

Decidedly DECAL

Highlighting the Events That Shape Who We Are



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Commissioner's Corner

by Commissioner Bobby Cagle



Each October and November we as state employees are invited to participate in something very special. It's called the State Charitable Contributions Program (SCCP) and it gives us an opportunity to collectively and individually give something back to the communities

we love through donations to local non-profits and charities. The timing is right since crunch time for many of these organizations comes with the holidays at the end of each year.

For over 15 years now, employees with the State of Georgia and the University System of Georgia have generously contributed more than \$30 million in support of more than 250 organizations serving Georgia. Non-profits range from the American Cancer Society and Children's Health Care of Atlanta to Georgia 4-H Foundation and Habitat for Humanity, plus many more. Here at DECAL, you may be interested in supporting one of 28 child advocacy centers on the list.

From my perspective, the success of this program is not only measured in dollars raised but also in the percentage of employees participating. And whether it's a dollar or a hundred dollars, every donation counts!

DECAL By the Numbers

- 4** - Community Meetings on New Lead Teacher Credentials
- 971** - Programs applying for Quality Rated
- 500** - Early learning professionals attending training by Caregivers Promoting Healthy Habits

1,667 - Sites offering Summer Food Service Program in 2012
14 - Groups making up 2013 Stakeholder Advisory Network
1,100 - Teachers pre-registering for Zoo Atlanta's 2012 Educator Appreciation Day



Roslyn Coleman and Jennifer McCreary manned a table during Zoo Atlanta's 2012 Educator Appreciation Day

New Logo for Georgia's Pre-K Program



In conjunction with the 20th Anniversary of Georgia's Pre-K Program, DECAL unveiled a new logo for the lottery-funded program for four-year-old children. DECAL Commissioner Bobby Cagle officially introduced the logo at the 46th Annual Conference of the Georgia Association on Young Children (GAYC) held on September 29th and 30th at the Gwinnett Center in Atlanta.

You can make a one-time donation or opt for a monthly payroll deduction to support your organization throughout the year. Our Senior Leadership Team joins me in hoping for 100-percent employee participation this year at DECAL.

To that end, I have already made my personal contribution to SCCP for 2013.

Our recent economic downturn has shown us that no one is immune from sometimes needing help. The loss of a job or a sudden chronic illness can change the playing field for any one of us and at any given time. Ironically, you might be giving money to an organization you will one day need as a recipient. It has happened before.

For more information on SCCP, you can contact our agency lead, Child Care Resource & Referral Agency Manager Angela Melton at 404.651.5335. You can also visit the [SCCP web site](#).



Child Care Resource & Referral Agency Manager Angela Melton, who is coordinating the State Charitable Contributions Program, looks on as DECAL Commissioner Bobby Cagle makes his personal contribution.

Celebrating Georgia Pre-K Week and 20th Anniversary of Georgia's Pre-K

"We needed something to visually communicate the important role played by Georgia's Pre-K in preparing our young learners for their educational journeys and future competition in the global economy," said Commissioner Cagle. "The stair steps remind us that early education of children from birth to age five proves critical to their success in kindergarten and elementary school. As a result, we believe investing in our youngest learners is important not only to their personal success but also to the long-term economic growth and potential of Georgia."

Commissioner Cagle said the logo, designed collaboratively with Atlanta marketing and PR firm Jackson Spalding, complements the Bright from the Start and Quality Rated logos now used by DECAL.

Happy Anniversary, Georgia's Pre-K Program

By Gov. Nathan Deal

Twenty years ago, Georgia took a single step, beginning a 20-year journey that has led to a statewide Pre-K program that serves as a national model today. A journey of a thousand miles began with a single step.



In 1992, thanks to the vision of then-Gov. Zell Miller, Georgia voters approved the creation of the Georgia Lottery for Education, supporting new statewide programs

DECAL and Voices for Georgia's Children, a child advocacy organization, declared October 1-5 as Georgia Pre-K Week to highlight the important role Georgia's Pre-K Program plays in Georgia's education continuum and to celebrate the program's 20th anniversary. This is the second official year of Georgia Pre-K Week sponsored by [Voices for Georgia's Children](#) and its Pre-K Week partners.

"Georgia's Pre-K Program is a direct investment in future success," said Georgia Governor Nathan Deal. "As we recognize this milestone, we also recognize that in order for Georgia to be competitive in a challenging global economy, we must have an educational system that transcends the K-12 model. Our nationally recognized Pre-K program is the first step in ensuring we have a highly educated workforce ready for the 21st century."

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

"Georgia's Pre-K is an exceptional education program that serves 84,000 four year olds throughout Georgia," said Pat Willis, Executive Director of Voices for Georgia's Children. "Pre-K is a milestone in a child's early education, and we are proud of Georgia's national leadership in supporting very young children."

Nearly 150 state officials, including Governor Nathan Deal and First Lady Sandra Deal, visited some of the approximately 3,900 Pre-K classrooms located in all 159 Georgia counties.

Georgia's Pre-K Program was created in 1992 after voters approved the creation of the Georgia Lottery for Education to support college scholarships and a voluntary pre-kindergarten program.

for college scholarships and pre-kindergarten classes. The first step was small with 750 at-risk 4-year-olds and their families in a pilot program at 20 sites at a cost of \$3 million. By the fall of 1995, Pre-K was opened to all eligible 4-year-old children, not just children of at-risk families, tripling its size from 15,500 children in 1994 to 44,000 in the 1995 school year. From the beginning, Georgia has built a strong public/private partnership. By funding programs in both public schools and private child care centers, children throughout the state are able to participate in Pre-K. A public/private partnership of this magnitude was a first in Georgia and the nation.

This year, Georgia Pre-K's 20th anniversary, the state will invest more than \$300 million to serve approximately 84,000 of our state's youngest learners. On this journey Pre-K has not only grown in number but also improved in quality. In 2012, the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) identified Georgia's Pre-K program as one of the few nationwide that meets all 10 research-based quality standards.

Our Pre-K program is a direct investment in future success. It enrolls 60 percent of 4-year-olds in the state, educating our future workforce. Research says that 90 percent of brain development



Governor Nathan Deal joined First Lady Sandra Deal in visiting three Pre-K classes at High Point Elementary School in Sandy Springs during Georgia's Pre-K Week. Mrs. Deal, a former teacher, read to students from the children's book, "Who I'd Like to Be," authored by Georgian Elizabeth Brown. Governor Deal read a poem he had written about reading and graciously received a book the four-year-old students had prepared for him.

DECAL Hosts Community Meetings on New Lead Teacher Credentials

DECAL hosted four community meetings in September to discuss new credentials requirements for lead teachers in Georgia child care programs. Beginning December 1, 2012, in addition to a high school diploma or GED, lead teachers in Georgia must have a Technical Certificate of Credit (TCC) from a technical college or a Child Development Associate (CDA) issued by the Council for Professional Recognition, or a comparable credential.

"Research supports that the education and skills of teachers and directors positively impact the preschool experience of Georgia's youngest learners," said DECAL Commissioner Bobby Cagle. "It is important that children have the best prepared teachers possible."

"In talking with providers and teachers, the cost and time required for obtaining this additional educational credential have been concerns, especially in this economy," said Kay Hellwig, assistant commissioner for Child Care Services. "However, through the Hope Grant, the Pell Grant and DECAL's SCHOLARSHIPS and INCENTIVES Program, we can help teachers cover most of the cost, as well as provide some additional funds for incidentals, such as gas and babysitters."

occurs before age 5, and we know from experience that early emotional development lays the foundation for later academic performance, mental health and the capacity to form successful relationships.

For Georgia to be competitive in a challenging global economy, we must have an educational system that transcends the K-12 model. For Georgia to have a highly educated workforce ready for the 21st century, we must continue to invest in our nationally recognized Pre-K program.

Visit a Pre-K classroom today, and you will be amazed by what our 4-year-olds are learning: literacy skills, foreign languages, music, math and technology. Pre-K students are becoming readers and writers; they are on the right path to excel.

Like all state programs, Georgia's Pre-K has faced difficult budget decisions. Earlier this year, working with the General Assembly, I was pleased to see 10 days added back to the Pre-K calendar, increasing this school year from 160 to 170 instructional days.

Beginning this fall, for the first time valuable information from Pre-K classrooms will be conveyed to Kindergarten teachers through the Georgia Department of Education's Longitudinal Data System. This information will help Kindergarten teachers plan their instruction more effectively and strategically.

So, to the thousands of Pre-K providers, teachers and assistant teachers, I say "Happy Anniversary." Over 20 years, your small steps have become great strides and I am honored to join

Both Cagle and Hellwig complimented the Technical College System of Georgia and CDA trainers for their cooperation in providing additional course offerings in early childhood education and child development both on site and online in an effort to help meet the new requirements.

Zoo Atlanta Celebrates Anniversary of Georgia's Pre-K Program

Zoo Atlanta designated October 8-12 as Pre-K Week presented by PNC bank to celebrate the 20th anniversary of Georgia's nationally recognized Pre-K Program.

Self-guided field trips are being offered at discounted rates with chaperones admitted free. Special shows and activities are planned for each morning.

"We are very appreciative of our partnership with Zoo Atlanta that already offers two Educator Appreciation Days in the fall and spring of each year with free admission for teachers and discounts for their guests," said DECAL Commissioner Bobby Cagle. "This special Pre-K Week is icing on the cake...a birthday cake celebrating 20 years of our lottery-funded Pre-K program, recognized as one of the top state programs in the nation. We appreciate PNC making this possible for all of our Georgia's Pre-K classes across the state."

On September 22, DECAL and Zoo Atlanta partnered to host Educator Appreciation Day. Early care and education professionals from throughout the state enjoyed free zoo admission and a discount for their guests for a day of fun-filled activities.



Remembering Charles Shepherd

you on the journey.

Nathan Deal is the governor of Georgia.

Spotlight on... Sarah Benton

Sarah Benton joined DECAL as a Childcare Licensing Consultant in November, 2004.



Today she works in the Central Region under Director Jennifer Bridgeman. The region covers portions of Middle and South Georgia, stretching from DeKalb, Butts, Jasper and Bibb counties to Effingham and Chatham counties on the coast. Child Care Services is responsible for ensuring health and safety in child care settings.

"I felt like this was a good opportunity to make a difference in the lives of many children by helping to increase the quality of care they receive," Benton explained. "I'm proud each time I am able to provide the support and input a provider needs to help them turn a program around. I know that I have been a part of improving the environment for kids and keeping them safe. What's more important than that?"

Bridgeman praises Benton for being dedicated, hardworking and reliable. "Sarah doesn't take the responsibilities of her job lightly, and works with her providers, the community and her fellow co-workers with honesty and true regard for their best interests," she said.

Benton is a 1999 graduate from the University of Georgia with a Bachelor of Science degree in Communication Sciences and Disorders. Married for eleven years

On September 14, 2012 staff at DECAL were deeply saddened to learn that Charles Shepherd had passed away from complications with heart disease. Charles had recently retired (for a second time) after passionately and faithfully working on behalf of children for over three decades...most of those years with Georgia's Pre-K Program. A memorial service celebrating Charles' life was held on Thursday, September 20; the church was filled with his family, friends, fellow church members, child care providers, and current and former employees of DOE, OSR, and DECAL.



With the afternoon sunlight pouring through panes of colored glass, Charles' pastor, Rev. Chris Henry, delivered a eulogy that was honest, sincere, compassionate, funny, and poignantly uplifting. Following are excerpts from Rev. Henry's comments.

"Today we have all come to this sacred place to give thanks for the life of Charles Lee Shepherd ... As I sat with Anchor and Rick last Saturday afternoon, we shared tears, laughter, and stories of a remarkable life. I was moved by the many examples of his passionate commitment to those whom he loved: a wide circle of family, friends, colleagues, and every child he served. As he let go of life with dignity and courage, Charles bore witness to those intangible and elusive qualities that made him an extraordinary person: his compassionate heart, his uncommon intellect, and his giving spirit.

Charles was born in Winchester, Kentucky, but his family moved to south Florida when he was a young boy. There he excelled in school and eventually attended Florida State University where he received a Bachelor's in Early Childhood Education and a Masters of Education with a focus on reading. Charles' passionate support of Florida State and especially its football team never wavered.

In 1979, Charles began working for the Georgia Department of Education as an early childhood consultant. It was a job he would hold for thirty-three years until only a few months ago. He was the last original Pre-K person, who helped to start the department twenty years ago. In this position Charles used his wide knowledge and expertise; his love for children; and his passion for giving every child a chance to get an education and succeed. To say he was committed to kids doesn't come close to the reality. He

with a seven-year-old son, she enjoys cooking and jogging in her spare time.

New Faces & Places

Laura Evans is the new Standards Coordinator.



Laura will oversee a project that will result in a revised set of Georgia Early Learning and Developmental Standards (GELDS) for ages birth through five.

Laura comes to DECAL from the Walton County School System. She has a wealth of experience working with standards and also has a marketing background.



Demetria Thorton joins DECAL as Nutrition Application Specialist. She lives in McDonough

and for the past three years was a Case Manager with the Salvation Army administering its Federal Grant "Veterans on the Move." She holds both a master's and bachelor's degree in Public Administration.

Paula Lawrence also joins DECAL as Nutrition Application Specialist. She lives in Snellville and for the past two years was a Unemployment Insurance Specialist with the Georgia Department of Labor. She holds a master's degree in Public Administration and a bachelor's degree in Science.



was a fierce, intense, ardent, eager, heartfelt advocate for the value of education and the inherent worth of every child. He believed that no child should be left behind long before the policy or slogan, and he worked every day for this to be a reality in our state. His zeal for this mission was matched only by his love for his family, and especially, for his beloved Bunny.

In the final months of his life, the things that were most important became even more urgent to Charles. The values that defined him came into clear focus: his love for his friends and his church; his passion for children and education; and most of all, his deep love for his family."

These are just a few of the things Rev. Henry said about Charles. After all was said and done...the benediction pronounced... and people filed out of the church, it was clear that Charles Shepherd had lived a life that impacted many people, especially children in Florida and Georgia.

Charles is survived by his wife Anchor (Bunny), son Rick, daughter Elizabeth, and two grandsons Tristan and Cole.

Laura Johns Honored

Did we mention how proud we are of Dr. Laura Johns? DECAL's Director of Quality Initiatives was the recipient of the 2012 Jo Cato Perseverance Award at the 46th Annual Conference of the Georgia Association on Young Children (GAYC) in Atlanta. She is pictured with Laurel Gulish Beckham, Ph.D., President of GAYC (right).



The Jo Cato Perseverance Award is presented to an individual who has significantly demonstrated support of children and families and demonstrates: More than 10 years of service, a strong voice and work ethic, a commitment to lifelong learning, a commitment to diversity and has a measurable impact

Quality Rated Welcomes First Approved Child Care Program



In Case You Missed It

DECAL Commissioner Bobby Cagle is seeking volunteers for the agency's advisory network made up of 14 committees advising the Commissioner and DECAL on policy priorities for Georgia's earliest learners, birth to five years old. The committees engage a variety of stakeholders including Pre-K parents, Pre-K teachers, school superintendents, child care owners and directors, business leaders and the faith community. New terms for committee members will begin January 1, 2013. The deadline for applications is Friday, November 2, 2012. For more information, please contact Deidria Bolden, director of special projects, at 404-232-1612 or via [email](#).

Quick Links

[DECAL on Facebook](#)

[DECAL on Twitter](#)

[DECAL Website](#)



October Birthdays



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

- 3 - La Tonya E. Bonner
- 4 - Craig A. Detweiler
- 7 - Julia P. Strickland
- 10 - Kathleen Olaughlin Jayson
- 11 - Kendra Lynn McGhee
- 11 - Garyon A. Stiggers
- 12 - Melissa D. Herndon
- 13 - Sarah B. Benton
- 16 - Danna Kathleen Foster
- 16 - Aneshia T. Harris
- 17 - Teresa Louise Todd

When she was only six years old, Linda Davis knew she wanted to teach young children. Today she is the proud owner and director of the first family day care home to be recognized for exceeding Georgia's childcare licensing requirements.

Justus Kidz in Buford received the first quality rating awarded by Quality Rated, the state's new voluntary system to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early care and education programs.

"In high school, I took a class that allowed me to work part-time in a child care center and continue my education," said Ms. Davis, who has more than 30 years' experience in child care. "After graduating from high school I got married and had two charming sons. When my youngest son was one and half years old I decided to go back to school and receive my Associates Degree in Child Development. Subsequently, I continued on to get a Bachelor's Degree in Business Management and my Masters in Child, Family and Community Services."

"We were pleased to see Justus Kidz apply for Quality Rated back in May, and now less than five months later to see them officially approved is even more exciting," said DECAL Commissioner Bobby Cagle. "As the first program in Georgia to be Quality Rated, Ms. Davis and the children and parents she serves should be very proud of their initial two-star award. And she will be in good company. With more than 950 centers voluntarily enrolling so far this year, more child care programs will be rated very soon."

Ms. Davis said she welcomed the program's assistance in becoming the best at providing top notch service. "Quality Rated is a program that influences child care providers to go beyond Georgia licensing standards," she explained. "My main goal has always been to provide a high quality educational program and receive high marks on my licensing reports. Participating in Quality Rated encourages me to keep doing what I have done in the past to educate the children and keep educating myself."

Throughout the process, Ms. Davis worked with Andrea McFarland, an Infant and Toddler Specialist with DECAL. "I feel like my main role was cheerleader and editor when it came to actually submitting the portfolio," McFarland explained. "She (Ms. Davis) had the knowledge and information; I just encouraged her to go through with it. There were a lot of eager and anxious butterflies when we hit the submit button. We kept in close contact until we heard that the portfolio had been accepted and maintained that super close

22 - Audrey B. Lampkin
24 - Laura Jane Johns
24 - Lisa Renee Tolbert
26 - Lari Lynn Beyer
29 - Jamie Carta

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

Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning Advisory Board

Vacant

First Congressional District

Susan Harper, Albany

Second Congressional District

Kathy Howell, Carrollton

Third Congressional District

Carolyn Ormsby, Ed.D., Conyers,
Fourth Congressional District (Chair)

Carlene Talton, Decatur

Fifth Congressional District

Dawn Henderson, Marietta

Sixth Congressional District

Phil Davis, Stone Mountain

Seventh Congressional District

Luann Purcell, Ed.D., Warner

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District

(Vice Chair)

Vacant

Ninth Congressional District

Janice Gallimore, Greensboro

Tenth Congressional District

Victor Morgan, Cartersville

Eleventh Congressional District
(Secretary)

Kay A. Ford, Savannah

Twelfth Congressional District

Maggy Martinez, Hampton,

Thirteenth Congressional District

contact until the process was finished. It is a great sense of accomplishment to know that I helped a provider become Quality Rated."

In July 2013, families will be able to verify if a provider is voluntarily agreeing to meet higher standards by participating in Quality Rated and to see the quality rating they have achieved by visiting the Bright from the Start website at www.decals.ga.gov.

For her part, Ms. Davis hopes to achieve a three-star rating by July, 2013. "I hope former students can in turn bring their children and future generations of their families to experience the care and educational standards provided by Justus Kidz."



Linda Davis, pictured at right, is the owner and director of Justus Kidz, the first approved Quality Rated child care program.

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

The Faces of DECAL

DECAL faces featured in the banner of this issue are (L-R) Dorothy Mitchell, John Gardner, Susan Adams, Rhonda Gunn, Stanley Cooper, Johnathan Davis and Carley Geren.

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