

# Toyota Gives At-Risk Youth H.O.P.E.

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**PONTOTOC, Miss. (August 15, 2018)** — Fifty at-risk teens in Pontotoc County have brighter futures thanks to Helping Other People Excel (H.O.P.E.) Afterschool. Toyota Mississippi gifted Transforming Lives Ministries with \$50,000 to launch the free 10-month after-school program, which will focus on life skills education.

“Not having a support system to provide responsible guidance is a real problem for many teens in our area,” said Leah Morrison, Transforming Lives Ministries executive director and curriculum coordinator. “Our goal is to provide life skills education to at-risk youth and to build our next generation of leaders.”

Toyota is taking its support a step further by deploying one of its business partnering groups, Mississippi Young Professionals (MSYP), to mentor students during the program. Anthony Bowdry, Toyota group leader and MSYP chairman found himself at a crossroads during his teens and knows life skills training and positive role models can change the trajectory for at-risk youth.

“I know what these kids are up against,” Bowdry said. “My life would have gone down a much different path without positive role models, and I know mentoring these kids will make a difference in their lives.”

H.O.P.E. Afterschool will take place at Transforming Lives Ministries, located at 17 Lafayette Street, Pontotoc, Miss., from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday during the 2018-2019 school year. Students age 13 to 18 enrolled in Pontotoc City or County Schools are eligible to participate in the program. Contact Leah Morrison at 662-891-8120 for more information or to enroll a child in the program.