

How a TFS Internship Helped Leslie Vasquez Find a Job... and Love

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It was through a friend at a local Boys & Girls Clubs of America in Mesa, Arizona that Leslie Vasquez found out about an internship that would prove to be a life-changer.

Vasquez, then a single mother and a 23-year-old college student at the University of Arizona, was told about a summer opportunity that Toyota Financial Services (TFS) was offering under its “Making Life Easier” program.

“It was advertised as a stepping-stone towards entering the workforce and experiencing what life is like beyond just being a college student,” said Vasquez.

She applied on a whim, and one month later was one of five students chosen to spend their summer working at one of TFS’ three Customer Service Centers (CSC) around the United States.

Vasquez’s first few days at the western CSC in Chandler, Arizona, were an adjustment. The center had 500 employees, and Vasquez had never worked at a company that large.

Her internship covered more than Toyota’s business side; she participated in the company’s giving-back efforts, too.

Vasquez and her fellow interns volunteered at the Chandler Center to provide food to those in need — an experience that she said was life-affirming and rewarding. They also learned from mentors such as TFS Group Vice President and Chief Social Innovation Officer, Al Smith, and other executives who have been with TFS for more than 20 years, all of whom stressed the importance of networking.

“They pushed us to have meetings with other managers and to meet with people who, down the line, could really help us in looking for the right opportunity,” said Vasquez.

That summer, her first lesson in networking at Toyota proved pivotal beyond her career aspirations. Vasquez met her husband, Austin Vasquez, a fellow intern who later spent four years as a Toyota employee.

Like many interns, Leslie Vasquez was able to parlay her internship into a job with TFS, first starting out in the Paid-in-Full department, and most recently working as an Administrative Clerk at TFS. She says it was her summer internship and the people she met that made her transition into a full-time job so seamless.

“My internship prepared me for this role by providing me with the knowledge of the systems that TFS utilizes on a daily basis,” said Vasquez.

Today, Vasquez is a stay-at-home mom of three children. But it was her time at TFS, from her internship to her full-time role at the company, that gave her an experience of a lifetime.

“My coworkers have been through my entire life journey with me, from getting engaged, married, and then welcoming two new children,” says Vasquez. “They are so resourceful and supportive, which is the reason why it was so hard to leave them.”