





Decidedly DECAL

Highlighting the Events That Shape Who We Are

















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DECAL By the Numbers

4,811 - Licensed child care programs in Georgia

6,121 - Completed visits by Child Care Services YTD for FY2018

278 - Calls to 1-877-ALL-GA-KIDS for November 2017

1,445 - Quality Rated Child Care Programs in Georgia

80,570 - Four year olds enrolled in Georgia's Pre-K Program

Commissioner's Corner

by Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs



Dear DECAL Team,

"Because I said so."

How many times did we hear that as children, and maybe even use it today as parents? "Go clean your room." "Why?" "Because I said so." "Don't play in the street." "Why?" "Because I said so."

At times, we have pointed to largely anecdotal information when talking about the success of Georgia's Pre-K Program. Kindergarten teachers

would often say they could tell the difference between students who attended Georgia's Pre-K Program, and those who did not. Other states and some national organizations would recognize our success. When we've been asked why Georgia's Pre-K program was such a great program, our response was focused on the research-based practices of the program, the developmentally appropriate and aligned standards, teacher credential requirements and the number of 4 years olds benefiting from the program; but, to some that sounded like, "Because we said so."

All of that changed in 2011 when the Georgia General Assembly appropriated funds for a three-phase evaluation of the effectiveness of Georgia's Pre-K Program. By 2013, we had actual data from this longitudinal study showing that children exhibited significant growth during their Pre-K year across all domains of learning. This evidence has continued to build over subsequent years.

And now, I am pleased to say we have more proof.

The most recent analysis looked at the performance of 3rd graders who attended Georgia Pre-K and those who did not attend Georgia Pre-K. It specifically compared the scores on the 3rd grade end of

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DECAL Surpassed 2017 SCCP Goal by \$2,000

The annual State Charitable Contributions Program, The Campaign 2017, has officially ended, and DECAL surpassed this year's goal of \$12,000 by donating close to \$14,000! Over 40 percent of DECAL employees either made a one-time donation or signed up for monthly payroll deductions

"Together, through this Campaign, we will make a difference to thousands of people through many worthwhile charities, including our own Georgia Foundation for Early Care + Learning," said Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs, who chaired this year's statewide campaign. "And we accomplished this by buying doughnuts and casual passes; playing a vicious game of Penny Wars; visiting the HR Mystery Manor; and many more fun activities!"

Those who still wish to participate in The Campaign can do so by turning in paper pledges and donations to Shannon Williams or Reg Griffin through Friday, December 8, 2017.

Commissioner Jacobs expressed appreciation to the DECAL Campaign Committee: Shannon Williams, Brian McKeen, Camaria Wright, Carrie Ashbee, Keturah Washington, Paul Ominde, Rachel Fowler, Reg Griffin, Rhae-Nicole Holloway, Stanley Cooper, and Taijha Harden.

Their enthusiastic leadership helped make our efforts successful," she said.

DECAL HR Team Recognized for Excellence

grade test, Georgia Milestones Assessment. Students who attended Georgia's Pre-K Program scored higher than their peers who did not attend Georgia's Pre-K. In fact, the Georgia's Pre-K students scored higher in each area tested. The impact was even greater for students who are receiving free or reduced lunch, and students with a home language other than English.

The complete, formal report will be posted soon to our website. This is great information which I hope is helpful to you in discussing Georgia's Pre-K Program with external audiences and your own family and friends.

As we close out 2017, I thank you for all of your efforts this past year. With so many things happening, including completing the move of CAPS from DFCS to DECAL, the year has not been without its challenges. But like always, you have risen to the occasion and done outstanding work in serving Georgia's youngest children and their families. As Commissioner, I appreciate your focus on customer service and excellence in delivering our programs.

Please take some time to enjoy this wonderful holiday season with your family, and join me in looking forward to a happy and healthy 2018 here at DECAL.

Why? Because I said so.



Sincerely,



DECAL Participates in Children's Healthcare of Atlanta Christmas Parade



2017 Teachers of the Year Nathan Leatherwood from Calhoun Pre-K and Jodi McNamara from Kids R Kids #49 in Lawrenceville

Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs and her family joined our 2017-18 Pre-K Teachers of the Year and CALi, DECAL's official spokespuppy, in the Children's Healthcare of Atlanta Christmas Parade on Saturday, December 2, 2017. The annual Atlanta holiday tradition stepped off at Peachtree and 16th Street and ended at Peachtree and 5th Street. Midtown Atlanta was transformed into Santa Claus Lane with sights and sounds of the season.

With floats, giant helium-filled balloons, and marching bands, the Children's Christmas Parade is the largest holiday parade in the southeast. Thousands of spectators were lined up along the streets eagerly awaiting the arrival of Santa and the official beginning of the holiday season in Atlanta. The parade will be rebroadcast on WSB-TV on Christmas morning.



DECAL's Human Resources Team was recently the winning recipient of the TEAM award for demonstrating Excellence in Human Resources from the Council for State Personnel Administration (CSPA).

Ice Cream Therapy



Nutrition Training Coordinator Sylvia Boykin (right) provides a little ice cream therapy for DECAL employees emotionally impacted by the November 20, 2017, implosion of The Georgia Dome. Located next door to the new Mercedes Benz Stadium, the 25-year-old Dome was cleared to make way for a new hotel and park. Sylvia is shown here with (L-R) Communications Intern Lara Ijitoye and Georgia Foundation for Early Care and Learning Executive Director Carrie Ashbee.

New Faces and Places

Congratulations to the following employees who joined the DECAL



Two-Gen Grants to Improve Access to Child Care and Adult Supports by Lara Ijitoye: Communications/Government Relations Intern

Our vision here at DECAL is to provide access to high quality child care and education for all children regardless of their income or location. We know that one of the best ways we can support young children is by supporting their families. In 2016, Georgia was one of five states to be awarded the Parent and Children Thriving Together (PACTT) grant from the National Governors Association (NGA) and Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP). With funding from PACTT, Georgia can promote two generation strategies to support children from low income families, while supporting their families in attaining education, training and jobs. By partnering with the Head Start, University System of Georgia, Technical College system of Georgia, Department of Economic Development Workforce Division and Department of Labor, DECAL is making three Two-Gen Innovation Grants available to expand community strategies that connect early learning, the workforce and postsecondary in state policy.

The Two-Gen Innovation Grants are designed to get state programs to work better together to give families seamless access to both child care and adult supports, and put the need of the family first. The grant brings together adult and child serving worlds to focus on the needs of families as a whole, enabling everyone the

team in November:

CAPS welcomes Family Support Consultants: Tregra Benjamin-Hoyte, Mechelle Bethea, Africa Blanton, Burlicia Bullock, Rollace Burton, Sonja Gillison, Judy Hasty, Jessica Hicks, Rochelle Holmes, Christine Lambkin, Tolejala Marsh, Brenda McRae, Cheryl Murray, Patricia Neely, Susan Powers, Patricia Sanchez, Audrienne Smith, Tanisha Stewart, and D'wana Walker; Scholarship Administration Specialists: Kristi Burk, Vanessa Culbreth, Michelle Dixon, Mesha Gibson, Rhonda Hines, Ricky Hollingsworth, Cheresha Holmes, Tokela Hooks, Angela Howell, Shana Jackson-Cooper, Demetrius Jasper, Sheila Love, Rosalind Merrell, Phillis Pope, and Dianna Porter; Policy and Process Improvement Administrator Jessica Peterick; Adverse Action/Claims Specialist Deborah Mallery; Administrative Assistant Dorothy Mitchell, and CAPS Administrative Services Manager Andrea Moore.

System Reform welcomes Quality Rated Assessors Sakinah Beyah, Daverney Freeman, Evelin Hicks, and Sara Myers.

CCS welcomes Compliance Consultant Jerica Davis.

December Birthdays



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

- 1 Karen Brown
- 2 Monique Chambers
- 3 Lacey Lewis
- 3 Devon Porter
- 5 Rollace Burton
- 5 Pamela Hall
- 6 Faith Duncan
- 6 Yvette Seales
- 7 Lori Ray
- 8 Mesha Gibson
- 9 Meghan McNail
- 10 Delia Newell
- 10 Megan O'Bara
- 10 Nicole Wilson
- 11 Woody Dover
- 12 Lisa Cooper
- 12 Tamra Thomas
- 13 Christina Rhoden
- 14 Avery Jenkins
- 14 Deborah Kimbrough



Kristin Bernhard

opportunity to reach their full potential. Kristin Bernhard, Deputy Commissioner of System Reform says, "DECAL is pulling everyone together, we want to continue provide quality child care but also support parents' success to give the best result for the family."

The grants will be offered in three counties: Clarke, Bibb and Clayton. Each community will be asked to implement two-generation strategies the will maximize impacts related to children's school readiness, and the ability of parents to attain jobs that promote greater family economic security. Grant ideas can range from creating family resource centers on college campuses, to developing new student orientations that support student parents. By implementing the Two Gen Innovation Grants, DECAL is "uncovering how we can help support parents in attaining their goals," says Kristin, and by focusing on the goals of parents, "we hope to positively impact children across Georgia.

CAPS Completing Transition from DFCS to DECAL by Laura Wagner, CAPS Family Support Director

This month, the CAPS program enters the final stages of its transition from DFCS over to DECAL. Over the last several weeks, we have onboarded our last large wave of new staff and have worked diligently to plan and execute trainings that will enable our team to work successfully for the benefit of our families. Last month, we officially moved in to our 5th floor office space in the Ag building (19 Martin Luther King Jr. Dr., SE) and we are settling in nicely. As a reminder, the program occupies two floors in the Ag building, with Program Administration being housed on the 2nd floor, and Scholarship Administration and CAPS Leadership sitting on the 5th floor.



Laura Wagner

"We are thrilled to finally be able to see all our planning and hard work come to life, and to have our team getting settled into this new space," said Elisabetta Kasfir, Assistant Commissioner for Federal Programs. "This move and transition has been a long time coming, as we have been planning it for over a year now. We would not have been successful in this transition without the tireless efforts of our counterparts in Human Resources, Information Technology, and Finance, and without the continual support of our Executive Cabinet and the entire DECAL team."

Currently, the DECAL CAPS team includes more than 150 of our 191 projected staff members. To put this in perspective, last December, our agency had a grand total of 11 CAPS program staff. We have partnered closely with HR to plan for hiring and onboarding of new team members, with IT to plan for the equipment and system access needs of such a large team in both home-based settings and in a new building, and with Finance to make sure everyone in our Atlanta office has a dedicated space to comfortably perform job duties.

With nearly all staff members in place, and with our last large-scale new employee trainings being completed in December, our final transition of the eligibility function of CAPS will take place on December 18, 2017. As we move forward, we look forward to continuing to uphold our end of DECAL's vision of ensuring that every child in Georgia will have access to high quality early care and education regardless of family income or location. For more information about our transition, please visit: http://caps.decal.ga.gov/en/CAPSTransition.

- 4 Laurianne McDonald
- 14 Raquel Roberts
- 14 Danielle Williams
- 15 Daverney Freeman
- 15 Michelle Hamilton
- 15 Shamonica Sanders
- 16 Angela Melton
- 16 Phillis Pope
- 17 Michele Allen
- 19 Teresa Churchwell
- 19 Tammy Jeune
- 20 Sonja Adams
- 20 Rochelle Holmes
- 20 Doria McQuiller
- 21 Cortera Rogers
- 22 LaTanya Barber-Swift
- 22 Suzanne Harbin
- 23 Rhonda Hines
- 23 Deirdre Williams
- 24 Margaret Armour
- 25 Christine Lambkin
- 25 Margrett Stephens
- 27 Jakeise Moody
- 27 Angela Walker
- 29 Randy Hudgins
- 29 Victoria Stripling
- 30 LaMonika Jones
- 30 Tahishe Smith
- 31 Sabrina Henry

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 (Chair)

Kathy Howell, Carrollton Third Congressional District

Phil Davis, Stone Mountain Fourth Congressional District

Carlene Talton, Decatur Fifth Congressional District



Edward Rowell, Adverse Action Claims Specialist

DECAL Partnering with Musician and Author Coy Bowles on New Book



Joanna Davidovich and Coy Bowles

DECAL is partnering with Georgia musician and author Coy Bowles from the Zac Brown Band on a new children's book which will be presented to over 84,000 Pre-K students and their families across Georgia as a gift. Bowles' association with DECAL honors the 25th birthday celebration of Georgia's Pre-K Program.

Behind the Little Red Door is the fourth children's book from the Grammy-award winning guitarist. Incredibly imaginative in text and cleverly illustrated by Joanna Davidovich, this delightful picture book encourages children to use every bit of their creativity to determine what could be behind the little red door

in each spread. Bowles' whimsical, singsongy approach to storytelling will charm children of all ages with the turn of each page.

Behind the Little Red Door encourages reading, innovation and fun while learning for children, sideby-side with their adult counterparts.

Dawnn 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

Jerri Kropp, Statesboro Twelfth Congressional District (Vice Chair)

Melissa Boekhaus, MD., Mableton Thirteenth Congressional District

Tangela Johnson, Cohutta Fourteenth Congressional District

Watch on POLAR



Let Us Hear From You!

More on this can be found at People online: http://people.com/babies/coy-bowles-wife-kylie-pregnant-expecting-second-daughter/

Person on the Street What is your dream travel destination?



Maranda Powell, Critical Response Consultant My dream travel destination is hands-down India. The kind of diversity you can see and experience in India is unparalleled. India has everything to offer - mighty Himalayas, scorching desert, beautiful rivers, majestic forts, luxurious palaces, modern cities, archeological wonders... the list goes on.



Nicole Wilson, GPITC Supervisor: I want to go to Santorini because the white buildings set against the crystal blue water is mesmerizing.



Shaketia Robinson-Hymon, Administrative Assistant I know most people will pick some places that are tropical or exotic, but my dream vacation destination would be to go to back to place where I was

born...Stuttgart, Germany. I lived there for the first 8 years of my life, and it was amazing! I am so curious to see how much things have changed...or stayed the same. And it would be amazing to have a real bratwurst, instead of that stuff they sell at Kroger lol!



Bridget Ratajczak I want to visit the Galapagos Islands and Cost Rica. I want to see the amazingly diverse wildlife in both of those places!



The Faces of DECAL

DECAL faces featured in the banner of this issue are (L-R) Sherry Beckett, Brenda Cash, Andrea Fairries Moore, Angie Ramanou, Michelle Hamilton, Craig Detweiler, and Melissa Martino.

Congratulations to the newest QUALITY RATED child care programs!

Sprouting Knowledge Development Center, Augusta * * * Big Blue Marble Academy - Medical District, Developing Minds Academy II, Decatur * Augusta Renee's Kid's World 2 LLC, Savannah ** Tibitha A, Clem, Riverdale Ashia C. Mitchell-Allen, Fairburn ** * Ekwutosi T. Ume, Lithonia A Brighter Choice Learning Academy, Roberta ** First Baptist Church of Springfield Weekday La Petite Academy - Steeplechase, Powder Springs Education, Springfield Ebenezer UMC Preschool, Conyers * ** World of Hope Child Care Learning Center A, Angel's Child Care & Enrichment Center 1, Grovetown Savannah * Lil' Angels Daycare and Kindergarten, Baxley Easter Seals Child Development Center Guice Educare, ** McDonald's Daycare, Oglethorpe Atlanta ** Dorothy L. Carr, Atlanta Janet M. Goodwin, Sparks Quenitra W. Hilliard, Guyton ** * KIDazzle Child Care - LittleFlyers CDC, Atlanta Rosa M. Haves, Atlanta * * Camilla A. Mason, Carrollton Happy Tyme Cottage Learning Center, Augusta * Eva Struway, Marietta Laverne S. Hall ** Kids of Innocence Childcare and Learning Center, Debbian J. Clark, Riverdale Children's World Learning Center LLC, *Angel's Childcare and Enrichment Center Inc. III, Hawkinsville



- ** ABC Childcare and Learning Center LLC, Covington (1 to 2 stars)
- ** Alberta C. Watson, Valdosta (1 to 3 stars)
- ** Kids 'R' Kids #23, Watkinsville (2 to 3 stars)
- ** Burke County Public Schools Early Head Start, Waynesboro (1 to 2 stars)
- ★★★ Little Geniuses Daycare, Thomson (2 to 3 stars)

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