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See how the Mustangs marched their way to double gold at annual Yorkfest Parade and a big finish at Harvest of Harmony.



Read how McCool Jct. football has worked to earn a 6-1 record as the season nears its end.

Homecoming Rundown

How the Mustang Family showed off their school spirit

By  
Trey Perry  
MJSM Advisor

McCool Junction school spirit was out in full form for this year’s Homecoming festivities and celebration. The week was capped off by a big win from the McCool Junction football team, defeating the Centennial Broncos 40-6.

After the game, Layton Christian and Claire Brugger were crowned Homecoming King and Queen. The other four candidates included Seniors Carson McDonald, Dylan Gonnerman, Grace Reinsch and Sydney Huber.

Following the crowning, students gathered in McCool’s old gym for the annual Homecoming dance, with McCool Alumni Kurstan Verhage serving as the DJ once again this year.

Homecoming Week was packed with fun themes and activities put on by Student Council members. Daily themes this year included: Monday: Hawaiian Day, Tuesday: Movie Day, Wednesday: Color Wars Day, Thursday: Jersey Day Friday: Black and Gold Day.

A new competition hosted throughout the week by StuCo this year was “Battle of the Classes”, where 7-12th grade students competed in a game against each other each lunch period.



Following the football team’s victory, Seniors Layton Christian and Claire Brugger were crowned 2025 Homecoming King and Queen in front of the Mustangs’ home fans.



Senior Sydney Huber and junior Jaysen Fuehrer participated in the “Cupid Shuffle”.



Student Council members showered elementary students in beachballs to celebrate “Hawaiian Day”.



McCool Jct. staff members showed off their “Movie Day” Spirit by dressing as characters from the “Despicable Me” movies.

Statewide phone ban takes effect

How Nebraska’s latest phone policy is working to “unplug” all public schools



By  
Sydney Huber  
Hoof Print  
Managing Editor

As students return to class to kick off the 2025-26 school year, they will notice something missing from each of their classrooms, their cellphones. On May 14, 2025, the Nebraska Legislature passed, and only six days later, Governor Jim Pillen signed LB 140, a bill requiring all public schools to adopt policies regulating student use of personal electronic devices, (such as cell phones and tablets) on school property. There are a few special exceptions for the use of these devices on school grounds, such as if they are necessary for a student’s medical condition. However, for nearly all students, public schools have put into place a “bell to bell” device ban, with one of these being McCool Junction.

As to why this ban came about in the first place, on the state level, Pillen’s main goals are to crack down on a growing lack of engagement in the classroom, improve students’ mental health, (since studies have linked social media to increased anxiety), and ultimately, improve students’ academic performances by providing them a distraction-free learning experience. Locally, at McCool Junction, Superintendent Dade McDonald shares these same goals, stating that, “while a change as big as this is challenging, a break from the stress of constant notifications is a positive change for our students.” Along with this, McDonald emphasized that while he is well aware that phones



Students are not allowed to use personal devices during class, in the hallways, or during lunch at McCool Junction.

are our way of staying connected to the world, he hopes students can see the value in being present with the people around them too.

“Our students are doing a great job adapting to this policy, and overall, I think it is a beneficial change for our students and staff,” said McDonald.

McDonald isn’t the only member of the Mustang family with an opinion on the new phone ban, with its impact bringing a new normal to teachers and students inside the classroom on a daily basis. Although ninth grade geography teacher Jabe Wurtz has never allowed phones in his classroom, he’s taking a more neutral side to this policy, saying that, in the past, he’s known great teachers to allow

phones, and bad teachers to prohibit them, so ultimately, this policy “is what you make of it.” However, Wurtz is grateful to our school board for letting teachers decide how to handle potential “phone peeks”, since he feels it gives them peace of mind that they are in control of their classrooms. On the student side of things, senior Grace Reinsch misses the easy access a phone gave her to text her family during the day, but agreed that she has gotten “more work done with way less distractions”, by keeping it out of sight. “Now I read and finish class work instead of scrolling on my phone during free

time”, said Reinsch. All in all, while everyone has their own opinion on a phone free school experience, teachers and students alike can agree on one thing: this policy is here to stay, so we should all make the most of it.

MJPS

STUDENT MEDIA

MUSTANG MEMORIES

Mustang Roundup 2025

Freshmen Klaire Rasmussen and Kayliana Kitto posing for a quick picture before marching in the Mustang Roundup parade.

Community Members Veeniece Davis and Mark Ellis announced each parade entry to the crowd as they passed by.

McCool Jct. eighth graders riding in their decked out “Diamonds and Demin” themed float, with that being the theme for Mustang Roundup this year.