

Toyota Tsusho Invests \$100,000 in Teach For America North Carolina for *Future Forward* College and Career Readiness Program

Funding will support programs in up to three area high schools, starting in Randolph Co.

LIBERTY, NC. (November 28, 2023) – Toyota Tsusho America, Inc. (“Toyota Tsusho”) announced today a total investment of \$100,000 to Teach For America North Carolina (“TFA NC”) to bring the Future Forward program – a career and college readiness initiative supporting marginalized high school students – to Randolph County. The company originally pledged \$25,000 to fund the program in Eastern Randolph High School (Ramseur, NC.), and increased its contribution today by an additional \$75,000 to expand the program to more high schools in the area.

“Today’s children are tomorrow’s future,” said Mike Lavender, Senior Vice President, Administration and Digital, Toyota Tsusho America. “As Toyota Tsusho grows our business in North Carolina, we are committed to supporting the needs of our local communities. That’s what today is all about. And, it’s why we’re honored to team up with Teach For America North Carolina to grow the Future Forward coaching program in this region, starting here in Randolph County.”

A Model for Success

Since its inception in 2020, Toyota Tsusho has funded the Future Forward program in Kentucky, where it now operates in three schools. The company's support enables program coaches to work one-on-one with participating students, offering guidance and resources as they navigate school, postsecondary options, family, and community while building a customized action plan for life after graduation.

Future Forward coaches are current college students, often first-generation, and local to the community and schools they serve. In 2022, the program logged more than 320 student coaching sessions and over 200 individual mentoring hours.

The program is resulting in higher grades and increases in college enrollments, and for many students, makes the difference between graduating from high school and dropping out. As many as 90% of program participants have identified a postsecondary pathway after completing Future Forward coaching, with roughly half of all participants planning on earning a two-year or four-year degree after high school.

“The opportunity to partner with Teach For America North Carolina and Toyota Tsusho will provide desperately needed support for career and college postsecondary success,” said Dr. Susan Chappell, Principal of Eastern Randolph High School, her alma mater. “I am a product of the Randolph County School System and have served the students and families of the Eastern Randolph Quadrant for the majority of my 28-year career.”

For Dr. Chappell, Future Forward is more than just a mentoring program. It’s a pathway to greater opportunities. “As the textile industry left the area, so did much of our opportunity for economic growth in this area of the district. I am excited for the job opportunities Toyota Tsusho will bring to our community and the mentorship that the Teach For America North Carolina Coaches will provide our students,” she said. “It is our collective vision for all graduates of Eastern Randolph High School to leave with a pathway to postsecondary success.”

Moving (Future) Forward

With the goal of ensuring all students have an equal opportunity to learn, thrive, and succeed in their postsecondary paths, Teach For America North Carolina is leading the way in training equity-driven individuals to become educators in urban and rural public schools throughout the United States.

“Teach For America North Carolina is excited to be partnering with Toyota Tsusho to bring the Future Forward program to Randolph County,” said Dr. Monique Perry-Graves, Executive Director, Teach For America North Carolina. “Across the state, Teach For America North Carolina works as a diverse network ready to support, challenge, and lead alongside each other as we aim to collectively expand opportunities for students here in our state. Every child deserves access to an equitable and excellent education, and thanks to Toyota Tsusho’s sponsorship, we can directly impact the lives and futures of hundreds of children as they work to achieve postsecondary readiness and success through peer-to-peer-influence.”

An Event Fit for Giving Tuesday

Intentionally held on Giving Tuesday – a globally recognized day of giving – attendees at the Liberty, NC, event included state and local community leaders. Among the speakers were North Carolina State Senator Amy Galey, Dayson Pasi3n, Teacher Advisor, Office of North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper; Dr. Monique Perry-Graves, Executive Director, Teach For America North Carolina; Mike Lavender, Senior Vice President, Toyota Tsusho America; Dr. Susan Chappell, Principal of Eastern Randolph High School; Dr. Stephen Gainey, Superintendent, Randolph County Schools.

“The Randolph County School System is very excited to partner with Toyota Tsusho and Teach For America North Carolina to implement the Future Forward program at Eastern Randolph High School,” said Dr. Stephen Gainey, Superintendent, Randolph County School System. “Without a doubt, this program will help our students through its support of the school system’s goal of preparing them for the future. I am extremely excited about the different focal points of concentration associated with this program such as future education options, future employment options, and financial planning.”

Toyota Tsusho in North Carolina

Toyota Tsusho’s presence in the Liberty, North Carolina area is quickly growing. In collaboration with Toyota Motor Corporation, Toyota Tsusho America’s parent company, Toyota Tsusho Corporation, is a 10% shareholder in the Toyota Battery Manufacturing North Carolina plant. The facility will produce batteries for hybrid electric vehicles (HEV) and battery electric vehicles (BEV) and is set to begin production in 2025.

“Bringing Future Forward to Randolph County isn’t just an investment in our students,” Lavender said. “It’s an investment in our community’s future – today.”