

# Decidedly DECAL

Highlighting the Events That Shape Who We Are



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## DECAL By the Numbers

**1,368,650** - Georgia's Pre-K slots since 1992

**\$314,300,032** - Georgia Lottery funds for Pre-K in FY 2015

**4** - Early Education Empowerment Zones

**370,000** - Licensed capacity for Georgia child care programs

**2,795** - LIKES for DECAL Facebook Page

**1,024** - Followers to DECAL Twitter Page

**17,500** - Criminal background checks processed by DECAL since January 1, 2014

**25,749** - Georgia children served by Head Start



## Quick Links

[DECAL on Facebook](#)

[DECAL on Twitter](#)

[DECAL on Instagram](#)

## Commissioner's Corner

by Interim Commissioner Amy Jacobs

Dear Fellow DECALers,

I continue to be amazed at the scope, breadth, depth, and pace of the work we do. In fact, I compare joining this agency, like I did in mid-June of this year, to jumping on a moving merry-go-round at the fair...it didn't stop for me to climb on nor does it ever really stop. Some of our work we do year-after-year (like Pre-K, CACFP and Summer Food, licensing visits, etc.); some of it is new and sometimes unexpected (like Quality Rated, Early Learning Challenge projects, Look Again, etc.) But **ALL** of it focuses on serving Georgia's children and families to enhance their well-being and help prepare them for life-long learning.



One of the annual activities I am particularly excited about is Georgia's Pre-K Week sponsored by Voices for Georgia's Children scheduled for October 6-10. I look forward to visiting Pre-K classes that week reading to children and introducing legislators, community leaders, and other dignitaries to the exciting work being done through Georgia's Pre-K Program. Last year 83 state representatives (46% of the House) and 30 state senators (54% of the Senate) participated in Georgia's Pre-K Week. Believe me: nothing generates support for our work more effectively than our elected leaders experiencing first-hand what takes place in a Pre-K classroom. We hope to have an even larger turn-out this year.

I'm also excited about one of our "new" activities related to Georgia's Pre-K Week. Georgia's Children's Cabinet, chaired by First Lady Sandra Deal, is sponsoring Georgia's Pre-K Month during which the First Lady and other Cabinet members will crisscross the state reading to Pre-K classes and stressing the importance of early literacy. I look forward to traveling with Mrs. Deal in October to support her as she shares her important message that learning to read is the critical foundation for reading to learn.

Of course, none of these activities would be possible without each of you: those of you in the field who work every day with owners, directors, teachers, cooks, sponsors, principals, and families and those of you based in Atlanta who support the work "behind the scenes." I appreciate all that you do and am grateful to be on this "ride" with you.

Sincerely,  
Amy

## DECAL Priority:

## Ensure Health & Safety



## SCCP: Looking Forward, Giving Back

Georgia's annual State Charitable Contributions Program (SCCP) continues through October 31, 2014, with all state employees invited to make voluntary donations to local nonprofits and charities. The action is heating up now with a Senior Team Ice Bucket Challenge and the return of Penny Wars, The Bizarre Bazaar, and more activities.

For more information on the SSCP, contact Sabrina Henry at 404-463-0034 or [sabrina.henry@decalfga.gov](mailto:sabrina.henry@decalfga.gov). You can also visit [www.gascpp.org](http://www.gascpp.org) and follow on Twitter using #GASCCP or #GAgovAllin.



The DECAL Senior Leadership Team raised money for SSCP with a "sundae sale."



DECAL Telcom Coordinator Kiejuan Davis shows his support for the I Have a Dream Foundation.

October Birthdays



## Georgia Pre-K Week is October 6 - 10

Pre-K centers across the state will celebrate Georgia Pre-K Week October 6-10, 2014, welcoming state, business, and community leaders to visit and learn about the value of early childhood education. Governor Nathan Deal and First Lady Sandra Deal will be among the first to read a children's book to a Pre-K class and experience firsthand the joy and excitement of our youngest learners.

In fact, the First Lady will be reading to Pre-K classes statewide throughout the month of October. Her visits are presented by the Georgia Children's Cabinet and DECAL. The First Lady will kick off Georgia's Pre-K Month at 9:15 AM on Wednesday, October 1, 2014, at CreekStone Academy, 2400 Ellison Lakes Drive in Kennesaw, Georgia. She will then be joined by DECAL Interim Commissioner Amy Jacobs and members of the Georgia Children's Cabinet during a 10:00 AM visit to Ivy Hall Day School, located at 1730 Tuscan Heights Boulevard in Kennesaw.

Hosted by Voices for Georgia's Children in cooperation with DECAL, this year's observance of Georgia Pre-K Week is supported by Georgia Power, Synovus and Scholastic Corporation. The weeklong, statewide celebration brings together a diverse group of leaders and places them in Pre-K classrooms in all 159 counties, drawing attention to this hallmark program that was pioneered in Georgia 22 years ago.

"Georgia's nationally recognized Pre-K program supports a critical developmental milestone each year for 84,000 four-year-olds," said Pat Willis, Executive Director of Voices for Georgia's Children. "Our state's outstanding Pre-K program and other health and early learning programs work together to help children read to learn by third grade."

Georgia Pre-K Week invites community leaders into the classroom showcasing how early education is making a difference for our children. Copies of Pete the Cat and His Four Groovy Buttons, written by Georgia children's author Eric Litwin and illustrated by Georgia artist James Dean, were donated for the event.

Joining Voices for Georgia's Children as partners on Georgia Pre-K Week are Black Child Development Institute Atlanta ([www.bcdi-atl.org](http://www.bcdi-atl.org)), Ferst Foundation for Childhood Literacy ([www.ferstfoundation.org](http://www.ferstfoundation.org)), Georgia Association for Young Children ([www.gayconline.org](http://www.gayconline.org)), Georgia Child Care Association ([www.georgiachildcare.org](http://www.georgiachildcare.org)), Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students ([www.geears.org](http://www.geears.org)), Georgia Family Connection Partnership ([www.gafcp.org](http://www.gafcp.org)), Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education ([www.gpee.org](http://www.gpee.org)), Georgia Public Library Service ([www.georgialibraries.org](http://www.georgialibraries.org)), Multiple Junior League Chapters ([www.gajlspac.org](http://www.gajlspac.org)), Quality Care for Children ([www.qualitycareforchildren.org](http://www.qualitycareforchildren.org)), and United Way of Greater Atlanta ([www.unitedwayatlanta.org](http://www.unitedwayatlanta.org)).

In a separate event, Zoo Atlanta will celebrate Georgia's Pre-K Week October 6-10, 2014, offering Self-Guided Field Trips at the discounted rate of \$9 per person (one chaperone per every ten students is required and admitted FREE). Enjoy special activities that include costume characters welcoming teachers and students as they arrive in Flamingo Plaza from 9:30 to 11:00 AM; Animal Tales storybook readings in Amy's Tree at 10:00 AM; and a private Wildlife Theater bird show geared toward the Pre-K audience at 11:00 AM. To register, visit [www.zooatlanta.org/home/events](http://www.zooatlanta.org/home/events).

"We are very appreciative of our partnership with Zoo Atlanta that already offers Educator Appreciation Days in the fall and spring of each year with free admission for teachers and discounts for their guests," said DECAL Interim Commissioner Amy Jacobs. "We look forward to seeing many Pre-K classes join us for this exciting week at Zoo Atlanta."

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

- 3 - La Tonya E. Bonner
- 4 - Craig A. Detweiler
- 7 - Julia P. Strickland
- 8 - Andrea D. Marable
- 9 - Erika D. Sims
- 12 - Melissa D. Herndon
- 13 - Sarah B. Benton
- 16 - Danna Kathleen Foster
- 16 - Aneshia T. Harris
- 17 - Paula M. Jones
- 18 - Keith D. Bostick
- 18 - Rebecca C. McDonald
- 22 - Audrey B. Lampkin
- 24 - Laura Jane Johns
- 29 - Jamie Carta

## E<sup>3</sup>Zs Commitment Ceremonies Details

### Thursday, October 2, 2014

VALDOSTA:  
9:30 AM - 10:30 AM  
Brooks Hall Seminar Center  
Wiregrass Valdosta Campus  
4089 Val Tech Road  
Valdosta, GA 31602  
[Click here to RSVP.](#)

MACON:  
3:00 PM - 4:00 PM  
Bibb County Health Department  
Training and Assembly Room  
171 Emery Highway  
Macon, GA 31217  
[Click here to RSVP.](#)

### Friday, October 3, 2014

ATHENS:  
9:00 AM - 10:00 AM  
Office of Early Learning  
440 Dearing Extension  
Athens, GA 30606  
[Click here to RSVP.](#)

DALTON:  
3:00 - 4:00 PM  
Whitfield - Dalton Day Care Center  
Alan S. & Shirley J. Lorberbaum Center  
515 South Pentz Street  
Dalton, GA 30720  
[Click here to RSVP.](#)

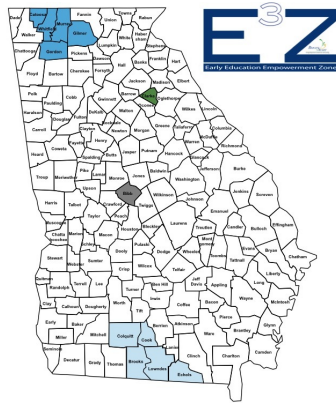


Georgia Governor Nathan Deal enjoys reading to a Pre-K class, which he and First Lady Sandra Deal will be doing during Georgia Pre-K Week October 6 - 10.

## DECAL Priority:

## Increase Quality & Access

### E<sup>3</sup>Z Commitment Ceremonies are this week



Commitment Ceremonies for Georgia's new Early Education Empowerment Zones (E<sup>3</sup>Zs) will be held this week in Valdosta, Macon, Athens, and Dalton. (See details at left) Last month DECAL formally announced the four zones selected to promote early education system reform initiatives that support better outcomes for young children. They are Clarke County, Bibb County, a North Cluster (Catoosa, Whitfield, Murray, Gordon and Gilmer) and a South Cluster (Colquitt, Cook, Brooks, Lowndes, and Echols). Each zone will receive targeted resources valued at over \$1 million and will participate in research that will help the state identify sustainable and replicable implementation strategies that can be scaled statewide. Each E<sup>3</sup>Z is home to around 10,000 children under the age of five.

"We are so very excited to partner with these four communities in piloting early education system reform initiatives that support better outcomes for young children," said Amy Jacobs, DECAL Interim Commissioner. "Each of these regions demonstrated their commitment to early childhood education through participation from their local Quality Rated child care programs, universities and technical colleges with strong early childhood education programs, and support from public school superintendents, elected officials, the business community, and nonprofit and philanthropic organizations."

Funding for the E<sup>3</sup>Z initiative is part of the \$51.7 million Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant received last year by DECAL from the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The E<sup>3</sup>Z initiative will be implemented over the three-year period remaining for the ELC Grant. Georgia's grant includes a variety of projects, all of which focus on improving services to Georgia's children from birth to age eight and their families. While DECAL is the lead agency for the grant, the work is being accomplished through partnerships with other state and federal agencies and non-profit organizations.

## 2014 Summer Meals Program a Success

Results are in from the 2014 Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and the news is great. This summer 4.5 million meals were served to qualified children and adults in Georgia, a 22% increase from last year.

Due to collaboration with the Georgia Food Bank Association, USDA's Rural Development Office, and Georgia's Library Association, 10 of the previous 19 unserved counties had meal service, which included 43 new mobile sites, 11 new libraries, and five housing developments.

"I would like to congratulate and commend Nutrition Director Falita Flowers and her team for far exceeding our goals for this year," said Ray Higgins, Deputy Commissioner for Finance and Administration. "Thanks to their efforts, more children and adults received free meals during the summer when they may not have daily access to well-balanced meals."

## Open Enrollment Dates

This year's Annual Open Enrollment is Monday, October 27 - Friday, November 14. Please ensure you can log in the State Health Benefit Plan (SHBP) Enrollment Portal at [www.mySHBPga.adp.com](http://www.mySHBPga.adp.com).

## Employee Suggestion Program

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

We cannot read your

**MIND.**

That is why DECAL has



Phil Jessup  
Information Systems Specialist

EMPLOYEE  
SUGGESTION  
PROGRAM

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

## Board of Early Care and



DECAL Interim Commissioner Amy Jacobs, Deputy Commissioner for System Reform Kristin Bernhard, and E3Z Director Dr. Laura Johns calling the four communities selected as Early Education Empowerment Zones.

## Pre-K Summer Transition Programs Make a Difference

The results of Georgia's Summer Transition Programs for rising Pre-K and rising Kindergarten students are impressive, according to research. A report by national experts in early childhood education and care concludes that children preparing to enter kindergarten who participated in the six-week transition program showed significant improvement in pre-literacy and school readiness skills. Both programs targeted children in low-income families eligible for subsidized child care, and the rising Pre-K program focused on children from families where Spanish is the primary language.

The report shares the results of a multi-year evaluation commissioned by DECAL. The study, conducted by scientists at the FPG Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (FPG) and Child Trends, evaluated the skills of 126 rising kindergarten students at the start and end of the summer program. To evaluate the rising pre-kindergarten program, scientists observed teachers and students in 19 classrooms where English and Spanish were used. In both transition programs, teachers and transition coaches completed questionnaires.

"We have consistently seen gains in children's skills over the past five years of the Rising Kindergarten Program," said Susan Adams, Assistant Commissioner for Georgia's Pre-K Program and Instructional Supports. "For a six-week program to demonstrate even moderate gains is somewhat unexpected and implies a successful implementation."

Adams said past research shows that learning opportunities for dual-language learners are maximized when both languages are used in the classroom. In this study, English and Spanish were used for explicit instruction and behavior management in the Rising Pre-K Program. The majority of classrooms had books in English and Spanish.

"Georgia's Summer Transition Programs provide important opportunities for young learners to build their skills and confidence before moving into Pre-K and Kindergarten," said Amy Jacobs, DECAL Interim Commissioner. "We appreciate the partnerships with our early care and education providers and teachers who made these valuable classes available over the summer months."

To view highlights from the study and/or the full report, visit the DECAL website at <http://www.decals.ga.gov/BftS/SummerTransitionProgram.aspx>.

## DECAL Priority:

## Foster Organizational Excellence

### New Federal Programs Division Taking Shape

In July 2014, DECAL created a new division under Deputy Commissioner Keith Bostick that is responsible for Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) Program, child care subsidy payments for low income families; Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Network,

## 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  
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) Rachael Lee, Paula Lawrence, Christi  
Bedwell, Jonique Hale, Kriste Elia, Jimea Evans,  
and Rian Ringsrud.*

comprehensive support to programs working towards and participating in Quality Rated; and federal nutrition services including the Child and Adult Care Food Program and Summer Food Service Program. Dee Bolden, most recently Director of Program Operations for Child Care Services, was named to lead the division as Assistant Commissioner for Federal Programs and Administration.



*Dee Bolden*

"With so many federal dollars and programs administered through our agency, this new division just made sense in an effort to create greater efficiency and accountability overall," Bolden explained. "CAPS represents around \$18-million per month in payments, Nutrition claim payments total around \$10-million per month, and the six CCR&Rs around the state represent a budget of over \$600-thousand per month. Aligning these areas can only help us in better serving Georgia's youngest children and their families."

As a result of the restructuring, Tamara Hall was promoted to CAPS Director, and Falita Flowers was promoted to Nutrition Director. Along with CCR&R Manager Angela Melton, the three now report to Bolden.

"Under our new contract, the CCR&Rs will be instrumental in supporting Early Learning Challenge Grant outcomes by recruiting new programs to participate in Quality Rated, providing technical assistance and support to programs working on a Quality Rating, and providing other professional learning opportunities," Bolden said.

In addition to its current role with CAPS, the new division will be involved with the transition of approximately 150 employees responsible for CAPS eligibility and administration from the Department of Human Services, Division of Family and Children Services, to DECAL over the next year.

Before joining DECAL, Bolden served as Assistant Secretary in the Office of Family Support for the Louisiana Department of Social Services (DSS). She has also served as the State Title IV-E Medicaid Revenue Maximization Manager for the Georgia Department of Family and Children Services and was responsible for statewide eligibility, policy and program development for Foster Care Medicaid.

Bolden's career includes positions as Deputy Director of Operations for the Louisiana Workforce Commission; Regional Program Consultant for the Georgia Department of Family and Children Services; and Eligibility Programs Manager for the Fulton County Department of Family and Children Services. She began her career as a case manager.