

Small Town Grows Big Business for 25 Years

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Commerce, Ga. – The company that established roots in Commerce in 1989 with only 15 associates processing 17,000 Toyotas annually now employs over 200 people.

“This was just a peach orchard farm before Southeast Toyota moved in,” said Donald Trammell, maintenance and trade coordinator. “When we opened our doors it was just 15 people at this whole plant. We all pitched in and did whatever needed to be done because it was more than just a business. We have a belief system of giving back to where we live and work, and so we have always felt like this was a community-based operation.”

Southeast Toyota recently celebrated its 25th anniversary with a donation for a new pavilion at Commerce’s Veterans Memorial Park. Mayor Clark Hill, who is also the company’s onsite Health & Wellness Center physician, honored Southeast Toyota with a proclamation from the City of Commerce for its economic and philanthropic contribution to the small but flourishing community.

Hill proudly wears his Southeast Toyota shirt even though it often prompts the question “do you sell cars too?”

“After 10 years of working for JM Family and Southeast Toyota, I’ve learned that the best part of getting is giving back, and our associates generously donate their time and talents to this community,” Hill said. “This company recognized the charm and potential of our little town. Call it luck, but I think the City of Commerce hit the jackpot when Southeast Toyota chose us.”

Product & General Processing Supervisor Kathy Archer has been there since the facility opened. “When Southeast Toyota started here, I was working at a local factory and looking for something different and better. It is the best thing that has ever happened to me and my family. It has put me in a position where I know that I will be able to retire comfortably. Not to mention, it’s a company that gives back to the community in so many ways. We always get involved in local events, especially when it supports children.”

“Because of Southeast Toyota, I consider Commerce my home and now my daughter who was born in Commerce still lives here,” said Operations Manager Hamp Echols. “Toyota and the city of Commerce have worked hand in hand and continue growing, and that has been nothing but great for the area. That’s what ‘Growing Good’ means to me!”

Automotive legend Jim Moran founded JM Family and Southeast Toyota in 1968, partnering with Toyota Motor Sales to strengthen the automaker’s U.S. presence by establishing a processing and distribution facility in Jacksonville, Fla. Later the diversified automotive company expanded its vehicle distribution operations by opening the northern Georgia Inland Processing center in Commerce. The facility is now a 300-acre complex including six buildings, 50 acres of pavement and six rail spurs. It processes more than 130,000 vehicles per year, approximately 500 per day, for distribution to Toyota dealers in northern Alabama, the Carolinas and northern Georgia.

“We owe the amazing growth of our company to our hard-working and dedicated associates, and to the support of this community which has been a great partner in our success,” said Colin Brown, President and CEO of parent company JM Family Enterprises. “We had no doubt that when we chose Commerce as our home in 1989, we chose the right place.”