

# Toyota celebrates technical center's 35th anniversary by donating to Ann Arbor-area nonprofits

By Ben Freed

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**Toyota** first officially incorporated a [North American technical center](#) in Southeast Michigan in 1977 and this week celebrated its 35-year anniversary in the region and on the continent by giving \$35,000 to charitable organizations.



A Toyota employee works on a dummy at the York Township technical center location.

Photo courtesy Toyota

[Girls on the Run](#), [826Michigan](#) and [Ele's Place](#) in Ann Arbor all received donations, as well as [Growing Hope](#) and the [Hope Clinic](#) in Ypsilanti. A committee of Toyota team members selected the charities, and all employees were then given tickets worth \$5 each to place in boxes representing the different organizations, assistant manager of external affairs **Cindy Mahalak** said.

The donations will go a long way toward helping the nonprofits, 826Michigan executive director **Amanda Uhle** said. The after-school tutoring program runs an office in downtown Ann Arbor on East Liberty Street and was able to start offering tutoring at Ypsilanti Middle School thanks to a previous grant from the Toyota America Foundation.

“We have a number of their folks who participate as volunteers as well, a number of our tutors who are employees of Toyota,” she said.

“We have a great relationship with them. At the same time, the gift totally came out of nowhere. We just got a really happy piece of mail that just came out of the blue.”

The Japanese car company employs 1,109 research and development team members in North America

and 955 of them are based in Michigan, Mahalak said. The majority of those employees work at the York Township and Ann Arbor Township locations.

“We also do still have hiring to do,” she said.

“From April we were expected to hire an additional 150 team members, and we’re still on target to do that but we have a lot of open positions. Most of them are for engineers, advanced researchers and technicians.”

Toyota does not break down its R&D spending by region, but the company spends approximately \$1 million on research every hour across the globe, adding up to about \$8.76 billion dollars every year. The North America Technical Center, which includes offices in at its offices in **Ann Arbor Township, York Township, Plymouth and Livonia**, is Toyota’s largest outside Japan, Mahalek said. Other locations include Australia, Europe and Thailand.

“The York Township/Saline office houses the engineering design activity and also the safety test activity, the crash tests,” she said.

“In Ann Arbor we have two facilities, one houses advanced research like the [Collaborative Safety Research Center](#), and advance materials research and evaluation. Across the street we have a facility that does powertrain collaboration.”

The Technical Center has been involved with the [engineering of key technologies](#) for the 2014 Electric RAV4 EV as well as the [development of the 2013 Toyota Avalon](#), a car that Mahalek said was primarily designed and engineered in Michigan.

“Over the past 35 years, our outstanding workforce has dedicated itself to engineering quality vehicles right here in the North America...” TTC President Seiya Nakao said in a statement.

“Building on 35 years of experience, we look forward to creating great Toyota products for our American customers.”

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Toyota's first presence in Ann Arbor was an emissions certification office at Hilbert's Garage on Plymouth Road in 1972.

Photo courtesy Toyota