

**President Toyoda's address at the 2022-23 Toyota Technical
Skills Academy Graduation Ceremony**
(read by Oyaji Mitsuru Kawai on behalf of the president)

I am Mitsuru Kawai.

Allow me to congratulate all the graduates and their families.

President Toyoda has worked to be the “most genba-oriented president,” caring more than anyone else about the development and production frontlines.

He also truly looks forward to the Academy's graduation ceremony every year.

Regardless of the physical or mental stress he may be under, he has always said that the graduation ceremony is special, and is determined to attend at all costs.

He also likes to speak with every graduate and give out his commemorative stamp. Each time, he would come away saying that meeting the students had energized him.

He seems to attend less as the company president, and more as a proud father.

As an alumnus myself, I am truly delighted and grateful that he cares so much about this Academy and its students.

It is therefore my pleasure to read President Toyoda's congratulatory message on his behalf.

<President Toyoda's message>

Congratulations to all of the graduates and their families.

I would also like to thank Governor Omura of Aichi Prefecture and our many other distinguished guests for making the time to attend.

This year, our graduates are also joined here by their family members, along with the many others who are watching the ceremony remotely.

Due to the pandemic, this year's graduating class was unable to have family members present at their entrance ceremony.

I hoped that these families could at least be together for the graduation, and I'm very pleased that this is the case.

Dear graduates, your school days began during the pandemic, and they finish during the pandemic. I'm sure this has caused you no small grief, given the restrictions.

Despite it all, you found ways to think and act for the benefit of someone other than yourselves.

Instead of long-distance swimming training, the high school course students took on the challenge of a 60-kilometer walk from the Sakichi Toyoda Memorial House in Shizuoka to the renowned Iwazu Tenmangu Shrine in Aichi Prefecture.

This was the route that an ailing Sakichi walked to build his strength and free his mother from worry. As you traveled that same path, I'm sure that your thoughts were also with your families living far away.

And it was not only family whose care kept you going. As you trekked through a downpour on the first day and intense heat on the second, locals also offered places to rest your exhausted bodies and minds.

Other members who heard about this went the following day to express our gratitude. No doubt the kindness of those local people spurred you on, both physically and mentally.

I hope you were able to appreciate that this is not a journey you can make alone, but only with the support of those around you.

Meanwhile, at Shimoyama, our professional course students experienced the cutting-edge frontlines of making “ever-better cars.”

There you saw Toyota staff, tools in hand and senses honed, developing cars with the single-minded desire of bringing smiles to the people who drive them. I hope this highlighted the importance of working for someone other than yourself.

We are carmakers, and we aim to be the best carmaker in town. I believe your time at the Academy instilled in you the spirit of putting others first.

The company’s founder, Kiichiro Toyoda, said that “employees are family.”

Your family is not just your real mother and father. The fact that you have all grown so much is thanks to the instructors who supported you as parents, older brothers, and older sisters. Thank you to all the instructors.

At Toyota, we also have fatherly figures we like to call *Oyaji*.

Oyaji Kawai here knows the *genba* better than anyone else. He imparts Toyota's cherished philosophy, along with the skills and conduct to make it a reality.

In Japanese, the root of the word "teach" means to hold dear—an act of love.

When you do wrong, there will be people to tell you so; when you cause trouble, they will apologize with you. Like family, they will continue to give support as you move forward in life.

Last month, I announced that I will pass the baton to our new president, Koji Sato. On that occasion, I said that "I believe in the future that the next generation will create."

I truly look forward to this graduation ceremony every year, because it shows me that our young people are carrying on the spirit of Toyota.

Watching you gives me courage and strength. That's why I believe in the future that you will create.

Remember what you have learned here, and continue to work hard for the good of someone other than yourself.

With you, the future is in safe hands.

Finally, I would like to ask everyone here today for your continued support. Thank you, and once again, congratulations.

February 15, 2023
Akio Toyoda
President
Toyota Motor Corporation