

Decidedly DECAL

Highlighting the Events That Shape Who We Are



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Commissioner's Corner

by Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs

Dear DECAL Co-workers,

Six months ago, I pointed out in my letter to you how we at DECAL celebrate three "new years" in 12 months. Two of these "new years" have passed: the new state fiscal year that began July 1; the new federal fiscal year that began October 1. Now we are quickly approaching the end of the current calendar year and the beginning of the third new year...calendar year 2017.

In next month's Decidedly DECAL, we'll look ahead to some of what we can expect in 2017. In this month's letter, however, I think it's appropriate to finish off the year recognizing the remaining two winners of the Spirit of DECAL award and the other nominees. Following are the remaining winners, including excerpts from their nominations.



Rob O'Callaghan, Research and Policy Analysis

- Rob was nominated because of his commitment to Organizational Excellence.
- He is the "in-house" expert on all DECAL data and understands what data does and does not tell us.
- All of his work is painstakingly researched and rarely has errors. The data tables he creates annually for Georgia's Early Learning Challenge report demonstrate an uncanny ability to meticulously research and report complex data from multiple data systems.
- He is an excellent editor and ensures that documents produced by the research team meet highest grammatical and content standards. Most importantly, Rob cares about the



DECAL and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs have awarded a fourth round of Child Care Expansion Grants totaling \$409,879 to seven early childhood care and education organizations located in Bibb, Brooks, Cook,

Gordon, Lowndes, and Whitfield counties...Recruitment drive is underway to reach 3,000 programs participating in Quality Rated by the end of the year...Legal has hired Avery Jenkins, Santeria Brown, and Emmanuel Asumadu as fulltime Legal Records Unit staff... E3Z team working with the BUILD initiative to host a meeting in early December in Atlanta with leaders from other child serving state agencies on early childhood system building and sustainability planning for the RTTELC zone work...Legal anticipates conducting the federally mandated comprehensive background checks by January 2017...Georgia is one of just eight states to be awarded the CCDBG Planning Grant, a competitive grant from the Administration for Children and Families, Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE).



Emmanuel Asumadu, Santeria Brown, and Avery Jenkins

Audits and Compliance Division Participates in Statewide Assessment

DECAL's Audits and Compliance Division participated in a statewide assessment of state agencies' activities regarding the identification, detection, and prevention of fraud, waste,

content.

- Without Rob's hard work and experience, DECAL would not have a strong research and policy analysis unit.

Randy Hudgins, Research and Policy Analysis

- Randy was recognized because of his collaborative approach in conducting his day-to-day activities that embodies all of DECAL values, especially "creating positive relationships."
- He works with all divisions to create surveys and maps; he presents data in easy to understand ways; and without hesitation helps wherever needed. This past year he designed and implemented 20+ surveys and created high-quality maps for many divisions.
- Randy is flexible and always amenable to "jump in" where needed, including jumping in to the "CALi" costume at the last minute for a needed video shoot; hand delivering research study results to all legislative offices; and doing whatever necessary to ensure that these ALL STAFF meetings run smoothly.
- Most of all, he impacts the agency through the level of trust that staff members have in him. They trust his work and his opinions.
- Simply put, Randy is a joy to work with. One person recently commented, "Whenever I'm given the choice about who I work with on a project, Randy is always at the top of list."



Randy Hudgins



Rob O'Callaghan

I congratulate Rob, Randy, Kristen, Donna, and Kie for being the first group to win the Spirit of DECAL award.

I also congratulate the following others who were nominated: Angela Butler, Marcy Maioli, Laura Wagner, Liz Young, Traci Bronner, Jennifer Delorme, Kristie Lewis, Tahishe Smith, Barbara Sanders, Craig Detweiler, Reisha Merriman, Rhonda Gunn, Sandra McNeal, Mary Stoklas, Carolyn Morkeh, Carol Hartman, and Jackie Shivers. And I thank those of you who took the time to recognize the exceptional work of your colleagues by nominating them.

As we approach the end of 2016, I wish the best for you, your family, and friends in whatever ways you choose to celebrate the season. And I look forward to working with and learning from you in 2017.

Sincerely,

and abuse to determine if the state should procure a statewide fraud, waste, and abuse system.

The final assessment rated DECAL the highest of the 9 state agencies assessed, and recommended that DECAL work with the Georgia Technology Authority to procure and pilot a fraud, waste, and abuse system that may later be utilized statewide.



Audits and Compliance Division

DECAL By the Numbers

80,805 - Four year olds currently enrolled in Georgia's Pre-K Program

55,000 - Children currently served each month by Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS)

24,038 - Children currently served by Georgia Head Start

4,936 - Licensed child care programs in Georgia

2,833 - Georgia child care programs currently participating in Quality Rated

1,192 - Georgia child care programs currently Quality Rated

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Study Confirms Georgia's Pre-K Students Sustain Progress in Kindergarten

Governor Nathan Deal last week announced that recent research confirms that students in Georgia's Pre-K Program continue to exhibit positive outcomes through the end of kindergarten across all domains of learning. The research is part of a multi-year evaluation by the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill.

"I am not at all surprised by the findings of this recent study indicating that the benefits from Georgia's highly ranked Pre-K program are maintained through Kindergarten," said Deal. "Continually building a strong foundation for children's growth and development has been one of my priorities since the day I took office. The foundational skills Georgia's youngest students acquire in Pre-K and Kindergarten put them on track to read at grade level by the third grade, a significant predictor of future academic success."

This most recent study is part of a multi-year, comprehensive evaluation commissioned in 2011-2012 by DECAL at the request of the Georgia General Assembly. This study began with a sample of 1,169 children who participated in Georgia's Pre-K Program during the 2013-2014 school year and will follow them through their third grade year in 2017-2018.

"These strong findings clearly indicate that Georgia's signature early education program impacts child academic development and validates the important work accomplished by our teachers and assistant teachers every day," said DECAL Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs. "On average, children's skills in language/literacy, math, self-knowledge, and general knowledge gained during their Pre-K year were sustained through Kindergarten. These findings confirm that Pre-K provides the strong foundation needed for future learning."

"This longitudinal research offers an important opportunity to follow a sample of over 1,100 children who attended Georgia's Pre-K Program through third grade," said Dr. Ellen Peisner-Feinberg, principal investigator with the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute. "One important distinction of this research is that classroom quality in both pre-k and kindergarten were taken into account as potential factors affecting children's growth, with notable similarities in the quality across both years."

Georgia's universal Pre-K program is available in all 159 counties of the state. Approximately 60% of Georgia's four year olds are served by the program. Currently over 1/3 of Georgia's counties serve over 70% of all eligible four year olds in their counties. A key component of Pre-K quality is the teacher, which is why Governor Deal and the Georgia General Assembly invested over \$36 million in the FY2017 state budget to retain and recruit quality Pre-K teachers by placing their salaries on par with their K-12 peers.

The full report and an executive summary can be found at:
<http://decals.ga.gov/BftS/EvaluationGAPreKProgram.aspx>.

Social Media Takeover!

Coming in December: Our Pre-K Teachers of the Year take over social media for a day. Look for Connie Ellington on December 13 and Channie Frazier on December 15. We can't wait!



Decidedly DECAL CALi Quiz Winner

DECAL's Pre-K Consultant Rebecca McDonald is the winner of this month's Decidedly DECAL CALi Quiz. She won two tickets to The College Football Hall of Fame. Rebecca's name was drawn from all employees who took the quiz and scored 100.



Rebecca McDonald

To win, read this issue of Decidedly DECAL and complete the next quiz for your chance to score some fun prizes donated by local businesses!

December Birthdays



In case you missed it...CCDF Planning Grant Awarded to DECAL



Bentley Ponder

Earlier this year, the federal Administration for Children and Families, Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE) invited states to apply for a grant to plan how the state will evaluate how effectively they implement their Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) state plan. Georgia is one of eight states to be awarded this grant. Dr. Bentley Ponder led a team of DECAL employees to develop an application for Georgia. In October, Commissioner Jacobs was notified that Georgia was one of eight states to be awarded the grant.

Specifically, Phase I of the grant funds 18 months of planning for a full-scale evaluation of the CCDF state plans. Three overarching CCDF goals are laid out in the proposal that will guide the evaluation process. These goals are: to reduce the cost of higher quality care for children and families receiving subsidies, to raise teacher quality for specific populations, and to implement new, innovative initiatives that build on other successful Georgia early education programs.

Recipients of this Phase I grant will be eligible to apply for additional grant money in Phase II. "It is a small grant, but the key, and the reason we applied, is this grant will give us an opportunity to implement a full scale evaluation of CCDF," said Ponder "If we do this first round successfully, we could receive funding for a full evaluation. This will help us know how far we have 'moved the needle' in meeting Georgia's CCDF goals."

"The evaluation plan we develop using these Phase I funds will allow us to create a research agenda specifically related to our CCDF state plan," Ponder added. "Phase II funding will allow us to evaluate if we are effectively implementing the the CCDF state plan thus adding to our already significant body of data. This project will expand our data and research capacity."

Unity, Hope, Desire: Making Dreams a Reality

2016 was a very successful year for the State Charitable Contributions Program (SCCP). DECAL's goal to have 180 DECAL members participate and to raise \$11,000 total was surpassed!

A total of \$11,791.42 was raised, with Finance winning the annual Penny Wars competition.

The SCCP encompasses more than 1,350 charities representing causes that effect communities throughout Georgia. State employees donate with a one-time donation or ongoing payroll deduction, giving as little as \$1. Every year, state employees give to enrich the lives of others with their compassion and willingness to share. Every donation goes to make a change in our neighborhoods.

Commissioner Jacobs said, "I think the purpose of the State Charitable Contributions Campaign is accurately summed up by the words of Charles Dickens when he wrote, 'No one is useless in this world who lightens the burdens of another.' I thank DECAL's SCCP team for giving of their time and creativity in leading this year's campaign, and I thank you for participating in this annual effort



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

- 1 - Karen Brown
- 2 - Monique Chambers
- 3 - Lacey Lewis
- 3 - Devon Porter
- 6 - Faith Duncan
- 9 - Meghan McNail
- 10 - Megan O'Bara
- 10 - Nicole Wilson
- 11 - Woody Dover
- 13 - Christina Rhoden
- 14 - Avery Jenkins
- 14 - Deborah Kimbrough
- 14 - Laurianne McDonald
- 14 - Danielle Williams
- 15 - Tamara Hall
- 15 - Michelle Hamilton
- 15 - Shamonica Sanders
- 16 - Angela Melton
- 17 - Michele Allen
- 19 - Tammy Jeune
- 20 - Sonja Adams
- 22 - Suzanne Harbin
- 25 - Margrett Stephens
- 27 - Jakeise Moody
- 27 - Angela Walker
- 29 - Randy Hudgins
- 30 - Tahishe Smith
- 31 - Sabrina Henry

Day in the Life of Dorothy Mitchell

Dorothy Mitchell, otherwise known as the Queen of Child Care Services (CCS), loves to make people laugh and has worked for DECAL for 16 years. She is an administrative assistant working with three regions, which makes her a self-proclaimed "jack of all trades."

When she comes into work, she looks forward to talking with her friends in CCS. She loves being able to work independently, and DECAL's mission makes her proud to work here. If she were Commissioner for a day, she would have all employees fill out a job satisfaction memo, including their future goals, and see how she as the Commissioner could help support them.

through which we are, in some way, lightening the burdens of others."

Some of the fun ways DECAL employees have been able to donate this year were by donating directly to a charity at the carnival, buying casual dress passes, purchasing a raffle ticket, participating in office wars, or competing in penny wars at any of the All Staff Meetings.

Lashawnda Evans said, "This experience has been very rewarding! Being new to DECAL, this was a great opportunity to get to know everyone and learn more about each division. The kickoff meeting was my favorite! The carnival theme was so much fun. We were able to speak directly to charity representatives and get details about the services and communities served by each. The delicious baked goods didn't hurt either. Each SCCP event reinforced the importance of giving (time, talent, dollars) and sharing (ideas, creativity, knowledge). I'm grateful for this wonderful opportunity and being a part of such a dynamic team! Your commitment to quality and attention to detail made all the difference. You all showed the true meaning of generosity and a giving heart!"

Nikiesha Neil said, "As someone who has given to the SCCP over time, I believe my charitable contributions are important because I understand that resources are needed to positively effect change. Recently, I became a recipient of charitable contributions, and giving has become much more meaningful to me. Each dollar donated impacts lives and sustains charities worthy of your generosity. I am extremely grateful for all those who contribute, so that me and my family can benefit from resources made available as a result."

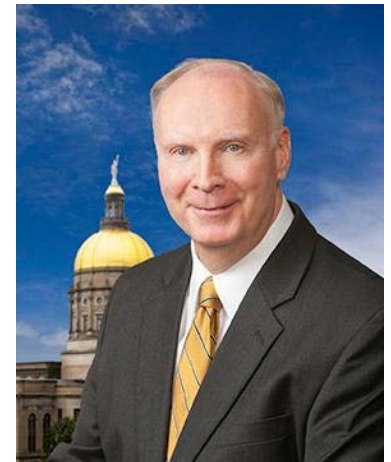
Board Member Spotlight: Phil Davis

Phil Davis serves as DECAL Board member from Georgia's 4th congressional district. In his professional life, he is Vice President of Strategic Planning for Sterling Planet, Inc., a Georgia company with an international reputation for complex project development in renewable and efficient energy. Davis began his career in Georgia in marketing and IT roles with Equifax.

"As a young man beginning a career, I was quite taken by the depths of cooperation and civic spirit that existed between Atlanta, Georgia, and its corporate citizens," he said. With Equifax' sponsorship, he worked closely with Junior Achievement and Toys for Tots. "That was my introduction to the spectrum of Georgia children," said Davis. "The JA kids were ambitious and eager to learn while the TFT children were just starting out, with clear challenges that were not being met."

A native of South Carolina, Davis moved to Atlanta at age 11. Though he graduated from high school here, he attended schools in Connecticut, New York, and Minnesota along the way. "There was a clear prejudice about southern education, then, as there often is today," Davis said. "From my seats in their classrooms, I couldn't see any justification though."

After graduating in Economics from Macalester College in St. Paul, MN, his career gravitated to solving complex process and organizational problems in large corporations, mostly in the energy industry. He first worked with DECAL with then commissioner Holly Robinson on organizational



Phil Davis

Outside of work, Mitchell goes to church and is an avid runner. Her goal is to run the Peachtree Road Race next year. Mitchell confesses that her favorite snack is almonds. A favorite motto of Mitchell's is "Free your heart from hatred. Free your mind from worries. Live simply. Give more. Expect less."



Dorothy Mitchell

Georgia Head Start Honors Haker

planning. He joined the board two years later.

Davis lives in Stone Mountain with his wife of 34 years, Anresa, who works with the senior citizen community. Though his own children are grown, he says that working with DECAL keeps him young. They have two grown sons who live in Savannah and in Washington, D.C.

"DECAL offers the best early learner support in the nation. When traveling for business, I like to ask my hosts whether the Pre-K kids in their states have read 1 million books!"

Davis enjoys photography and trail running, and is a notorious "gadget freak."

Congratulations to the newest QUALITY RATED child care programs!

- | | |
|--|--|
| Building Blocks Learning Academy for Kids Inc., Mableton ★ | ★ Timothy's Learning Center, Union City |
| Uva D. Wells, McDonough ★★ | ★ Future Stars Academy, Atlanta |
| Southern Montessori Academy LLC, Savannah ★ | ★★★ Early Head Start - Partnership for Community Action, Inc., Decatur |
| Arlentia Y. Giddens, Stone Mountain ★ | ★★★ Jamie M. Baker, Covington |
| West Chatham YMCA Child Learning Center, Pooler ★★ | ★ The Little House Learning Center, Smyrna |
| Rochelle K. Ferguson, Garden City ★★ | ★ St. Andrews Extended Day Program, Tucker |
| High Hope Child Development Center, Tifton ★★ | ★ Bright Minds Academy, Covington |
| Chattahoochee Head Start Academy, Atlanta ★ | ★ Winters Chapel Kindergarten & Day Care Center, Doraville |
| Billie F. Richards, Grovetown ★★ | ★★★ APEC After School Enrichment at Campbell, Fairburn |
| Discovery Point Child Development Center #8, Alpharetta ★★ | ★★ Saint Simons United Methodist Preschool, St. Simons |
| Tree House Academy, St. Marys, Camden ★ | ★★ Active Learning Academy, Atlanta |
| Elsie M. Sams, Savannah ★ | ★★★ Tiara A. Braswell, Grovetown |
| Janeth Laruy, Lawrenceville ★★ | ★★ Harvest Christian Academy, Kingsland |
| Mother Goose Nursery School, Woodbine ★ | ★★ Precious Hands Child Development Center Inc., Albany |
| Bright Beginnings Day Care, Brunswick ★ | ★ KIP Academy, Lithonia |
| KIP Academy, Lithonia ★ | ★ Tender Years Learning Center #9, McDonough |
| Tender Years Learning Center #9, McDonough ★★ | ★ Nutts About Kids Learning Center Inc., Pinehurst |
| The Word of Truth A+ Learning Academy ★ | ★ Merry W. Smith, Tifton |
| | ★ Urban Explorers Preschool, Atlanta |

The Faces of DECAL

DECAL faces featured in the banner of this issue are (L-R) Pamela Stoner, Chad Paul, Santeria Brown, Katheryn Cosby, Angela Butler, Allison Setterlind, and Suze Neal.



Georgia Head Start Collaboration Director Janice Haker was honored last month by members of the Georgia Head Start Association (GHSA) at their annual Fall Leadership Conference in Atlanta. After 12 years of service with DECAL, Haker is retiring from her position later this month. Allison Setterlind, who has 20 years of early childhood experience, has been named as her successor. Haker is shown above with her award. Below, Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs, who spoke at the conference, is shown with (L-R) Setterlind, GHSA President Tanya Thomas, and Haker.



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