

Executive Director's video address – September 2020

I am pleased to have this chance to speak with you today after having finished up my first six months here as your executive director. With all of the changes that the Covid-19 pandemic has caused for all of us, this first six months have been very different from what I had anticipated when I was asked to become your executive director. But one thing has been constant: we are all in this fight together trying to put this agency back on the straight and narrow and rebuilding the public's trust in the important work we do.

I saw on the local news several stories about people filling up sandbags to prepare for the possible flooding from hurricane sally. At first, that might sound like the most boring, mundane task in the world – filling up sandbags. But then I started thinking, what if those sandbags save your family home, or your town, from floodwaters? That gives the job a little more importance, a little more significance, now doesn't it?

Along those same lines, I have been thinking about this new mission statement we adopted a few months ago: offering Mississippians young and old tangible help today to create a lasting hope for tomorrow. As you are dealing each day with the families and individuals we serve, I want you to be keeping those two phrases in mind: "tangible help" and "lasting hope." Some days, I know that our work can feel like we're just filling up sandbags. But what if the tangible help you are providing to a family means the next meal on their table? What if the job training you connect a single mom to means that she can begin to have employment for the first time, and that she can now provide a home for her children? That tangible help then becomes a lot more important and significant.

And when you think about a lasting hope for tomorrow, I want you to think about Tom and Minerva Clemon up in the community of Schlater, Mississippi. Through the work of Tina Ruffin, our community services director, and others up in that little delta town, Tom

and Minerva will soon have running water again in their home. They had been without running water for over a month due to the floods in the delta last year. What better source of hope than to be able to deliver clean running water to a family? As Tom said the day we broke ground where the new water well will be drilled, “he’s sending angels to see about us. Angels I ain’t never met before.” That’s what you have a chance to be, in delivering TANF, SNAP, community resources, child care, child support, youth services, workforce development assistance to families across this state: you become the “angels they ain’t never met before.” As long as you continue to commit your time and your talents to the families who depend on us, you’ll be a crucial part of the mission of offering tangible help and creating lasting hope for Mississippians young and old. And I am pleased and proud to be a part of that team with you. Stay safe, and know that we will get through this pandemic together and we will continue to provide that tangible help and lasting hope.