college degree; however, that desire can be hindered by the cost of a diploma. The state of Georgia, along with the help of child care centers, wants to help place families on the path towards college and a bright future with the Path2College 529 Plan - Georgia's official college savings plan.

To encourage families to plan for college, DECAL is excited to announce a partnership with the Path2College 529 Plan - the "We Care, Child Care Challenge." This partnership is designed to encourage Georgia families to plan for the cost of their loved ones' college education. As a part of the challenge, child care facilities throughout Georgia will have the chance to win one of three \$529 checks towards their child care program. One child care program from each region of Georgia (North Georgia, Metro-Atlanta, and South Georgia) will win. Will your child care program be the winner of



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You know that great idea you have for our agency?

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**Employee Suggestion Program**



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this challenge?

To participate, child care programs should fill out a form at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/wecare529> where they can sign up to promote college savings by sending an email to their child care program parents about a special sweepstakes between July 1 - August 1, 2016. Additionally, the students will have a chance to win \$1,529 towards a Path2College 529 account by visiting [www.WeCare529.com](http://www.WeCare529.com) starting July 1. Their future is looking bright with the Path2College 529 Plan.

Please encourage the child care programs you visit to participate in this challenge.

## DIY Summer School

Check back daily for tips on preventing summer brain drain.



[fb.com/brightfromthestart](http://fb.com/brightfromthestart)

## 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  
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(Secretary)

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Second Congressional District  
(Vice Chair)

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Third Congressional District

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Jerri Kropp, Statesboro  
Twelfth Congressional District

Vacant  
Thirteenth Congressional District

Tangela Johnson, Cohutta  
Fourteenth Congressional District

## The Faces of DECAL

*DECAL faces featured in the banner of this issue are (L-R) Arielle Deadwyler, Rhianna Clark, Michelle Clark, Nicole Cook, Gary Amos, Ray Higgins, and Elizabeth Smith.*

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