

Decidedly DECAL

Highlighting the Events That Shape Who We Are



Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning



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DECAL By the Numbers

\$312 million - Annual cost of Georgia's Pre-K Program

3,800 - Classrooms in Georgia's Pre-K Program

700 - New connections per second in a young child's brain

5,918 - Licensed Child Care Programs in Georgia (FY13)

261 - Child Care Programs now Quality Rated

19 - Emergency Closures of Child Care Programs

11,800 - Child Care Services visits to child care programs (FY13)

57,187 - Georgia Children served by CAPS Program

300 - Birth to 5 teachers and directors trained at first GELDS Institute

1,797 - Participants in DECAL's Infant and

Commissioner's Corner

by Commissioner Bobby Cagle



commissioner.

In last year's DECAL employee survey, many of you said you would like an opportunity to meet with me personally away from the Twin Towers and closer to the areas where you live and work. In response, we initiated "Chats with the Commissioner," informal meetings where employees are invited to meet with me and discuss our work as an agency: what we're doing right, what we're doing wrong, and things you would change if you were the

We kicked off this year's chats last month in Tifton and Savannah and will continue this month in Macon and Columbus. In October, I will meet with employees in Rome and Augusta, and in November, it's off to Athens.

I appreciate the time you take to meet with me and share your thoughts about our agency. You have been honest and forthright with me in a way that is respectful and holds high the best interests of DECAL and our team. In the same way that I've solicited and valued input from our customers and stakeholders, I very much want to hear your input. I clearly recognize that an organization is only as strong and effective as the people who make up the organization, and I acknowledge that you are the reason DECAL has accomplished so much to enhance the well-being of Georgia's children these past years.

In addition to meeting with you on my visits around the state, I am also touring local child care programs, meeting with state and local officials, and talking with local media about DECAL and what we're doing to serve and protect Georgia's youngest learners. I appreciate those of you who are able to join me during some of these events.

I thank our teams in Tifton and Savannah for great meetings last month, and I look forward to being with you soon in Macon,

Toddler training (FY 13)

Quick Links

[DECAL on Facebook](#)

[DECAL on Twitter](#)

[DECAL Website](#)



Zoo Atlanta Educator Appreciation Day

DECAL will join Zoo Atlanta for the biannual Educator Appreciation Day on Saturday, September 7, 2013 from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Educators receive FREE admission (educator ID required) and \$2 OFF admission for accompanying guests. Visit the Educator's Lounge in the Ford Tent from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. to receive a coupon for 10% off purchases at Zoo gift shops and food outlets.

Zoo Atlanta will unveil their new Cases Conservation, brand new teacher loan boxes designed for students in Pre-K through 7th grade. Stick around to learn about other programs and education resources while your children enjoy private animal encounters, face painting and animal activities.

Register and purchase guest tickets by clicking [here](#).



Important Dates

Georgia's Pre-K Week with Voices for Georgia's Children, September 30-October 4

Columbus, Rome, Augusta, and Athens. Below are links to recent stories generated by my visits to Tifton and Savannah:

[School Standards Set to Start on Smaller Students - WFXL-TV \(FOX\) 31 Albany](#)

[Commissioner Bobby Cagle Visits Elementary School - WTOG-TV \(CBS\) 11 Savannah](#)

Of course, you don't have to wait for a "Chat" to share your thoughts or concerns with me. My door is always open, and my cell phone is 404-803-2058. I look forward to seeing many of you in the coming weeks or hearing from you by phone or [e-mail](#) in the meantime.



Kids World Learning Center Director/Owner Michelle Smith Lank (center) welcomes DECAL Commissioner Bobby Cagle (right) and Deputy Commissioner of Programs Keith Bostick to Statesboro, Georgia, for a recent tour and visit. Smith Lank is the incoming president of the Georgia Child Care Association (GCCA).

DECAL Priority:

Health & Safety

Practice Makes Perfect When Preparing for Emergency Situations

On Tuesday, August 20, 2013, a lone gunman entered the McNair Discovery Learning Academy in DeKalb County and opened fire. Thankfully, no one was injured and the suspect surrendered to authorities. Teachers and administrators are being applauded for their cautious response to the situation and their orderly fashion of getting children safely out of the building and back to their parents and guardians.

In response to this incident, DECAL is reminding all of the state's

New Faces and Places



Falita Flowers

Falita Flowers has been named Interim Director of Nutrition Services. She has been with the division since 2002, serving as a program coordinator, program administrator and most recently as program manager. Flowers holds a Bachelor's Degree in Social Work from Georgia

State University and a Master's Degree in Public Administration from Troy State University.

Candy Prince has been named Special Assistant to Deputy Commissioner of Programs Keith Bostick. She will provide support to Bostick and be involved in special projects/initiatives for DECAL programs.

Prior to her transition to DECAL, Prince has a long history of state government service, providing support to senior leadership



Candy Prince

Radio Broadcast



DECAL Commissioner Bobby Cagle was recently a guest on The Ryan Cameron Morning Show heard in Atlanta on V-103 FM. V-103 is one of the top radio stations in the Southeast with a weekly audience of over 600-thousand. The Commissioner talked about the start of Pre-K and responded to questions from listeners. V-103 provides streaming video of its broadcasts online. [View the](#)

child care programs and Georgia's Pre-K classes of its required policies for handling emergencies. Approximately 6,000 child care programs in Georgia serve more than 375,000 children. All child care programs are required to conduct fire drills monthly and are encouraged to hold regular drills for tornadoes and other emergency situations. Each child care program should have emergency response plans, whether keeping children and staff in place and securing the location or off-site evacuations where children and staff would move to a safe designated area.

As we saw at McNair, teachers and providers are the first responders in emergencies like these and should be trained and supported in every way possible. Parents must be informed of the center's emergency policies and procedures. Our child care consultants work with providers and teachers to ensure that emergency plans are up-to-date and recommend support materials for helping children and teachers cope with the aftermath of any emergency.

At DECAL, our top priority is the health and safety of Georgia's youngest learners.

Great resources:

[Ready Georgia](#)

[National Association of School Psychologists](#)

[National Center for Infants, Toddlers and Families](#)

DECAL Priority:

Quality

DECAL joins CHOA, Emory & Marcus Autism Center for Autism Training

Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, Emory University School of Medicine, and the Marcus Autism Center will help DECAL train Infant and Toddler Specialists and Inclusion Coordinators on the early detection, assessment, and intervention of children with autism and other learning disorders. The collaborative partnership has created a 12-month training curriculum on autism and related disorders including topics related to early detection, red flags for autism, developmental perspectives, and early intervention and inclusion.

"This is a unique opportunity to help teachers working with our youngest learners throughout Georgia in urban, suburban, and rural child care settings who serve families with diversity in race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic levels," said DECAL Commissioner Bobby Cagle. "This project will have a significant impact on the knowledge and coaching of the provider participants, the

[program here.](#)

September Birthdays



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

- 1 - Richard Bartlett
- 2 - Cassa Andrews
- 5 - Tanya Astin
- 5 - Peggy Kosater
- 6 - Dana Bond
- 8 - Christi Bedwell
- 8 - Laura Davis
- 8 - Angelita Ramanou
- 14 - Sonia Ladd
- 14 - Jeannie Lippy
- 17 - Amy Hill
- 17 - Shenetta McNair
- 18 - Secanda Jewell
- 19 - John Gardner
- 20 - Quatavius Copeland
- 22 - Takisha Aragon
- 22 - April Rogers
- 24 - Luetricia Billingsley
- 27 - Pam Bojo
- 27 - G. Alex Dagenhart
- 27 - Sherry Smith

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, 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

caregiver/teachers with whom they work, and most importantly the children and families in their care." Cagle said intervention has the greatest impact on autism if it begins before age 3, but the average age of diagnosis now ranges between 4 ½ and 5 ½ years of age.

"We are proud to be involved in this partnership," said Don Mueller, Executive Director of Marcus Autism Center. "This program will enable Marcus Autism Center to work with DECAL to provide community support and training to enable earlier detection and intervention for children at risk for autism and related disorders. It will help build upon the community based infrastructure to impact more children and families in community settings. With an estimated 26,000 children in Georgia with autism spectrum disorders, it is critical that we form public-private partnerships to reach these vulnerable children."

Kickoff meetings were held in August, with more scheduled for September, featuring a group lecture introducing the neuroscience of autism and the current state of early detection, assessment and intervention. The lectures will include video examples of early intervention and inclusion of children with autism. On-site and online training will continue over the next 12 months.

"We are excited about the potential of this partnership," said Commissioner Cagle. "Emory University School of Medicine is ranked among the nation's finest institutions for education, biomedical research, and patient care. The Marcus Autism Center is the largest center for clinical care of children and adolescents with ASD in the country, providing comprehensive as well as problem-focused evaluations, and a wide range of treatments. The parent organization for the clinical practice at Marcus is Children's Healthcare of Atlanta (CHOA), which consists of three pediatric hospitals, Marcus, 17 neighborhood clinics, and two large primary care centers."

DECAL Priority:

Organizational Excellence

Spotlight on... Stacey Schaff

To Atlanta by way of Pago Pago: DECAL welcomes New Family Engagement Coordinator

Since graduating from Portland State University with a Master's of Social Work degree in 2004, Stacey Schaff has been working to bring children, teachers, and parents closer together. DECAL's new Family Engagement Coordinator believes that children with engaged families are more likely to be ready for school and sustain development and learning gains

Seventh Congressional District

Luann Purcell, Ed.D., Warner Robins
Eighth Congressional District
(Vice Chair)

Tammy Lenkeit, Flowery Branch
Ninth Congressional District

Janice Gallimore, Greensboro
Tenth Congressional District

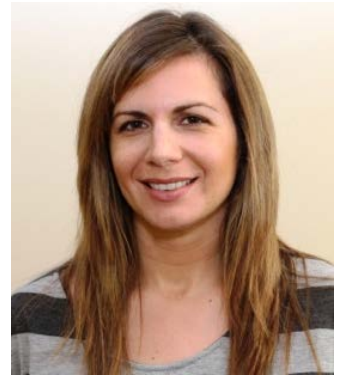
Victor Morgan, Cartersville
Eleventh Congressional District
(Chair)

Jerri Kropp, Statesboro
Twelfth Congressional District

Judy Neal, Stockbridge
Thirteenth Congressional District

Vacant
Fourteenth Congressional District

*We are committed to nurturing
Georgia's youngest children, keeping
them safe and healthy, and to enriching
their lives.*



Stacey Schaff

through third grade.

"Families who have opportunities to develop positive relationships with their children's places of learning are more likely to be active partners in the school systems as their children grow," Schaff explains. "As early learning professionals, if we are not seeing the partnership, communication, and participation we desire from the families we serve, we should question if the approaches we use to engage families are culturally and linguistically sound. Every family is diverse and efforts to partner with families should step beyond the bounds of traditional approaches."

"DECAL is working to strengthen our focus on family engagement within Georgia's early childhood system," said DECAL Inclusion Manager Jennie Couture. "We are excited to have someone with Stacey's commitment and experience to lead that effort."

Schaff began her career in Portland, Oregon, as a Residential Treatment Counselor with the Boys and Girls Aid Society, assisting youth with histories of trauma and abuse. Two years later she found herself in the South Pacific, working as Program Manager for an early intervention program in Pago Pago, capital city of American Samoa.

"I was powered to rebuild American Samoa's failing early intervention system from the ground up," Schaff explains. "Over the course of four years we brought the program into compliance and tripled the child count by doing outreach, marketing, and partnering with community and health providers."

After two similar roles in Washington State, Schaff headed south to Atlanta in 2012 to work with the Georgia Department of Public Health before recently joining DECAL.

"I was very excited about the opportunity at DECAL to exclusively focus on family engagement," Schaff said. "Family engagement has always been a component of my work but there has never been enough time to make it a priority. I was impressed that DECAL recognizes that family engagement is essential to the well-being of Georgia's children."

In the months ahead, Schaff said you can expect to see her "asking questions, making observations, and listening." "The communities we serve will inform us on how to do better and in doing so, become our partners," she added. Away from the office, Schaff likes to run, completing her first half-marathon this year with plans to run another this fall in Walt Disney World.

your brain is only young once

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The Faces of DECAL

DECAL faces featured in the banner of this issue are (L-R) Janice Haker, Taurus Jackson, Margrett Stephens, Richard Bartlett, Coty Johnson, Judy Blasengame, and Nicole Cook.
