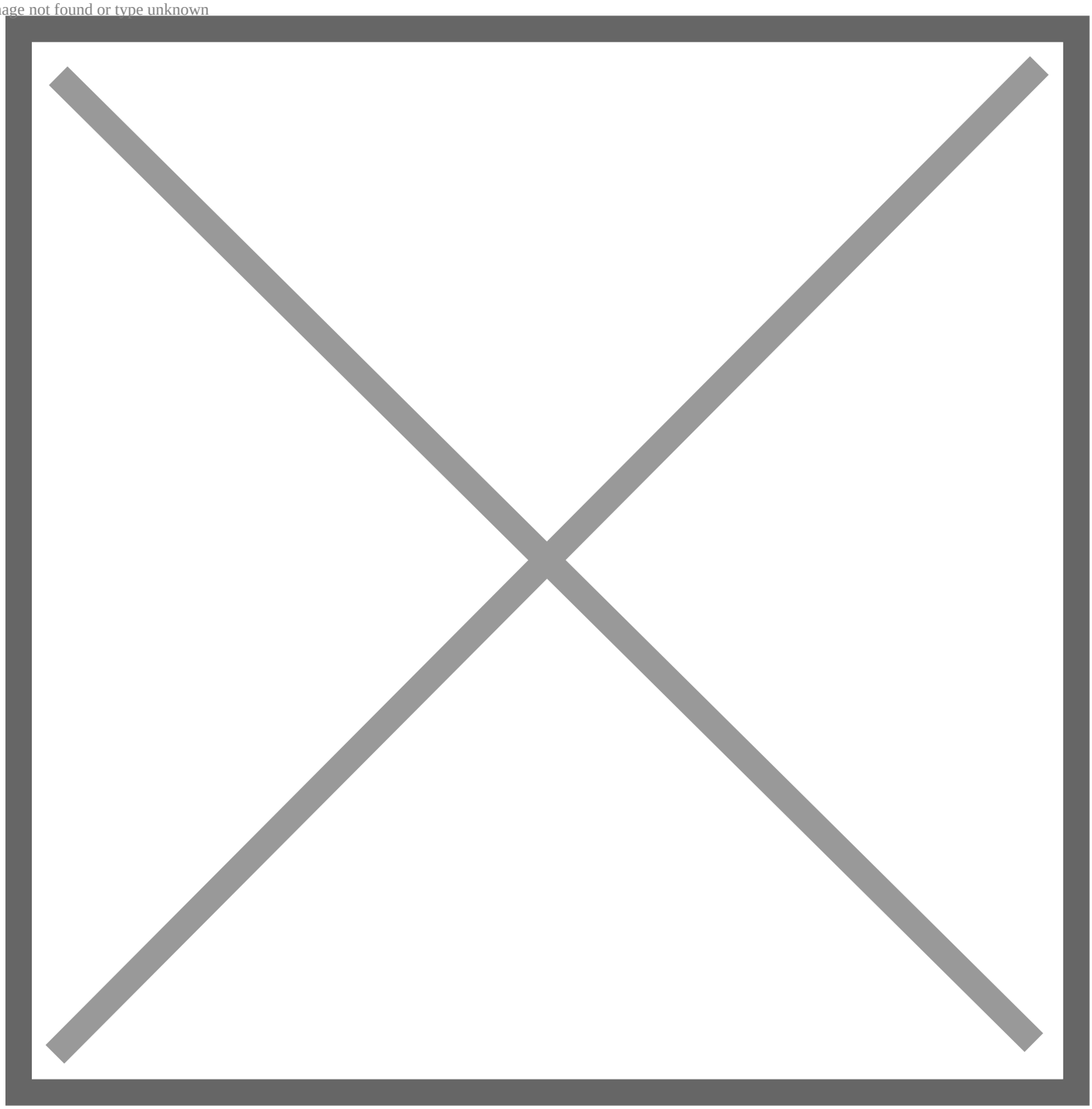
High School Students Find Promise of Versatile Careers in Manufacturing through Toyota’s 4T Academy

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Just as Toyota has continued to innovate its vehicles, the strategy of continuous improvement has also been used to develop the production team assembling each new model. The 4T Academy is one way Toyota is connecting with high school juniors and seniors in the community.

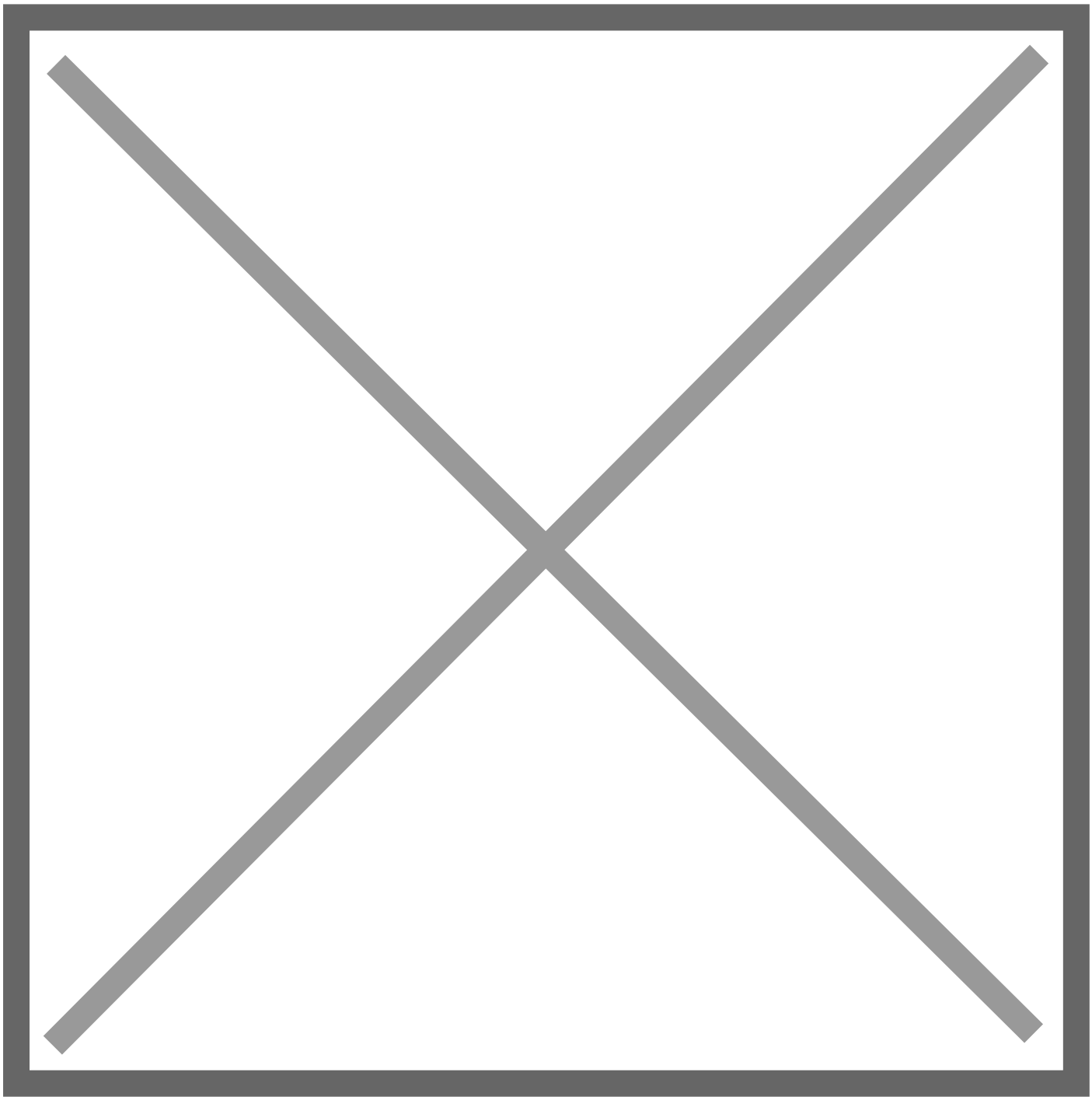
For Toyota, it's building teams that will make the company thrive for decades to come. For the students, there are pathways to stable, high-paying jobs that don't require a college degree.

Toyota's 4T Academies

The 4T programs in Indiana, Kentucky, Mississippi and West Virginia are a key way Toyota is developing future leaders. These programs allow high-school students to work while they earn their diplomas, with the potential of stable, full-time employment upon graduation.

Students follow a state-approved curriculum in traditional high-school classes while also learning about manufacturing and training in a simulated factory environment. The 4T academies house collaborative classroom spaces, electric and pneumatic tool training stations, a simulated vehicle production line, and high-tech components.

Seniors enrolled in 4T – which stands for Team, Teach, Together and Toyota – earn a competitive wage while working alongside industry experts at Toyota facilities. In Princeton, Indiana, Toyota invested $1 million in the regional workforce education partnership in 2020.



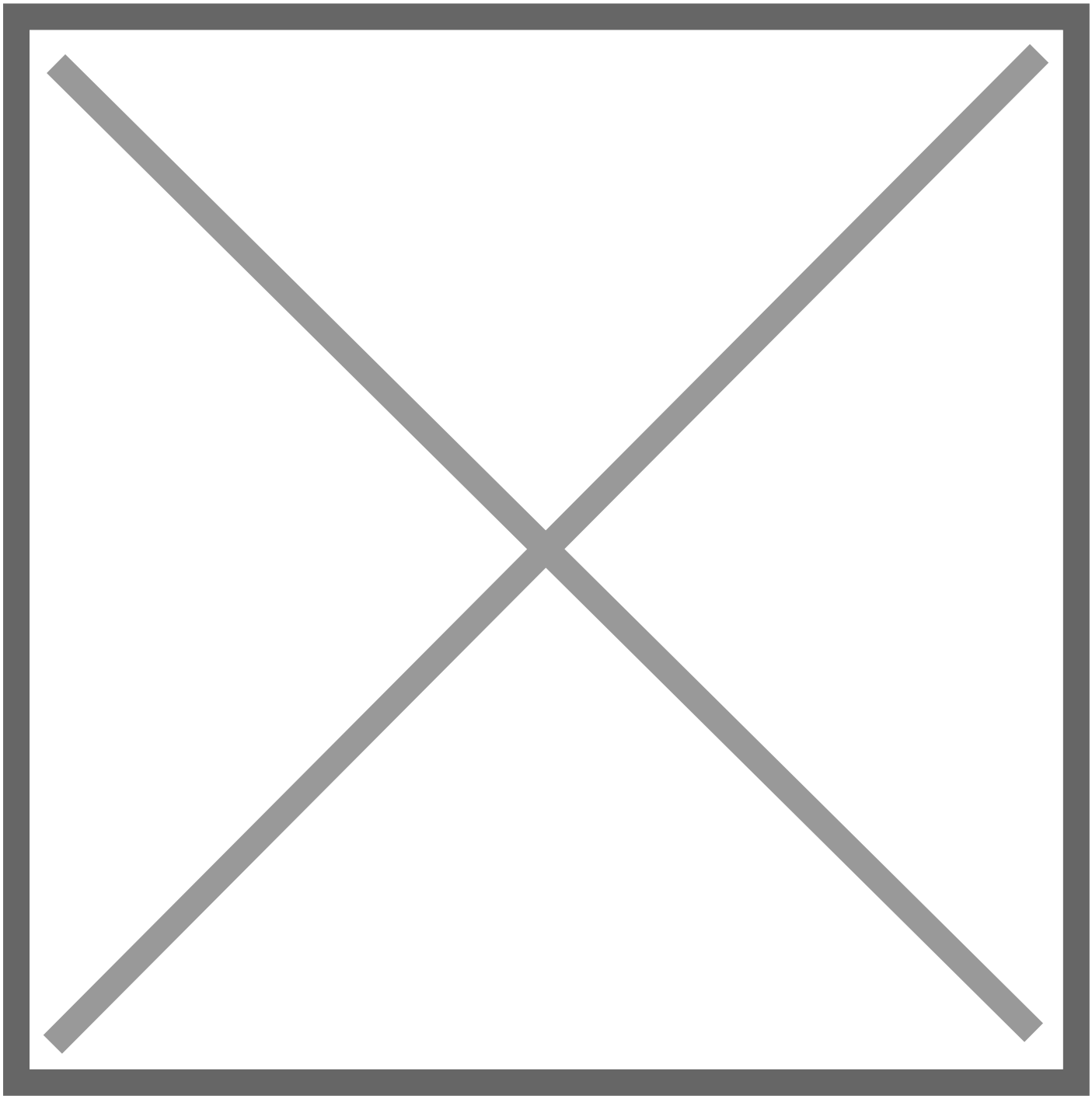
From Trainee to Full-Time Employee

In Indiana, Ali Houchin was thinking about a career in cosmetology before hearing about 4T while she was still in high school. Houchin was hesitant at first, because she didn't have any family who had worked in manufacturing, and she imagined it was dirty, demanding physical labor.

"I just viewed factory work as very hard," Houchin said. "I didn't really know a lot of women that worked at a factory."

First-hand experience on the assembly line as part of her high-school program changed Houchin's thinking. She worked alongside other women and saw how modern manufacturing employs robots and other machinery to reduce physical labor. Houchin liked the team atmosphere and Toyota's emphasis on safety. By the time she graduated, Houchin had decided on her future.

"After being there for so many months, I could see myself just staying," she said. "It's a good factory. They care. I knew if I wanted to learn more, I could have more opportunities to develop myself."



Growth Potential

Houchin, 23, has been promoted to supervisor in the paint shop. Her experience was so good, four family members who never considered manufacturing jobs started working at Toyota. The money was good enough that she bought three acres of land and built a house at the age of 21.

“Toyota has been very good to me,” Houchin said. “If I hadn’t done this, I probably would have gone on to cosmetology school. I wouldn’t have developed like I have. I’d probably still be in an apartment, like a lot of my friends.

“Now I’m very financially stable. I know what I want in life.”

To learn more about the 4T Academy, visit 4tacademy.com.