

Honoring Military Veterans: 'The Wall That Heals' Comes to Toyota Texas

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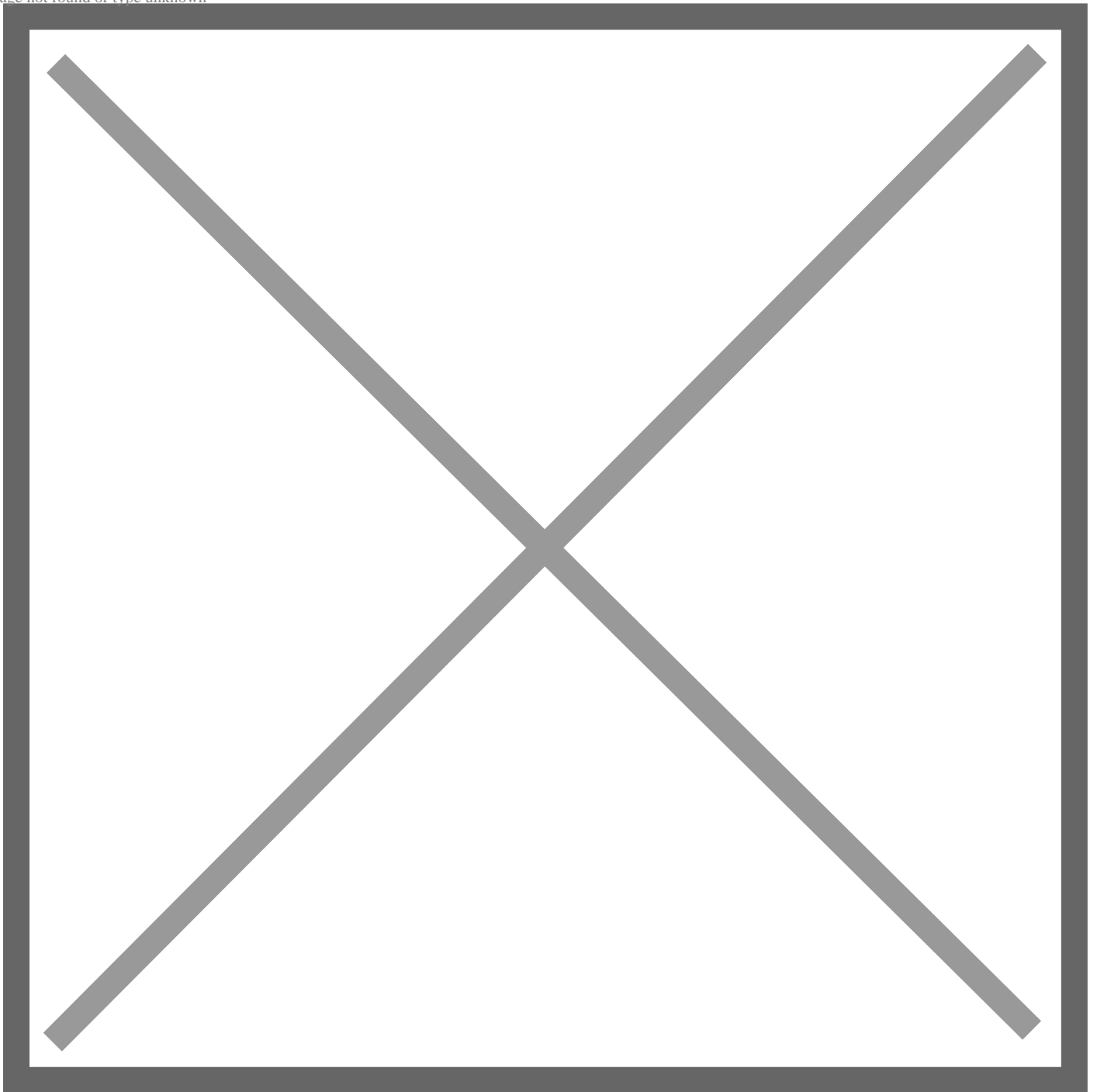


When former U.S. Army/Marine veteran Roger Lopez visited the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., in 1994, it was a stirring experience that he will likely never forget.?

“It made me cry,” the production group leader at Toyota Motor Manufacturing, Texas (Toyota Texas) and military veteran recalls. “It was a very emotional event for me. My father was a Vietnam veteran. So, it gave me the opportunity to understand his sacrifices, as well as all the Vietnam veterans that are on that wall.”

Dedicated in 1982, the memorial chronologically lists the names of 58,281 Americans who gave their lives in service to their country between 1957 and 1975.

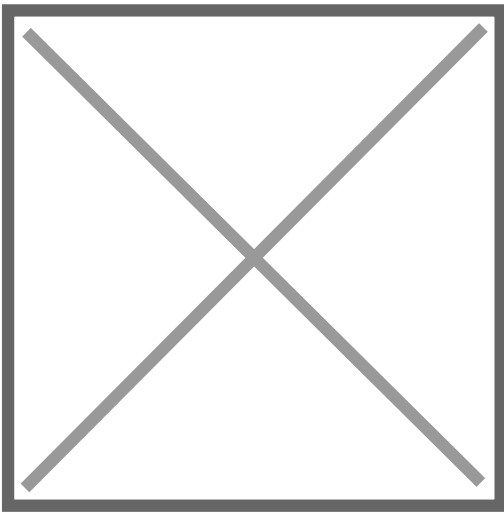
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Bringing Solace to Texas

Thanks to Toyota's Veterans Association (TVA), a business partnering group (BPG) that advocates and provides support for veterans at Toyota, the company's military veterans and employees, as well as the public in the San Antonio area, got the chance to see "The Wall That Heals," a replica of the memorial.?

The BPG applied to have the traveling exhibit come to San Antonio, home of Toyota Texas, and add the visit to its growing list of nearly 700 communities throughout the country since its dedication in 1996.?

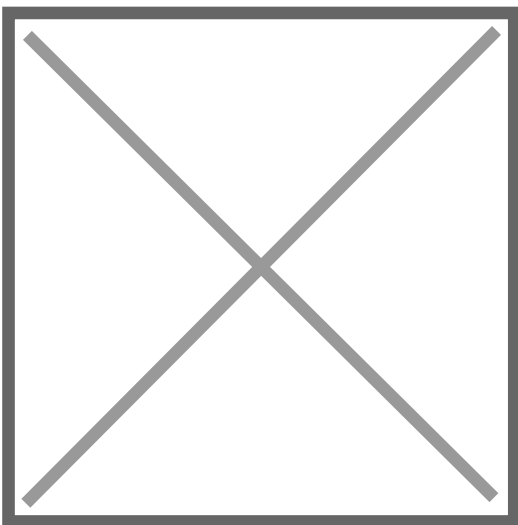


“I feel it was important to bring ‘The Wall That Heals’ to San Antonio because we are a military city in the U.S.,” says Lopez, who has been with Toyota for nearly 17 years and also serves as TVA’s chair. “We have a great connection with San Antonio, and allowing the veterans of all sorts, the post-Vietnam veterans as well, the opportunity to come down here...it gave them the opportunity to stand in front of the wall as if they were standing in front of that wall in Washington, D.C.”

Driving Honor and Reflection??

Like the original memorial, “The Wall That Heals” is erected in a chevron shape and visitors are able to do rubbings on the wall of individual service member’s names, according to the [website](#).

The replica is constructed of Avonite, a synthetic granite, and an aluminum frame supports its 140 numbered panels. Machine engraving of the more than 58,000 names along with modern LED lighting allow the wall to be readable day and night. An expansive structure, it’s 375 feet in length and stands 7.5 feet high at its tallest point.



Bringing the memorial, which was on display 24 hours a day from November 3-6 to the Lone Star State is something that Lopez was proud and happy to be a part of.?

“‘The Wall That Heals’ coming to Texas meant a lot to me,” he says. “It allowed the opportunity for just veterans alone here in San Antonio to be able to come to the wall to reflect and remember the sacrifices made by all the men and women.”

For Lopez, who has been a dedicated TVA member since 2018, bringing “The Wall That Heals” to Toyota was just one of the many opportunities of being a part of the BPG.?

“I thought it was important for me to join TVA because I wanted to be a voice for our members and for our veterans at the plant and in the community,” says Lopez. “It’s definitely benefited me being part of TVA here at the plant. It has helped me grow personally to be able to communicate and network with other veterans at the plant, in the community and at other plants. It’s helped me grow professionally.”

Fueling Passion and Purpose?

Lopez’s military background has also been beneficial for his career. The structure at Toyota is similar to that in the military, he says.

“I felt that I was a perfect fit coming to Toyota Texas just because of the structure. It helped me with my leadership skills as well as my training skills.”

Seeing the original memorial nearly 30 years ago and then being an integral part of bringing its replica to his place of business was an important, full-circle moment for Lopez. He understands the magnitude and impact the replica had on those who were able to view it for the first time.?

“To be able to stand in front of the wall, you’re able to connect with the sacrifices that were made during that era,” he says. “And it also gives the opportunity to keep this memory alive.”