

Decidedly DECAL

Highlighting the Events That Shape Who We Are



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DECAL By the Numbers

- 84,000** - Slots in Georgia's Pre-K Program
- 80,620** - Current enrollment in Georgia's Pre-K Program
- 5,000** - Waiting list for Georgia's Pre-K Program
- 4,869** - Licensed child care programs in Georgia
- 1,232** - Quality Rated child care programs in Georgia
- 73,508** - Registered users in the Georgia Professional Development System (GaPDS)

Commissioner's Corner

by Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs



Dear Fellow DECALers,

Does this look familiar?

I keep this in my state id holder as a constant reminder of what we as a department consider important...and value.



In this month's column I'm focusing on the first value: Delivering stellar customer service...although in some ways, I feel like I'm "preaching to the choir." I'm proud of DECAL's reputation for providing quality customer service. But, it never hurts to remind ourselves of the characteristics we want to embody day-in and day-out.

When you think of a company, store, or service...Who comes to mind for providing excellent customer service? I've experienced both good and bad, but Chick-Fil-A is a company that has consistently provided me with great customer service.

One reason: From the corporate offices...to the stores in food courts and on the streets, Chick-Fil-A employees are asked to approach each customer in context of the sentiment illustrated in the following video: please go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2v0RhyZ3lvY>.

The reality so clearly expressed in this video is true...not only of Chick-Fil-A customers...but of DECAL's customers too...and not only of DECAL's external customers but of our internal customers (each other) as well.

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March Is "Read Across Georgia" Month

Join Governor Nathan Deal, First Lady Sandra Deal, and Get Georgia Reading this Thursday, March 2, 2017, 11:00 AM in the North Wing of the State Capitol to kick off "Read Across Georgia" Month. The initiative is held annually in support of Gov. Deal's goal of increasing the percentage of children reading at grade level by the completion of third grade. The Deals believe parental activities as simple as reading stories aloud to young children can greatly improve and enhance our students' reading and literacy skills.

Decidedly DECAL CALi Quiz Winner

DECAL's Senior Recruiting Specialist Sonya Price is the winner of this month's Decidedly DECAL CALi Quiz. She won two tickets to the [World of Coca-Cola](#). Sonya's name was drawn from all employees who took the quiz and scored 100.



Sonya Price

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!

March Birthdays



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

2 - Lashawnda Evans
2 - Katie Hagan
2 - Mark Waits
3 - Megan Torello
5 - Jennifer Bailey
5 - LaJuana Williams

Even when our customers are demanding and less than polite (and we've all experienced this kind of customer...external and internal), we can be responsive, timely, courteous, and respectful. We never know what may be creating stress in the other person's life, but we may be able to minimize that stress by our response.

It may sound old-fashioned and "hokey" in the 21st century, but one of the things I shared the first time I met with DECAL leadership was what I consider to be key to success...at work AND in life. "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Keeping that golden rule in mind when interacting with all our customers will certainly impact the way we respond and will help ensure that the customer service we provide is always stellar.

When it comes to interacting with our customers, my goal, and I hope your goal as well, is for DECAL to be known as the most customer friendly, professional, responsive, and courteous department of state government.

Warmly,

CAPS Eligibility Transition Is Well Underway

Work continues on transferring the eligibility function of Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) Program from the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) to DECAL and on building out the new centralized headquarters for Scholarship Administration and other CAPS offices in downtown Atlanta. In January, the DECAL CAPS team, led by Assistant Commissioner for Federal Programs Elisabetta Kasfir, met with DHS CAPS supervisors and field program specialists in Atlanta and Macon. The team also conducted a webinar for all DHS/DFCS CAPS employees. In February, the team provided follow-up opportunities for DHS CAPS employees to meet with them in Macon and Atlanta. One more event will be held in Tifton on March 9, 2017.

The CAPS Program transition team recently formed three sub-groups to focus specifically on workload sharing between the agencies, client communications and agency coordination, and new DECAL CAPS procedures. These sub-groups will include DECAL and DHS/DFCS CAPS staff at all levels to strategize the best ways to support the CAPS program at both agencies during the transition.

Earlier this year existing DHS and DECAL staff got a first look at career opportunities in the new CAPS organization. Positions included Family Support Consultants, Family Support Managers, Quality Assurance and Training Consultants, a Quality Assurance and Training Administrator, Scholarship Administration Managers, Scholarship Administration Specialists, and a Policy and Process Improvement Administrator.

More positions will be posted as we launch Waves 1 and 2 of the transition later this year.

Meanwhile, preliminary work has begun on

- 6 - Jo Ann Gazick
- 6 - James Holloway
- 7 - Glenda Hambrick
- 9 - Susan Adams
- 12 - Brian Griffin
- 12 - Susan Winston
- 14 - Scott Hall
- 14 - Julie Harnage
- 16 - Elizabeth Crofton
- 18 - Alethea Cicero-Brown
- 18 - Sondra Paster
- 19 - Bernice Henderson
- 20 - Esther Duggan
- 20 - Titus Dyson
- 20 - Shannen Grimes
- 20 - Monica Jennings
- 21 - Shannon Williams
- 23 - Paul Ominde
- 27 - Brandon Cason
- 27 - Amy Page
- 27 - Ashley Shirah
- 29 - Meghan Pendergast
- 30 - Kenyatta Wade
- 31 - Mari Springs
- 31 - Pamela Stoner

Day in the Life of Kristie Lewis

Assistant Commissioner for Child Care Services Kristie Lewis was born in Macon, Georgia, and has lived in middle Georgia her entire life. However, she plans to move to Atlanta this summer. In her words, "I have been commuting long enough."



Kristie Lewis

In July of this year, she will have worked for DECAL for 16 years, mostly in Child Care Services.

When asked what a typical day here includes, she said there is no "typical," but that ultimately she is "responsible for ensuring that the Child Care Services Division operates effectively and efficiently." She notes that she works hard to balance immediate issues and strategic planning.

Even on a stressful day, she is thankful to have a job she enjoys. When she gets stressed, she thinks about how lucky she is to



the new CAPS offices, located on the second and fifth floors of the State Agriculture Building located at 19 Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive in Atlanta, across from the State Capitol and less than a block from the Twin Towers. The Agriculture Building is pictured at left. Plans call for 4,873 square feet of space on the second floor and 10,587 square feet of space on the fifth floor.

Georgia Gateway Launches Henry County Pilot

On February 6, 2017, the state of Georgia's new integrated eligibility system, Georgia Gateway, began its Pilot phase in Henry County.



Georgia Gateway is a collaborative effort between DECAL and the Department of Community Health (DCH), Department of Human Services (DHS), Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS), and Department of Public Health (DPH), to design and implement a computer-based integrated eligibility system and business processes across state benefit programs including Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) Program. The pilot will continue to test functionalities each week as Georgia Gateway moves towards its next phase in spring 2017.

Georgia Gateway will replace the existing legacy systems with a modernized system that complies with federal requirements, enhances fraud prevention measures, provides real-time eligibility determinations for certain benefit programs, and creates a common portal for customers to process and manage their benefits for various assistance programs.

Updates on this project are posted monthly on POLAR.

Board Member Spotlight: Sheri Hooper

Sheri Hooper represents the Ninth Congressional District on the Board of Early Care and Learning. She is the founder of the Interactive Neighborhood for Kids (INK), a children's museum in Gainesville, Georgia (www.inkfun.org), from which she recently retired after serving 15 years as the full-time volunteer CEO. She is responsible for assembling the INK board of directors and seeking private funding for the museum, which is now recognized as a non-profit 501(c) 3 serving over 72,000 visitors annually.

Hooper began to lay the groundwork for INK in the spring of 2001, inspired by her passion for childhood learning and a visit to the

have the opportunity to have the job she does, keeping in mind that not everyone can have a job they like because of lack of education, experience, or access.

Kristie loves that she gets to work with "a lot of creative, bright, committed people throughout the department, but especially the CCS licensing staff...When child care is improved in Georgia, everyone benefits. And licensing is a critical and foundational piece of this improvement."

If Kristie were Commissioner for a day, she would ask staff about their challenges and opportunities, and then try to minimize challenges and increase opportunities based on what she learned.

Something interesting about Kristie is that she binge watches shows. In just a few months in 2016, she watched the entirety of Sons of Anarchy, Game of Thrones, Vikings, Bloodline, Stranger Things, and Black Sails. She is currently watching Z. On the weekends, she enjoys live music at small venues.

Kristie has a 23-year-old son Colby who is set to graduate with a degree in Criminal Justice in May. She also has two cats, Mama Cat and Sammie, whom she loves dearly.

Before she says, writes, or does anything, Kristie asks herself, "Is it helpful?" This helps her focus her energies in the right place and not waste time.

Lunch and Learn



Sheri Hooper

Children's Museum in San Antonio, Texas. She previously founded two MOMS (Moms Offering Moms Support) playgroups, one in Charlottesville, Virginia and one in Gainesville.

Hooper is Co-Chair for Collins for Congress, the Chattahoochee District Chair and a Council Board Member for Boy Scouts of America, and has served on many other committees in the school and community environment. She has been recognized by many organizations for her efforts to serve the children of her community. She was the recipient of the Youth Service Award in 2006 from the Kiwanis Club of Gainesville, the 2007 Blazing Star Award from Gainesville/Hall County Convention & Visitors Bureau, the 2007 ABWA Business Woman of the Year Award, the 2011 Gainesville Rotary Club Woman of the Year Award, and the 2013 Master Entrepreneur Award.

A native of Dahlonega, GA, Hooper has a background in art and education as well as retail business. She lives in North Hall County with her husband Dr. Trevor Hooper. They have three children: 20-year-old son Tyler, currently a sophomore at Berry College, and 18 year old identical twin daughters Emily, who is a freshman at Savannah School of Art and Design, and Katie, who is a freshman at Coastal Carolina University.

Hooper loves spending time with her family, traveling (especially to the beach), being outdoors, and playing tennis. She has a rescue dog named Marney, who she thinks actually rescued her. She and her husband hope to downsize, meaning less housework and more time outside enjoying nature. And maybe, they might even get a few chickens!



Child Care Services team members enjoyed lunch recently while attending professional learning community training in Warner Robins. Shown are (from upper right) Rachel Fowler (Quality Improvement), Carrie Spangler (Central Region), Chrissy Clayton (Applicant Services), Brandon Cason (Southeast Region), Margarita Scott (Northwest Region), and April Brown (Complaint Unit).

**Let Us Hear
From You!**



DECAL participated in Georgia Head Start Association Day at the State Capitol on Thursday, February 16, 2017. Shown are Head Start Collaboration Director Allison Setterlind (left) and GHSA President Tanya Thomas.



Got a great new idea for the Agency?
Share it through DECAL's

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

DECAL Assistant Commissioner for Child Care Services Kristie Lewis last month served on a national Child Trends panel on licensing and quality. Shown with Lewis at the Child Trends offices in Bethesda, Maryland, are (L-R) Nina Johnson and Sheri Fischer from the National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance and Child Trends researchers Kelly Maxwell and Kathryn Trout.

Congratulations to the newest  **QUALITY RATED™** child care programs!

- ★ Learning Time Child Development Center, Gwinnett
- ★★ Cynthia M. Pace, Chatham
- ★★ Amanda L. Welchel, Jackson
- ★★★ Nancy L. Santos, DeKalb
- ★★ Bertha B. Lawrence, DeKalb
- ★ Berean Christian Early Learning Academy, DeKalb
- ★★★ Preferred School Care at B.E. Usher Elementary, Fulton
- ★★★ Sheltering Arms - East Lake Village, DeKalb
- ★★ Sportz Center Academy, DeKalb
- ★ Giselle Learning Academy, DeKalb
- ★★ Leaders of Tomorrow Learning Center, Dougherty
- ★ Haygood Child Development Center, Fulton
- ★★ Kimberly D. Chesteen, Clayton
- ★★ Rose H. Curley, Lincoln
- ★★ Serafina Wright, Chathan
- ★ JahcINETTE A. Dolphin
- ★★★ Candler County Head Start, Candler
- ★ Sweet Peas Day Care, Albany
- ★ Apec Learning Center, Fulton
- ★★ McCullough's Creative Child Care, DeKalb
- ★★ Peachtree Academy - East, Rockdale
- ★ Loving Arms Child Development Center, Fulton
- ★ Na-Na's Day Care Center, Inc, DeKalb

Carlene Talton, Decatur
Fifth Congressional District

Dawn 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
Tenth Congressional District

Victor Morgan, Cartersville
Eleventh Congressional District
(Chair)

Jerri Kropp, Statesboro
Twelfth Congressional District

Melissa Boekhaus, MD., Mableton
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) Kimberly Mitchell, Woody Dover, Shayla Lewis, James Keith, Vanessa Brown, Emily Grosoff, and Hasnein Gulamali.



*Congratulations to Denise Green, one of our
QUALITY RATED™ child care programs who
increased her star rating in February!!!*

★★ Denise Green, Dougherty (1 to 2 star)

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