

# Celebrating Father's Day with Toyota's Father-Child Duos

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During his 33 years at Toyota, Daniel Rusch taught his fair share of young employee's best practices for getting the job done. But Rusch's favorite maintenance student by far is his daughter Julia, who followed in her father's footsteps and now works in maintenance at Toyota Motor Manufacturing, Kentucky (TMMK).

"In the last few years, I've trained a lot of team members," Rusch says. "But it's really meant a lot when my daughter would ask me questions and I'd be able to help her out. It was really gratifying; my children being interested in what I do and wanting to learn from me."

Rusch started working in assembly maintenance at Toyota's Georgetown, Kentucky plant in 1988. Before retiring this year, Rusch had the opportunity to share some of his hard-earned knowledge with his daughter, a graduate of the Advanced Manufacturing Technician (AMT) program.

Julia Rusch graduated from college and joined the workforce in a different field before deciding that she wanted to enter manufacturing. When she expressed interest about working at Toyota like her dad, he recommended AMT, which allows technicians to transition into the field with a two-year degree and a year of hands-on experience.

“My dad has always been super supportive of me and my siblings and what we wanted to do,” she says. “He knows from experience how great of a job this can be, so after I got into the AMT program, I could tell he was excited that I was going to follow in his footsteps.”



*Daniel and Julia Rusch*

### **Automotive Runs in the Family**

It's not uncommon to find parent-child duos at Toyota. For Efren Gonzalez Sr., a machine operator at Toyota Motor Manufacturing, Missouri (TMMMO), his son and four of his nephews work at the same plant.

While Efren Gonzalez Jr. watched his dad working at Toyota while growing up, he wasn't immediately

interested. He joined the Army right after high school and served for four and a half years. Back home, he began working in a restaurant.

“After I got out of the military, I wasn’t sure what I wanted to do,” Gonzalez Jr. says. “I started working for a restaurant through one of my friends and did that for about 10 years. Then in 2016, I started at the plant in a temporary role as a cleaner.”

With some encouragement from his father, Gonzalez Jr. began working directly for Toyota in 2018 as part of a pilot group on a new product line. Over the years, he moved up and was promoted to team leader in January. While Gonzalez and his father work at the same plant now, they are assigned to different shifts and will only occasionally see one another in the hallways. But two of his cousins are on the shift, and one even works on Gonzalez Jr.’s line.

“When we see each other at family stuff, we try to not talk about work all the time, but always when we first greet each other it’s like, ‘Hey, how’s it going? How’s work?’” he says. “It couldn’t feel more like family. Everybody’s great, the people I work with, and that makes such a difference.”



*Efren Gonzalez Jr. and Efren Gonzalez Sr.*

### **A Built-In Teacher**

For Julia Rusch, the best part about following in her father’s footsteps was having someone to turn to for extra

help while in school. Dan Rusch would call her into the garage for lessons, and if she didn't understand a concept the way her professors taught it, she could ask her dad for a demonstration.

"Not many people understand what happens in maintenance unless you work the job," she says. "Having him with all this experience has really helped me, even in small situations, because I would be able to ask him, 'Hey, what would you do if you were in my shoes?'"

At first, Rusch was worried that his daughter would have a harder time in the shop, because when he was starting out, there were few women in the automotive industry. But he saw how much it meant to her, so he encouraged her to pursue the AMT program and study maintenance. He ultimately thought it would be a good fit for her.

"I thought she needed to start from scratch," he says. "I wanted her to start in school and get the basics so she could have that knowledge and people would see her as a maintenance person right off the bat."

Before her father retired, Rusch says they would make plans to eat lunch or take a break together because they worked on opposite sides of the plant.

"I'd be working on something and my dad would come in to get a part or whatever," she says. "It was a nice pick me up just to see him and it always put a smile on my face. I honestly have really enjoyed going through this and working with my dad. I think it's made our bond even closer because we have this in common."