

In a heartwarming new annual tradition, seniors from Aubrey Rogers High School (ARH) and kindergarten students from Veterans Memorial Elementary School (VME) will gather each year on the football field for a unique and meaningful event that bridges the gap between the youngest and oldest members of their shared school community. The ceremony, dubbed "pats to PATS," represents the transfer of spirit, pride, and connection between the two schools that share not just a road, but a mascot as well. The brainchild of ARH Athletics Coordinator Ted Parsons, pats to PATS is an informal but emotionally charged ritual where graduating seniors "pass the torch" (or lanyards in this case) to their younger kindergarten counterparts in the middle of the ARH football field, symbolizing the journey from kindergarten to senior year. To help the school promote this exciting new tradition, our Collier County Public Schools (CCPS) Communications team sent multiple staff members to document the experience. Along with traditional photos and videos, we included stunning drone footage to capture the unforgettable moment when the Patriots, young and old, first began walking toward one another. As you'll see from the video, this year's event included a unique family connection between brother and sister. Senior Sean Adamczyk will be graduating from ARH this May and heading to Florida State University in the fall. His sister, Maddie, is just beginning her academic adventure at VME as a kindergarten student. She was thrilled to see her big brother on the field as he passed down his lanyard to her! Those who attended the inaugural ceremony were treated to touching moments of intergenerational bonding. Childhood games transported the seniors back to their youth, while the younger students looked on in awe, captivated by the graduates' stories and conversations. Our hope is that the video encourages other schools who may be uniquely coupled to do the same, as this simple yet powerful moment of connection, community, and tradition is sure to inspire the students of both schools for many years to come. Their road may be the same, but the journey ahead for each student is just beginning.