

King's Fork High School
Oct 3rd, 2025

THE BULLDOG BARK

2026 Senior Class Officers Kick-Off the New Year with a Student Section at the Football Games



"I believe that the game last Friday fostered a sense of community and camaraderie with my peers and I. It seemed as though people were really enjoying themselves, and it was a wonderful kick off for the new school year."

- Layla Criner, Senior Class President

THE BULLDOG BARK

Isle of Wight County Fair Attracts Residents from All Over

WINDSOR, VA – The 2025 Isle of Wight County Fair successfully concluded its run at the Heritage Park & Joel C. Bradshaw Fairgrounds, continuing a beloved tradition that celebrates community, agriculture, and entertainment. The annual event featured a wide array of food and craft vendors from across the region and even hosted booths for Democratic and Republican candidates for Virginia State offices.

The fair's history is a story of community perseverance. After a 53-year hiatus, the fair was re-established in 1994 through the dedicated efforts of a committee chaired by George Winslow. Following challenges like hurricanes and a one-year hiatus in 2007 for renovations, the fair found its permanent home at Heritage Park near Windsor.

Under the leadership of figures like Chairman Danny Byrum and Fair Coordinator Jenilee Hallman, the event has grown into an award-winning spectacle. It has been recognized at the International Association of Fairs and repeatedly honored by the Virginia Association of Fairs (VAF) for its marketing, agricultural education, and overall excellence. In 2022, it was named the Best Overall Fair in its category by the VAF.

Fairgoers experienced the event's signature attractions, including:

- Thrilling amusement rides on the midway.
- Popular events like the Demolition Derby, Truck & Tractor Pull, and a professional Rodeo.
- Agricultural exhibits housed in three large 9,600 sq. ft. buildings, showcasing livestock, 4-H projects, and competitions.
- The Agricultural Education Center, which offers interactive farming tutorials and live birthing shows.
- National and local entertainment on the main stage.
- A vast selection of classic fair food and unique crafts from local vendors.

Next on the local fair circuit is the Suffolk Peanut Fest. This year's event will have a special Kings Fork connection, as several students will be vying for the title of Peanut Fest Queen.

For more information on the history and future of the Isle of Wight County Fair, you can visit their official website at www.thefairiscoming.com.

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THE BULLDOG BARK

Foundation of Grit: Coach Mendez and the KFHS Cross Country Team Build More Than Speed by Caleah Reid and Inasah Mitchell

At Kings Fork High School, the cross country and track teams operate on a simple philosophy, articulated by their leader of over 40 years, Coach David Mendez: “You need a strong foundation in order to win.” This foundation isn’t just built on mileage and speedwork, but on life lessons, resilience, and a shared commitment to excellence.

For Coach Mendez, running is personal. His own journey to the sport began in the city, where a youthful mistake became a pivotal turning point. “When he was hungry he would steal fruits and run,” Mendez shared. “An old man caught him and went to his mother about it. He said he’ll train him and let him join his track team in exchange for not telling the police.” This chance encounter unlocked a prodigious talent; by the sixth grade, Mendez was running against high schoolers and would eventually become one of the top runners in the country.

This history informs a coaching style he describes as “hard, motivational, and turn[s] out great athletes.” His practices are meticulously planned, built around mileage on Tuesdays and Thursdays, grueling speedwork sessions of 400s and 800s, and hill workouts on Saturdays. He keeps his athletes motivated through one-on-one talks. “You can't win them all,” he tells them. “We have to lose, that's how you learn and that's how you get better.” While he is serious on the track, he treasures the fact that his athletes feel comfortable talking to him off it. His greatest joy comes from “seeing his athletes go to college and make someone out of themselves.”

This culture of hard work and personal growth is embodied by the team’s senior leaders.

THE BULLDOG BARK

Foundation of Grit: Coach Mendez and the KFHS Cross Country Team Build More Than Speed by Caleah Reid and Inasah Mitchell

For Jakari Sartin, a 17-year-old dedicated to everything from the 400-meter to the 5k, the goal is a scholarship. He candidly describes a normal practice as “actual torture,” a relentless cycle of miles and sprinting half-tracks. A cherished memory was breaking two minutes in the 800-meter, a barrier many runners never cross. After a difficult meet, he sits in the shower longer than usual, analyzing his performance to plan for improvement. His verdict on his coach? “Coach Mendez is the greatest coach in the school, hands down.”

Loreida Jennings-Ward, another 17-year-old senior, is a “multi” athlete, competing in mid-distance, sprints, and field events like the triple jump. Her challenges are often internal, grappling with self-compassion and comparing herself to more experienced athletes. To recover, she calls her sister, a D1 track athlete, for support. She recalls the pride of overcoming the difficult hurdle event, proving that perseverance pays off.

For Christopher Jones, running the mile and 800 meters is a form of mental release as much as exercise. His main challenge is the relentless pursuit of a personal record. After a tough meet, he finds solace at home, reading the Bible and reaffirming his commitment to improve next time. He values the friendships forged through shared struggle and, having been raised as a long-distance runner by his father, holds a special preference for the demanding mileage of cross country.

Together, under the guidance of a coach who was saved by the sport, these athletes are building their own strong foundations—one lap, one hill, and one life lesson at a time.

THE BULLDOG BARK

Why Students Need Intellectual Courage by Kalynn Carter

We've all had that moment: the words leave our mouths, and a instant later, we think, "Why did I just say that?" These awkward, cringe-worthy moments are not just inevitable; they are a vital part of learning. Yet, in today's school culture, this essential rite of passage is at risk. While fostering respectful dialogue is non-negotiable, we have become so focused on saying the "right" thing that we are stifling the very process of learning—a process that requires the freedom to be wrong.

The issue is rarely that teachers or administrators are imposing strict ideologies. In fact, many educators actively encourage creative and unique perspectives. The problem is subtler and more social: a culture that values performative correctness over genuine, curious exploration. Speech carries weight, and accountability is crucial, especially for those in power. However, a growing tendency to shame rather than critique, to shut down rather than engage, has created a palpable anxiety around open expression.

Accountability should not morph into an environment where students are terrified of making a mistake. School must be a laboratory for ideas, a place for trial and error. We cannot hone our critical thinking, public speaking, or writing skills if we are paralyzed by the fear of imperfection. You might say something insensitive. Your argument might crumble under scrutiny. You might even change your mind mid-discussion. This isn't failure; it's intellectual growth. We lose something profound when we discourage this messy but necessary process.

THE BULLDOG BARK

Why Classrooms Need Intellectual Courage

This is not a call for a return to a mythical past of consequence-free speech, nor is it an argument for tolerating hateful or discriminatory language. The line between harmful speech and productive disagreement often comes down to intent and approach. We must stop presuming malice in every misstep and avoid the instinct to silence merely “unwelcome” ideas.

Instead, we must view classroom dialogue as a collaborative workshop. We need to grant ourselves and others the grace to stumble. If a classmate voices an idea you question, engage with the concept, not the character of the person. Counter opposing views with respect and a willingness to understand. Raise your hand not only when you are certain of your answer but also when you are uncertain and want to learn. Have the courage to express your beliefs authentically—while doing so constructively and with consideration.

True learning thrives on disagreement. We are all better off when we are challenged to grow.

THE BULLDOG BARK

If Only by Bailee Bastiste

If only. If only I had more time
if only I could go back to those happiest moments.
The moments when the sun shined bright and the clouds were
dancing in the sky.
The moments where nothing else mattered but what time we
had to be in the house, and what we were gonna eat that
night.
The moments where we would get excited when we saw
butterflies and rainbows.
The moments when we would get \$5 and feel rich.
The moments when we would have fun with our parents as if
they were our best friends.

But now... but now it's like if you chase a butterfly you're
weird,
if you get excited about rainbows you're childish,
if you get \$5 you're still broke,
and if you have fun with your parents you're either spoiled or
lame.

If only. If only I didn't grow up so fast. If only I didn't have to
worry about sports. If only I weren't so stressed about grades.
If only I didn't know I'd be in college in 1 more year. If only I
knew I'd be all on my own. All alone. No more sunshine, no
more butterflies, no more rainbows, and no. more. childhood.

If only.

INDIEFLIX
PRESENTS

THE UPSTANDERS

OCTOBER 22, 2025 | 6 – 8 P.M.

King's Fork High School Auditorium

351 Kings Fork Road, Suffolk

A documentary about resilience and the power of connection to end bullying.

This original Indieflix film explores all sides of cyber-bullying and its impact on the bully, the victim, bystanders, and their family members.

With the increase in social media use, bullying is more prevalent than ever. Upstanders weaves personal stories of teenagers and their families, and interviews with educators and brain-scientists together to demonstrate the importance of empathy and resilience.

Learn what is needed to transform attitudes and what actions can be taken to change human behavior and develop greater positive connection to one another. The film highlights that everyone has a part to play in eradicating cyber-bullying, and gives bystanders the confidence and tools they need to become Upstanders and change the narrative and the outcome.

Immediately following the film, a panel of experts from the film and local experts will answer your questions.

Local Panelists:

Cindy Devers, Coordinator of Student Support, Suffolk Public Schools

Kails Lovette, President, ODU NAMI-On-Campus Club

Ashley Spratley, LCSW, CHKD

Registration is required.
Register [here](#) or scan
the QR Code



The Upstanders

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THE BULLDOG BARK

Is Cursive Writing a Lost Art for Today's Students?

by Jaidon Faircloth-Scott

In classrooms across Virginia, the flowing loops and connected letters of cursive writing are making a surprising comeback. The Commonwealth has joined a growing national movement pushing back against the Common Core standards that largely eliminated cursive instruction from American schools over the past decade.

Virginia now stands among 22 states that have reinstated some form of cursive requirement in their curricula, according to tracking by MyCursive.com. This movement represents a significant shift in educational priorities, balancing digital literacy with traditional penmanship skills.

The national turning point came in 2010 with the widespread adoption of Common Core State Standards, which emphasized keyboard proficiency over cursive instruction. Sue Pimentel, one of the lead writers of the English/language arts standards, explained the rationale to Education Week in 2016: "We thought that more and more of student communications and adult communications are via technology. And knowing how to use technology to communicate and to write was most critical for students."

The standards also responded to teacher concerns about instructional time. "Sometimes cursive writing takes an enormous amount of instructional time," Pimentel noted. "You could be spending time on other things rather than students practicing cursive writing."

However, this shift had unintended consequences. Historian Drew Gilpin Faust, former president of Harvard University, discovered the impact firsthand when teaching a Civil War history seminar. "I was just stunned," Faust told NPR after realizing approximately two-thirds of her students couldn't read cursive documents from the era. "What does it mean when you can't read your birthday card from your grandmother and you have to have your mother translate it for you?"

THE BULLDOG BARK

Is Cursive Writing a Lost Art for Today's Students?

Proponents of cursive instruction argue that without it, students cannot read foundational documents like the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and the Bill of Rights in their original form. Faust warns that if cursive becomes a forgotten skill, translation of important documents could be left to a small pool of experts, potentially limiting access to historical understanding.

The movement to restore cursive has gained bipartisan support across the country. The latest state to join was California, where legislation requiring cursive instruction in grades one through six passed unanimously before being signed by Governor Gavin Newsom. The law takes effect January 1.

Other states now requiring some cursive instruction include Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and West Virginia.

Despite this growing trend, opposition remains. Morgan Polikoff, an associate professor of education at the University of Southern California, told Stateline there's "not much evidence cursive matters"—especially as schools struggle with pandemic recovery.

"If you are going to spend time on some indication of written communication, keyboarding skills are more important," Polikoff argued. "We've fallen behind during COVID, we're dealing with chronic absenteeism, student mental health is in crisis, and we're spending time on cursive?"

In Virginia, education officials have struck a balance, incorporating cursive instruction while maintaining focus on digital literacy. The state's approach recognizes both the historical significance of cursive and the practical realities of modern communication.

As the debate continues, Virginia's classrooms are becoming ground zero for a national conversation about what skills truly matter for the next generation—and whether the elegant loops of cursive writing still have a place in America's educational future.

THE BULLDOG BARK

Theatre Department Sees Overwhelming Response Amid Weather-Delayed Auditions by Willow Hamlin & Aniyah Williams, Photos by Johnta Thomas

The Kings Fork High School theatre department is launching into a dynamic season following a successful audition process that drew nearly fifty students. Under the direction of Mrs. Millette-Miller, aspiring actors and crew members gathered to compete for roles in two one-act plays: "Small Town Secrets," an original work by Mrs. Millette-Miller, and the comedic "So You Wanna Be a Cheerleader." Despite a cancellation due to inclement weather, student enthusiasm remained high, with the large turnout signaling a robust interest in the theatrical arts.

When we spoke with students before their auditions, many were returning from last year's production of *The Wiz*. "It was a really fun acting experience and I got to meet a lot of new people," sophomore Kadmiel Arias shared. For many, like students Justin Hargrove and Naomii Connally, the social aspect was a key motivator, providing a chance to connect with friends and meet new people while doing something they love.

Beyond community, the program offers valuable experience. For Kaleb Bronaugh, whose goal is to become an actor, the drama club is a crucial step toward that dream. His advice to hesitant peers was heartfelt: "You should just go ahead and do it. I wanted to join, but I was too scared and a friend had to force me to sign up. I just fell in love with theater and I don't regret it at all."

Mrs. Millette-Miller expressed great satisfaction with the depth of talent, noting the high caliber of auditions made casting decisions challenging. With the cast and crew lists now posted, the rehearsal process begins for what promises to be a captivating showcase of student creativity and dedication.

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THE BULLDOG BARK

**Theatre Department Sees Overwhelming Response Amid
Weather-Delayed Auditions**



THE BULLDOG BARK

SYAA: Heart of the Community by Anika Huguenin

SUFFOLK, VA - For over forty years SYAA, or the Suffolk Youth Athletic Association, has stood as a testament to the power of community and volunteerism in shaping young lives through sports. What began as a modest local initiative in 1981 has blossomed into one of Virginia's largest privately operated youth sports organizations, with more than 1,000 registered players annually.

The non-profit, charitable organization has maintained its core mission throughout its remarkable growth: to operate, conduct, and maintain athletic programs for the youth of Suffolk and surrounding areas. Unlike many youth sports organizations that have professionalized over time, SYAA remains proudly volunteer-driven, with parents and community members filling every role from coaching to groundkeeping.

"It takes over 25,000 volunteer hours to run and manage our programs on a yearly basis," explains the organization. This army of dedicated volunteers includes coaches, assistant coaches, team managers, officials, ground keepers, concession management, and a board of directors—all working together to create opportunities for local children.

More than just a game

SYAA's philosophy extends far beyond teaching athletic skills. The organization has built its programs around core values that prioritize character development alongside physical achievement.

THE BULLDOG BARK

SYAA: Heart of the Community by Anika Huguenin

"We provide a safe and positive experience where we encourage fun and ensure everyone plays," says the organization. "We emphasize that participating, not winning, is what's important."

This commitment to inclusion is reflected in their mission to serve youth "of all abilities, orientations, races & ethnicities, creeds, and religions." The association focuses on building fundamental skills while teaching values like sportsmanship, perseverance, teamwork, and respect for rules, officials, and fellow players.

Family-Centered Approach

True to its community roots, SYAA emphasizes family involvement throughout its programs. The organization has become a family tradition for many Suffolk residents, with multiple generations participating in its various offerings.

The soccer program, for instance, operates at Recreational, Advanced, and Select Travel levels, attracting participation from King's Fork students and alumni. Even local teachers have found a home at SYAA, with Friday night pickup games keeping them active through November on indoor fields.

THE BULLDOG BARK

SYAA: Heart of the Community by Anika Huguenin

Teamwork and Homework

Many students at Kings Fork High School play for SYAA. “Our coach tells us to leave it all on the field, but I'm pretty sure I left a shin guard somewhere near the penalty box last match,” says Class of 2026 senior Damion Blakeman. From projects to penalties, many student-athletes have found a balance between school, soccer, and most importantly, their own personal lives.

Looking Forward

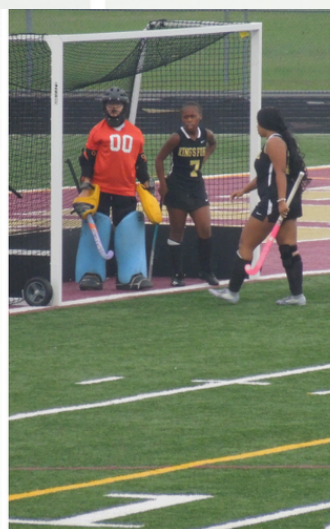
As SYAA celebrates over four decades of service, the organization continues to stress the importance of parental involvement in children's athletic endeavors. This volunteer-driven model has not only kept costs accessible for families but has also strengthened community bonds through shared investment in youth development.

From its small beginnings, to its current status as a regional athletic powerhouse, the Suffolk Youth Athletic Association remains committed to its original vision: building better citizens through sports, one child at a time. As they look toward the future, SYAA continues to prove that some of life's most important lessons are learned on the fields of friendly competition. Justin Hargrove, another King's Fork student who plays for the SYAA, can attest to that, stating: “The SYAA Facility and people allowed me to pursue my dreams to become a better soccer player.”

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THE BULLDOG BARK

**Lady Bulldogs Win 1-0 over Woodside, photos by
Johnta Thomas**



THE BULLDOG BARK

Confessions of a Snack Plug: “Don’t Y’all Mommas Feed Y’all at Home?” by RDH

Bringing snacks in school is beyond often for a high school student. For the students that do bring snacks for themselves, find an obstacle with the students that don't. It tends to get very annoying when people ask “can I have some” or “let me get a bite”. It can get so hard to the point where you don't even want to open a single bag of chips in front of someone greedy. Sometimes “no” is hard to say, but if you don't say no the situation can progress into something more extreme. The more you get out and bring snacks the more it attracts. It can get so bad that you have to put out a boundary and when you do end up putting out a boundary you seem “mean” or “stingy”.

You try to put yourself in their shoes by thinking of the reason why. Maybe they haven't eaten all day, maybe they don't have the resources to get their own snacks, or maybe they don't eat as much as you choose to. But even if you give in, it can get excessive by saying yes every time. The dread feeling of pulling out a bag of snacks and someone sees it, you know you're cooked. Sometimes you just want to eat your bag of Doritos for lunch in peace after being in class all day. It's worse when it is in the classroom because you're with people that you know and it's allowed to eat snacks in class.

It's harder when it is your friend to say no because you do want to share but the more you share everyday the more it gets excessive. You can make a joke by saying “Do your mommas feed y'all at home” or “Hungry aren't you” but at the end of the day those are just jokes and they are being serious. It can get so bad with the people that are close enough with you and cross a boundary you have already set. They think you have to share the whole bag with them or they would even go through your stuff themselves. That is where you're not comfortable with someone else going through your belongings just for some a bag of chips or a candy bar.

THE BULLDOG BARK

Confessions of a Snack Plug: “Don’t Y’all Mommas Feed Y’all at Home?” by RDH

Teachers go through this struggle just as much as the other students. Some students miss breakfast, have insufficient meals at home, or just have a fast metabolism. Meanwhile some students are picky and don't like to eat the food that is given out at school so they go to their teachers. Asking for snacks or food is a type of bonding way for students and teachers. If you're more comfortable with a certain teacher of yours it's easier to ask them for snacks. But even if you're that one teacher's favorite student, they can still be uncomfortable at times with giving out their snacks. After they have been talking for hours non stop giving lectures. They just want to eat the lunch they brought for themselves during their planning blocks or lunch.

When students come into their classes uninvited, teachers can sometimes feel annoyed. Sometimes they don't want to help but sometimes they feel like they have too. Some teachers are annoyed by persistent, demanding requests, especially when the student isn't genuinely in need. Keep in mind that some teachers can feel that being taken advantage of is common, particularly for teachers who are known to share snacks. Then there are many teachers who feel a strong sense of care for their students and are happy to provide food when a child is hungry. Teachers recognize that a student's well-being is a priority and that a hungry student cannot learn effectively.

Some advice for students who do not bring snacks like others is to make sure that you eat breakfast, pack your own lunch, if not just bring your own snacks, or at least be polite to the people you ask and the teachers' rooms you try to come in.

Throwback to the Best Teacher/Student Swap Day - Over 51 Million Unique Views Across Social Media Platforms





Suffolk Public Schools

2025 TEACHER JOB FAIR

**** In Person and Virtual ****

**SATURDAY
NOVEMBER 1, 2025**

9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

COL FRED CHERRY MIDDLE SCHOOL

7401 Burbage Dr
Suffolk, VA 23435

WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

- Candidates who are eligible for VA Licensure
- Applicants who are interested in Provisional entry teaching opportunities
- Current SPS employees who are interested in transferring
- Recent Graduates who are completing student teaching
- Open positions for Special Education (OT, SLP, Psychologist)

WHAT TO BRING?

PROOF OF CERTIFICATION

- **Instate:** Valid VA Teaching Certificate
- **Out of State:** Valid teaching certificate and Praxis Scores
- **New Graduates:** Letter of eligibility from college or transcripts and Praxis scores.
- **Associate Teachers:** Must have a Bachelor's degree and be enrolled or active in a teacher prep program

WHAT TO EXPECT?

An opportunity to meet school staff members and potentially interview with school administrators.

WALK-INS WELCOME

Bring licensure or transcript information with you if a walk-in.

TO ATTEND YOU MUST REGISTER AT:

<https://www.applitrack.com/spsk12/onlineapp/>



NORTH CAROLINA CENTRAL UNIVERSITY

COMMITTED

Zig'Dao'Egus Wyan

HOMECOMING ROYALS

Homecoming 2025
October 17th



SPS Clear Bag Policy

Beginning OCTOBER 17th

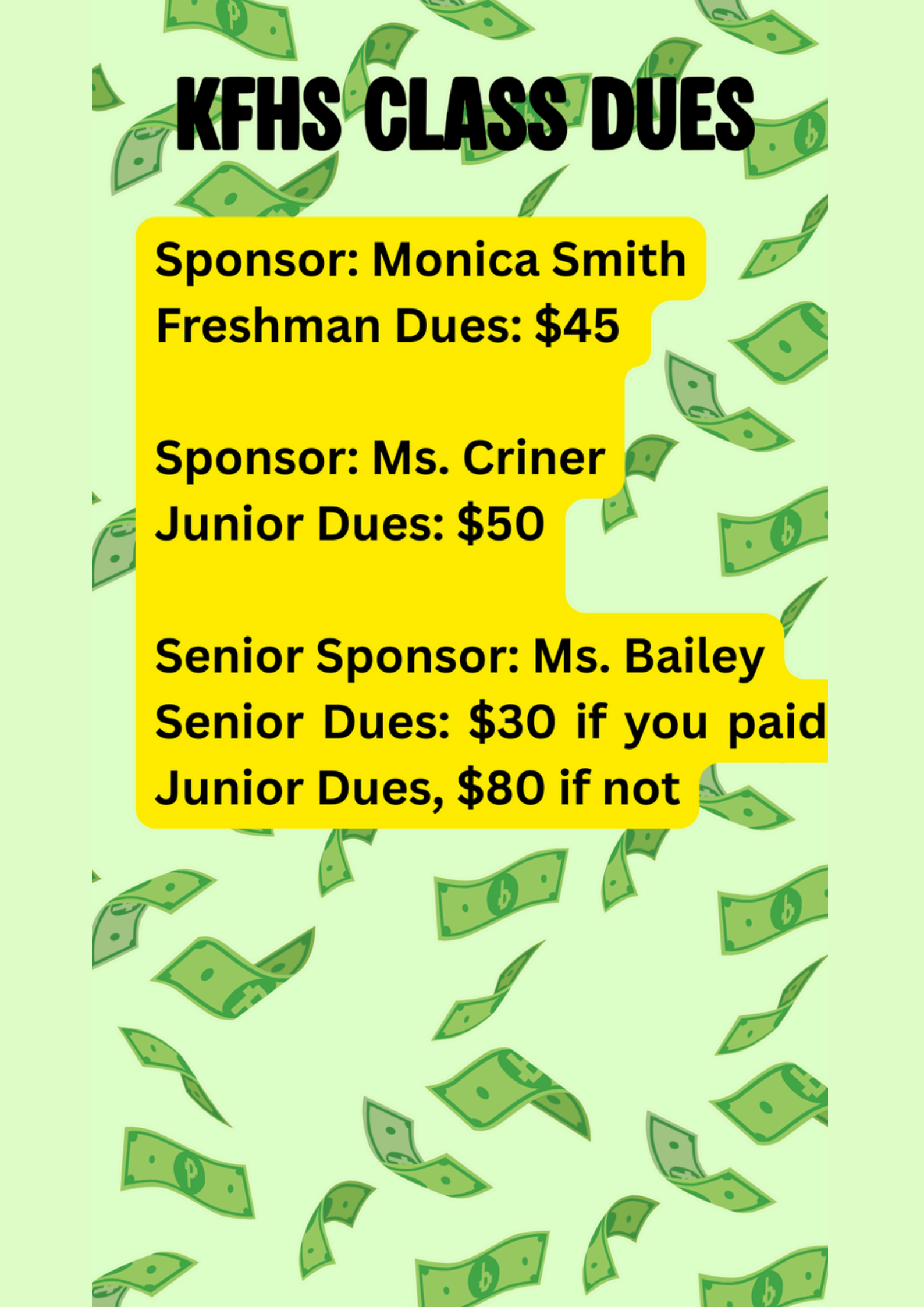
Athletic event attendees may only bring:

1 clear bag 12"x12"x6" and/or

1 small clutch or pouch for personal items no
larger than 4.5"x6.5"

Medical bags and diaper bags are allowed but
must be inspected upon entry.





KFHS CLASS DUES

Sponsor: Monica Smith
Freshman Dues: \$45

Sponsor: Ms. Criner
Junior Dues: \$50

Senior Sponsor: Ms. Bailey
Senior Dues: \$30 if you paid
Junior Dues, \$80 if not

KFHS Girls
Volleyball
RULES!!!!



THE UPSTANDERS

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Ashley Spratley, LCSW, CHKD

Registration is required.
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the QR Code



KING'S FORK HIGH SCHOOL

SPIRIT WEEK

OCTOBER 13-17



"Let the School Spirit Unleashed"

Freshmen: Red/Maroon

Sophomores: Blue

Juniors: Green

Seniors: ALL White & Gold

Monday - October 13th
Cowgirl/Cowboy day

(Cowboy/Cowgirl hats are ONLY allowed)

Tuesday - October 14th
Grade level color day

Wednesday - October 15th
Pink out Day

Thursday - October 16th
Pajama Day

Friday - October 17th
School Spirit Day

PLEASE ADHERE TO THE
DRESSCODE POLICY OR
FURTHER ACTION WILL BE
TAKEN!

NO WEAPONS, CHAINS, OR
LINGERIE!