

Decidedly DECAL

Highlighting the Events That Shape Who We Are



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DECAL By the Numbers

- 750** - Four year olds in 1992 Georgia Pre-K Pilot Project
- 79,884** - Four year olds attending 2017-2018 Georgia's Pre-K Program
- 3,827** - Georgia's Pre-K Program classes for 2017-2018
- 4,791** - Licensed child care programs in Georgia
- 1,406** - Quality Rated programs in Georgia

Commissioner's Corner

by Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs



Dear DECAL Staff,

My letter this month serves two purposes: 1) it focuses on DECAL's fourth value, *Always valuing others* (a continuation of a series about the department's values I began earlier this year), and 2) it's a precursor to our ALL STAFF meeting scheduled for October 24.

When the DECAL Employee Advisory Group drafted this fourth value, I'm sure they intended "others" to be defined in a couple of ways: Always valuing our *customers* AND always valuing our *co-workers*.

I don't need to say a lot about the importance of always valuing our *customers*. While we work hard to be professional, responsive, and helpful, we can't always make providers, parents, families, key stakeholders, etc. happy. But I truly believe we're shifting the perspective of many people from being the early care and learning "police" to being partners who want to support them in their work. And, I think we all recognize that we exist because of the child care and early education needs of our *customers*.



I think "others" also refers to our DECAL *co-workers*, and in several weeks, we'll be focusing on valuing...on appreciating...each other when we gather for our ALL STAFF meeting. The theme of the meeting relates to making connections and to how important it is for us as a staff to feel connected to the department's mission and vision and to each other.

I regret that, as DECAL grows and spreads out, it will be impossible for me to get to know each of

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Decidedly DECAL CALi Quiz Winner

CAPS Family Support Consultant Deirdre Williams won the CALi Quiz for September's Decidedly DECAL. Her name was drawn from everyone who took the quiz and scored 100.

Deirdre wins two tickets to the Atlanta Botanical Gardens. For your chance to win, read this edition of Decidedly

DECAL, watch for the quiz on your e-mail and take the quiz. You could also win tickets to a fun Georgia attraction!



Deirdre Williams

Mark the Date!

The DECAL All Staff Meeting is Tuesday, October 24, 2017, at the Georgia International Convention Center in College Park. Registration opens at 8:00 AM and the meeting begins at 9:00 AM.

Are you ALL IN with #TheCampaign?

The State Charitable Contributions Program (SCCP) --- also known as The Campaign --- is officially underway! The Campaign is an opportunity for DECAL employees to contribute to the non-profit of their choice through monthly payroll deductions or a one-time donation. From the Salvation Army to the YMCA...United Way to Easter Seals...you can choose from over 1,000 participating charities including early childhood education groups like Voices for Georgia's Children, GEEARS and Quality Care for Children. There's something for everyone! And this year, Commissioner Jacobs is serving as Chair for the entire state! Please consider supporting The Campaign by visiting <https://gascap.causecast.com/>.

New Faces and Places

Congratulations to the following employees who joined the DECAL team in September:

you on a personal level. But, my desire as your commissioner is for each of you to feel valued and appreciated by your peers, your supervisor, your assistant commissioner, and me. A person who feels valued and appreciated will always do more than what is expected, and being told you're appreciated is one of the most simple, yet incredibly uplifting, things you can hear.

And I hope that's what you hear...from this letter...and from our time together later this month. Until then, I am...

Grateful for you,

It's Georgia Pre-K Week! Let the Celebration Begin

Starting today, hundreds of state and local leaders will celebrate the 25th birthday of Georgia's Pre-K Program by reading to Georgia's youngest learners from October 2-6 as part of Georgia Pre-K Week 2017.

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

Georgia Power and Synovus return as presenting sponsors of Georgia Pre-K Week for the fourth consecutive year. Additional key supporters include Governor Nathan Deal and First Lady Sandra Deal, state commissioners, state and local elected officials, and other dignitaries.

"The broad and diverse base of support from around our state is evidence that Georgia's leaders care about and understand the long-term impact of quality early learning on each child," said Dr. Erica Fener Sitkoff, Executive Director of Voices for Georgia's Children. "Research consistently shows that children entering kindergarten from quality early learning settings are more prepared and ready to learn, which our leaders see first-hand during Pre-K Week."

During the week, countless state, business and community leaders will visit Pre-K centers to witness early learning in action. While there, each will read a favorite children's book to the classes. Since Pre-K Week began, nearly three out of every four state legislators and nearly half of Georgia's congressional delegation have participated in the event.

"We are grateful to see Georgia's state and local leaders celebrate this landmark year for Georgia's Pre-K Program," said Amy M. Jacobs, Commissioner of DECAL, which administers Georgia's Pre-K Program and licenses and monitors the state's child care learning centers. "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."

CAPS welcomes Scholarship Admin Specialists Ebony Rosser Coleman and Sasha Latrice Polite.

Nutrition welcomes Procurement and Purchasing Officer LaMonika Jones and Nutrition Services Training Manager Earlene Reynolds.

Audits and Compliance welcomes Nutrition Compliance Accountant Porsche Ewen and Auditor/Examiner Donna Pearce.

Finance welcomes Accounts Payable Accountant Michelle Flynn.

System Reform welcomes Quality Rated Assessor Miltrina Horton Specialist Projects & Business Operations Manager Nia Taylor-Brackett.

Communications welcomes Communications/Government Relations Intern Lara Ijitoeye.

Employee Spotlight

For this "Spotlight," Jessie Bruno, Data and Research Coordinator, interviewed two of the division's newest members:



Ani Whitmore, Research and Policy Analyst

Where are you from?

I am an Atlanta native...born and raised in the SWATS (Southwest Atlanta).

What college did you go to?

I received my B.A. from Spelman College in 2009, and my Ph.D. from Georgia State

University in 2015.

Where did you work before DECAL?

I was a Post-Doctoral Fellow at the CDC in the Office for Noncommunicable Disease, Injury & Environmental Health.

What project are you working on that you're really excited about?

I am enjoying all of the projects I am working on so far, but I am most excited about the TPOT Research Project and the Quality Rated Peer Support Network Evaluation. Both projects are similar to the work I completed in graduate school.

What is your favorite Halloween movie and what Halloween candy are you eating while you watch?

I actually hate scary movies, but my favorite "Halloween" movie is technically a Christmas movie: The Nightmare Before Christmas. I love Jack Skeleton! And the candy I would be eating while watching would be a bag of gummy bears.



DECAL and Naserian Foundation Name Georgia's Pre-K Program 2017-2018 Teachers of the Year

DECAL and the Naserian Foundation have named two outstanding educators as Georgia's Pre-K Program Teachers of the Year for 2017-2018. The winners are Jodi McNamara from Kids R Kids #49 in Lawrenceville and Nathan Leatherwood from Calhoun Pre-K.

DECAL names two teachers each year, one from a public school system and one from a private child care center, representing the public-private model through which the Pre-K program is delivered. McNamara and Leatherwood will serve as ambassadors for Georgia's Pre-K Program, making presentations, attending meetings, and modeling effective classroom practices.

"Georgia's Pre-K Program is only as successful and effective as the dedicated women and men who work with Georgia's four year olds every day," said DECAL Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs, These awards are a small way for us to recognize their efforts. We congratulate Jodi and Nathan and look forward to working with them this school year. We also thank Connie Ellington of Bethlehem Elementary School in Barrow County and Channie Frazier of Kids World Learning Center in Bulloch County for their outstanding job serving as our very first Pre-K Teachers of the Year in 2016-2017."

This school year, while celebrating its 25th birthday, approximately 84,000 four year olds are attending Georgia's Pre-K Program. The voluntary, lottery-funded Pre-K program has been recognized as one of the top programs in the nation, based on quality standards, teacher qualifications, and enrollment. Georgia's Pre-K Program is universal - meaning that any age eligible child residing in Georgia may attend the program regardless of family income.

Alexandria Williams, Research and Policy Analyst

Where are you from?
Warner Robins, GA (2 hours south of the city).

What college did you go to?
Georgia State University - GO Panthers!

Where did you work before DECAL?
I previously worked at GOSA, the Governor's Office of Student Achievement, as a Research and Evaluation Intern.

What project are you working on that you're really excited about?
Planning the All-Staff Meeting. This will be the first one I attend, and it seems like such a great way to learn more about the agency and the people that work for it. Plus, I'm the kind of person that loves organizing and planning out all the fine details, so this is fun for me.

What is your favorite Halloween movie?
Favorite Halloween movie is definitely The Nightmare Before Christmas because Danny Elfman and Tim Burton are geniuses.



October Birthdays



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

- 1 - Faith Strachan
- 1 - Ani Whitmore
- 2 - Kathryn Cosby
- 3 - La Tonya Bonner
- 4 - Clayton Adams
- 4 - Mary Berry
- 4 - Craig Detweiler
- 7 - Ouicia Jolly
- 7 - Julia Strickland
- 8 - Andrea Marable
- 10 - Deborah Helms
- 11 - Diane Swift
- 12 - Kanisha Copenny
- 12 - Melissa Herndon
- 12 - Donna Johnson
- 12 - Chris Linn
- 13 - Shamira Champion
- 14 - Deidrea Thompson
- 16 - Aneshia Harris
- 16 - Sherika Hough

Susan Adams, Assistant Commissioner for Georgia's Pre-K Program and Instructional Services said, "DECAL appreciates this opportunity to recognize the commitment of our Pre-K teachers who work every day all over the state to ensure that Georgia's children have a great Pre-K experience. The quality of the teacher in the classroom determines the quality of the classroom instruction."

Earlier this year, six finalists for Georgia's Pre-K Program Teachers of the Year were announced. This fall, all of them were interviewed and underwent a classroom evaluation. They were also visited by Commissioner Jacobs and Stephanie Blank, CEO of the Naserian Foundation, which is sponsoring the statewide program. Each February, DECAL invites any Georgia's Pre-K lead teacher who has taught for a minimum of three years to apply for Teacher of the Year. Applicants must also meet Georgia's Pre-K credential and Professional Development Registry requirements and plan to continue as a lead teacher for the coming year. Their school must be in good standing with all programs administered by DECAL (Pre-K, Child Care Services, Childcare and Parent Services [CAPS] and Nutrition Services).



Georgia First Lady Sandra Deal and Stephanie Blank with the Naserian Foundation joined Commissioner Jacobs and DECAL officials in surprising our new Teachers of the Year.

- 17 - Stephanie Jenkins
- 18 - Rebecca McDonald
- 20 - Renee' Lind
- 22 - Audrey Lampkin
- 22 - Mattie Ray
- 24 - Laura Crawford
- 24 - Monica Hale
- 26 - Lari Beyer
- 27 - Katie Davis
- 31 - Sherry Beckett
- 31 - Kendra Drakes
- 31 - Stacy Whitten

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
(Chair)

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



Division Updates

Information Technology



Chad Paul

We are still chipping away at the CAPS expansion with office moves, equipment purchases and setup, and planning for the next wave of hires. We are currently searching for a lead telcom and a level 1 support desk technician. We are also in the process of upgrading some of our outdated equipment for Quality Rated. - **Chad Paul, Help Desk Analyst**

Nutrition



Shericka Blount

On September 27, 2017, the Nutrition Services Division engaged in our first annual All Staff Training. Staff members were encouraged to dress in their favorite fall colors as we attended a day full of learning and team building. The training was primarily a professional development event in an effort to "Fall-in" the FY 2018 CACFP renewal season smoothly. The training ended with a memorable team photo as we are geared up and ready to "Fall-forward" into the new fiscal year. - **Shericka Blount, Application Specialist**

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



Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

Let Us Hear From You!

Human Resources



Julie Harnage

Open Enrollment is around the corner: Annual Open Enrollment (OE) for the 2018 Plan Year of the State Health Benefit Plan (SHBP) is scheduled from October 16, 2017 at 12:00 AM through November 3, 2017 at 11:59 PM. During this period, all eligible employees may select their 2018 health care elections online at www.mySHBPga.adp.com.

New Hires: 93 employees were hired during the last quarter and 72 of those participated in Quarterly New Employee Orientations held on September 20th and 21st. We are expecting to bring on one new hire on 10/1, which brings our total number of payrolled employees to 525.

Training Opportunities: Be on the lookout for an upcoming email containing the training calendar for our next quarter! Remember to copy your supervisor on any class you would like to attend.

DECAL's HR Team Wins State Recognition!: DECAL's HR Team is the winning recipient of the TEAM award for demonstrating Excellence in Human Resources from the Council for State Personnel Administration (CSPA).- *Julie Harnage, Training and Organizational Development Specialist*

Person on the Street

Who is your favorite superhero?



Dawana Brown, CAPS Family Support Consultant:
My favorite superhero is the Incredible Hulk because he is big, strong, and fierce yet only when pushed to the limit. He's really a sweetheart.



Allison Setterlind, Head Start Collaboration Director:
My favorite superhero has always been Wonder Woman. I used to put paper around my wrists and use a pizza pan to act out scenes from the show with my friends. She was a strong female lead and always fiercely protective of everyone who needed her help...I appreciated that courage then and now.



Keturah Washington, Pre-k Quality Support Administrative Assistant:
Superman... he's so unsuspecting as Clark Kent, and very few know who he really is and his real strength. He's amazing!

Employee Suggestion Program

ideas?

Visit the Virtual
Suggestion Box now!

The Faces of DECAL

DECAL faces featured in the banner of this issue are (L-R) Amanda Tarpley, Erika McCrary, Ettoniet Anderson, Alex Dagenhart, Grushan Robinson, Katie Davis, and Suzanne Harbin.

Congratulations to the newest  QUALITY RATED™ child care programs!

Carol M. Douglas, Lithonia ★★	★★ Shannon I. Moon, Columbus
The Sunshine House #63, Decatur ★	★ Susan's Early Learning Center, LaGrange
Excell Preparatory Center, Lithonia ★	★ Retha R. Weatherspoon, Jesup
Bertha K. Thomas, Albany ★★	★ Prime Time Discovery - Hephzibah, Hephzibah
Prime Time Discovery - Tobacco Road, Augusta ★★	★★ Josefa Rodriguez, Grovetown
Tender Years Learning Center #14, Gray ★	★★ Dougherty County Family Literacy Council Inc., Albany
Cornerstone Children's Center, Vidalia ★★	★★ LaKisha M. Adams, Evans
Preferred School Care at Beecher Hills Elementary, Atlanta ★★	★ The Sunshine House #102, Snellville
Heavenly Place Childcare Learning Center, Hinesville ★	★ Prime Time Discovery Warren Road, Martinez
Smith's Day Care Center, Albany ★★	★ Flory Gustave, Stone Mountain
Tyshome T. Jones, Leesburg ★★	★★★ Ambra G. Metzger, Springfield
Academy for Little People, Chickamauga ★	



*Congratulations to all of our
QUALITY RATED™ child care programs
who've increased their star rating
in September!*

★★★ Sandy's Sandbox, Macon (2 to 3 stars)

★★★ Jennifer Rose-Ann Porter, Jonesboro (2 to 3 stars)

★★★ Bettie W. Godoy, Riverdale (2 to 3 stars)

★★ Olubusayo O. Olujuyigbe, Lawrenceville (1 to 2 stars)

★★ Miss Jan's Nursery & Playschool Inc., Albany (1 to 2 stars)

★★★ Vvee A. Dawson, Warner Robins (2 to 3 stars)

★★ Kiddie Carousel, Dalton (1 to 2 stars)

★★★ Pure Love Learning Center, Riverdale (1 to 3 stars)

★★ Rainbow Child Care Center (McDonough), McDonough (1 to 2 stars)

★★★ Glascock Co. Head Start Center, Gibson (2 to 3 stars)

★★ Foundations for the Future, Kennesaw (1 to 2 stars)

*Visit qualityrated.org to find
Quality Rated child care programs in your area!*