

Decidedly DECAL

Highlighting the Events That Shape Who We Are



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DECAL By the Numbers

- 150** - Participants in the 2013 Farm to Preschool Summit
- 256** - Transportation enforcements FY2013
- 14** - Emergency Closures FY2013
- 3,900** - Classrooms in Georgia's Pre-K Program this year
- 7,000** - Waiting List for Georgia's Pre-K Program
- 132** - Counties served by child care programs in Quality Rated
- 164** - Participants in first Infant and Toddler Conference this year

Important Dates

September 30 - October 4
Georgia's Pre-K Week

Commissioner's Corner

by Commissioner Bobby Cagle



By now you know how much I love stakeholder groups. They provide an opportunity for experts in a variety of fields to create something far better than any one of us could have created individually. Here at DECAL, I meet with 10 stakeholder groups - from Pre-K parents and child care providers to business leaders and the faith-based community - who help us make informed policy decisions impacting Georgia's youngest learners AND the early care and education professionals who care for them.

In 1965, President Lyndon Johnson brought together his own stakeholder group: a group of experts who germinated an idea to help meet the emotional, social, health, nutritional and psychological needs of children from low-income families. That idea that started as an eight-week summer program became known as Project Head Start.

Today - 48 years later - that program is known as Head Start, and each October as a nation we celebrate Head Start Awareness Month, bringing together parents, teachers, students, and other community members to celebrate this amazing accomplishment. Of course today Head Start is a national, year-long program providing comprehensive education, health, nutrition, and parent involvement services to low income families.

Since Head Start began, more than 25 million children ages three through five have participated. Today nearly one million children participate in more than sixteen-hundred different Head Start programs across the country. These programs operate more than 48,000 classrooms in every state and practically every county in the country.

Here in Georgia, DECAL works closely with Head Start to serve thousands of four year olds through Georgia's Pre-K Program and Head Start...many of them in classes blending children and funding. Georgia is fortunate to have Janice Haker as Director of the Georgia Head Start State Collaboration Office, which is housed in DECAL. Janice is a valuable part of my Senior Leadership Team. Through her leadership, Janice has helped prepare more children for school success, closed the achievement gap, and helped more families move toward self-sufficiency by building and supporting partnerships between state funded Pre-K and federally funded Head Start. Janice and her team provide additional

October 1 - November 30

State Charitable Contributions Program (SCCP)

October 8 - 9

Chat with Commissioner in Rome

October 11 - 12

47th Annual Conference of Georgia Association on Young Children, Gwinnett Center, Duluth

October 19

Infant and Toddler Conference, College Park (Sessions available in Spanish)

October 22

Chat with Commissioner in Augusta

November 1

Georgia Head Start Awareness Night with Atlanta Hawks

Quick Links

[DECAL on Facebook](#)

[DECAL on Twitter](#)

[DECAL Website](#)



Open Enrollment Underway

It's that time of year again --- time to think about your healthcare, dental, vision, and life insurance coverage, among other things. The Annual Open Enrollment period for the 2014 Flexible Benefits and Healthcare Plans begins Monday, October 21, 2013, and ends on Friday, November 8, 2013.

In preparation for your healthcare enrollment activity with the 2014 State Health Benefit Plan, you will need to access the new State Health Benefit Plan ADP portal at <https://myshbpga.adp.com/shbp/>

to create your user name and password, set up your password hints and security questions. If you experience problems, you should contact their call center at 1-800-610-1863. (Look for more information on the 2014 Healthcare Plan coming soon from the Georgia Department of Community Health, the agency administering the program.)

In preparation for your flexible benefits enrollment activity with the 2014 Flexible Benefits Program, you need to ensure that you can log in to the [GaBreeze website](#) and complete the new security questions if you have not already done so. Should you experience difficulty accessing your account or problems with your User ID or password,

services promoting parent engagement, health and mental health, assistance for children with disabilities, nutrition, and education.

Visit <http://www.nhsa.org> to learn more about Head Start.

Please join me in congratulating Janice and the Head Start Program on 48 amazing years. I appreciate all that has been accomplished, and I look forward to serving even more children and families through innovative collaborative programs with our Head Start partners in the next 48 years.



Georgia Head Start Awareness with the Hawks



Come support Georgia Head Start and cheer on the Atlanta Hawks at the Home Opener! Celebrate with family and friends as we fundraise and raise awareness within the community!

ATL HAWKS vs. TORONTO RAPTORS

Friday, November 1st at 7:30 pm

(doors open at 6pm)



\$39 Ticket in 100 Level

\$23 Ticket in 200 Level

\$14 Ticket in 300 Level



\$5 from each ticket purchased through the link on the website will go back to the Georgia Head Start Association!

Please visit <http://www.georgiaheadstart.org/> to get your tickets for the night and use the special password "GHS".

If you would like to purchase 8+ tickets, please contact Angela Spence (404) 878-3253 angela.spence@hawks.com

*Tickets are based on availability and prices are subject to change. This game/event may sell out prior to the deadline.

DECAL Priority:

Health & Safety

2013 Farm to Preschool Summit is Big Success

Officials with DECAL, the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) and Georgia Organics are calling our recent 2013 Farm to Preschool Summit, held September 13-14 in Atlanta, a huge success. More than 150 people attended the two-day summit, which was the first of its kind in the nation. Regional

you may need to have them reset. This is a good time to add/verify your home address, phone number and email address.

If you need assistance accessing your account, you can call the GaBreeze Benefits Center Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at 1-877-342-7339. You'll need to provide your name, date of birth, zip code, and last four digits of your social security number to access your Flexible Benefits information. Also, we encourage you to attend one of the twenty-five Flexible Benefits Program/ Informational Fairs being held statewide to assist employees with benefit questions.

Employee Spotlight

Spotlight on...

Mary Stoklas

Mary Stoklas always had a love for young children, whether it was teaching them in a faith-based preschool or selling school supplies that would help them in class. She wanted to do more but there was a problem: Mary did not have a college degree. With a husband and three children plus extended family in her care, there had never been enough time.

So you can see why Mary was a bit hesitant and anxious when the thought of entering Gwinnett Technical College first entered her mind in 2007. On two different occasions she pulled into the parking lot, only to drive right back out thinking this was impossible. The third time, she went inside, passed the college placement test and registered for classes in early childhood education. That night, showing her new ID to her husband of 40 years, she said, "You're married to a college student!"

Today Mary is a Program Evaluation and Development Specialist with DECAL's Quality Rated Program. She is also an inspiration to many that it's never too late to follow your dreams.

"It was something I had to do for myself," Mary explains. "Our kids were in college and I was caring for my aging parents and an aunt. When my parents and aunt passed away I decided it was time to go back to school."

Mary graduated from Gwinnett Tech in 2009 with an associate's degree in Early Childhood Education, and then spent three years earning her bachelor's degree in Early Childhood

education. Experts shared best practices in gardening, food education, and innovative local food procurement strategies.

DECAL Commissioner Bobby Cagle said the summit accomplished multiple goals. "This emphasis on greater use of locally grown fruits and vegetables in child care programs helps fight the childhood obesity that plagues our state and our country," Cagle said. "It also encourages collaborative relationships between child care programs and local farmers and producers, which is great for our economy."



On Saturday, Commissioner Cagle was joined by Dr. Brenda Fitzgerald, Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Public Health, in presenting the first ever Georgia SHAPE Awards. Eleven child care programs were recognized for going above and beyond Georgia's licensing standards in the areas of nutrition and physical activity.



"Farm to Preschool and SHAPE recognized day care facilities provide a foundation for a lifetime of healthy eating and physical activity for our little ones, beginning at a very early age," said Dr. Fitzgerald. "We're talking about our future, so reducing obesity among our preschoolers is critical."

DECAL was recently awarded a \$337,000 Team Nutrition Training Grant from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The grant will allow DECAL to expand the Farm to Preschool Program and its Caregivers Promoting Healthy Habits initiative to other parts of the state. USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Georgia SHAPE Award winners (pictured below) included Kids-R-Kids #27 in Duluth; Dade Head Start/Early Head Start in Trenton; Westside Head Start/Early Head Start in Rocky Face; Luella Academy in McDonough; Little Angels Daycare in Athens; KinderCare Learning Center #1690 in Marietta; KinderCare Learning Center #642 in Douglasville; Greater New Hope Christian Assembly Academy LLC in Stockbridge; and Family Day Care Home operators Eva Polite of Midway, Renae Harris of Hampton, Linda Davis of Buford and Susan Paltrineri of Auburn.



DECAL Team Participates in Corporate Run/Walk Program

Education from Georgia State University. While in college, she worked three part-time jobs as a substitute teacher in the Gwinnett County schools, as a tutor and as an usher with the Gwinnett Braves.

Throughout her college experience, Mary earned the respect of her teachers and fellow students. She was the 2008 Early Childhood Education Student of the Year at Gwinnett Tech, and in 2009 won additional awards from Skills USA and the Georgia Association on Young Children (GAYC). She was recently interviewed for a video commemorating the 10th Anniversary of the Early Childhood Education program at Gwinnett Tech.

"Because of the support and guidance of both Georgia Technical College and Georgia State University, I now have an unbelievable job with DECAL working with Quality Rated," Mary says proudly. She encourages anyone considering returning to college or attending for the first time to pursue it and not let circumstances get in the way.

After all, it's never too late.



Mary Stocklas (R) is pictured during an interview commemorating the 10th Anniversary of the Early Childhood Education program at Gwinnett Tech.

Charitable Contributions Program Kicks Off

Georgia's annual State Charitable Contributions Program (SCCP) kicks off this week, and all state employees are invited to make voluntary donations to local non-profits and charities. This year's campaign, whose theme is "Give TODAY. Change TOMORROW," runs through Saturday, November 30, 2013.

Human Resources Assistant Sabrina Henry is spearheading this year's campaign for DECAL, supported by members of our Employee Advisory Group. For more information on the SCCP, visit www.giveattheoffice.org/_sccp/ or www.team.georgia.gov

DECAL participated in the recent Kaiser Permanente Corporate Run/Walk & Fitness Program, designed to promote health, wellness and fitness among metro Atlanta companies and their employees. A portion of proceeds benefited the Atlanta Community Food Bank, Back on My Feet and the Atlanta Braves Foundation.

Shown in photo are (L-R) Top: Sabrina Henry, Nikiesha Neil, Deborah Toney and Lajuana Williams. Bottom: Crystal Hoffman, Randy Hudgins and Jennifer Popadiuk.



DECAL Priority:

Quality

Georgia Pre-K Week Activities Get Underway

Nearly 150 state and local officials are visiting some 3,900 of Georgia's Pre-K classrooms this week, joining DECAL and Voices for Georgia's Children, a child advocacy organization, in recognizing September 30 - October 4 as Georgia Pre-K Week.

During Pre-K visits, state leaders participate in a learning activity with the children, take a tour of the facility, talk with the staff, and get an up-close look at the ways centers support early learning

"Research shows that the early education of children from birth to age five proves critical to their success in kindergarten and elementary school," said DECAL Commissioner Bobby Cagle. "As a result, we believe investing in our

click on My Benefits-Charitable Giving. You may print an employee pledge form at <http://doas.ga.gov/sccp> and turn it into Sabrina. If you have questions, please contact Sabrina at 404-463-0034 or sabrina.henry@dec.al.gov.



Human Resources Assistant Sabrina Henry (left) accepts DECAL's first donation to the annual State Charitable Contributions Program (SCCP) from Commissioner Bobby Cagle.

New Phone App Empowers Parents



DECAL is excited to join Quality Care for Children (QCC) in announcing the launch of a new phone app designed to help parents in locating quality early

childhood education programs here in Georgia. [This link](#) leads to QCC's news release.

For more information about the app, contact Theresa Prestwood at QCC at 404-479-4202.

October Birthdays



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

- 3 - La Tonya Bonner
- 4 - Craig Detweiler
- 7 - Julia Strickland
- 8 - Andrea Marable
- 10 - Kathleen Jayson
- 11 - Kendra McGhee
- 11 - Garyon Stiggers
- 12 - Melissa Herndon
- 13 - Sarah Benton

youngest learners is important not only to their personal success but also to the long-term economic growth and potential of Georgia."

Governor Nathan Deal will participate by visiting Pre-K classes at the Northeast Intown YWCA, 957 N. Highland Avenue in Atlanta, on Thursday, October 3, 2013, at 9:00 AM. He will be joined by Commissioner Cagle.

Commissioner Cagle and Georgia's First Lady Sandra Deal helped kick off the week on Monday, September 30, 2013, with visits to three North Fulton child care programs: Kids-R-Kids #28 at 3455 Webb Bridge Road in Alpharetta; Appletree Learning Care at 4665 Webb Bridge Road in Alpharetta; and Open Arms Lutheran Child Development Center at 4655 Webb Bridge Road in Alpharetta.

Pictured below, Brandi Brumlow, Executive Assistant to the Governor's Chief of Staff and Intern Program Director, got a jump on Pre-K Week activities by reading last week to a class at Calhoun City Pre-K in Gordon County. "We know that early childhood education is critical to future success, and preparing for elementary school is an important part of life for a child from birth through age five," said Brumlow. "We are thrilled to be honoring some of our youngest learners, and proud of what our state is accomplishing through Georgia's Pre-K program."



Infant and Toddler Care Conferences Continue through Nov. 2

DECAL's 2013-2014 Infant and Toddler Care conferences are off and running. Conferences were held September 14 in Savannah and September 28 in Albany. Upcoming conferences are scheduled for October 19 in College Park and November 2 in Augusta. [Click here](#) for more information.

- 16 - Danna Foster
- 16 - Aneshia Harris
- 17 - Paula Jones
- 18 - Keith Bostick
- 22 - Audrey Lampkin
- 24 - Laura Johns
- 24 - Donna Pettigrew-Jackson
- 26 - Lari Beyer
- 29 - Jamie Carta
- 31 - C. Louanne Hutcheson

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, Savannah
First Congressional District

Susan Harper, Albany
Second Congressional District
(Secretary)

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
Seventh Congressional District

Luann Purcell, Ed.D., Warner Robins
Eighth Congressional District
(Vice Chair)

Tammy Lenkeit, Flowery Branch
Ninth Congressional District

Janice Gallimore, Greensboro
Tenth Congressional District

Victor Morgan, Cartersville
Eleventh Congressional District
(Chair)



DECAL Priority:

Organizational Excellence

Ringsrud Named Director of Audits and Compliance

Rian Ringsrud has joined DECAL as Director of Audits and Compliance.

Previously with the Georgia Department of Audits and Accounts, Ringsrud is a certified Governmental Auditing Professional, Certified Fraud Examiner, and a member of the Institute of Internal Auditors.



Rian Ringsrud

He began his state career with the Georgia General Assembly's Budgetary Responsibility Oversight Committee (BROC). He later transferred to the Audit Department as a Senior Management Analyst where he was responsible for leading a team of auditors in planning and conducting complex performance audits, program evaluations, and special examinations. Originally from Milledgeville, Georgia, Ringsrud earned a BBA in Management from the University of Georgia.

The Faces of DECAL

DECAL faces featured in the banner of this issue are (L-R) Taquella Austin, Rita Lang, Tamara Denise Hall, Phillip Jesup, Morgan Stahl, Stacey Schaff, and Gwen Kahn.

Jerri Kropp, Statesboro
Twelfth Congressional District

Judy Neal, Stockbridge
Thirteenth Congressional District

Vacant
Fourteenth Congressional District

*We are committed to nurturing
Georgia's youngest children, keeping
them safe and healthy, and to enriching
their lives.*