

# Decidedly DECAL

*Highlighting the Events That Shape Who We Are*



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## DECAL By the Numbers

**\$36 million** - Money added by Governor Deal to implement a new compensation model for Pre-K to help retain lead teachers, increase assistant teacher salaries, and maintain classroom quality.

**80,818** - Four year olds enrolled this year in Georgia's Pre-K Program

**3,858** - Pre-K classes funded this year

**5,067** - Licensed child care programs in Georgia

**968** - Quality Rated child care programs in Georgia

## Commissioner's Corner

*by Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs*

Dear Fellow DECALers,

The Georgia General Assembly is well underway, and Governor Deal has issued his proposed FY 2017 budget to the legislature. Following are a couple of items that may be of interest to you.

First, the Governor included funding in his budget for a merit based 3% salary increase for all state employees. Here's what he said in his State of the State address:

"Once we have met our mandatory budget requirements, we must ensure that our crew is appropriately provided for, and so we have prioritized rewarding state employees for their hard work. Just as we are budgeting for a three percent pay raise for teachers, we are also including a three percent pay raise for all other state employees. Many of them have worked very hard as the Great Recession required the state to significantly cut the budgets of the agencies for which they work."

Second, the Governor has proposed adding over \$36 million in funding (for a total of \$358M) for Georgia's Pre-K Program. Most of this funding would be used for a new compensation model for Pre-K lead teachers and to increase assistant teacher salaries. It also proposes to increase funds for benefits.

These recommendations still have to go through the legislative process and be approved by the House and Senate. But, we hope our partners under the Gold Dome will pass these provisions in the Governor's budget which would become effective July 1, 2016. I'll keep you posted.

In my last letter, I mentioned the CCDF State Plan...critically important, directly or indirectly, to all of us here at DECAL. By the time you read this, the period during which the public can make



**3,960** - Sites participating in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

**150** - Participants in Second Annual Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) Summit

## Quick Links

[DECAL on Facebook](#)

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[DECAL Website](#)



## February Birthdays



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

- 4 - Kimberly Smith
- 5 - Lauris Cooper
- 5 - LaKisha Robinson
- 6 - Kesha McNeal
- 8 - Falita Flowers
- 8 - Charles Gore
- 9 - Catherine Broussard
- 11 - Tamika Boone
- 12 - Stanley Cooper
- 14 - Linda Barge
- 14 - Kristen Huie
- 16 - Angelia Boykins
- 18 - Christy McCray
- 18 - Beverly Pollard
- 19 - Bianca Staggs
- 19 - Laura Swann
- 19 - Lindsey Urry
- 20 - Judy Blasengame
- 24 - Ty Ancrum
- 24 - Carrie Spangler
- 25 - Lisa Chandler
- 25 - Michele Rauton
- 26 - Jae Boyd
- 27 - Jana Albertson
- 27 - Melissa Martino
- 27 - Kendra Taylor
- 28 - Michelle Radford

## A Day in the Life of

comment will be over, and we will be finalizing the plan based on what we've heard from families, providers, other ECE stakeholders, advocacy groups, policy makers, and the general public.

Examples of items included in the state plan:

- Increased payments to providers for subsidized child care. The state plans to raise subsidy rates to the 50th percentile for all providers. To improve access to higher quality early education for children and families eligible for subsidy, the state will increase the tiered bonus percentage to 5%, 10%, and 25% for one, two, and three star providers.
- Increased income eligibility thresholds. Families who are at 65% of the state median income (SMI) or below are eligible for the program.
- Increased supports for the state's early education workforce. These supports will positively impact programs serving children with disabilities and dual language learners. The supports will also help providers meet the social-emotional needs of all children in their care.
- Additional requirements for programs receiving CCDF funds who are exempt from licensing. The requirements will include additional monitoring and reporting.
- Additional supports for infants and toddlers. Specifically, the state will pilot different service models geared toward increasing the quality of infant and toddler classrooms.
- Additional supports for families. This includes increasing consumer awareness about early education and providing families easy access to critical information about child care programs.

We are already implementing many of the requirements mandated by the reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant; we are excited to begin implementing new efforts outlined in the plan to enhance our services to children and families.

And I'm grateful that many of you will be an integral part of "making good" on what we are committed to do.

Sincerely,

## New CCDF Plan Nears Submission

DECAL held three public hearings last month in Athens, Savannah, and Atlanta for the proposed Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Plan for Georgia FFY 2016-2018. A copy of the plan has been posted on our website for public comment at <http://www.decaldga.gov/BftS/CCDFPlan.aspx>.

In November 2014, Congress reauthorized the Child Care and Development Block Grant that provides CCDF monies for states to increase the availability, affordability, and quality of child care services. To receive these funds, DECAL, as the lead agency for administering CCDF funds in Georgia, must submit a state plan detailing how funds

## John Gardner

When John Gardner reports to DECAL each day as the administrative assistant for the Criminal Records Check (CRC) division, he is fulfilling a passion.

"I love to work," said Gardner, who derives personal satisfaction from performing his duties well. "If I am happy with the work that I do for myself, then I can be happy and productive with what I do for others, because I first do it for myself."

Gardner is responsible for handling the division's administrative matters, facilitating work flow, processing employee and contractor criminal records checks, covering for peers when needed, and "encouraging fellow employees through the day to be happy and productive."

"I look forward to working with my peers each day, encouraging them to be their best in their work, and modeling a joyous behavior for all," he said.

Gardner's path to DECAL started in 1996 when he joined the Office of School Readiness.

"I have always worked in an administrative assistant capacity, and once was the executive assistant for a brief time. I have worked in many departments of DECAL (Pre-K, Nutrition, Legal, Executive), and have had the opportunity to create these administrative roles."

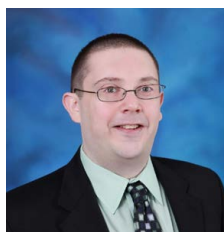
Gardner said he continuously seeks opportunities within DECAL "to move, to grow, and to do my good work in a new capacity."

One job he is not interested in is that of the DECAL Commissioner, but if he were appointed to the position for a single day "I would be inclined to talk to and listen to employees. I would want employees to know that I am approachable, just like our current commissioner, Amy Jacobs," he said.

When not at work, Gardner enjoys nurturing his creative side.

He is a professional flutist and played with the Army Ground Forces Band from 1983-1987, touring the U.S., Canada and Mexico. He played semi-professionally thereafter, performing as principal flutist with many of Atlanta's premier groups (Horizon Theatre, Atlanta Opera, Gay Men's Chorus, Avolante Winds/Woodwind Quintet, and many local concert bands).

"I have also privately coached flutists and



Ira Sudman



Kristie Lewis

will be used.

"We have worked diligently on this plan these past months in conjunction with other state agencies, local governments, and different stakeholder groups to ensure that CCDF dollars are used wisely to help low-income, working families find and pay for child care and to enhance the quality and availability of child care in Georgia," said DECAL Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs. Commissioner Jacobs assigned Assistant Commissioner for Child Care Services Kristie Lewis and Chief Legal Officer Ira Sudman to oversee the process.

Public comments (written and oral) will be considered equally as DECAL finalizes the plan for a March 1, 2016 submission. DECAL will host an informational webinar for the public about the CCDF Plan on Tuesday, February 2, 2016 from 9 a.m.-10 a.m. Please register at this link:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/5181293886956578049>.

## Serving Georgia's Children with Special Needs

To improve services for children with special needs, an agreement was signed last month by DECAL, Georgia Department of Public Health, Georgia Head Start Association, Georgia Department of Education, and Region IV Administration for Children and Families. These agencies have developed a plan to coordinate services, transition, screen and refer children for special services, and to share training among each agency.

"The purpose is to ensure that all children with special needs receive high quality services," said Janice Haker, Georgia Head Start State Collaboration Director, who has coordinated the effort over the past two years.

In photo are (L-R) DECAL Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs; Dr. Brenda Fitzgerald, Commissioner, Department of Public Health; Richard Woods, State School Superintendent; Stephania Whitehurst, President, Georgia Head Start Association. Back row: Donna Johnson, State Director Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs; Jan Stevenson, Education Program Specialist, Preschool (619) and Speech/Language Impaired Program Division for Special Education Services and Supports, Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE); Jennie Couture, Director of Practice and Support Services, DECAL; Janice Haker, Director Georgia Head Start State Collaboration Office. Not pictured is Carlis Williams, Region IV ACF Administrator.





*John Gardner*

musicians in performance technique. Currently, I have purchased several vintage flutes and am in the process of having them restored."

In addition, Gardner creates beaded jewelry for his home-spun company, DIVA John's Luminous Creations, and has taught jewelry making briefly for Michael's craft store in Tucker.

His favorite quote is by Raymond Charles Barker: "You are more than you appear to be; Life is greater than you have ever known it; The best is yet to come."

## 2015 in Review: Georgia's Early Learning Challenge Grant

### 2015 IN REVIEW:

# GEORGIA'S EARLY LEARNING CHALLENGE GRANT

**In December 2013, Georgia was awarded a \$51.7M Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge grant. Over the four year grant period, Georgia will create an early learning agenda that builds and strengthens current early learning and development systems. See how Georgia progressed in meeting these goals in the grant's second year!**



## Bartlett Receives First Lady's "With a Servant's Heart" Award



*Pictured (L-R) Governor Nathan Deal, DECAL's Richard Bartlett, First Lady Sandra Deal, Debra Bartlett*

A DECAL employee who also serves as pastor of a Henry County congregation and plays Santa to children who might not otherwise have a Christmas has been honored by Georgia's First Lady Sandra Deal and DECAL Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs. Last month Richard Bartlett, Lead Examiner in DECAL's Audits and Compliance Division, received the "With a Servant's Heart" Award from the First Lady's Children's Cabinet. The honor included coffee with the First Lady and a tour of the Governor's Mansion.

"Richard's servant heart is rooted in and is an outpouring of his personal faith," said Commissioner Jacobs. "He is pastor of the Stockbridge Church of God of Prophecy, but his service is not limited to those of his congregation or necessarily those of his faith. Richard has a heart for all people and willingly gives of his time, money, and talents to better the lives of those he comes in

contact with on a daily basis."

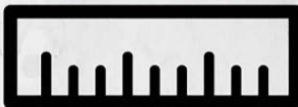
For the past 22 years, Bartlett and his family have organized "Santa Surprise" using their own time and money to solicit or buy toys for children from Henry County families who are struggling financially. He has also volunteered as Santa Claus at the Henry County DFCS office to give children living in foster or relative care an opportunity to visit with and receive gifts from Santa. Bartlett also donates much of his time as



### 1 WORKFORCE SUPPORTS

The Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) assisted in paying for **889** early childhood education credentials and degrees.

### 2 EARLY LEARNING STANDARDS



DECAL printed **20,000** Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS) Teacher Toolboxes. Each toolbox targets a specific age and includes thousands of developmentally appropriate standards-based activities.

### 3 INCREASING ACCESS TO HIGH QUALITY CHILD CARE



**451**  
**11,214**

new child care programs became Quality Rated.

children who receive child care subsidy were served in Quality Rated programs receiving tiered subsidy reimbursement based on star level.

### 4 SUPPORTING FAMILIES

A child care center-based home visiting program was established in each of Georgia's four Early Education Empowerment Zones.



[decals.ga.gov/BfS/EarlyLearningChallenge.aspx](http://decals.ga.gov/BfS/EarlyLearningChallenge.aspx)

**Georgia's Pre-K Program  
Receives National Recognition**

pastor to those who cannot afford to pay for funerals or weddings.

Each state agency represented on the Children's Cabinet recognized one employee who regularly goes above and beyond in community service beyond their official role.



Governor Nathan Deal and First Lady Sandra Deal are pictured with the recipients of the "With a Servant's Heart," including DECAL's Richard Bartlett.

### Summer Food Summit a Success

The Nutrition Services Division held the second annual Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) Summit at The Loudermilk Conference Center on Wednesday, January 20, 2016. Although inclement weather was forecasted, over 150 new, potential and experienced sponsors came out to learn more about the SFSP and how they could get involved in their own communities. The SFSP is a child nutrition program funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Organizations such as private nonprofits, school systems, and faith-based organizations can participate as approved sponsors. These sponsors serve healthy and nutritious meals to children across the state during the summer when school is out of session.



Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs welcomes sponsors to the Second Annual SFSP Summit.

With over ten workshops for attendees to choose from, seven vendors with products and services relevant to the SFSP, and our very own Commissioner Jacobs to welcome everyone to the summit, it was a breeze keeping our sponsors engaged. Additionally, the Georgia Food Bank Association, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and DECAL provided some great giveaways for the participants. including all-weather tents to be used during meal service.



Some lucky participants like these won outreach kits for promoting Summer Meals in their communities.

### DECAL Participates in Conference on Children

DECAL participated in the 29th Annual Southern Conference on Children held at Georgia Southern University in Statesboro. Shown (L-R) are Lindsay Miller, Quality Rated Assessor;





Georgia's Pre-K Program is one of the best in the country, according to a study by New America's Early & Elementary Education Policy team. They singled out Georgia for providing full-day services and requiring teachers to have a bachelor's degree and early childhood education specialization. Click this link

to view the article: <http://www.edcentral.org/prekstates/>.

Let Us Hear From You!

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)

Sharon Aston, Infant/Toddler Specialist; Kesha McNeal, CCS Consultant; and Sarah Beck, System Reform Communications Specialist.



### CALi Contest Comes to a Close

Since December, child care programs across Georgia have been posting photos of their classes inviting our new mascot, CALi, and Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs to come for a visit. The deadline for the contest was January 29, 2016, and a random drawing will be held soon to determine the winning school. Here's a look at some of the entries inviting our agency spokespuppy to visit for some hugs and high-fives.

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

Dawn Henderson, Marietta  
Sixth Congressional District

Sherron Murphy, Lawrenceville  
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

## 900th Quality Rated Child Care Program





Congratulations to  
**Georgia's 900th**  
Quality Rated child  
care program!

**Childcare  
Network #218**  
Columbus, Georgia



**QUALITY  
RATED**  
www.QualityRated.org

### The Faces of DECAL

*DECAL faces featured in the banner of this issue are (L-R)  
Shannon Curtis, Jill O'Meara, Brian Collin, Barbara Sanders, Carole  
Allen, Veronica Thomas, and Twylah Tippett.*

## Congratulations to the newest QUALITY RATED child care programs!

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| Janet S. Hall, Pooler ★                 | ★ Sheena L. Cutts, Decatur                     |
| Vera D. Picktt, Ellenwood ★             | ★ ★ Sheltering Arms - Welcome All, Atlanta     |
| Rebecca P. Holmes, Lithonia ★ ★ ★       | ★ ★ Sherry L. Satterfield, Hinesville          |
| Childcare Network #241, Conyers ★ ★     | ★ ★ ★ Childcare Network #225, Columbus         |
| A Child's Night Out, Marietta ★         | ★ Childcare Network #210, Lawrenceville        |
| Creative Kids, Brooklet ★ ★             | ★ ★ ★ Francina Ware, Hinesville                |
| Maggie Campbell Gingerbread             | ★ Tallapoosa Christian Academy, Tallapoosa     |
| House Early Learning Center, Tifton ★   | ★ ★ White Oak Learning Academy #2, Dawsonville |
| Frances E. Punkosdy, Tallapoosa ★       | ★ Funfield Learning Cottage, Villa Rica        |
| Lily Pads Learning Center, Columbus ★ ★ | ★ Diane P. Seabrooks, Pooler                   |
| Santana M. Smith, Warner Robbins ★ ★ ★  | ★ ★ Childcare Network #218, Columbus           |
| Angelia M. Hutchens, Athens ★           | ★ Kawanna Arnold, Atlanta                      |