

Celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month: TODOS Members Reflect on Their Participation

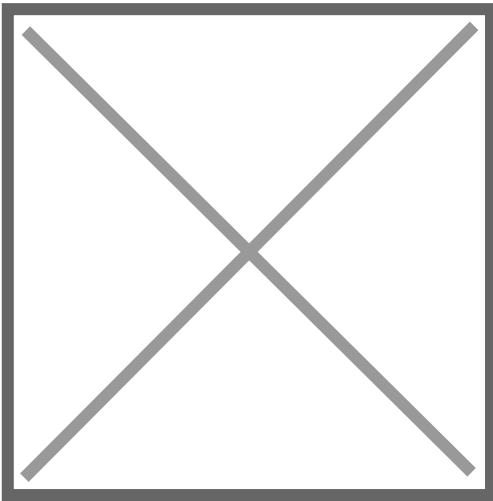
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Hispanic Heritage Month is an annual observation meant to celebrate, honor and reflect on Hispanic and Latino culture and history in America. Its official commemoration is Sept. 15 to Oct. 15, but for the Toyota Organization for the Development of Latinos (TODOS), the sentiment is embraced year-round. TODOS has existed for more than 20 years as a Toyota business partnering group (BPG), serving as a network and resource for Hispanics and Latinos at Toyota and in neighboring communities.

Sparking Passions, Supporting People



Pablo Ramirez

HR analyst Pablo Ramirez has been with Toyota Indiana for almost two decades. His work for TODOS in that time helped him realize both his passion for helping people and Toyota's dedication to supporting Latino communities.

"Toyota is 1,000% supportive. When you look across the different plants, the company has done so much to help," Ramirez says. "I've been involved in working groups to host English classes, translation, training assistance, as well as participating in a Latino development program. Toyota goes above and beyond."

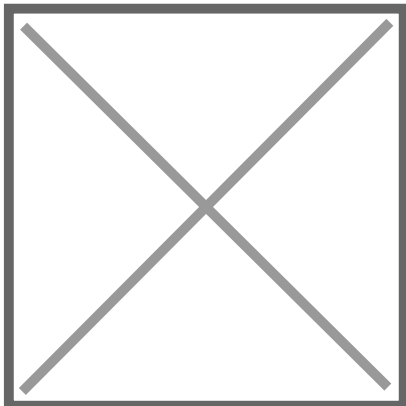
Ramirez, who grew up in Costa Rica and moved to Indiana when he was 19, says that Toyota has consistently been a source of opportunity and growth for him. He was once even a chairperson for his local TODOS chapter.

"My experience here has been amazing, always positive," Ramirez says. "I want to pass that along to everyone, not just Latinos. I want to be a great resource for others who might feel like an outsider."

He hopes that the series of events TODOS is hosting this year for Hispanic Heritage Month will inspire more of his colleagues to learn about and become a part of the organization.

"Hispanic Heritage Month is a great opportunity to honor and embrace our culture," Ramirez says. "It's important to remember all the Hispanics who have contributed to building a better world for future generations, but also shine a light on how far there is to go. It is nice to see the collaboration from Toyota team members building inclusion and bringing us together to celebrate our heritage"

Accelerating Initiatives



Andrew Sanchez

Still, some of TODOS' most impactful initiatives happen outside of the month-long celebration. With long-term events and initiatives focused on education, cultural engagement, community involvement and career development, TODOS has a broad scope of impact that will continue to grow following Hispanic Heritage Month. For instance, TODOS is holding its first chapter-wide symposium in November, according to Andrew Sanchez, chief of staff for enterprise strategy at Toyota Motor of North America (TMNA) and chairperson for TODOS' North American Advisory Council.

“There are numerous events that will take place throughout Hispanic Heritage Month at all seven TODOS chapters, ranging from guest speakers to a development series,” Sanchez says. “The symposium will be the first time all seven chapters will come together in person to focus on development and empowering one another.”

But even as TODOS expands, its role within Toyota as a BPG remains the same: maintain diversity, inclusion and visibility for everyone.

“Every BPG is made up of members with different experiences, some within that cultural community and some allies,” Sanchez says. “What drives diversity and inclusion is the power of the people and those who support them. We're all bringing our unique experiences to Toyota, and that's what diversity and inclusion is all about.”

In Sanchez's 14 years of experience with Toyota, TODOS has always given him a platform to be open with his cultural experiences and authentic self.

“Bringing my whole self to work and being proud of my culture and heritage is a good way for my allies, mentors and peers who are not Latino to learn about our culture and community,” Sanchez says. “The more we can educate, the more we can be allies for one another.”