TOYOTA In the magazine for toyota dealerships

# **Turning Point**

TOYOT

Ray Chaudhry and a group of adults with special needs are making a very real impact at Naperville Toyota



#### 4 Loud & Clear

True. Daniel Lethcoe is deaf. But that doesn't seem to matter all that much as the certified technician moves up the ranks at Johnson City Toyota.

#### 7 **Turning Point**

By employing people with special needs, Naperville Toyota is filling critical jobs and giving its people invaluable experience. That includes document scanner Ray Chaudhry, pictured on the cover with his mother, Ruby.

#### 11 Help Is Here

When employees need to talk, Danny Mize (above, left) is there to listen. It's his job at Street Toyota. General Manager Mike Good brought him on board as an employee to support other employees.

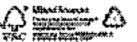
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What does it take to be named the Toyota Certified Collision Center of the Year? A-1 Toyota shares its winning formula.

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#### DEALER DOINGS: How Far Will You Take It? Teacher drives RAV4 Hybrid on nationwide national parks road trip

#### by Kaitlin Pennell

A dream came true this summer for a passionate Philadelphia AP Environmental Science teacher. And a 2016 RAV4 Hybrid from Team Toyota of Langhorne made it possible.

Central Atlantic Toyota (CAT) and the Pennsylvania dealership loaned Neshaminy High School's James Maloney the hybrid to embark on a coast-to-coast tour de national parks. It's something they believe will positively affect both the local community and Neshaminy's students.

But how did this dream come to fruition? With a few letters. Actually, 70 to be exact.

Maloney wrote to all major car companies asking for a new car for his summer road trip. Most brands were quick to say, "Forget about it."

#### But not Toyota.

"Our interest was piqued by the educational link," says Brad Heagy, CAT vehicle operations manager. "He came to us and said 'I teach my students about ecology all over the world and the country, but I haven't been to these places, so I want to be able to understand them from a firsthand standpoint and relate my experiences to students."



"This summer road trip really captures the spirit of the RAV4," says Ash Hack of Toyota Marketing, "especially with the tagline, 'How far will you take it?' And the fact that the car is a hybrid, he's going to go farther in between fueling up."

Maloney visited more than 20 national parks during his 49-day, nearly 13,000-mile journey with girlfriend Lea Della Vecchia, a teacher at the Pocono Environmental Education Center. Throughout the road trip, Maloney journaled about his travel experiences on his blog and Facebook page.

But it's the second part of the journey that has Toyota even more excited. Maloney received the RAV4 on the condition that he use the knowledge gained on his trip to challenge his students.

So, during the first month of the school year, Maloney asked his students to come up with ecological strategies to benefit their community. CAT has pledged a \$10,000 grant to help those proposals come to life.

"It turned out to be amazing," Heagy says. "We didn't enter this partnership for a return on our investment. We did this because James is an educator with a passion."

Before the Epic Journey Environmental educator James Maloney returned from the ultimate road trip to more than 20 national parks in a RAV4 Hybrid provided by Team Toyota of Langhorne and CAT Next step? Students create ecological strategies to benefit their community.

#### DEALER **DOINGS**:

#### Sunnyside Toyota

The return on investment in AEDs and CPR training? A customer's life

#### by Dan Miller



Very Happy Ending What's the difference between life and death? For Sunnyside Toyota customer Frank George, it was an AED unit and the quic response of (left to right) Tina Merrell, Dave Henson, Kendyl Frye and Bob Steele.

Kendyl Frye admits Sunnyside Toyota's management team did hesitate a bit before it decided to invest in three automated external defibrillators (AED) and the training required to use them. But after what happened at the North Olmsted, Ohio, dealership, no one is second-guessing that expense now.

To put it simply, the suburban Cleveland store's foresight—in all likelihood—saved a life.

"I honestly believe that, if not for the AED, he wouldn't have made it," says Customer Relations Manager Frye of long-time customer Frank George.

On a routine weekday in August, George was seated in the dealership's service lounge, having brought in his 2012 Corolla for its routine 45,000-mile service. What happened next was anything but routine.

George's head fell back. He started convulsing. He lost consciousness. He had no pulse. He was in the throes of a sudden cardiac arrest.

"I happened to be in the area, taking care of another customer," says Frye. "I told Dave Henson, one of our service advisors, to get the AED while our receptionist, Tina Merrell, called 911. Bob Steele, another service advisor, and two of our customers helped me get him down on the floor. We just formed a team and took our positions. There was this silent understanding." When the AED arrived, Frye attached the pads and gave George's heart a shock and the team started to administer CPR. The 65-year-old managed one dramatic inhalation. Then the paramedics arrived and took over. From start to finish, only seven minutes elapsed.

Six days later, in the hospital, George regained full consciousness. Rather miraculously, he had no loss of brain activity. His wife, Ellie, told Frye that only about 10 percent of the people who suffer sudden cardiac arrest survive. When he's up to it, George plans to revisit the dealership to personally thank the people who saved his life.

"We were lucky," says Frye. "The man upstairs was watching over us."

Fortunate, yes. But Sunnyside Toyota was also prepared. In addition to the AEDs placed strategically throughout the facility, the dealership has a dozen employees who are certified to use the devices and administer CPR. Frye hopes their experience will inspire every Toyota dealership to follow suit.

"You do need a commitment from management," she says. "We took on the challenge and, thankfully, it paid off. A lot of our customers are older. They bring in their cars and wait in the lounge. You never know when something like this will happen."

# LOUDS CLEAR

Daniel Lethcoe can't hear. So what? That hasn't stopped him from pursuing his goals and wowing his coworkers at Johnson City Toyota.

by Dan Nied Photos by Paul S. Howell

continued on page 5

#### continued from page 4

#### What's the story here?

Daniel Lethcoe is a certified line technician at Johnson City Toyota in Tennessee. He has his sights set on becoming a master technician.

He is good at his job. He's ambitious. And his colleagues love working with him. Every dealership has people like that, who can thrive in a fast-paced environment, raise their game when needed and aim for bigger things.

Oh, so Daniel Lethcoe is deaf. Has been from birth. Does that change the story? Does that make him special?

Well, maybe in one sense. But the story isn't that he can't hear. It's that it doesn't matter that he can't hear.

#### **MASTER JOURNEY**

Lethcoe has been at Johnson City Toyota since 2011. In those five years, his technical knowledge and ability have skyrocketed. He started by changing tires and oil. Now he's the go-to guy on accessories, suspension kits and alignments.

This year, Lethcoe was nominated for the Cincinnati Region's 10-month group technical training program. He completed the course in October. The Region hired two sign language interpreters for each class—at no expense to Lethcoe or Johnson City Toyota. From there, it was smooth sailing.

"The instructors have just bragged on him about how attentive and intense he is about learning," says Service Manager Bob Berry, who isn't shy about heaping praise on the tech.

Lethcoe found more than technical expertise during training. He found a career path.

"The more I learn about what I do, the more interested I become," Lethcoe says. "Before the training, my knowledge might not have been as indepth, so this makes me motivated to learn more. I didn't really know exactly what I wanted. But as I moved on, I decided I wanted to be a master technician."

And his bosses see that path, too.

"Next year is advanced group training," Berry says. "Once he gets his training done, we want him to get on the path to master technician and eventually become a master diagnostic technician."





#### **SLIGHT ADJUSTMENT**

When Lethcoe came aboard, it took a little getting used to for everyone. His coworkers would sometimes forget that he couldn't hear them, and he was unable to listen for sound cues that could help guide his work.

But because of his strong work ethic, he has done nothing but impress his bosses.

"Daniel refuses to fall into the same pitfalls so many technicians do," says Scott Ferrell, the dealership's service and parts director. "He doesn believe things are beneath him. He embraces whatever we give him today."

Ferrell saw it back in 2009, when he worked at another dealership. Lethcoe came in looking for a job. Unfortunately, there was nothing oper at the time.

"Daniel impressed me because he was very determined to become a technician. He was not going to be denied," Ferrell says. "That always stuck with me. I knew that, given an opportunit he would go far. And when I came to Johnson City Toyota, he was already here. I get immense satisfaction seeing how far he's come, and it confirms what I knew about him seven years ago Daniel was not going to be told 'no."



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#### JUST PART OF THE CREW

	Ferrell and Lethcoe have become close over the
d	years, which has Ferrell thinking about learning a
d	new skill.
1	"I want to learn sign language," he says.
	"He's too lazy to do that," Lethcoe shoots back.
	"You watch," Ferrell says. "I'm going to learn sign
	language and I'm going to show you."
	Just your basic banter between coworkers.
	Nothing special here.
'nt	Actually, there is something special:
	A technician who has found his calling, and
	is well on his way to mastering his craft. Yep,
	Daniel Lethcoe is a role model to others,
	including Justin Shell, a new technician who
n	also happens to be hearing impaired. Daniel
	has, naturally, helped Justin's transition.
	"If he gets frustrated I'll help him out," Daniel
	says. "I know what it's like. I was frustrated early
	on, too."
у,	But Daniel's frustrations have evaporated now,
	and he's focused on his path.
	So what's the story here? One of a gifted technician
	with an intense passion to grow, and the coworkers
).	who love him.
	As stories go, this one is pretty good. 🏵

### given the opportunity

Naperville Toyota's embrace of employees with special needs benefits everyone involved. Just ask Ray Chaudhry.

by Dan Nied

toyota**today 🖌** november/december2016

Sometimes, Ray Chaudhry gets frustrated. In his mind, the words are there. His smile suggests he knows the answers. But he just can't get them out.

Ray is nonverbal. He only talks to his mother, Ruby, and only then in short, quiet sentences. But behind those eyes are human thoughts and emotions, the curious mind of a 27-year-old man who dreams of working in computer science and electronics.

Asperger Syndrome has robbed him of the ability to verbally express his thoughts to those around him.

So yes, Ray gets frustrated sometimes. But that doesn't stop him.

#### A Commitment All Around

Ray holds a full-time job scanning documents for Naperville Toyota in Illinois. It can be monotonous work, but it's critical to the dealership's daily operations, and he counts his job as the proudest accomplishment of his life.

Ray isn't alone. In recent years, Naperville Toyota has found the benefits of hiring employees with special needs. At any given time, the dealership has 20-24 such employees on staff. Some of them—including Ray—come from



Man with a Plan Ray Chaudhry is fascinated by electronics and solar power. He has converted some of the lights in his home to solar power. *Photos by Rex Curry*  **Standing Tall** Ray counts his job as a document scanner at Naperville Toyota as one of the proudest accomplishments of his life.

Turning Pointe CN Day School, a school for people with special needs founded by dealer principals Dan, Randy and Danny Wolf to help Randy's autistic son, Jack, and others like him. (See related story on page 9.)

"The Wolf family has made a commitment to people with special needs because they have seen the impact of it," says Bob Snell, Naperville Toyota's director of fixed operations and the director of the employment program for people with special needs. "Their goal is to bring these individuals into the work environment. These are good young people who are great employees and appreciative of the opportunity."

And they're doing important jobs, such as scanning documents and delivering parts.

"When they're not here, I don't have anyone to fill those roles," says Snell. "We're giving them the opportunity to find out what it's like to have a job, to show up every day and to interact in the workplace."

Ray joined Naperville Toyota three years ago. He started as a volunteer, then moved to parttime employee and then to full time.

"It was the best thing that could happen because Ray was out of work," says Tariq Chaudhry, Ray's father. "He was staying home all day and getting frustrated. He asked us every day if he could go out and work. It was something of a blessing falling out of the sky."

And though Ray's limitations remain, his world has opened up.

"It is very hard for people with disabilities, including speech impairments," Tariq says. "These days, most interviews are done online or on the phone. Ray is nonverbal, so that's tough. Getting him working was the best thing. He's happy at Naperville Toyota, and he has asked if they have other opportunities for him. He wants to expand."

#### What Does Ray Think?

Ray is intrigued by computers and electronics and, ultimately, would like to find a job in that field.

But for now, he's grateful for the opportunities he's found at Naperville Toyota.

"People at work are very supportive and understanding," he said in an email interview. "They assigned me a job that does not require me to communicate directly with customers. In life, with love and support from my family, I am constantly encouraged."

In his spare time, Ray says he watches solar and electronics assembly and disassembly videos. And in fact, he has converted some of the lights in his house to solar power. His mind is meticulous and technical, and he flashes a disarming smile everywhere he goes.

"When you smile, people normally smile back at you," Tariq says. "He is pretty social, he uses the telephone and he texts. He is very comfortable working with people."

And Ray has forged ahead, impressing Snell, the Chaudhrys and those around him.

"We are all proud of what Ray has done," Tariq says. "Ray has graduated high school and has been working full-time for three years. I think it's a lot of achievement for a person with those disabilities. I think it's an achievement for anyone." @

### **Toyota of Naperville**

School for autism helps provide career paths

by Kaitlin Pennell

ack Wolf, 19, was diagnosed with severe autism when he was 2 years old. From that point forward, his parents Randy and Kim Wolf knew it was going to be an uphill battle. The family moved from city to city-school to school-to help Jack find good teachers that fit his needs, even making the commitment to travel two hours via bus to get to a reputable school.

Finally enough was enough, so Randy and his wife Kim, alongside his brother Danny and father Dan, decided to take matters into their own hands.

The three founders of the Dan Wolf Automotive Group built a school in 2007 that catered to severely autistic children. That school came to be known as the Turning Pointe CN Day School, working under their Turning Pointe Autism Foundation.

The school started with one student and one teacher but has now grown to capacity, and even has a wait list for people with special needs age 10-21.

"It quickly became apparent that two things were happening," says Danny, dealer principal of Toyota of Naperville and board member of Turning Pointe. "One: The demand was a lot greater than what we had initially anticipated. The one-room school wasn't going to work anymore. Two: The kids were getting older and we had to offer more than just middle school-level learning."

With that in mind, the Wolf family purchased an additional building for high school classes and, later, added the Career College.

At the Career College, students gain handson working experience in mock work settings.

Turning Pointe landed partnerships with Office Max and Walgreens, in addition to partnerships with dealerships under the Dan Wolf Automotive Group, which employs about 25 people with special needs.

Danny says hiring these young adults helps fight the stigma that individuals with disabilities aren't capable of working.

"Individuals with special needs-and it doesn't have to be just autism-truly have the potential to be phenomenal employees," Danny says. "I don't think people give that enough thought or recognition.

"A lot of people work because they have to," he adds. "But our students work because they want to. Having meaningful employment means everything to them."

And that includes Jack, who is doing just fine these days, working at Lexus of Naperville two days per week.

Bringing Turning Pointe graduates onto the staff has positively impacted both customers and employees at the dealership. Danny says the team treats the young adults like family.

"It's changed every employee's perspective on special needs," Danny says. "I think it's taught them that life isn't as bad as they think sometimes. They get to work and think they're having a bad day. Then they see someone like Ryan, who is nonverbal and works in the service lane, smiling and running up to people, giving out high-fives, and it instantly lifts everybody's spirits. It's truly amazing to be able to work with these kids."  $\oplus$ 



**Giving Back** 

young adults with special needs ncluding Randy's son, Jack, who has evere autism. *Photos by Rex Curry* 



Simply Sincere

Danny Mize enjoys getting to know the mployees at Street Toyota and hopes ney will come to him if the / ever need comfort or a sympathet Photos by Rex Curry

There to Care Mize knows that happy emp like Service Valet Patrick Stewart feel valued, and it shows in their work

ize makes sure he gets face time vith as many employees as possible ike Sales Consultant Victor Alvarez

### Someone to Lean On

#### Street Toyota hires caring professional to support employees

#### by Karen Nielsen

Danny Mize isn't new to crises. He supported grieving and injured people after the 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. And over the years he's comforted countless individuals and families through tragic situations.

These days you'll find him at Street Toyota in a new role. The Amarillo, Texas, dealership

recently created a staff support position that shows it cares not only about its customers, but also its employees' well-being.

Employees know if they are having a personal issue or a family struggle that Mize is available to listen or offer an encouraging word of support. The 65-year-old isn't a licensed counselor or "fixer" of people. He's simply there to care.

"The reality is if you don't have employees who are happy and well connected to each other, it will reflect on the customer in a negative way," says Mize, who has four decades of experience as a hospital chaplain, hospice bereavement coordinator, grief center director, and full-time church minister. "Employees who are valued and feel supported and loved will be more engaged at work and with customers instead of worrying about their own issues."

Street Toyota is joining the ranks of other caring companies who have added similar positions-often called corporate chaplains or employee resource counselors-to their roster.

"Everybody is dealing with something in their lives and, often, people just need somebody to listen to them," says the store's General Manager Mike Good. "The car business needs to be more sensitive in serving people. It's important to have heart when dealing with people."

#### **Relationships Matter**

With a population of 196,000, Amarillo is the largest city in the Texas Panhandle. Community loyalty runs deep and relationships are a big deal. Among the area's 19 new-car dealerships, Street Toyota continues to dominate the market.

"A cornerstone of our culture is to treat people well. And if you treat your associates and your customers well, you'll earn a reputation for it and reap the benefits," says Good.

Good has known Mize for years. In 2013, he saw firsthand what a difference Mize could make when his sister was in hospice care.

"I'm pretty rough and tough and I didn't think I needed anybody, but when your sister dies ... he was just there," Good says. "He made me feel better. He has that gift."

So when Mize retired, he approached Good about creating a staff support position. Since coming onboard, he attends employee functions and visits departments, stopping in to chat or have coffee. He provides referrals to local professional

counselors or other resources. He's also available to visit employees in the hospital and attend funerals.

"It takes an estimated nine to 12 months for relationships to develop to the point that employees really begin turning to someone for support and encouragement," Mize says. "I want to show I'm real, I care, and I'm part of the team."

Mize is open about his own personal losses and a painful journey with his son through drug and alcohol addiction to recovery. That connection recently opened the door for an employee to talk about his own struggle and serve as a resource to others in recovery.

#### **Personal and Confidential**

Confidentiality is a huge part of his job. Mize won't break that confidence unless it involves a matter that, by law, requires reporting-such as a threat to harm self or others.

If an employee or manager thinks someone is having a problem, Mize asks that they give them his card and share that he is an available resource.

"It could feel threatening or intrusive, especially if a manager is asking me to speak to them directly," says Mize who carries a cell phone and can be reached 24/7. "They might think they have to talk to me or they're in trouble with the boss."

None of the managers will get personal information about who he talks to and what they talk about. Management will receive a factual quarterly report listing the number of hours devoted to the company, including the approximate amount of time spent on relationship-building and the amount of time given to employee support. But there's nothing specific that would identify an employee.

Clearly, building trust and providing a safe work environment are key.

"It's more than just supporting our staff. It's about creating a way of living and operating and an identity of who we are," he says. @

## **TORTORA'S TURNAROUND**

Hardworking manager leads A-1 Toyota's collision center from the brink to Toyota Certified Collision Center of the Year

by Dan Miller



AnnaLynn Wheeler admits that, in 2008, A-1 Toyota's in-house collision repair center was at a crossroads. The dealer principal had just replaced the department's manager for the fifth time in short order, trying to fill a void created by the departure of a trusted hand who'd held the reins for 25 years. The collision center business, a regulatory- and cost-intensive undertaking even in the best of circumstances, was floundering.

As a last ditch effort, Wheeler approached Michelle Tortora about assuming the lead. It proved to be an inspired choice.

This year, the New Haven, Conn., dealership was named the Toyota Certified Collision Center of the Year, outperforming some 60 shops of comparable volume nationwide.

"To be honest, I was almost ready to say it wasn't worth the grief," says Wheeler of her frame of mind eight years ago. "Besides the fact that the collision center business was one of the founding father's dreams, the only thing that kept us moving forward was the concern for our body shop employees who had been loyal to us for decades. But Michelle took it on, even though she didn't have any collision repair experience."

a Touch Yousifu Imoro buffs the body A-1 Toyota's objective: to restore every stomer's vehicle to a factory-like condi

Tortora, though, was well acquainted with what it takes to serve customers. She got her start at the dealership in 1992 as a service writer, then methodically worked her way up to manager of the service department.

In 2000, however, Tortora got married and started a family. She continued on at A-1 Toyota, but chose the less demanding role of warranty clerk.

#### SLOW AND STEADY PROGRESS

Still, the turnaround didn't happen overnight. Tortora learned while doing. And while the business's metrics improved, they did so gradually, year after year. Wheeler says Toyota's collision center certification program served as an invaluable road map along the way, setting clear checkpoints for staff training, the use of specialized tools-often the same as those used in manufacturing Toyota vehicles-and customer satisfaction.

Ultimately, the process improvements led to more robust financials. Wheeler notes that before Tortora took over, the department converted just 50 percent of its repair estimates into actual jobs. Now-thanks to Tortora's leadership, the support of long-term employees and Assistant Manager Ralph Doyon and an administrative assistant—that measure is running north of 85 percent.

"They followed the certification policies and procedures to the letter," says Dave Pyle, wholesale and collision development manager for Toyota Motor North America. "Winning the award speaks volumes about the dedication of all of the A-I team members and the A-I family leadership."

#### **PUTTING CUSTOMERS AT EASE**

Still, Wheeler believes it was Tortora's personal touch that ultimately made the difference. After all, A-1 Toyota, founded by Wheeler's grandfather and father, is the sixth oldest Toyota dealership nationwide. And it was one of the first to jump onboard Toyota's collision center certification bandwagon 20 years ago. They've been at this for a while.

"Michelle understood that most collision repair customers are pretty upset when they bring their cars in," says Wheeler. "She was very determined to put them at ease and assure them that everything would be OK. She told them we would work through everything with the insurance company. And we would make their car right again. Making people happy and making things better was just Michelle's nature."

Doyon, who came on board in 2010 and has now succeeded Tortora as manager, echoes those sentiments.

"Unlike some collision centers, we are not a direct repair facility," says Doyon. "We don't represent the insurance companies. We work for our customers. Our job is to fix their vehicle correctly and restore it to a factory-like condition."

#### **STAYING THE COURSE**

Unfortunately, this story of exemplary accomplishment doesn't have an entirely happy ending. Tortora, you see, learned that A-1 Toyota had won the national award just two months before cancer claimed her life. Also devastating was the sudden death of 22-year veteran technician Ed Gannon, just one week later. He, too, helped make the award possible.

"She was so proud of her team," says Wheeler. "It was an acknowledgement of everything she had worked for. And it was a big boost to the morale of the staff. They're now even closer than ever and remain committed to following Michelle's lead. If it's possible to win this award two years in a row, this group could do it." 🏵

# Helping you feel safe in your lane.

The 2017 Toyota Corolla's standard **Toyota Safety Sense<sup>™</sup> P** (**TSS-P**)<sup>1</sup> is designed to help keep passengers safe with a suite of systems including Lane Departure Alert with Steering Assist<sup>2</sup>. This feature is designed to detect visible lane markers on the road, alert the driver if an inadvertent lane departure is detected and may also provide slight, corrective steering inputs to help keep the vehicle in its lane. With TSS-P's Lane Departure Alert, you'll feel greater peace of mind on the road.



Prototype shown with options. Production model may vary 1. Drivers should always be responsible for their own safe driving. Please always pay attention to your surroundings and drive safely. Depending on the conditions of roads, vehicles, weather, etc., the system(s) may not work as intended. See *Owner's Manual* for details. 2. Lane Departure Alert with Steering Assist is designed to read lane markers under certain conditions. It provides a visual and audible alert and slight steering force when lane departure is detected. It is not a collision-avoidance system or a substitute for safe and attentive driving. Effectiveness depends on many factors. See *Owner's Manual* for details. (2. Lane) of the details. (2. Lane) of the details of the details of the details of the driving of the details of the details of the details of the driving. Effectiveness depends on many factors. See *Owner's Manual* for details. (2. Lane) of the driving of the details. (2. Lane) and the details of the driving of the details of the driving of the drive driving of the driving of the driving of the drive driving of the driving of the driving of the drive driving of the driving of the driving of the drive driving of the driving drive driving of the drive driving of the drive drive



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