

Ag Commissioner Gipson partners with U.S. Rep. Trent Kelly in FARM Corps

Press Release

Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce Andy Gipson announced that the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce is partnering with U.S. Representative Trent Kelly in the FARM Corps program to assist Mississippi farmers facing labor shortages due to COVID-19.

Representative Kelly launched the Farm and Ranch Mission (FARM) Corps program in partnership with the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce, Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation, Mississippi National Guard and Reserves, the Mississippi State University Extension Service, Mississippi Department of Veterans Affairs and other agricultural and veteran organizations. FARM Corps connects furloughed or unemployed

members of the Guard, Reserve and Veterans from all service branches with local farmers and ranchers who are suffering labor shortages caused by COVID-19 and the lack of H-2A labor supply.

“I commend Congressman Kelly for launching the FARM Corps program in Mississippi which comes at a critical time for farmers as the growing season progresses. Without the proper workforce, our farmers can’t continue to operate. We look forward to working with all of the partners involved to address the labor shortage challenge. I encourage our farmers to take advantage of this tool and post their job openings on the FARM Corp website,” said Commissioner Gipson.

For this planting and harvesting season, the FARM Corps will address a critical need for Mississippi’s agri-

cultural producers by providing skilled labor. Mississippi National Guardsmen and agricultural producers who are interested can visit the “Mississippi Farm Corps” Facebook page to learn more about this new program. More information about the FARM Corps can be found on the Mississippi FARM Corps website. The website is ready to be used by agricultural producers to apply for employees, guardsmen to apply for work, and to locate a list of available jobs.

Background: The COVID-19 pandemic has caused strict travel restrictions at a time when America’s agricultural producers are both planting fall crops and harvesting summer crops. As a result, many farmers are experiencing large labor shortages in areas where they typically use foreign labor through the H-2A visa program.

The FARM Corps program originated in Arkansas as a collaboration between Arkansas Farm Bureau and U.S. Representative Rick Crawford.



Living With Children

By John Rosemond
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One website is titled “How to Cope with Kids During Coronavirus.” Another, featuring a staged photo of an obviously frazzled mom with a toddler on her lap, tells the reader that “Parents are losing their minds having kids at home during coronavirus!” There’s yet another, advising on “How to Keep Kids Entertained During the Crisis.” On and on it goes, website after website counseling parents on how to deal with being confined at home with one’s kids.

The early Twenty-First Century may be remembered as the “Age of the Personal Soap Opera.” A person makes a soap opera out of a life situation, claims victimhood, garners sympathy, manufactures more soap opera, garners more sympathy, and so on. Soap opera begets soap opera. Forty-plus years of counseling experience has

taught me that once a person becomes caught in the soap opera loop, it is harder than hard to get out.

For thousands of years, it was normal for children to be at home. It never occurred to parents that they might need “support” or advice to deal with that circumstance. Everyone was in the same sturdy boat. Furthermore, the boat had two paddles and was helmed by one or two adults who obviously knew how and in what direction to row. No one went running pell-mell down the road screaming that their kids had pushed them over the edge.

And then, along came television, day care, and something called “parenting,” one aspect of which is the understanding that good parents put children at the center of their attention and see to it that they are always occupied (meaningfully so), even entertained.

Growing up, I was blessedly deprived of a mother who “parented.” My non-parenting mother, who was a single parent during most of my first seven years, did not put me at the center of her attention and hardly felt it was her job to keep me occupied. That responsibility fell squarely on my little shoulders.

“I’m bored, Mom.”

“Bored, eh? If you can’t find something to do, I’ll find something for you to do.”

And just like that, I found something to do, knowing that Mom’s solution would not be at all to my liking, as in “You’re going to wash the kitchen floor and if you’re still bored, I have plenty of other things with which to un-bore you.”

Television has made both kids and parents lazy. Journalist Marie Winn termed it the “plug-in drug.” Her book of the same name was instrumental to my belated understanding of television’s devastating effect on the normal progression of development in a young child; specifically, how it throws a wet blanket on a child’s curiosity and motivation.

Television – and now its demonic offspring, social media – also promotes the notion that a life without drama is a life without meaning. One of the dramas du jour is “Having my kids at home is shredding my sanity into itsy-bitsy pieces!”

The solution, stop parenting. Turn off the television. It’s full of mostly junk programming and bad news anyway. Take your kids to a bookstore or a library. Buy them games they can play with one another. Teach them to play something non-electronic. Get them involved in hobbies. And don’t forget to assign each of them a routine of those old-fashioned things known as chores.

Last I heard, chores still defeat boredom.

Conservation Corner

by James Cummins
Executive Director
of Wildlife Mississippi

Bass Pro Shops and Cabela’s are teaming up with Convoy of Hope, a non-profit organization, to donate one million face masks to COVID-19 health care workers.

The Mississippi Department of Health will receive 4,000 of those face masks for distribution in the Jackson and Pearl area.

Convoy of Hope is utilizing its national network of partners and volunteers to identify appropriate local hospitals and medical facilities, and help distribute the masks based on area needs and demands.

Johnny Morris, the founder of Bass Pro Shops, is personally donating the FDA-approved ASTM Level 1 Procedure face masks. “We are extremely grateful to our nation’s health care workers serving on the front lines of this unprecedented global health crisis,” said Morris.

Over the past 10 years, I have gotten to know Johnny and his son, John Paul, who is a graduate of the University of Mississippi.

Johnny got his start in 1972 by selling fishing tackle using 8 square feet of space in the back of his father’s store. Today, Bass Pro Shops not only has a shop in Pearl, Mississippi, but a total of almost 200 stores with more than 200 million visitors daily. As one can easily see with this donation of masks, Johnny and his family are generous people. We are both in the Boone and Crockett Club and I will sometimes sit next to him in meetings. He will have two notepads—one to

take notes about the meeting and one to write down ideas about what he is working on or a next project.

He is one of the most visionary conservation leaders I know. I also have a great respect for how he grew up—his humble beginnings. His father, a decorated World War II veteran, loved to hunt and fish and taught Johnny that hunting and fishing fostered a special respect and appreciation for wildlife and our natural world. That is easy to see, from every Bass Pro store to Dogwood Canyon to Big Cedar Lodge to his Wonders of Wildlife Museum and Aquarium in Springfield, Missouri.

Johnny’s passion, leadership, personal commitment, and dedication to conservation is tremendous. He is one of our Nation’s largest donors—in both time and financial resources—to fish and wildlife conservation efforts. He is a strong believer in getting our Nation’s young people introduced to the outdoors and all the rewards they have to offer.

I personally would like to thank Johnny, his wife Jeanie, and John Paul for making this great Nation a better place to live, work, and raise a family. It is their sincerity and generosity, such as donating these masks, that brightens up a dark day. I don’t have all of the answers, but I do know that the more people in our great nation with traits like these, the better off our nation will be.

James L. Cummins is executive director of Wildlife

Pandemic unemployment assistance available for the State of Mississippi

Press Release

Individuals residing in Mississippi, who were unable to work because of the COVID-19 public health emergency may apply for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA), the Mississippi Department of Employment Security (MDES) that was announced in April.

People who live or work in Mississippi and could not work as a “direct result” of the pandemic that occurred on February 2, 2020 and ongoing, are entitled to apply and may be eligible to receive PUA.

Self-employed individuals, independent contractors, persons employed by a church or religious entity, employees of non-profit organizations, gig economy workers, those who do not have sufficient wages in covered employment during the last 18 months to establish a claim under regular unemployment compensation, and those who became unemployed or partially unemployed as a result of the pandemic, may be eligible for PUA.

Persons eligible to apply for PUA are individuals who: (1) have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or, are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 and are seeking a medical diagnosis; (2) became the breadwinner or

Mississippi, a non-profit, conservation organization founded to conserve, restore and enhance fish, wildlife and plant resources throughout Mississippi. Their web site is www.wildlifemiss.org.

major support for a household because the head of the household has died as a direct result of COVID-19; (3) quit his or her job as a direct result of COVID-19; (4) their place of employment is closed as a direct result of the COVID-19 public health emergency; (5) have a member of their household that has been diagnosed with COVID-19; (6) is providing care for a family member or a member of their household who has been diagnosed with COVID-19; (7) has a child or other person in the household for which they have primary caregiving responsibility that is unable to attend school or another facility closed as a direct result of the COVID-19 public health emergency and such school or facility care is required for the individual to work; (8) is unable to reach the place of employment because of a quarantine imposed as a direct result of the COVID-19 public health emergency; (9) was scheduled to commence employment and does not have a job or is unable to reach the job as a direct result of the COVID-19 public health emergency, and; (10) is unable to reach the place of employment because the individual has been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine due to concerns related to COVID-19.

Individuals in Mississippi can apply online 24 hours a day at www.mdes.ms.gov or by calling toll-free 1-833-919-0334 from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Sunday.

Cleveland to receive new weekly newspaper

Press Release

On April 8, the 104-year-old Cleveland, Mississippi newspaper, *The Bolivar Commercial* announced they would stop publishing.

“Like everyone in this community, we were also sad to read *The Bolivar Commercial* was closing its doors,” says Scott Coopwood of Cleveland, who has been in the magazine and newspaper publishing business for thirty-one years.

“Every small town needs a newspaper for a variety of reasons,” said Cleveland Mayor Billy Nowell. “Many of us grew up reading *The Bolivar Commercial* and the announcement came as a big surprise.”

For Cleveland and Bolivar County to continue to have a newspaper, several of the town’s leaders met with Coopwood about the possibility of launching a newspaper to fill the void. Coopwood is the publisher of *Delta Business Journal*, *Delta Magazine*, *Delta Ag Journal* and *The Welcome Guide*. Additionally, he also published the town’s Sunday morning newspaper, *The Cleveland Current* from March 2011 until April of 2017.

“Scott was the logical choice to approach about publishing a newspaper for the town,” said Nowell. “No one could imagine Cleveland not having a newspaper.”

“The newspaper business is a challenging business today and with the pandemic sweeping the world, we had to think long and hard before jumping back in,” said Coopwood. “After several meetings, we decided to re-enter the newspaper business.”

Next week, on May 6, *The Bolivar Bulletin* newspaper will make its debut. Initially, the weekly newspaper will be published on Wednesdays and mailed to 2,000 households and businesses in Cleveland and Bolivar County. Additional copies will be available on newsstands. Plans are to increase the circulation in the coming months.

“Our overall strategy will be to marry the printed newspaper on Wednesdays with our digital platforms that we update everyday,” said Coopwood. “Between the two, we’ll be able to deliver news to Cleveland and Bolivar County in a significant way.”