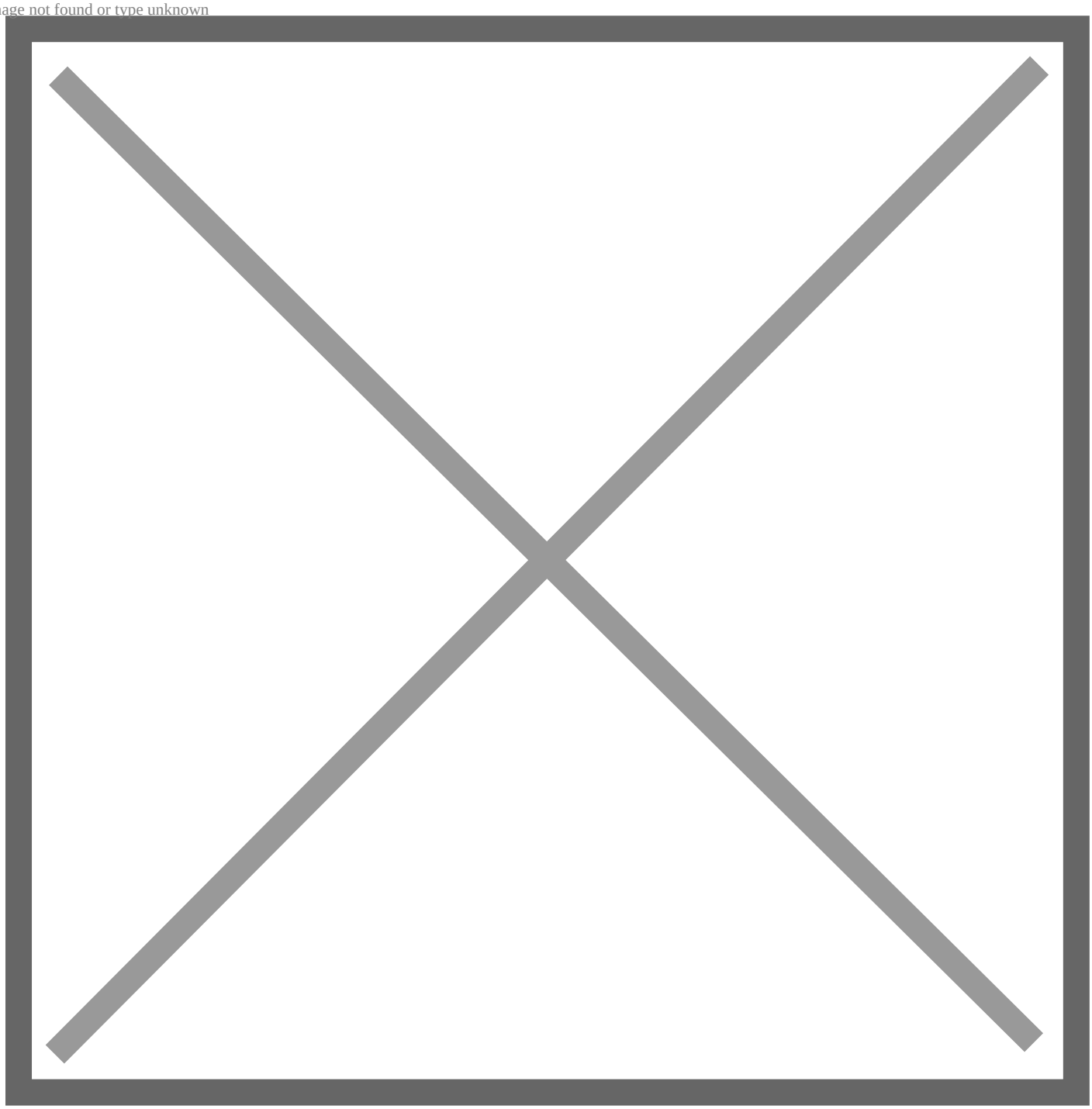
# Toyota Employees Reflect on Their Careers While Empowering the Next Generation of Leaders

April 25, 2025

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What do Toyota employees Lariscia Julion, Justina Thwing, Lavanya Venkatesan and Kate Thompson have in common?

They're all invested in helping drive forward the next generation of young people in STEM, supporting their teammates in the workplace and giving back to their respective communities.

Each of them is passionate about cultivating a harmonious society where creativity and innovation thrive. What's more, they value self-care and prioritize spending time with their families. After all, to keep the wheels turning at work, making time for the things that matter is paramount.

**Balancing Act**



Julion is a quality management systems manager at Toyota whose day-to-day role includes driving quality excellence across North America by setting policies, objectives and processes to achieve them.

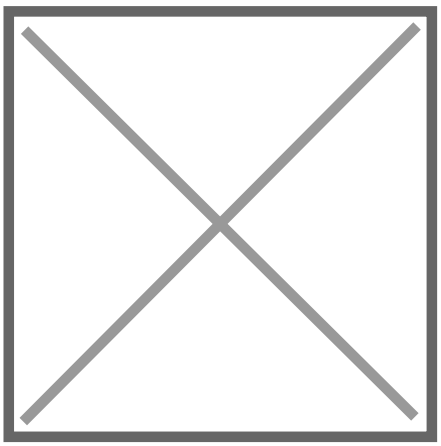
The eight-year veteran is also the co-chair of Plano's Women Influencing and Impacting Toyota (WIIT) chapter.

"Our mission is to contribute to an inclusive Toyota environment," says Julion. "We are proud to continue this effort by providing opportunities for networking, community engagement and career development."

Julion enjoys working at Toyota, taking quality time for herself and spending time with family.

"The older I get, the more intentional I am about making time to reflect on my day, week and month," she says. "This pause allows me to listen to my body and mind and see if my actions are still aligned with my values and goals. Every failure contains a lesson to help us improve. This philosophy has helped me to grow as a person and appreciate and celebrate my achievements along the way."

**Fostering Confidence at Every Turn**



Thwing, a production machining manager for Toyota New Global Architecture (TNGA), can also relate to celebrating wins.

Over the years, she has faced many challenges, and now, after 14 years at Toyota, she is more confident than ever and acknowledges how far she's come.

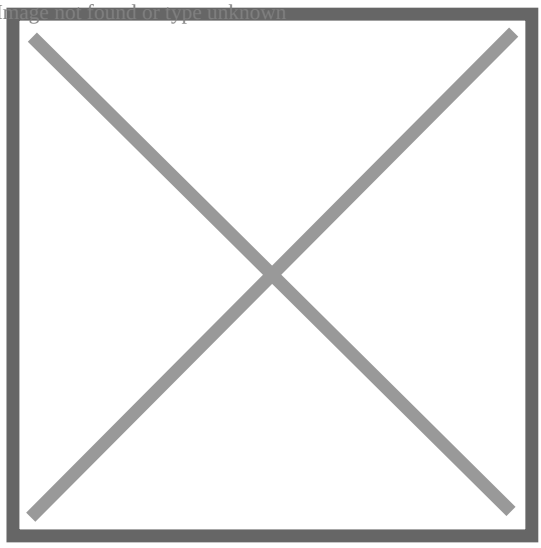
"My journey has been full of highs and lows, challenging yet adventurous," says Thwing. "As the only woman in the room at times, I battled imposter syndrome but reminded myself of my worth and contributions. I've been fortunate with new opportunities at Toyota and recognize that I deserve to be here because of my hard work and self-awareness. Reflecting on this, I've realized that each challenge has made me stronger and more confident in my abilities."

Thwing helped start Alabama's Women in Manufacturing (WiM) chapter, where she's currently treasurer.

"Professionally, I'm passionate about people," says Thwing, who also leads WIIT's recognition efforts on the Toyota North American Advisory Council. "I love helping anyone and everyone. I thoroughly enjoy mentoring and supporting those who aspire to achieve more. It's incredibly satisfying to see people get promoted or moved into fields that align with their life goals."

**Fueling Opportunities for Future STEM Leaders**

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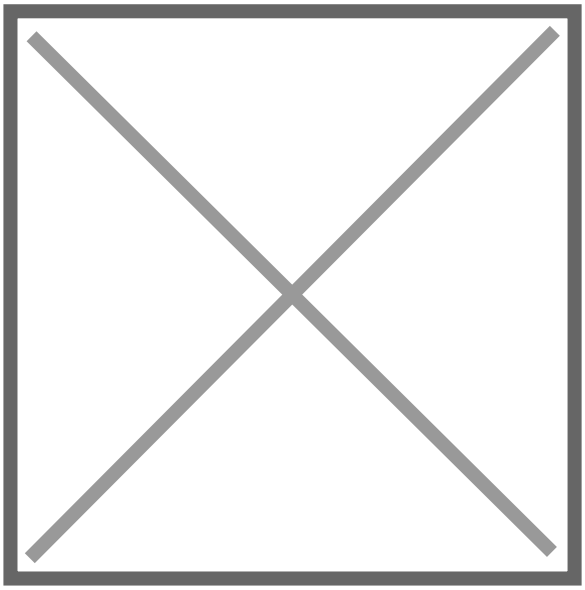
Venkatesan, a Toyota national data engineering manager, shares that sentiment about mentoring. She also served as the WIIT STEM lead, where she worked on creating events to fuel the next generation of STEM leaders.

“With our partnership, we are able to host events, give tours of Toyota headquarters and introduce young women to Toyota,” she says. “We have women leaders share their stories and backgrounds, with the hope of inspiring the attendees to potentially pursue a career in STEM or help them define the kind of career they want.”

For example, she and some Toyota leaders have paneled at an intensive eight-week summer program that requires applicants to have high grade point averages. WIIT leaders attend the annual Power 2 the Girl Conference, where Toyota is the presenting sponsor. More than 250 middle and high schoolers from across Dallas County attend the conference “for a transformative day of connection, confidence and career exploration,” according to the Girls Inc. website.

“We are focused on empowering these girls, giving them an opportunity, sharing our brand and paying it forward because these efforts align with Toyota’s values,” Venkatesan says.

**Staying the Course While Pushing Boundaries**



Empowering women through opportunities and paying it forward are processes that Thompson, a senior engineer at the Production Engineering Manufacturing Center (PEMC), wholeheartedly supports.

“Teams made up of different people bring a variety of viewpoints and experiences, which can lead to more innovative solutions and better problem-solving,” she says. “[Women] contribute unique insights that might otherwise be overlooked.”

She advises women entering the field to build a strong foundation, stay connected, develop soft skills and embrace challenges.
Thompson, who has a passion for motorsports, believes that challenging yourself is the key to advancing and enriching one’s life.

“I took the opportunity to get outside of my comfort zone and try something new,” she says. “I joined the PE Motorsports team and have gained more mechanical knowledge and skills.”

She adds, “Do the scary thing, the uncomfortable thing. It takes courage to start something new or join a new group. Not only will you grow personally and professionally, but you’ll also gain new perspectives and skills that you might not have discovered otherwise.”