

Toyota and Jane Goodall Institute Help Grow Environmental Stewardship with Roots & Shoots Events in U.S.

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Toyota has been assembling cars in the U.S. for more than 40 years. But that's not all it does. Toyota also works with others, including the communities around its facilities throughout North America, to educate children, train workers and improve the environment. A big part of this involves changing people's minds and expectations for a brighter future.

That's where relationships like the one Toyota has struck with international environmental icon Jane Goodall come in. Supporting Goodall's international organization, the Jane Goodall Institute (JGI), Toyota is helping to build environmental awareness in young people, so they'll be empowered to understand issues and come up with constructive solutions.

"Hope is our North Star," said Mary Ford, Senior Director of Jane Goodall's Roots & Shoots USA in Washington, D.C. "It's so easy to lose hope in the face of everything that's going wrong in the world, and the enormity of the challenges before us. We need to instill hope, and to do it through actions that grow hope."

Turning sheet metal into cars is one thing. How can you help manufacture hope?

Over the past year, Toyota has helped support JGI on a series of events as part of the Roots & Shoots program, which focuses on teaching schoolchildren and teenagers about environmental conservation and giving them tools to help them take action to help humans, other animals, and the environment we all share. By showing young people how they can improve their local communities, JGI has been training the next generation of compassionate leaders for the past 30 years.

"It's important to engage kids early on, to help them get access to the outdoors, so they can grow up to be stewards of the environment," said Becky Martin, an environmental sustainability manager with Toyota North America. "We're working with underserved communities that may not have had a lot of opportunities to be out in nature, to learn about it."

Toyota has its own environmental goals for both its products and operations that include reducing carbon, conserving water, minimizing waste, and increasing biodiversity, Martin said. But outreach is another main pillar of the company's sustainability efforts, she said.

"We want to have a positive impact on our communities," Martin said. "We want to engage the people where we work, to provide experiential learning opportunities, and to help train a new generation of leaders."

Roots & Shoots program

Toyota supported JGI on four Roots & Shoots events over the past year, and five more are planned in the coming year. The following is a short recap of the events already held.



Photo credit: Joseph Rey Au/Toyota

In Kentucky, seventh graders from Paris Middle School joined employees from Toyota's Georgetown plant to remove invasive plants like Japanese honeysuckle and thistle from the company's 50-acre biodiversity reserve including a meadow and forest habitat. Others helped get duckweed out of a pond to help native wildlife flourish.

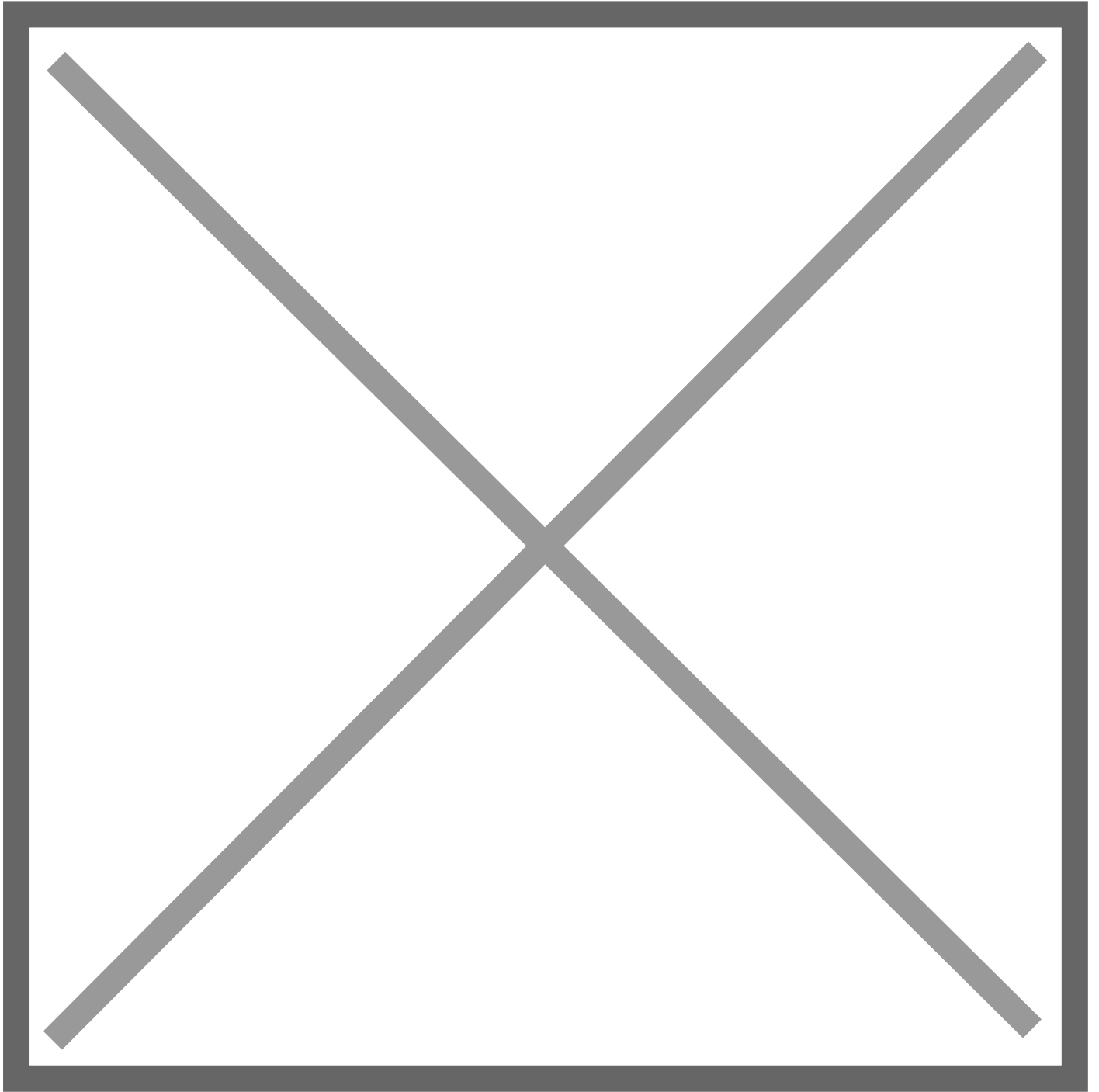


Photo credit: John Sibold/Toyota)

Students from Hannan Junior Senior High School near Toyota West Virginia took part in a beekeeping demonstration to learn about the impact of pollinators on the environment. They heard from West Virginia Department of Natural Resources, Marshall University's Natural Resource Program, and the Three Rivers Avian Centers Wings of Wonder Program about native raptors. The students will be back next year, and Toyota is donating funds to repair the school's greenhouse from damage in a recent storm.

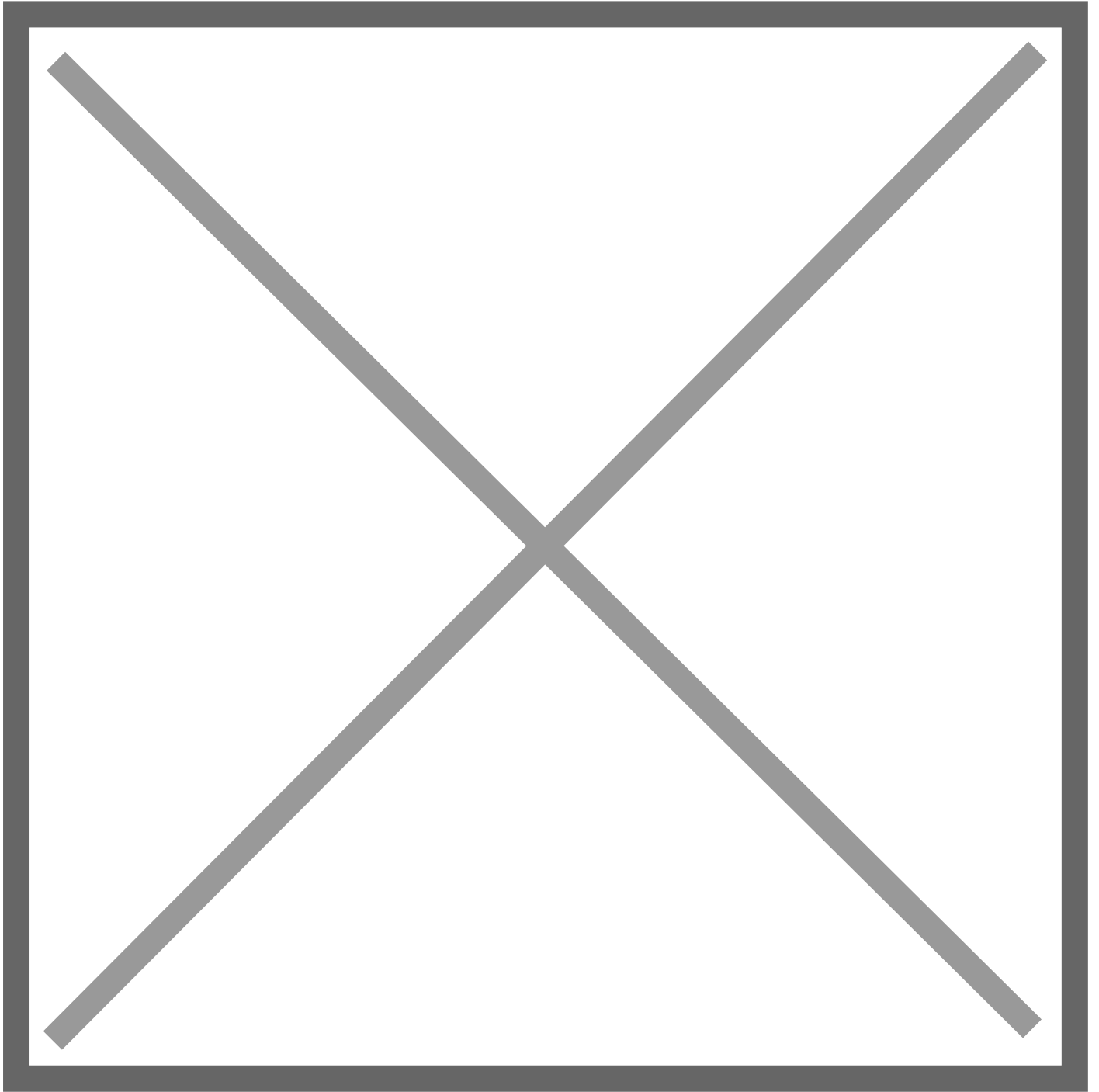


Photo credit: David Dewhurst/Toyota

At a Los Angeles event in March, students from L.A.'s Crenshaw and Compton neighborhoods went to The Beehive, a Black-owned business incubator and cultural events space in South Los Angeles. They worked with a master gardener to learn about local wildlife, urban ecology, and conservation. They planted native pollinator plants as well as hydroponic vegetable towers, bringing welcome green space to a former industrial complex.

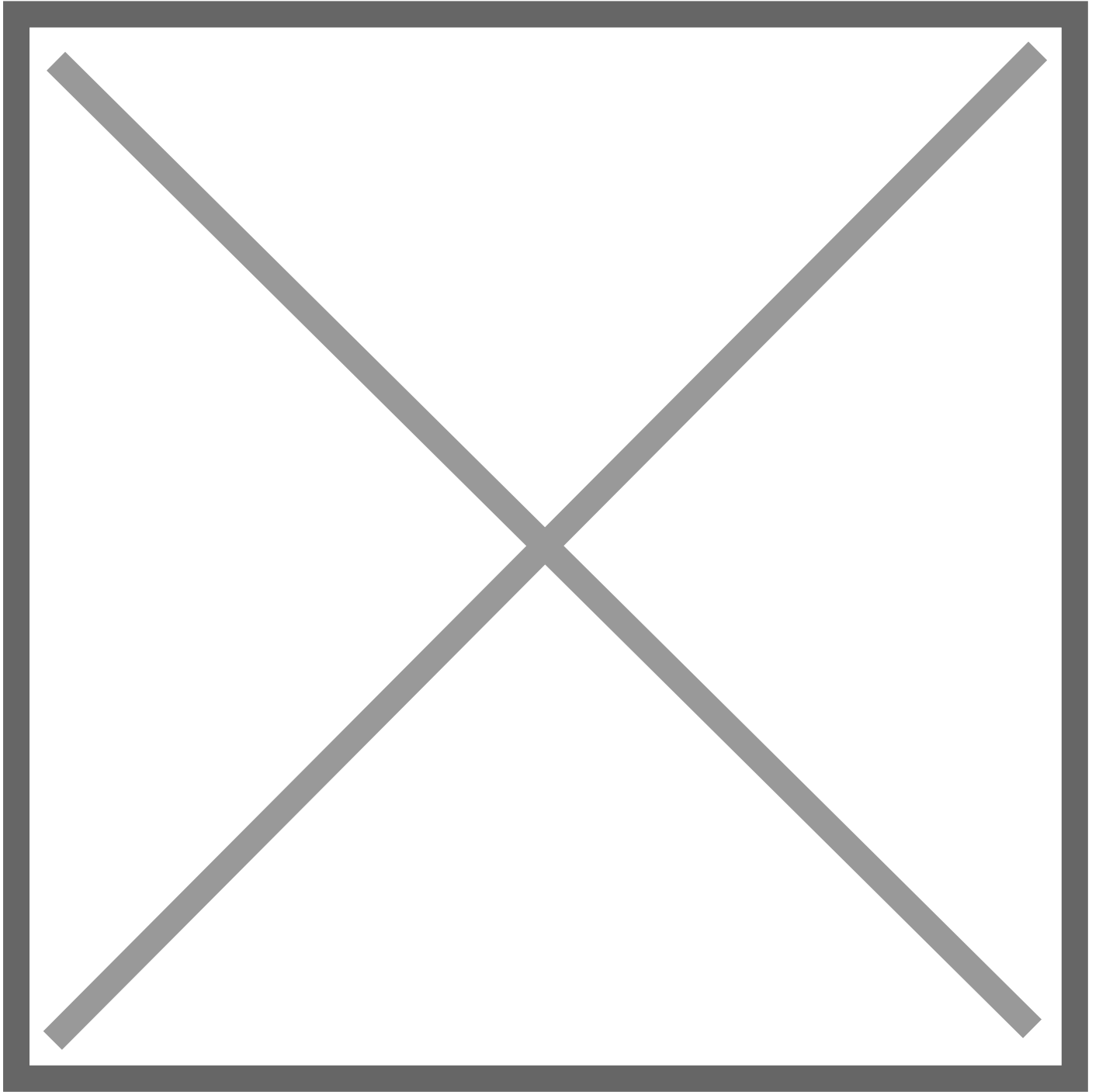


Photo credit: LJ Garcia/Jane Goodall Institute

Jane Goodall herself came to a Toyota-sponsored Roots & Shoots event near Atlanta, Georgia. The 90-year-old United Nations Messenger of Peace helped teenagers from Decatur plant trees. Later, Goodall recounted her life story to the group, from her experiences studying chimpanzees in Tanzania in the 1960s to coming to realize that conservation was the only way to save them decades later.

Origins of the Roots & Shoots program

As Goodall said in an interview with Toyota North America's Regional Environmental Sustainability Director Kevin Butt last year:

“When I began work in Gombe in 1960 with the chimpanzees, there was a great forest belt that stretched across Africa. By the late 1980s, it was just a small island of forest surrounded by bare hills. There were more people living there than the land could support, and they were too poor to buy food. People were struggling to survive. ... That's when it hit me. If we can't find ways for these people to support themselves without destroying the forests, we can't save chimpanzees, the forest or anything else.”

Roots & Shoots has been working since 1991 to get young people involved in conservation. Goodall started the program after a meeting with disillusioned teens in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Goodall counseled the kids to organize themselves, brainstorm about problems facing their immediate community, and to come up with solutions. This locally focused, action-oriented model has been the blueprint for the program ever since. Roots & Shoots now operates in 70 countries. In the U.S., Roots & Shoots operates in 50 states through over 2000 individual groups, with more than 63,000 participants.

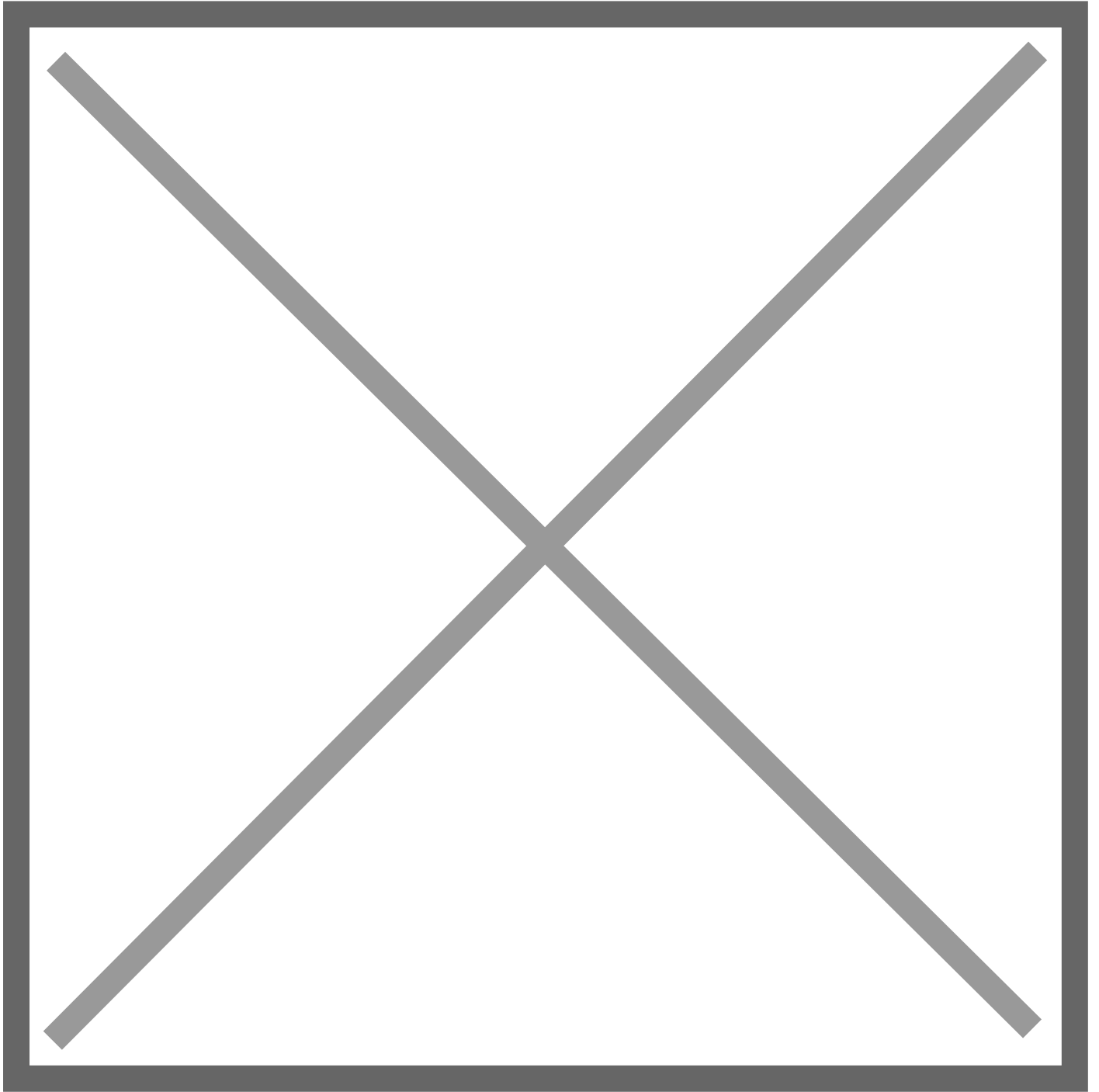


Photo credit: LJ Garcia/Jane Goodall Institute

One of the strengths of Roots & Shoots is a structure that accommodates all sizes of groups to allow maximum participation, Ford said. Groups can range from a few members to dozens. They might be led by a teacher, be part of a scout troop or sprout from a single, inspired and motivated young person. The key is that the members decide for themselves which problems to focus on and what actions to take.

“We want kids who are involved in Roots & Shoots to know that they have agency now,” Ford said. “We want them to know they can make a difference, and to grow up to be people who see themselves as changemakers, who have the agency to see something that’s going wrong, and to take action to address that.”

Working with companies like Toyota is a way for the Jane Goodall Institute to take its conservation message to a broader population, Ford said. Kids at the Toyota events may have never heard of Goodall, but they know Toyota cars. If a big company like Toyota thinks conservation is important, they might be more open to thinking about the environmental message.

In her conversation with Toyota last year, Goodall said that industry had a vital role to play in conservation.

“It’s clear that business and corporations have to take the lead in this crisis time,” Goodall said. “Governments are handcuffed in a way – they’ve just got to do what their constituents want. ... There is a tendency for NGOs who are environmentalist or something like that to preach to the converted. It’s really important to find those companies who really do care.”

To learn more about the JGI Roots & Shoots program, visit rootsandshoots.org or follow on social at @rootsandshoots.