

Extraordinary Times

[Photo: Dr. Farmer.jpg] **7/13/20** — “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times...” as Charles Dickens so memorably wrote in his 1859 historical novel *A Tale of Two Cities*. Extraordinary times call for extraordinary actions by ordinary individuals. We now collectively find ourselves in one such extraordinary time where we are inundated daily with both heartbreaking stories of loss and uplifting stories of heroic individuals rising to the challenges of the occasion...and somehow it seems as though things will never be exactly the same as they were before COVID-19.

We are all aware of the tragic loss of life that has occurred as a result of the coronavirus. In addition to the rising death toll, far too many good citizens have lost their jobs through no fault of their own. Those directly impacted by the loss of loved ones or of economic prosperity have certainly endured the worst of times.

However, the challenges associated with the crisis have also caused businesses and institutions of all types to reevaluate the way they operate on a daily basis. Unanticipated silver linings have emerged as businesses and institutions have struggled to balance safety and economic viability. A pandemic pragmatism has evolved in which individuals, businesses, and institutions have been forced to become even better at what they do if they are to prosper in the face of current challenges.

Health care workers and first responders have unquestionably risen to challenges of the coronavirus, but they are not the only heroes. Many ordinary people from all walks of life have responded in extraordinary ways. Beyond the normal altruism of supporting widows and orphans, total strangers are feeding hungry children, giving single mothers a helping hand, or helping the recently unemployed get back on their feet. The COVID-19 related challenges have shined a light on all the good things that are happening all around us on a daily basis. We have been reminded that we are surrounded by the goodness of ordinary people. In this sense, these are the best of times.

At Weatherford College we are serious about helping the recently unemployed get back on their feet. We are collaborating with Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas and the Texas Workforce Commission to build a new 70,000 square foot Workforce and Emerging Technologies Building. We are rapidly expanding our workforce programs in an effort to both support our business community and to get Texans back to work. The recently unemployed are going to receive the type of training that will allow them to quickly move off of public assistance programs and back to tax paying jobs that pay family sustaining wages.

These extraordinary times are forcing us to look at things differently in our new normal. We are surrounded by extraordinary opportunities that have been created by this new normal. I have faith in the great people of Texas. Just as heroic Texans helped each other during the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey, I believe that Texans will come together in a pragmatic way to protect both public safety and our dynamic economy. It was the best of times, it was the worst of times... and I believe that Texans will prevail.

Tod Allen Farmer
President, Weatherford College