

Toyota Helps Turn Nurse's 'Worst Nightmare' Around

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Melissa Nagy-Deak, who lives in eastern Pennsylvania and is also a nurse, is a loyal Toyota customer.

“I’m a die-hard fan,” she said.

After enduring two years of serving on the frontlines of the COVID pandemic, she was ready to treat herself to a new vehicle last September: a 4Runner TRD Pro.

“And I wanted it in Lunar Rock,” she said. “It had to be Lunar Rock.”

Normally that wouldn’t be such a tall order. But in the midst of a historic inventory shortage, Nagy-Deak had to get resourceful. She checked with dealers across the country to try and find one.

She scoured social media, finally finding one on a sales associate’s Facebook page. The only problem? That sales consultant, Carrie Cassens-Johnson, worked at Motor Inn Toyota in Carroll, Iowa — more than 1,000 miles away.

“I didn’t care. Here’s my deposit, take my money,” Nagy-Deak said, laughing. “A friend and I got on a plane to pick it up and drive it back.”



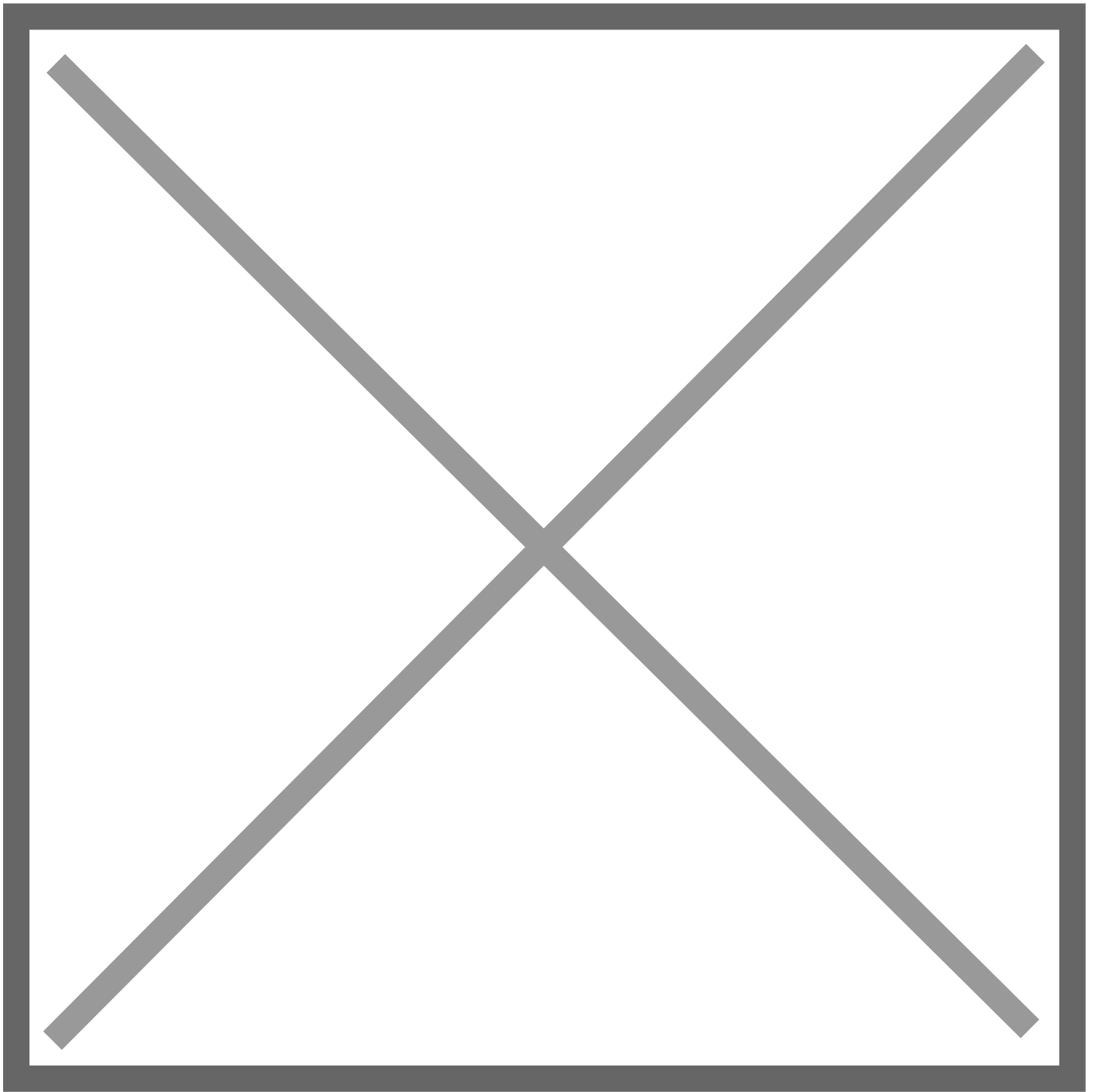
It was worth the trip. She loved her new vehicle.

“Everything about it,” she said. “I really, really loved it.”

But just four weeks later, it was destroyed.

Nagy-Deak was driving home from a late Saturday night shift when another driver rear-ended her. The brand-new 4Runner was totaled. And Nagy-Deak was heartbroken.

“I was just devastated,” she said. “I just cried and cried. I couldn’t believe this happened.”



Nagy-Deak reached back out to Cassens-Johnson, hoping she could find a replacement. But production of the 4Runner TRD Pro in Lunar Rock ended in July 2021, and the paint color was no longer available for the 2022 model year.

“I said, ‘Oh, no,’” according to Cassens-Johnson. “I told her this is a hard model, a hard color and the last of the model year ‘21s. I felt heartbroken for her and I really wanted to help her out.”

Cassens-Johnson reached out to her district manager, Egor Agafonov, of the Kansas City Region.

“When I heard this story and how personal and emotional this was for the customer, I knew we had to help,” he said.

Agafonov and his manager began coordinating with the Central Atlantic Toyota Region, which covers the area where Nagy-Deak lives.

The story landed on the desk of Michael Boyland, the region’s market representation manager. Just a week before, he’d had a show car with the exact specs Nagy-Deak wanted, but he had already sold it to a dealer.

“Talk about being frustrated,” Boyland said. “But I decided to pick up the phone and call Melissa. I like talking to customers, and I wanted to see how we could help. I knew we could get her a vehicle. That wasn’t the problem. But I wanted to talk to her and see what we could do.”

Boyland suggested other options and colors. But Nagy-Deak’s heart was set on the 2021 4Runner TRD Pro in Lunar Rock.

“I got off the phone and just really wanted to help her,” he said. “We’re a big company. I knew we had to have a vehicle somewhere.”

Boyland checked with his counterparts in every region. No luck.

Then, he downloaded the company car report — a list that shows every vehicle in the company’s inventory for internal use. He filtered it to show all the 2021 4Runners in the company fleet and found the exact model and color Nagy-Deak was looking for.

It was currently being used as a press vehicle in the Atlanta area. He made a call to Toyota’s East Coast public relations manager, who agreed to release the vehicle to the region.

Jackpot: Boyland had found the vehicle Nagy-Deak was looking for.

From there, Bradley Faulkner, district manager for the region, coordinated to have it shipped to a local dealership. This time, Nagy-Deak wouldn’t have to travel a thousand miles to get her car. She would pick it up at Koch 33 Toyota, a dealership just over an hour from her house.

Faulkner worked with the dealer to figure out logistics and delivery.



“Here’s this customer, working as a nurse and doing something above and beyond, just going to and from work, and then she gets in this wreck,” Faulkner said. “And it makes you wonder, ‘why do bad things happen to good people?’ This was a customer’s worst nightmare. So, I shared the story with our partners at Koch 33, and of course, they wanted to help.”

The dealership agreed to cover the costs to transport the vehicle from Atlanta to Easton, Pennsylvania, where they’re located.

“We were excited to help a health care hero,” Bob Bozarth, Koch 33 Toyota general manager, said. “My wife is a nurse and I have a lot of respect for the medical community. They’ve stepped up for all of us over the last two years and so my takeaway was, how can we help? How can we show our appreciation?”

Nagy-Deak picked up her vehicle in November.

“It was worth the wait,” she said. “And I’ll always be grateful to everyone who played a part to make this happen. I’m just blown away by how thoughtful everyone has been throughout this process. It’s incredible and it’s why I’ll be a Toyota customer for life.”

For Boyland, he just considers it part of the job.

“It’s always about the customer,” he said. “Put the customer first and the rest will follow. That’s what Akio Toyoda always says and it’s true.”

To read the full January issue of Toyota Today, click [here](#).