

Decidedly DECAL

Highlighting the Events That Shape Who We Are



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DECAL By the Numbers

5.4 million - Summer Food Service Program meals served in 2017

82,980 - Students enrolled in Georgia's Pre-K Program

12,274 - CCS visits to date in FY2018

8,563 - Child and Adult Care Food Program sites in Georgia

4,693 - Licensed child care programs in Georgia

1,543 - Quality Rated child care programs in Georgia

Follow DECAL on Social Media

Commissioner's Corner

by Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs



Dear DECAL Team,

It was great seeing many of you at our recent regional meetings all across the state, from Cartersville and Marietta to Augusta and Macon. As you know, we have created six new DECAL regions recognized by all of our programs in order to achieve one of the goals in our strategic plan to "Build a framework that aligns DECAL programs and services across regions for children from birth to age eight."

And don't worry Twin Towers and Ag Building (or Capitol Hill as I like to call it), we are planning a meeting with all of you in the near future. And we will meet again in our regional meetings this fall.

While employees on Capitol Hill see and interact with each other on a regular basis, that's not as easily achieved by employees based in home offices who primarily work in child care programs and other locations. Sometimes you can feel isolated and disconnected from the rest of the agency. The goal of this new regional approach is to increase intra-departmental and cross-divisional exposure in response to feedback that I received from surveys and all staff meetings. This will assist in helping all employees of DECAL become familiar with all our divisions and build relationships with peers who work in the same areas of the state.

As I said in the meetings, I hope you added a new tool to your toolbox to help you in your job, learned something new about another division, and got to know someone you had never met before. Be sure to complete the survey by May 4 so we can continue to make all of our employee meetings better each time.

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Celebrating State Employees

Governor Nathan Deal has proclaimed May 6-12, 2018, as State Employee Recognition Week, and Wednesday, May 9, 2018, as State Employee Recognition Day. DECAL is celebrating with Cake with CALi, candygrams, a Flat CALi contest on Instagram, and more!

"I would like to personally thank you for your hard work and dedicated service to the citizens of Georgia," said Governor Nathan Deal. "Your impact, and often-times behind the scenes work, advances the health, education, safety, and well-being of all Georgians."

This week of employee recognition provides a collaborative effort to honor the thousands of dedicated individuals who make up the State's workforce. State Employee Recognition Day is an excellent opportunity to express appreciation to state employees at a time when their dedication is even more valued and appreciated.

State Employee Recognition week is not only statewide, but nationwide as well. Throughout the country, mayors, governors, agency leaders, communities and public service organizations participate in Public Service Recognition Week (PSRW) by issuing proclamations; hosting award ceremonies and special tribute events; and delivering messages about the value of public service.

Watch your e-mail for more details. You're appreciated!

Research and Policy Analysis Team Receives Grant



DECAL's Research and Policy Analysis Team was awarded a grant on April 2, 2018. The grant will be used to conduct policy-relevant research around the state's childcare development fund plan.

Initially, the Research Team received a phase one grant in September 2016 for 18 months. Phase one was used to plan the research. The

Thanks to Director of Professional Learning Christi Moore and her team for coordinating the regional meetings and her committee composed of Rian Ringsrud, Faith Duncan, Jennie Couture, Donna Johnson, Amy Page, Jennifer Bridgeman, LariLyn Beyer, Brandon Cason, Laura Davis, Jill West, April Brown, Rosalind Merrell, Jill Vandenbos, Katie Hagan, LeighAnn Hendrix, Bridgette Washington, Earlene Reynolds, Thea Stevens, and Alexandria Williams.

The Child Care Services division is expanding and broadening its regulatory scope of work. Work is currently underway as CCs began expanding its Exemption and Enforcement units and enhancing its Quality Improvement and Training unit in April 2018. Expanding the Exemption unit will allow DECAL to perform random monitoring of approximately 10-percent of Georgia's exempt programs each year, in addition to new required annual inspections of government operated exempt programs and day camps accepting CAPS scholarships. This will include health and safety monitoring for CCDF funded programs, because that is not within our jurisdiction for non CCDF programs, but monitoring will be based on ensuring that the programs are operating within the limits of their exemptions and not expanding their scope of services.

Expanding the Enforcement unit will allow DECAL to expedite adverse actions and proactively pursue unlicensed programs through social media and other avenues.

As you can see, while many state agencies may slow down in the summer, DECAL is getting fired up for some exciting new opportunities. I have enjoyed celebrating the 25th Birthday of Georgia's Pre-K Program, especially with the new Coy Bowles' book "Behind the Little Red Door." Presenting a copy of this book to every child and their classroom has truly been a joy for everyone involved. And Coy has been a pleasure to work with in visiting classrooms, reading to children, and even playing his guitar!

I hope you and your family can take some vacation time over the next few months to relax and recharge. Be safe in your travels and have fun! It is an honor to work with each of you in serving Georgia's youngest learners and helping them build a strong foundation for their futures.

See you soon!

Ringsrud Named Deputy Commissioner

Rian Ringsrud is transitioning into the position of DECAL Deputy Commissioner for Finance and Administration, working with Ray Higgins who will be leaving the job at the end of May to serve as Executive Director of Mississippi's Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS).

Ringsrud has served as DECAL's Director of Audits and Compliance for the last four years. Prior to that he worked for the Georgia Department of Audits and Accounts (DOAA) for over nine years after starting his career with the Budgetary Responsibility and Oversight Committee (BROC) with the Georgia General Assembly in 2004. He is a Certified Fraud

Bentley Ponder

most recent grant is phase two of the project that will be used to conduct research. Based on some of the work that was done in phase one of the project, the team decided to conduct their phase two work centered on services for infants and toddlers. This will be the first time the department has a research agenda specifically dedicated towards DECAL's services for infants and toddlers.

The research will be targeted on three areas: barriers for families in accessing high quality infant and toddler care, barriers for programs in providing high quality infant and toddler care, and the infant toddler workforce. The team will be working closely with the Instructional Support team to figure out how to do a better job empowering the workforce that serves infants and toddlers and their families. Traditionally, infant and toddler care is the lowest quality care and the workforce is the lowest paid workforce.

"The DECAL Research and Policy Analysis Team is excited to receive this research grant from the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation in the Department of Health and Human Services," stated Bentley Ponder, Director of Research and Policy Analysis. "We are looking forward to expanding our internal research capacity, and work with many of our DECAL colleagues to inform the conversations around improving the quality and availability of early education for Georgia's infants and toddlers."

Reid Completes CEELO Leadership Academy

Congratulations to Laura Reid on successfully completing the Leadership Academy offered by the Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (CEELO). Reid, our Professional Learning Community Specialist who has worked at DECAL for three years, was selected as one of a cohort of national fellows during the 2016 - 2017 year. She described the training as exciting and is "honored" to have had DECAL support her through the process.



The yearlong CEELO Leadership Academy included four in-person sessions, interim online learning opportunities, a job-embedded project, and intensive coaching for each fellow. Reid gained valuable skills that are applicable to her daily tasks.

Examiner (CFE) and a Certified Government Auditing Professional (CGAP). Ringsrud earned a BBA in Management from The University of Georgia.



Ray Higgins and Rian Ringsrud

In his new role, Ringsrud will be responsible for audits and compliance, finance, human resources, federal nutrition programs, government relations, and research and policy analysis.

"I have complete confidence in Rian's ability to smoothly transition into this new role," said Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs. "He brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise that will serve DECAL well."

DECAL & QCC Helping Parents Find Summer Camp and Child Care Programs

DECAL is partnering with Quality Care for Children (QCC) to help parents find summer camps and child care programs for the summer. Parents can verify their camp by visiting www.qualityrated.org to see if it is either licensed or exempt from licensing.

If parents prefer, they can speak with a summer camp referral specialist by calling 1-877-ALL-GA-KIDS (877-255-4254) Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. with early hours beginning at 7:00 a.m. on Monday/Wednesday and extended hours until 9:00 p.m. on Tuesday/Thursday.

"Our first recommendation to parents looking for summer camp is to start early," said QCC Chief Executive Officer Pam Tatum. "Many camps and child care programs offer scholarships, sliding scale fees, and discounts for registering multiple children. By beginning early, families can find child care that fits their budget, alleviate fears regarding child safety, read reviews of the program, and find a program most convenient to where they live."

"Summer camp does more than just provide child care for a family when children are not in school," said Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs. "Attending camp in the summer can help children learn how to work with others, build meaningful relationships, accept guidance, express creativity, and become more independent and confident."

"Sometimes, however, families don't know what to look for or what questions to ask when looking for a summer camp for their children. DECAL and QCC have partnered to create these resources so families can do their homework and make informed decisions about the right camp for their children," Jacobs added.

DECAL and QCC have produced a thirty-second public service announcement to promote www.qualityrated.org through print, broadcast, and social media. The campaign is currently underway. You can view the PSA at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nPA4XwF3-00>.

"The experience offered in-depth content from national experts on results-based leadership, systems thinking and communication," explained Reid, "and I have access to a network of people I can call on if I face any leadership challenges."

The CEELO Leadership Academy is designed to strengthen leadership and management competencies for early childhood education programs in state departments of education (SEAs), early learning agencies, and other state early childhood education agencies. Reid is glad she met a variety of people from all over the country who are working towards the same goals. She says the academy helped her uncover the leader she already is and helped boost her confidence.

We asked Laura what she most enjoyed about her experience and she replied, "the people and the relationships I formed." CEELO's mission is to strengthen the capacity of SEAs to lead sustained improvements in early learning opportunities and outcomes. Working alongside SEAs, state and local early childhood leaders and other federal and national technical assistance providers, CEELO promotes innovation and accountability. The academy introduces concepts of leadership development tailored to state early education administrators. Reid encourages her fellow colleagues to keep an eye out on the CEELO website for upcoming opportunities.

State Officials Launching "Look Again" Campaign



For the fifth consecutive year, Governor Nathan Deal, First Lady Sandra Deal, and Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs will be calling for families and caregivers of children to have a heightened awareness of the dangers of leaving children unattended in vehicles.

Officials hope a news conference planned for Tuesday, May 29, 2018, at 10:30 a.m. at the State Capitol and a new public service

announcement will help prevent heatstroke deaths of children this summer.

Since 2010, 17 children in Georgia have died due to vehicular heatstroke, four in 2017 alone.

Officials ask the public to be their eyes and ears in the community, and if they see a child left alone in a vehicle, call 911 immediately; emergency personnel are trained to respond.

Children's Book Distributed Across the State in Celebration of the 25th Birthday of Georgia's Pre-K Program

Students all across Georgia are receiving their own personal copies of the new Coy Bowles children's book "Behind the Little Red Door" as part of this year's celebration of the 25th birthday of Georgia's Pre-K Program. The Grammy-award winning guitarist recently visited schools in Dallas, Athens, Atlanta, and Gainesville to read the new book, play guitar and take photos with teachers and students.

In addition to every student receiving a free copy of the book, Pre-K classes were asked to participate in a Facebook contest to promote the new book. The contest asked Pre-K classes to demonstrate what they believed was behind the door through a variety of video and art projects. Close to 200 entries were received. The winners of the contest received a visit from Bowles.

Emily Paxson's class at Timothy Elementary School in Athens won the video contest, and Leigh Chauvin's class at Childcare Network #309 in Dallas won the artwork contest. Both winning entries have been posted on the Bright from the Start Facebook page

"Behind the Little Red Door" is available for purchase at www.coybowles.com.



Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs talks with 11 Alive News cautioning parents and caregivers to be diligent in ensuring that children are not left unattended in vehicles.

Board of Early Care and Learning

Supporting and guiding the mission and vision of Bright from the Start:



Shown above, children from across the state received free copies of "Behind the Little Red Door." Celebrating Georgia's Pre-K Program's 25th Birthday below are (L-R) Mindy Binderman, GEEARS; Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs; Coy Bowles; First Lady Sandra Deal; Governor Nathan Deal; Carrie Ashbee, Georgia Foundation for Early Care + Learning; and Bryan Miller, Miller Institute for Public Policy.

Board of Early Care and Learning

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Watch on POLAR





Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

Let Us Hear
From You!



Human Resources team members Sonya Price and Darien Wilson recently hosted a lunch-and-learn workshop for DECAL interns. The workshop focused on resume writing and interviewing skills. Pictured above are Price, Nikki Jefferson, Watson, Darra Jackson, and Nia King.

Person on the Street

Pick two celebrities to be your parents. Who are they?



Rita Lang, Director Scholarship Administration (CAPS):

I would like my celebrity parents to be George Clooney and Oprah Winfrey. George because he seems like he'd be a lot of fun, always joking around. Oprah would bring a balance to George's humor with her thought provoking sage wisdom. Together I'd have the best of both worlds, and their checking account balances wouldn't hurt either!

Iko Blackmon, Applicant Services Consultant:

Barbara Streisand - my favorite singer/performer - and Morgan Freeman; he is an amazing actor and plays many different roles. I enjoy singing and performing and have many shades to my personality, so I think they'd make great parents for me!

Employee Suggestion Program

ideas?

Visit the Virtual
Suggestion Box now!

The Faces of DECAL

DECAL faces featured in the banner of this issue are (L-R) Susan Adams, Damon Smith, Bridget Ratajczak, Quandra Collins, Kimberly Stoy, Sara Myers, and Maxberte Jean-Paul.



Kimberly Brickey, Quality Rated Assessor:

Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson - Any man of his structure, reputation, and character that can go from macho to singing in the movie "Moana" would be my ideal parent. Pink - I love how she encouraged her then 6-year-old child to be herself. Pink encouraged her daughter to be herself despite what others thought. She further explained to her child that "when people make fun of me and say I'm too masculine or I have too many opinions, or my body is too strong, we help other people to change so they can see more kinds of beauty." Yes, she would be my ideal parent.



Geraldine Marriott, CAPS Scholarship Administrative Assistant:
Barack & Michelle Obama



Daverney Freeman - Quality Rated ERS Assessor
Iyanla Vanzant (Mom) - Iyanla will fix your life. Sean Combs (Dad) - P. Diddy can bring the entrepreneur out of a horse.

Congratulations
to the newest **QUALITY RATED CHILD CARE** programs!

- Small Treasures Learning Center, Griffin ✱
- Stages Early Learning Enrichment Center LLC, Austell ✱
- Hahira Head Start, Hahira ✱✱
- Sonya J. Thornton, Lithonia ✱✱✱
- Charlene M. Bates, Villa Rica ✱
- Little Stars Learning Center LLC, Dawsonville ✱✱
- KinderCare Learning Center #906, Atlanta ✱
- Bright Beginnings, Americus ✱✱
- Wilisa Y. Henderson, Lithonia ✱✱
- Tuleda A. Corbin, Sparks ✱✱
- The Playhouse, Patterson ✱✱
- The Harvest School, Stone Mountain ✱✱
- FOJM Learning Center Inc., Covington ✱✱
- G. R. Lighthouse Learning Center, Jeffersonville ✱
- Kidz Choice Learning Center, Pooler ✱✱
- Innovative Playskool Child Care, Forest Park ✱✱
- Austell Learning Academy, Austell ✱✱
- Jam's Athletics, Stone Mountain ✱✱✱
- ✱✱ Favorite Time Academy, Acworth
- ✱✱ Love and Grace Christian Academy, Decatur
- ✱✱ Kids Express Learning Center, Hawkinsville
- ✱✱ Destined for Greatness Academy, Snellville
- ✱✱ Destined for Greatness Academy II, Snellville
- ✱✱ Steppin' Stones Daycare & Preschool, Cedartown
- ✱✱ Rising Stars Enrichment Center, Griffin
- ✱ Nana's School of Knowledge, Garden City
- ✱✱ Destiny Starr Creative Learning Academy, Athens
- ✱ Little Adorables Child Care Center, Lilburn
- ✱✱✱ Prime Time - Mimosa School, Roswell
- ✱✱ Childcare Network #106, East Point
- ✱✱ Juanita V. Felton, Montezuma
- ✱✱✱ Prime Time - Barnwell, Alpharetta
- ✱✱ Rays of Hope Childcare, Thomaston
- ✱✱✱ Vanessa M. Lawson, Cochran
- ✱✱ Stepping Stones Early Development Center, Byron
- ✱✱ The Goddard School, Woodstock



*Congratulations to all of our
QUALITY RATED™ child care programs
who've increased their star rating
in March!*

★★ Building Blocks Learning Academy For Kids Inc., Mableton (1 to 2 stars)

★★ Floyd Head Start (CSRA), Augusta (1 to 2 stars)

★★ Start Smart Learning Center, Rincon (1 to 2 stars)

★★★ The Little School of Savannah Country Day, Savannah (2 to 3 stars)

★★ Early Start Learning Center, Decatur (1 to 2 stars)

★★ KinderCare Learning Center #410, Morrow (1 to 2 stars)

★★ JahcINETTE A. Dolphin, College Park (1 to 2 stars)

★★ SGMC Child Care Center, Valdosta (1 to 2 stars)

★★★ Polk ECDC/Steppin' Stones Day Care, Cedartown (2 to 3 stars)

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