



**Georgia Dept
of Early Care
and Learning**
BRIGHT FROM THE START

Brian P. Kemp
Governor

Amy M. Jacobs
Commissioner

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DECAL Scholars celebrates 20th Anniversary with two \$1,500 Prizes for Early Educational Professionals

*DECAL Scholars of the Year Recognizes Individuals Actively Pursuing ECE Degree or
Credential While Working in Child Care Workforce*

ATLANTA, Ga., (May 20, 2021) – The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) and the Georgia Foundation for Early Care + Learning are celebrating the 20th Anniversary of DECAL Scholars by awarding two \$1,500 prizes to early educational professionals selected as the 2021-2022 DECAL Scholars of the Year. DECAL Scholars supports early care and educational professionals in Georgia in gaining more education and skills and earning financial awards. DECAL Scholars of the Year are limited to those who are actively pursuing a degree or credential in Early Childhood Education while also working in a child care program.

“We are excited to recognize those who are balancing home, work and school to invest in their own education while continuing to serve the children of Georgia,” said DECAL Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs. “Similar to our Pre-K Teachers of the Year, this is a great opportunity for DECAL to recognize and reward early child care professionals who are committed to providing a high-quality early education experience here in Georgia.”

“The Foundation is proud to support this important initiative by recognizing and rewarding our dedicated early childhood educators,” added Carrie Ashbee, Executive Director of the Georgia Foundation for Early Care + Learning. “When you are a teacher by day and scholar by night, it can be challenging to achieve the right balance. We hope these awards are a small way of recognizing the amazing commitment and dedication these early education professionals have to their students and families, both now and in the future.”

There will be two DECAL Scholars of the Year: One attending a four-year college or university and one attending a technical college. Applicants must be working in a licensed Child Care Center, Family Child Care Learning Home, exempt Head Start or Department of Defense program, or Georgia’s Pre-K class in a public school.

In addition to the \$1,500 scholarship, award recipients will receive \$500 for a classroom makeover and a virtual classroom visit from Coy Bowles, lead guitarist for the Zac Brown Band and author of children’s books, including “What’s Behind the Little Red Door?” and a member of the Georgia Foundation for Early Care + Learning Board of Directors.

“DECAL supports ECE professionals all over Georgia in gaining more education, skills, and earning financial rewards,” said Brandi Swain with Care Solutions, responsible for managing DECAL Scholars. “Georgia’s youngest children benefit from higher quality care when ECE professionals continue their professional development and stay longer at their jobs. DECAL Scholars provides free educational counseling, scholarships, financial assistance, and rewards.”

Applications for DECAL Scholars of the Year open May 19, 2021, and close on June 18, 2021. Winners will be announced on July 16, 2021. The application is available on the Georgia Foundation for Early Care + Learning website at www.gaeearlyed.org. For more information, contact Carrie Ashbee at decalscholars@dec.al.ga.gov.

About DECAL

The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning is responsible for meeting the child care and early education needs of Georgia’s children and their families. It administers the nationally recognized Georgia’s Pre-K Program; licenses child care centers and home-based child care; administers Georgia’s Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) Program and federal nutrition programs; and manages Quality Rated, Georgia’s community-powered child care rating system.

The department also houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office, distributes federal funding to enhance the quality and availability of child care, and works collaboratively with Georgia child care resource and referral agencies and organizations throughout the state to enhance early care and education. For more information, go to www.decal.ga.gov.