

Badge of Honor

May 21, 2019



Kat Lee was an impressionable 12-year-old when she and her Girl Scout troop took a field trip to Nissan’s Southern California design studio.

“One of the moms worked for them, so that was our way in,” she says. “We saw clay models of vehicles. I remember that vividly. I also remember the day we went to a tofu factory and they talked about efficiency and quality checks. You never know how moments like that can shape your future.”

In some roundabout way, Lee believes they did. She’s now more than 10 years into her career with Toyota, currently serving as a market representation manager in the Boston Region.

Going forward, Lee is committed to paying it forward. She and several of her fellow female team members who call the Mansfield, Massachusetts, facility their work home are doing just that — in partnership with the Girl Scouts of Southeastern New England.

Inspired to Do Their Part

The seeds for this community outreach were planted in May, when 10 members of the Boston Region’s “Women in the Field” group — including Lee — attended an *Automotive News*-hosted Leading Women

Conference in Nashville, Tennessee.

“It was a very inspiring experience,” says Lee. “When we got back, we agreed that we needed to do our part to encourage more women to get into our business. After all, Toyota is a great company. We love working here.”

Lee soon learned that Toyota Financial Services had a relationship with the Girl Scouts on the national level. That led to the realization that six of the 10 women had been Girl Scouts in their youth. A phone call to the Girl Scouts’ closest chapter, in Rhode Island, soon followed.

“That’s when we learned that they offer business-related merit badges,” says Lee. “So we asked their corporate sponsorship representative if there was something Toyota could do to help.”

The Auto Industry 101

The reply: offer to deliver the training for the group’s business plan merit badge. Lee says the Girl Scouts define the criteria for earning the badge but give corporate partners some latitude in how to implement it. So, the Boston Region women formed small teams to tackle the task of adapting the badge’s requirements to an automotive environment.

In the end, they came up with a two-hour program that challenges the girls to:

- Dissect a corporate mission statement and understand its importance.
- Tour the office, ending in the technician training area.
- Explore select Toyota vehicles parked in the shop, guided by a scavenger hunt for product features.
- Discuss the role and importance of setting sales goals.
- View a series of videos that offer a glimpse of the broad scope of Toyota’s activities, such as its support of the Mothers of Invention, its operations at Toyota Motor Manufacturing, Kentucky, and its investments in R&D and mobility.
- Compete in the “Game of Life,” where the girls draw cards that describe different customers — such as family size, household budget and favorite color — then challenge them to identify which vehicle best fits each customer’s needs.
- Create their own business plan to promote the sales of Girl Scout cookies, under the watchful eye of a Toyota team member.

Since launching the program in October, the Boston Region has hosted three groups totaling more than 70 Girl Scout cadettes (ages 11-13).

“One of the great things about this is that while the ‘Women in the Field’ group developed the program, team members throughout the office have helped us implement it,” says Lee. “Everything happens after hours and is completely voluntary. We’re so grateful for their contributions. It really means a lot to us.

“And my pitch to (General Manager) George Brenner and (Assistant General Manager) Jason Keller was one of the easiest I’ve ever made. They just kept saying, ‘Yeah, you can do it. Please pursue it.’”

Expanding the Reach

Emboldened by their early success, Lee says the “Women in the Field” members have started to look for ways to package the program so that other Regions — and perhaps even Toyota dealers — could replicate it. And she

said they'll likely develop a similar program for the Girl Scouts' marketing merit badge.

For more news on Toyota's commitment to Girl Scouts of the USA, click [here](#).