

# Decidedly DECAL

*Highlighting the Events That Shape Who We Are*



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## DECAL By the Numbers

- 4,664** - Licensed child care programs in Georgia
- 1,638** - Quality Rated child care programs in Georgia
- 83,267** - Four year olds enrolled in Georgia's Pre-K Program
- 211** - Classroom visits for 2018 Georgia Pre-K Week
- 1,780** - Entries in most recent "We Care, Child Care" Sweepstakes

## Commissioner's Corner

*by Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs*



Dear DECAL Co-workers,

As I write this letter, I've attended two of this fall's staff meetings. By the time you read this, I will have attended three. At each of these meetings, I've heard a presentation that has caused me to think profoundly about a quality I believe is vitally crucial as we work together on behalf of children and families...and as we live and function in our own families, communities, state, country, and world.

That presentation is all about RESPECT.

The dictionary defines respect as "...recognizing, appreciating, esteeming the worth of a person or thing." Of course, the presentation at the regional meetings deals specifically with respect in the workplace...and making us aware of how respect is shown...or not...as we work day in and day out in the Atlanta offices or in our regions - with our co-workers, our customers, our stakeholders, providers, sponsors, etc.

But as I've listened to the presenters at each session, I've come to realize that this *recognizing, appreciating, and esteeming the worth of others* is just as...if not more...important and necessary OUTSIDE our office. It applies to every aspect of my life.

If you've already attended a fall staff meeting, I hope you (we) take to heart and apply what we've learned about showing respect. If you haven't attended one yet, I encourage you to pay close attention to the session that presents a perspective on a serious topic in a different and entertaining way.

As we observe a time of national Thanksgiving in November and celebrate a holiday in December (or

**12,015** - LIKES on DECAL's Facebook Page  
**8** - Episodes of DECAL Download podcast  
**95,849** - Georgia Professional Development System (GaPDS) users  
**11,208** - Scholarships awarded through DECAL Scholars  
**62** - Certified Professional Learning Community (PLC) facilitators  
**643** - Bright from the Start approved trainers

## Follow DECAL on Social Media

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## Halloween Contest Winners



Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs congratulates our Halloween Costume Winners: (L-R) Second Place Ebony Bergen, Brittney Estrella, and Autumn Matthews as Alvin and the Chipmunks; Commissioner Jacobs; First Place Darien Watson as Steve Urkel; and Third Place Danielle Williams as 80's Oprah.

## Listen to the Latest DECAL Download

DECAL Download is a fun new way for employees and friends of DECAL to stay informed on everything happening here at the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs will talk with guests from inside and outside our

not, according to your personal tradition), I will continue to be thankful for you and the work we do as a department. In the four+ years I've been DECAL commissioner, I've grown to respect and appreciate the gifts and skills you all bring to the table.

And I hope between now and 2019 you enjoy special time with your families, friends, and yourselves.

Gratefully,

Learn more about Commissioner Jacobs on this edition of [DECAL Download](#).

## Kristin Bernhard Shares What It Means to Be a 2018 Ascend Fellow



*Kristin Bernhard*

Kristin Bernhard, Deputy Commissioner for System Reform, is among 20 leaders recently selected by the Aspen Institute to be a part of their Ascend Fellows for the Class of 2018. The program is a national competitive fellowship, for which people from across the country and from a variety of fields are invited to apply.

The Aspen Institute is a non-partisan think tank based in Washington, D.C. but with campuses around the world. The institution was founded to bring leaders together to collaborate, coordinate, innovate, and help make the world a better place. Aspen has numerous policy programs, including Ascend, which focuses on ideas and collaborations that move children and their parents toward educational success and economic security. Ascend utilizes two-generation strategies addressing the needs of children and the adults in their lives together.

One of the main focuses of Ascend is leadership development, so every two years the Institute selects a class of fellows to develop professionally and to connect with each other on a variety of issues. Each fellow has a different way of tackling two-generation work. For example, a fellow from New York City has a role similar to Bernhard's in an organization like DECAL but with a city focus.

"I'm thrilled to join this impressive cohort of leaders advancing strategies to lift children and their families together," said Bernhard. "I look forward to bringing back knowledge to inform Georgia's own two-generation efforts. We know this approach will help more families in Georgia access opportunity and achieve economic self-sufficiency."

The kick off was held October 16 in Aspen, Colorado at the Aspen Institute. Over the next 18 months, Bernhard will spend time with the other fellows learning and discussing what each person is working on to strengthen their work. They will also develop action plans for what they want to accomplish during their time as Ascend Fellows.

"The goal of my participation will be to strengthen and support our agency's existing two-generation work that began as part of the Parents and Children Thriving Together (PACTT) grant," said

agency, and then take a question from one of our team at the Water Cooler, a feature we think everyone will enjoy. Each episode will run 15-20 minutes. Follow the link below to our first episode.

You can find DECAL Download on Apple Podcasts, Google Play, Spotify, Overcast, and wherever you find your podcasts.

Please send questions or suggestions for future episodes to [decaldownload@decals.ga.gov](mailto:decaldownload@decals.ga.gov).

Download here: <https://www.buzzsprout.com/211637>

## Pam Stevens Named Deputy Commissioner of Child Care Services

Pam Stevens has been named Deputy Commissioner of Child Care Services effective August 16, 2018. She replaces Kristie Lewis who, after 17 years with DECAL, left recently to join a national consulting firm providing training, technical assistance, and other support to child care entities in the northeast United States.

"Pam has worked in the early education field for over 30 years as a teacher, child care director, inclusion coordinator, parent educator, behavior specialist, and most recently, managing the development and implementation of Quality Rated," said DECAL Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs. "CCS is a high functioning division at DECAL and performs all duties with the highest standards and customer service. Working with Pam, I am confident that CCS will continue to excel and move DECAL forward."

Learn more on this edition of [DECAL Download](#).



*Pam Stevens*

Bernhard.

Two years ago, Georgia was awarded a \$90,000 PACTT grant from the National Governors Association and the Center for Law and Social Policy to launch a two-generation policy. The goals of this grant have been accomplished. Since then DECAL has been working with the Technical College System of Georgia and the University System of Georgia to support parents pursuing associate's and bachelor's degrees and certificates to acquire skills and credentials that help them get a job paying a living wage.

"One of the things I'm really excited about is the other people in this fellowship class. I'm hoping some of them can come here to share what they're working on in their state or city," Bernhard said.

## DECAL Launching Early Education Community Partnership Initiatives Statewide

DECAL is launching an Early Education Community Partnership initiative in each of its six regions to spark new, local efforts to improve and better coordinate a system of supports for children from birth to age 8. The statewide initiative expands the work that began four years ago in areas known as Early Education Empowerment Zones or E3Zs.

E3Zs were targeted regions of Georgia that agreed to work with DECAL and other state agencies to pilot early education system reform initiatives to increase the quality of and access to early care and learning options and to foster partnerships to support better outcomes for young children. The E3Zs were a part of DECAL's Race to the Top: Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) federal grant, which ends this year.

To support, sustain, and expand the work done in the E3Zs, System Reform is creating a new unit -- Early Education Community Partnership Regions -- to focus on building better relationships with communities across the state around early education. A coordinator will be assigned to each of DECAL's six regions. They will work with community partners to coordinate the delivery of state and local services for young children and families; to support and seek to improve the quality of child care settings; to provide opportunities for conversations about access to high-quality child care; to work with community stakeholders to align early childhood systems for children ages birth to 8; and to create public awareness of early education services.

"We are excited about working with local leaders to empower their communities to support early education," said Jill O'Meara, Early Education Community Partnership Manager. "There are a lot of great organizations and initiatives for education already in place in these regions, and we want to support those and ensure that the early education voice is at the table."

The Early Education Community Partnership team is pictured below: (L-R) : Bridgette Washington (Central West), Kati Cosby (South East), Clayton Adams (North East), Jill O'Meara (Manager), Kristin Bernhard (Deputy Commissioner for System Reform), Glenda Davis-Canteen (North West), Audrienne Smith (Central East), and Edward Rowell (South West). Not shown is Laura Wagner (Director of Quality Rated Policy and Partnerships).

## Sign of the Times

Coming soon to a Quality Rated program near you...new signs thanks to a generous grant from the United Way of Greater Atlanta with support from the Joseph B. Whitehead Foundation. Pictured with the new sign are Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs and Carrie Ashbee, Executive Director for the Georgia Foundation for Early Care + Learning.



## Commissioner Presenting Spirit of DECAL Awards

This fall we are recognizing our DECAL colleagues in the third annual Commissioner's Spirit of DECAL Awards. These awards are presented at our Regional and Capitol Hill staff meetings to DECAL employees who consistently embody and model DECAL's values in an exemplary way. Employees are nominated by their peers. Nominations are scored by DECAL's Employee Advisory Group and, based on that scoring, final winners are determined by Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs.

DECAL values are:

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



DECAL Regions





*Danielle Williams*

## Commissioner Presents Golden Radish and Baby Golden Radish Awards

Eighty-four of Georgia's 181 school districts received recognition for Farm-to-School Program excellence at the Fifth Annual Golden Radish Awards at the Georgia Freight Depot. These districts served more than 1.3 million students a whopping 109 million school meals with locally grown food. They also taught more than 61,000 curriculum-based lessons incorporating food and agriculture.

The Golden Radish Awards honor Georgia school districts for best practices in Farm-to-School Programs. Best practices include local food procurement, exposing students to new foods through taste tests, and incorporating cooking and gardening activities into class curriculums. This year, the Golden Radish Partners are Georgia Organics, Georgia Department of Agriculture, Georgia Department of Education, Georgia Department of Public Health, UGA Extension Service, and DECAL.

Pictured below are (L-R back row): Rian Ringsrud, Candace Thigpen, Luetricia Billingsley, Ben Appling, Charlene Godfrey, Shannon Goff, Porsche Ewen, Robyn Parham, Victoria Thomas, Grushan Robinson. (L-R front row): Sonya James-Cole, Sonija Bacon, Tabitha Moreland, Valerie Coulton, Kate Rapp, Deidrea Thompson, Aleisha Golden, Lakeisha Robinson, Shonda Franklin, Meggan Hemans-Reese, Tamika Boone, and Earlene Reynolds.



## Georgia Foundation for Early Care + Learning Hosts Inaugural Event

On October 20, the Georgia Foundation for Early Care + Learning hosted the inaugural Moonlight Through the Pines: A Singer Songwriters Event at Lightwood Plantation located in Haddock, Georgia. Governor Nathan Deal and First Lady Sandra Deal joined more than 120 guests for a magical evening featuring performances by three nationally recognized songwriters, culinary delights presented by five of Atlanta's renowned chefs, and a live auction filled with vacations, rare libations, and artwork commissioned specifically for the event. All funds raised go directly to early education initiatives supported by DECAL and the Foundation. Thank you to all DECAL volunteers and attendees for making the night a huge success!

Learn more about the Foundation on this edition of [DECAL Download](#).

DECAL Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs presented the inaugural Baby Golden Radish Award to the Bleckley County School District for creating an innovative and exemplary Farm-to-Early Care and Education Program that advances the learning and development of its Pre-K and Head Start students.



*Congratulations to the Bleckley County School District for earning the Baby Golden Radish Award!*

## State and Local Leaders Celebrate Georgia Pre-K Week by Visiting Pre-K Centers

Georgia's Pre-K Program is now in its 26th year, and hundreds of state and local leaders celebrated by reading to the state's youngest learners during the annual Georgia Pre-K Week observed October 1-5.

The lottery-funded Georgia's Pre-K Program was launched in 1992 by Governor Zell Miller as a pilot program serving 750 four year olds. Since then, the program has laid a solid foundation for academic excellence and future success in the lives of approximately 1.6 million children.



Now in its eighth year, Georgia Pre-K Week is coordinated by Voices for Georgia's Children, a policy and advocacy non-profit organization. The goal of Pre-K week is to emphasize the importance of quality early childhood education by providing opportunities for leaders to engage with Pre-K classrooms in local communities.

Countless state, business, and community leaders visited Pre-K centers around the state the first week of October to witness early learning in action. Nearly three out of every four state legislators, and nearly half of Georgia's congressional delegation have participated in the event since it began in 2010.

"We are grateful to see Georgia's state and local leaders celebrate Georgia's Pre-K Program," said Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs. "By participating in Pre-K week activities, our leaders show parents and the public that they value quality early education and its impact on students, families, and our state."

Celebrating Georgia Pre-K Week isn't limited to the first week of October. Thursday, October 25, 2018, was a very special day as First Lady Sandra Deal was joined by former First Lady Shirley Miller, wife of the late Senator and Governor Zell Miller, along with her grandson Bryan Miller, CEO of the Zell Miller Foundation. They visited Dahlonaga Country Day Academy, owned by Heather and Wes Chambers. The Chambers are part of the inaugural class of the Zell Miller Leadership Institute.

Mrs. Miller read "The Little Engine That Could," one of her husband's favorites. Mrs. Deal read "Rainbow Fish."

Mrs. Miller reminisced about the first time she and Mrs. Deal met. It was at a chicken pie fund raiser at the elementary school Mrs. Deal's children attended over 40 years ago. Pictured below are Mrs. Deal (L) and Mrs. Miller (R).

Congratulations to the 2018-2019 Georgia's Pre-K Program Teachers of the Year. They are Becky Thomas-Haden from Mulberry Creek Elementary School in Cataula (top photo), and Stephanie Westhafer from Georgia Kids Academy in Hoschton (bottom photo).





Learn more about Georgia Pre-K Week on this edition of [DECAL Download](#).

## Board of Early Care and Learning

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

### Board of Early Care and Learning

Vacant  
First Congressional District

Susan Harper, Albany  
Second Congressional District  
(Chair)

Kathy Howell, Carrollton  
Third Congressional District  
(Secretary)

Phil Davis, Stone Mountain  
Fourth Congressional District

Carlene Talton, Decatur  
Fifth Congressional District

Vacant  
Sixth Congressional District

Vacant  
Seventh Congressional District



## Person on the Street

What's your favorite Thanksgiving dish or tradition?



### **Leslie Truman, Nutrition Services Administrative Assistant**

When my siblings and I were kids, early on Thanksgiving morning we would pack up and drive down to my grandparents' home in Northeast Oklahoma on Grand Lake. To do this we would get up extra early to make the four-hour drive from Kansas City. To wake us up, my Dad would sing "Over the River and through the Woods" as loud as he could. Dad had a great voice; however, at that time of the morning it was VERY annoying and funny at the same time. I still sing that on Thanksgiving morning although my cats don't seem to appreciate it.

### **Rochelle Holmes, CAPS Family Support Consultant**

My favorite Thanksgiving tradition is getting everyone together. We vote on the next year's Thanksgiving gathering the year before; we have traveled to Delaware, Tennessee, or wherever the poll takes us. The larger our family becomes the more spread out (over the country)

Luann Purcell, Ed.D., Warner Robins  
Eighth Congressional District

Sheri Hooper, Gainesville  
Ninth Congressional District

Vacant  
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

**Watch on POLAR**



**Let Us Hear  
From You!**



we get. It is so good just to get together!



**Teja Nedunuri, IT Application Developer**  
My favorite Thanksgiving dish is sweet potato casserole.



**Lisa Rambhajan, Finance and Budget Administrative and Facilities Coordinator**  
My favorite dish is sweet potato soufflé, and since my birthday is in November, on Thanksgiving we eat birthday cake instead of the traditional deserts.



**Sylvia Boykin, Nutrition Services Training Coordinator**  
My favorite Thanksgiving dish is turkey cranberry quesadillas.



**Rita Lang, Scholarship Administration Director**  
As my birthday typically falls the same week as Thanksgiving, my favorite tradition is celebrating my birthday with the state holiday. I claim the day after Thanksgiving, the state holiday, as the state's gift to me for my birthday.

## Employee Suggestion Program

ideas?

Visit the Virtual  
Suggestion Box now!

Sign up for DECAL text messages by  
texting DECAL to 474747!

### The Faces of DECAL

DECAL faces featured in the banner of this issue are (L-R) Brittney Estrella, Allison Morrison, Quandra Collins, Robin Currie, Sarah Tinsley, Demetria Joyce, and Kate Rapp.



#### Chasity Baugh, Quality Rated Subsidy Analyst

My favorite Thanksgiving tradition is when my family and I head out to the farm to go skeet shooting. When we are finished, we all take our best dish to my mother-in-law's house where the smoked turkey is waiting, and afterwards some of us play board games while others nap.



#### Allison Setterlind, Head Start Collaboration Director

My mother is a proud (and rare) pancreatic cancer survivor. Her favorite holiday is Thanksgiving, and she truly counts her blessings with each passing cancer-free year. I love that SHE loves Thanksgiving so much. She wakes me up before the sun to start the turkey. We drink coffee and watch the Macy's parade while the kids compete over who can peel the most potatoes for Nana. So I guess my favorite tradition is being with my mother.



#### Shantreze Anderson, Quality Rated Subsidy Analyst

My favorite Thanksgiving dish is sweet potato cobbler.



#### Kay Pollard, Pre-K Field Operations Consultant

My favorite Thanksgiving dish is homemade sweet potato pie.