

Column Recurring Title: **Rooted and Growing: The Southampton Story**

Column Author: Dr. Julie Thompson, SCPS Superintendent

Specific Article Title: “Celebrating Our Schools, Our Community, and Our Future”

Specific Article Due Date: October 12, 2026



SCPS Elementary Students at SHS Football Game (Photo Credit: Brittney Vandiford Photography)

There is something special about watching a community come together around its children. This week, I was reminded of that in several wonderful ways, and I am excited to share a few of those moments with you.

Friday night lights brought our Southampton County family together! Southampton High School took on Brunswick this week, and our Indians came away with a WIN! While I was proud of our football team, one of my favorite parts of the evening had very little to do with the scoreboard. We invited students from all of our elementary schools to join us for the game, with a special opportunity to run onto the football field at halftime.

I loved spending time with our elementary students, watching much of the second quarter from the end zone, and then running onto the field right alongside them. Their excitement was contagious! These are the moments that help our youngest students feel connected to Southampton High School long before they walk its halls as high school students. They get to

see themselves as part of something bigger – a school family that stretches from our elementary classrooms all the way to graduation.

A special thank you goes to SHS Athletic Director Deshon Jenkins for all the planning that made this event possible. I am also grateful to our principals – Dr. Mark Barfield, Dr. Camilla Ferebee, Susan Fowler, Devonda Gary, Dr. Paul Kea, and Amesheia Warren – for coordinating their students' participation. It also would not be possible without our Head Football Coach Travis Parker and his coaching staff who work so hard with our student-athletes on and off the field. Thank you to Brittney Vandiford Photography for capturing photographs and videos throughout the night. It takes teamwork to create opportunities like this, and I appreciate everyone who helped make the evening memorable for our children.

Last Saturday, I also enjoyed spending time with families at Franklin's Fall Festival. I am grateful to the Franklin-Southampton United Way for sharing its lovely space with us. Executive Director Trish Tsitsera and her Board made us feel right at home! It was wonderful to see our students and parents, reconnect with former SCPS staff, and meet other members of our community. Thank you to everyone who stopped by to say hello and celebrate our schools.

I also appreciated Sheriff Josh Wyche's gracious invitation to join the Southampton County Sheriff's Office for National Night Out on Tuesday. We enjoyed connecting with families and watching our students have fun with the deputies who help keep our community safe. Partnerships like these strengthen the relationships that support our children every day.

Finally, I had a wonderful visit to the Southampton Agriculture and Forestry Museum and Heritage Village this week. Our community has a rich history, and the museum offers a special opportunity for students to learn about the people, places, and traditions that helped shape Southampton County. Learning doesn't happen only inside our school buildings, and I want our students to experience the history and heritage right here in their own backyard.

As I continue getting to know our schools and community, I am grateful for the warm welcome I have received and the pride so many people share in Southampton County Public Schools.

Thank you to everyone who has been reading *Rooted and Growing: The Southampton Story* and celebrating SCPS with me. Every week, I am reminded that our greatest strength is our people – our students, families, staff, and community partners. Together, we are rooted in excellence and growing toward an exciting future.

Have a wonderful week, Southampton County!