

Toyota Provides Environmental Learning Experience in Costa Rica for 26 U.S. Educators

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TORRANCE, Calif., Oct. 12, 2011 –Twenty-six U.S. teachers have been selected to travel to Costa Rica through the [Toyota International Teacher Program](#). Taking place November 19 – December 3, 2011, the program will provide educators with unique learning experiences to help them encourage and inspire their own students to become more involved in environmental, cultural and world studies.

Now in its 13th year, the program has sent more than 650 educators from across the country to Costa Rica, Galapagos, Japan and South Africa to complete a two-week study tour during which they learn about the environmental challenges each country faces. The program's aim is to provide a unique and enriching experience for teachers and librarians, and equip them with learnings that will help them develop interdisciplinary, hands-on and solution-oriented educational approaches in their classrooms.

Program Overview

Funded by Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Inc., and administered by the Institute of International Education (IIE), the Toyota International Teacher Program advances environmental stewardship and global connectedness in U.S. schools and communities.

The program to Costa Rica, a country dedicated to protecting its natural resources, will give educators an opportunity to explore environmental and cultural preservation, biodiversity and sustainability through a variety of site visits, discussions, lectures and hands-on activities. Program participants will have an opportunity to meet with local experts, visit schools and museums and experience the rainforest first-hand.

During their travels to San Jose, Guácimo, Sarapiquí and La Fortuna, the educators will participate in a variety of activities that highlight the relationship between Costa Rican history, culture and the environment. They will tour innovative sustainable agriculture projects at Earth University and engage in service projects at La Selva Biological Station, one of the most studied tropical rain forests in the world. Area experts will educate participating teachers on local development, agronomy and conservation practices. Other activities include learning about research methods at Earth University and visiting rural Costa Rican primary and secondary schools to observe classes and interact with teachers and students. All activities are aimed at exploring the role of environmental education in spreading environmental awareness.

To help bridge their Costa Rican experiences with the curriculum projects, the educators will be accompanied by 2009 Toyota International Teacher Program alumnus, Jason Shields. As an on-site Discussion Leader, Jason will provide support and mentorship, facilitating several group debriefs and activities throughout the study tour to stimulate creative thinking among the participants.

Representing 20 states, the 26 participating teachers were chosen through a competitive, merit-based process administered by IIE, the nation's most experienced nonprofit educational exchange organization. Selection criteria include professional qualifications, evidence of interest in international education, and feasibility of incorporating the study experience into the curriculum.

The Toyota International Teacher Program values diversity and encourages educators of all backgrounds, subjects and school types to apply for future program dates. Applicants must be a U.S. citizen, employed full-time as a secondary classroom teacher or teacher-librarian (grades 7-12) and have a minimum of three years teaching experience. For more information about the Toyota International Teacher Program and to learn about future trips, please visit <http://www.iie.org/toyota>.

Quotes

"Toyota congratulates the 26 teachers selected for this professional development experience in Costa Rica. Like their predecessors, they are excellent representatives of their profession. We are honored to support them through this study program that explores the importance of environmental stewardship both at home and abroad." – Michael Rouse, vice president of philanthropy, Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Inc.

"We are honored to continue working with Toyota to promote global awareness and environmental stewardship in U.S. schools. The Toyota International Teacher Program provides unique opportunities for educators to strengthen the education they provide to their students. The program allows students to travel and interact with other cultures through their teachers' experiences, fostering new learning opportunities for thousands of students." – Dr. Allan E. Goodman, IIE President and CEO

The 26 participating educators for the 2011 trip to Costa Rica are:

- Loris Chen; Fair Lawn, New Jersey
- Sandra Childs; Portland, Oregon
- Margaret Collier; Orlando, Florida
- Emily Dietzschold; Lincoln, Nebraska
- Timothy Dobbins; Spring Valley, California
- John Elfrank-Dana; New York, New York
- Kelly Foss; Rehoboth, Massachusetts
- Robert Hanchett; Houston, Texas
- Angela Hemingway; Meridian, Idaho
- Katie Hook; Portsmouth, Rhode Island
- Tammy Hyder; Newnan, Georgia
- Tracy Marcello; Palm Beach Gardens, Florida
- Christine Mihealsick; Cedar Park, Texas
- Valerie Mulé; Mount Airy, North Carolina
- Paulo Oemig; Las Cruces, New Mexico
- Charles Palmer; Mills River, North Carolina
- Joshua Parker; Chicago, Illinois
- Ann Pearson; Cadott, Wisconsin
- Kimberly Pitts; Cordova, Tennessee
- Jeremiah Potter; San Diego, California
- Alyxandra Price; Montgomery, Alabama
- Bhavna Rawal; Houston, Texas
- Gregory Regalado; Bartlett, Illinois
- Valerie Smith; Vevay, Indiana
- Erin Stephens; Issaquah, Washington
- Susan Tate; Montague, Michigan