

Decidedly DECAL

Highlighting the Events That Shape Who We Are



December 2015 - In This Issue

[By the Numbers](#)

[Important Links](#)

[December Birthdays](#)

[A Day in the Life...](#)

[Jenson Speaks at National Conference](#)

[Toy Drive Donations Being Accepted](#)

[Virtual Suggestion Box](#)

[Board of Early Care and Learning](#)

[Commissioner's Corner](#)

[DECAL Celebrates Inclusive Schools Week](#)

[Behind the Bears and Trees...](#)

["Swap 'Till You Drop" Event Is This Friday](#)

[SFSP Summit Slated for January 20, 2016](#)

[Head Start & DOE Partner on Homelessness](#)

[November Quality Rated Programs](#)

DECAL By the Numbers

67,000 - Jobs created in Georgia by the early care and education industry

\$4.7 Billion - Economic activity generated each year in Georgia by the early care and education industry

337,000

24,823 - Children served by Georgia Head Start

5,141 - Children served each year by the early care and education industry in Georgia - Licensed child care programs in Georgia

893 - Quality Rated child care programs in Georgia

Commissioner's Corner

by Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs

Dear DECALers,

One of the most significant events that's happened for me as Commissioner since our last Decidedly DECAL was finalizing the recommendations from the Early Childhood Education Subcommittee of the Governor's Education Reform Commission and then presenting them to the full Commission. The Commission unanimously approved ALL our recommendations.

In a nutshell: All the recommendations related in some way with increasing access to Georgia's Pre-K Program AND with increasing access to Quality Rated child care for Georgia's children. If these sound familiar, it's because the recommendations also align with our vision for the department, and at our 2020 Employee Roundtables, we established that each of you plays a part in accomplishing our vision.

Looking ahead, this month the Commission will present all of its recommendations to Governor Deal who will determine which ones he and his administration will champion in the next legislative session. So, it's an exciting possibility that legislation regarding early care and education will be proposed when the General Assembly convenes in January. I'll keep you posted.

This time of year I always look ahead with anticipation to what we might do in 2016, AND I look back at what we accomplished since this time last year. Our list of accomplishments is amazing and impressive, and I feel really blessed and encouraged by what we - together - have done to impact the well-being of children and families in the one and a half years I've been here. I clearly recognize and acknowledge that none of what we have accomplished in 2015 would have been possible without you.

As the holiday season has officially begun, I hope you remember what I said at the 2020 meetings





Quick Links

[DECAL on Facebook](#)

[DECAL on Twitter](#)

[DECAL on Instagram](#)

[DECAL on Pinterest](#)

[DECAL Website](#)



December Birthdays



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

- 2 - Monique Chambers
- 3 - Lacey Lewis
- 6 - Faith Duncan
- 9 - Meghan McNail
- 10 - Megan O'Bara
- 11 - Woody Dover
- 14 - Deborah Kimbrough
- 14 - Laurianne McDonald
- 15 - Tamara Hall
- 15 - Shamonica Sanders
- 16 - Angela Melton
- 17 - Carol Allen
- 19 - Suzanne Milford
- 19 - Tammy Thompson
- 20 - Sonja Adams
- 22 - Suzanne Harbin
- 25 - Margrett Stephens
- 27 - David Malik
- 27 - Shardá Short
- 27 - Angela Walker

regarding work-life balance. I hope we all take time to enjoy our family and friends and to refresh ourselves physically, emotionally, and spiritually during this special season. Doing so will prepare us optimally for a happy, professionally fulfilling, and personally satisfying 2016.

Happy holidays and best wishes for what I hope will be one of the best years ever.

Sincerely,

DECAL Celebrates Inclusive Schools Week December 7-11, 2015

Governor Nathan Deal recently proclaimed December 7-11, 2015 as Inclusive Schools Week in Georgia, and you're invited to help celebrate the occasion. Inclusive Schools Week is a time to acknowledge the hard work and commitment of teachers, administrators, students, and parents in making their schools more inclusive and, thereby, developing a more inclusive society.

"This week is an exciting opportunity to celebrate the work DECAL has done across various divisions to improve inclusive opportunities for children. We have a lot to celebrate, but there are also plenty of opportunities to improve access to high quality early education for children with disabilities and other children at risk," said Jennie Couture, Director of Practice and Support Services.

Several events are happening around the state to celebrate this special week. These events include TED talk screenings and panel discussions on our society's mental model of inclusion, and parent trainings on inclusion. These events are being led by DECAL's Inclusion Unit in partnership with Parent to Parent of Georgia.

"This week shines a light on the importance and value of inclusion and the innovative strides DECAL is making in early childhood inclusion statewide," said Brandy Locchetta, Inclusion Specialist Supervisor.

Inclusive Schools Week events are scheduled in Dalton, Macon, Valdosta, Athens, Savannah, the Twin Towers offices, and other metro locations. All DECAL staff (those based at the Twin Towers and those in the field) will be invited to the various events of the week, including taking a pledge to "Put People First," a part of the person first language campaign. "We hope everyone will find at least one event during Inclusive Schools Week that they can be a part of and learn from," said Locchetta.

In photo below are (L-R) Director of Practice and Support Services Jennie Couture, Inclusion Specialist Brandy Locchetta, and Assistant Commissioner of Georgia's Pre-K Program and Instructional Supports Susan Adams.

29 - Randy Hudgins
30 - Taxishe Smith
31 - Sabrina Henry

A Day in the Life of Sarah Beck

Want to know the latest news in early childhood education, DECAL, and the state of Georgia? DECAL's Sarah Beck has you covered. Each morning, the System Reform Communications Specialist compiles the top news on these topics in a brief that staff can sign up to receive by following this link: <http://bit.ly/DECALNews>.

While pulling together news clips is a staple in her morning routine, the remainder of Sarah's work day is far from predictable.

"Every day is a little different," says Beck, who also manages communications for Quality Rated and Georgia's Early Learning Challenge (ELC) grant. "I could be designing a flyer for a new Early Education Empowerment Zone initiative or planning the next Quality Rated Advisory Committee meeting. No two days are ever the same!"

Much of her work on Quality Rated is currently focused on preparing to launch a new marketing campaign in the spring. For the Early Learning Challenge grant, she supports project leads with any communication needs they may have. She also prepares a monthly ELC newsletter that staff can sign up to receive here: <http://bit.ly/1suh96d>. Additionally, Beck manages Georgia's child care referral services contract and coordinates the Quality Rated Advisory Committee.

Beck has worked for DECAL since March of 2014. Before becoming the System Reform Communications Specialist, she worked for a little over a year as the System Reform Coordinator, supporting the System Reform Division and Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs' scheduling.

Asked what she would do if she, herself, were Commissioner of DECAL for a day, Beck said she would create an internship program for college students and recent graduates to work in DECAL's various divisions to learn more about early childhood education policy and research.

"Interning in college was one of my most fond experiences, and I would love for a group of students to have this experience at DECAL," said Beck.

Beck said she is thankful for her job at DECAL and the opportunity to work in public service in a position "where I feel like I make a



Behind the Bears and Trees

By now you've probably noticed that DECAL has computer portals named after bears and conference rooms named after trees. But why? Like the young children we serve, that was the simple question raised recently from a DECAL New Employee Orientation...which, by the way, is held in the Spruce and Laurel conference rooms.



Craig Detweiler

Turns out the credit or the blame for both goes straight to DECAL Chief Information Officer Craig Detweiler, who is responsible for the agency's Information Technology (IT) as well as its 2011 move from 10 Park Place near Five Points to the Sloppy Floyd Towers next to the State Capitol. When Detweiler arrived at DECAL, the primary computer program was called PANDA, used for Georgia's Pre-K Program, so it made sense to name future programs after bears. Today we have POLAR, serving DECAL employees; KOALA, serving Child Care Services (CCS) and providers; and most recently ATLAS (an extinct bear), soon to be serving Nutrition Services.

And about those conference rooms in our East Tower offices? "We thought tree names were more palatable than Star Wars characters, U.S. Presidents, or Georgia cities," says Detweiler. "And there are lots of trees so we wouldn't run out." That's why your meeting might be held in Oak, Laurel, Dogwood, or many others.

difference in the lives of children and families in Georgia."

What challenges does she face at DECAL? "Time! I wish there were more hours in the day," said Beck.

In addition to her busy day job, Beck is in her first semester of law school at Georgia State University's College of Law, where she attends a part-time evening program after work.



System Reform Communications Specialist Sarah Beck

DECAL's Denise Jenson Addresses Participants at NAEYC Conference

Quality Rated Manager Denise Jenson recently spoke at the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) 2015 Annual Conference & Expo in Orlando. The

Got a question about DECAL? Send it to reg.griffin@decalfga.gov. We'll go out on a limb...if you can bear with our puns.

First Ever DECAL "Swap 'Till You Drop" Is This Friday

Do you have unused/unwanted items in your desk, filing cabinets, cubicle, or office? Do these items fill your storage areas, cabinets, rooms, and closets? If so, then this Friday, December 4, is your lucky day. The Finance Division is hosting DECAL's First Ever "Swap Till You Drop" event in the Hickory Conference Room between 9:00 AM and 2:00 PM. The idea was first recommended through DECAL's Employee Suggestion Program (ESP).

Finance is asking that everyone with any obsolete, unused, or unwanted items of any kind bring them to the Hickory Conference Room on Thursday, December 3, between 3:00 PM and 4:30 PM, or Friday, December 4, between 8:00 AM and 10:00 AM. This includes office supplies, paper, envelopes, furniture, fans, shredders, phones, electronic equipment, etc. Please complete, print, and submit a copy of the DECAL Intra-Agency Transfer Form for each item brought to the Swap.

"Finance will surplus the unwanted and unclaimed leftovers freeing the agency of years of built up clutter and give everyone a cleaner desk, cabinet, or store room to start the New Year," said Scott Hall, DECAL Purchasing Manager. "Please look around and bring anything that you don't need or use that might free up valuable space in your work area."

For more information, contact Lisa Rambhajan or Scott Hall.

Annual Summer Food Service Program Summit Slated for January 20, 2016

The Nutrition Services Division is hosting the 2nd Annual Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) Summit, Wednesday, January 20, 2016 at the Loudermilk Conference Center in downtown Atlanta. This day-long conference will be filled with workshops, vendors, and the opportunity for new potential sponsors to learn about the SFSP and experienced sponsors to learn best practices about various aspects of meal service.

With keynote speaker Dr. Bonita Jacobs, President of the University of North Georgia, participants will be in for a treat as they learn how an experienced sponsor has taken their meal service to the next level. Over 10 workshops will be offered and participants will have the opportunity to familiarize themselves with various aspects of meal service from the mobile meals model to financial management and planning.

Anyone interested in participating in the summit should contact Shani Drake, Marketing & Outreach Manager at shani.drake@decalfga.gov.

presentation was about Georgia's transition from ECERS-R to ECERS-3. Also pictured is Richard Clifford, one of the authors of the environment rating scales.



Toy Drive Donations Accepted

In the spirit of the season, and on a totally voluntary basis, you are invited to join DECAL senior leadership by bringing or sending a new unwrapped toy for Clark Howard's Christmas Kids campaign to



Sylvia Boykin, Nutrition Services Training Coordinator, leads training during a workshop at the 2015 SFSP Summit



benefit 7,000 children this year. This drive is conducted annually in conjunction with the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services. Bring or send your donation to DECAL's Human Resources office by 2:00 PM on Thursday, December 10, 2015, and we will deliver our contributions to one of Clark's designated sites.

Thank you so much for your enthusiasm and support. Best wishes for a wonderful start to your holiday season.

**Let Us Hear
From You!**

• **SAVE THE DATE** •

Wednesday
JANUARY 20, 2016

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

PRESENTS

The 2nd Annual
SFSP SUMMIT

Partnering to Eliminate Childhood Hunger in the Summer

at

The Loudermilk Conference Center
40 Courtland Street, NE • Atlanta, GA • 30303

MORE DETAILS TO FOLLOW!

Direct all questions to Shani Drake, Nutrition Services
Marketing & Outreach Manager at shani.drake@dec.al.gov



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

We cannot read your **mind**.

That is why DECAL has

ESP

Employee Suggestion Program



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

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
(Vice 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

Sherron Murphy, Lawrenceville

Head Start and Department of Education Partner to Assist Homeless Families

On November 9, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed supporting the partnership between the Georgia Head Start Association and the Georgia Department of Education regarding homeless children and youth. This agreement strongly supports Georgia's goal to serve homeless families through comprehensive Head Start and Early Head Start programs. This agreement fosters collaboration between the Department of Education and the Georgia Head Start Association through regular communication and shared training events.

Pictured below are Stephania Whitehurst, President of the Georgia Head Start Association and Director Of EOA Savannah Head Start; Eric McGhee, State Education Coordinator of Education for Homeless Children and Youth; and Janice Haker, Director, Head Start Collaboration Office.



Seventh Congressional District

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

Vacant
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

The Faces of DECAL

*DECAL faces featured in the banner of this issue are (L-R)
Elizabeth Crofton, Gregory Brown, LaKisha Robinson, Margaret
Tarrant, Karla Crawford, George Davis, and Charlene Godfrey.*

Congratulations to the newest QUALITY RATED child care programs!

Baby World Developmental Day Care, Albany ★★★★★ Elisia C. Jennings, Statesboro
Dorothy D. Belton, Forest Park ★★☆☆☆ Stacey W. Jones, Clarkesville
Beulah Early Learning Center, Decatur ★★☆☆☆ Lynett M. Mike, Savannah
Deborah Q. Bolden, Stockbridge ★★☆☆☆ Oxford Falls Academy, Lawrenceville
Lucille M. Bryant, Savannah ★★☆☆☆ Kim L. Ragsdale, Waverly Hall
Champions for Children, Athens ★★☆☆☆ Kim Rucker, Elberton
Childcare Network #217, Albany ★★☆☆☆ Scottdale Child Development &
Children's Ark Academy, Alphretta ★☆☆☆☆ Family Resource Center, Scottdale
Clark's Learning Center, Jackson ★☆☆☆☆ Tojuana Y. Simmons, College Park
Belinda Farley, Lithia Springs ★☆☆☆☆ Christina F. Skipper, Cochran
Genesis Early Learning and ★☆☆☆☆ Sugar Hill Child Development Center, Sugar Hill
Child Development Center, Atlanta ★☆☆☆☆ The Loving Caring Sharing Place, Emerson
Deborah D. Green, Cartersville ★☆☆☆☆ Windward Child Development Center, Alpharetta