

Celebrating Pride Month: Toyota Employees Reflect on Their Experiences

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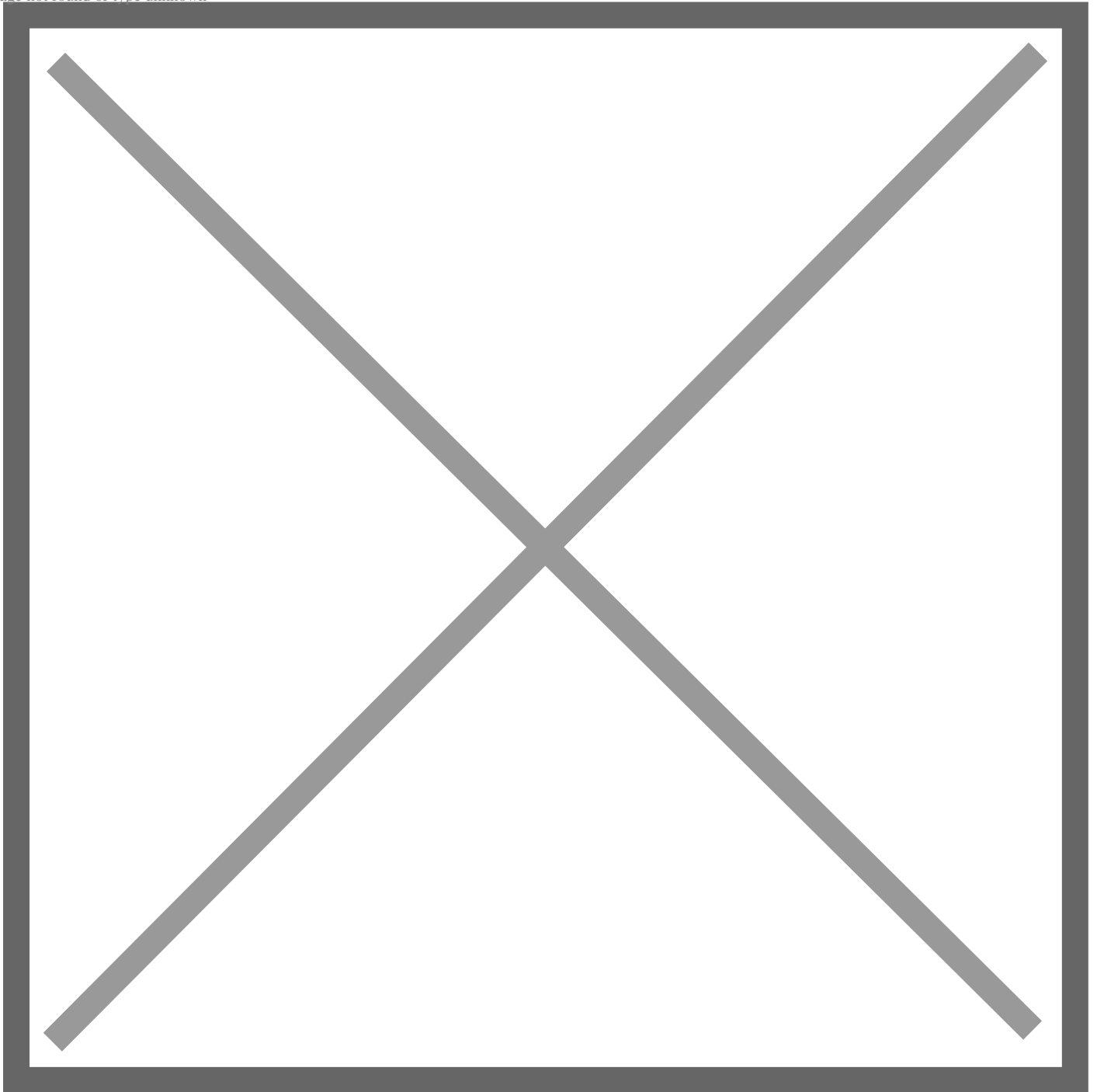
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At Toyota, there's a welcoming space for everyone. For the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ+) community, that space includes Spectrum, a business partnering group (BPG) where they can embrace their identity, share thoughts on relevant issues and seek support.

In celebration of Pride Month, we're highlighting three Spectrum members to get their perspectives on what pride means to them, why they joined the BPG, and what it means to work for a company that stands by its commitment to diversity and inclusion.

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Family Ties

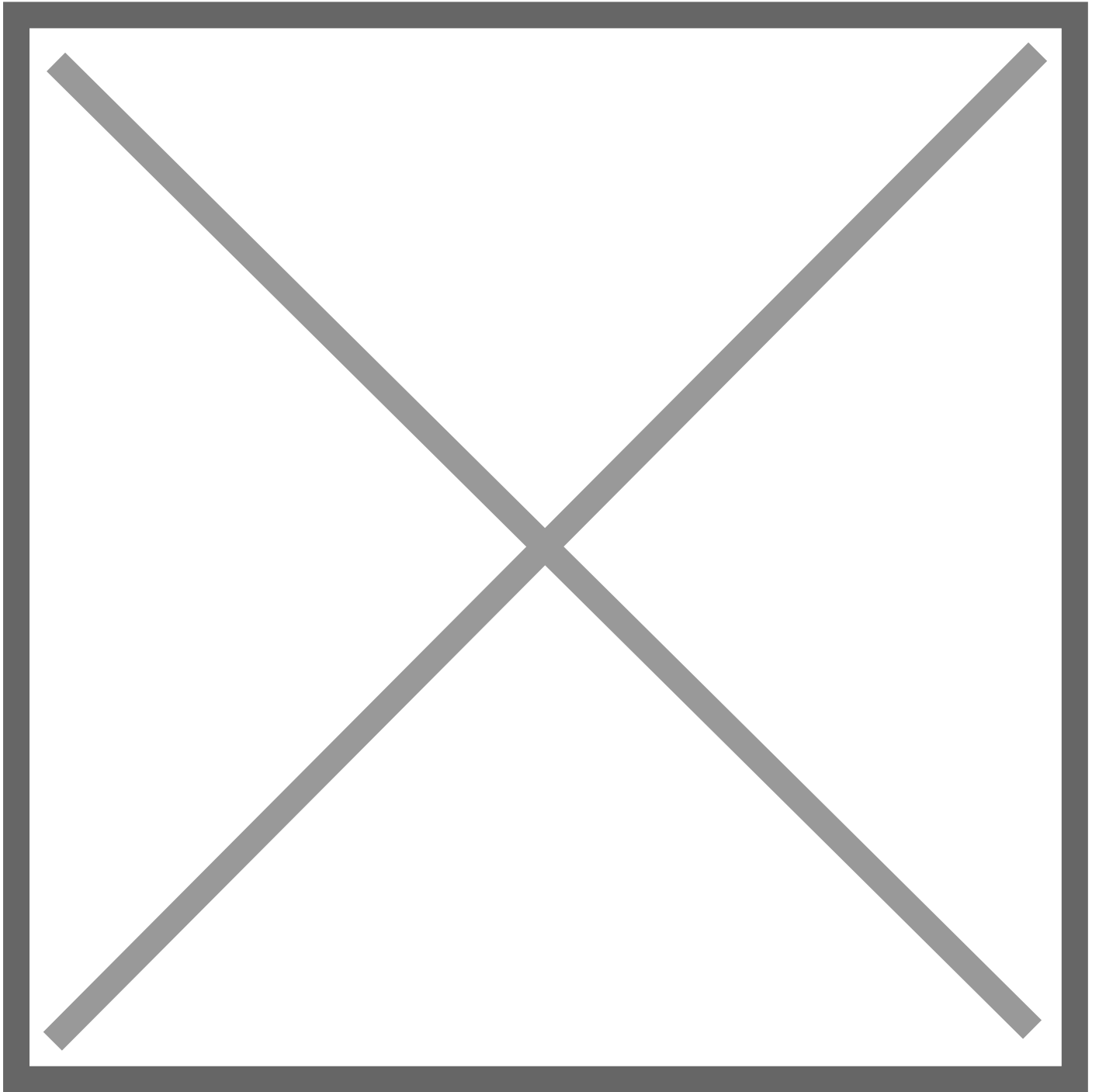
For ??Jose Melendez, body weld team leader at Toyota Mississippi, joining Spectrum was a way to show respect and honor his daughter.

“A friend at work told me about Spectrum and I knew I wanted to be a part of it,” he says. “My daughter, Katherine, is a member of the LGBTQ+ community, and I join every event held by Spectrum to show my support for her and her community.”

Fostering an inclusive environment where everyone is seen as valuable and given the opportunity for growth is what makes Melendez proud to work at Toyota.

“No matter who you are, there’s a place for you here,” he says. “I have always felt included. If you put the work in, there are so many opportunities to move up. Toyota cares about my safety above all else.”

For those looking to join a BPG like Spectrum, Melendez offers some advice: “Be open-minded and accepting. You don’t have to agree with everything. Acceptance is the ability to see that others have a right to be their own unique person.”



Limitless Possibilities

Sabrina Williams, quality team leader at Toyota Indiana, says Pride Month is a time to reflect on the progress made toward equality while honoring yourself.

“For me, Pride Month is about celebrating and acknowledging the equal-rights journey that members of the LGBTQ+ and allies fought through,” they say. “It’s about remembering what was before and celebrating how far we have come as a community. Pride Month is about self-affirmation, self-acceptance and visibility.”

Since their first Spectrum meeting, they've been involved in the BPG in some capacity. Today, they're now the chair of the Toyota Indiana chapter.

"Toyota has celebrated and supported my LGBTQ+ identity by offering opportunities through BPG involvement," they say. "Toyota offers inclusive policies geared at providing a safe space to ensure equity and equality for employees."

Like Melendez, Williams also believes that Toyota sets its employees up for success while supporting their drive for advancement within the company.

"My favorite thing about working for Toyota is that anything is possible," they say. "If you're willing to put in the work, then you will achieve any goal you set for yourself. Leadership wants you to succeed."

For Williams, that level of commitment to employees' success and overall well-being is exemplified at Spectrum.

"Toyota is one of the largest companies in my area," they say. "BPGs like Spectrum enable employees to bring their whole selves to work. Being a part of a BPG provides employees a sense of belonging and community."

In terms of their guidance within Spectrum, Williams is pleased with their contributions and how they impact the group.

"I'm most proud of witnessing firsthand the support that my leadership team has given me to pursue ideas that foster a more inclusive environment for employees."



Embracing the Unexpected

When Lauren Warner, productivity analyst at Toyota Motor North America (TMNA), joined the company five and half years ago, she probably didn't foresee working at several locations in such a short amount of time.

"This is my fourth location with the company," she says. "I started out in the field as a supervisor with Toyota Logistics Services (TLS) at Toyota Indiana; Toyota Kentucky; then at Long Beach, California. I moved to productivity management and relocated to Plano two years ago."

Warner thrives on the unexpected and loves that she can experience that at Toyota. “I love the variety,” she says. “No two days have been the same in any role that I’ve had, and I love it. Also, there is lots of room for movement and horizontal growth. A pyramid needs a strong base before it can build upward.”

In addition to her current role, Warner is also the chair of Spectrum’s Plano chapter. She credits her team for keeping the BPG running smoothly and effectively.

“I am supported by a fantastic board that connects our colleagues with the community, executives and each other.”

For the first time in all U.S. Toyota locations, Spectrum held a Progress Pride Flag Raising Ceremony on June 1.

“The Progress Pride Flag is a significant milestone because it celebrates inclusivity and recognition of marginalized groups within the LGBTQ+ community,” Warner says. “At the Dallas Pride festival and parade the first weekend of June, we had cars in all the colors of the Progress Pride Flag. We plan on having several informational lunch-and-learn sessions this year for everyone to enjoy.”