

September 2022 News Briefs from Commissioner Merceria Ludgood!

Brighten the Corner

By: Commissioner Merceria Ludgood

This month's column begins with a confession. When I am sitting in a public space like an airport or waiting room I sometimes eavesdrop on people's conversations. In my defense, who can blame me when they have long personal cell phone calls that are loud of enough for everyone to hear? Now I do not go looking for conversations but, if I am in the midst, I will listen. It amazes me the things people find interesting enough to devote extended time discussing. Last week in the ladies' restroom I overheard one side of a conversation about Megan the Stallion. I wanted to ask the person if she was a close personal friend but then she would have known I was in the other stall listening. Or was I just hearing? Listening suggests I wanted to hear but I did not-it was unavoidable, so I give myself a pass on that one.

Celebrity gossip and the latest TikTok phenom rank high among the topics most discussed. In certain parts of the country, anything Nick Saban and SEC football dominate. Then some lament telemarketer calls that interrupt the flow of their conversations about how long it is going to take for their new car to be delivered, their weak WiFi connection, or the lengthy drive-thru line at Foosackly's and Chick-fil-A.

Part of what I am listening to determine is whether the speaker is a "glass is half full" or a "glass is half empty" person. The Glass is half empty person views the world through a prism of lack, which often breeds discontent. Unfortunately, a pessimistic worldview evolves and is followed by a search for someone or something to blame for whatever they are being denied. Their conversations are long gripe sessions. The person whose glass is half full is optimistic and is more likely to be, as my elders are fond of saying, grateful for things being as well as they are.

What takes me down this path? For weeks now I have been contemplating world conditions, both close to home and abroad. Issues like access to health care, clean water, and sanitary disposal of waste are right here in Alabama and in pockets of poverty throughout the world. Matters we take for granted like public education, adequate food supply, access to education and employment opportunities regardless of gender, and a democratic form of government are elusive for many of our neighbors. Many of the so-called problems we face are rooted in our standard of living which, compared to the rest of the world, can seem extravagant or excessive.



I want to shift our focus away from the natural impulse for more and more and toward serious consideration of what we can do as individuals and institutions to improve living conditions for the billions whose circumstances are desperate and who see little reason for hope. For some, whether Auburn's football coach will survive another season leads the list of their concerns about the state of the world. But we must be more concerned about those residents of Lowndes County about 90 minutes southwest of the Plains who daily experience untreated sewage within smelling distance of their homes. There are people in the world who wake up every morning praying that they and their families will survive the day. Not all of them live far away. Let's begin each day with gratitude, asking ourselves how we can use our influence and resources to make life better for someone with real problems.