

Sekisui House Joins The Valuable 500, an International Initiative Promoting the Inclusion of People with Disabilities into Society

On October 20, 2020, Sekisui House, Ltd. joined The Valuable 500, an international initiative promoting the inclusion of people with disabilities into society.



The Valuable 500 is an international initiative established at the January 2019 annual meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos. The idea underlying the initiative is that “inclusive business creates inclusive societies”. It aims to encourage business leaders to make their own companies’ businesses inclusive ones in order to let persons with disabilities demonstrate their potential to add value to businesses, society and economy. They aim to get 500 company endorsements, and currently have over 330 companies already signed up.

In agreement with the ideas and efforts of The Valuable 500, as we aim to become a leader in ESG, we established the following commitments.

The commitments of Sekisui House Group

With its global vision to “make home the happiest place in the world”, Sekisui House Group supplies and integrates the physical structures and technology with the intangibles and services required to maximize the happiness and well-being of its customers, employees and society as a whole.

1. The happiness and well-being of customers – Creating homes and communities based on the lifelong-housing concept

In 1975, an accident occurred at one of our construction sites where a worker fell and seriously injured his spine. Feeling a deep responsibility, we worked together with surgeons and research institutes to build a prototype wheelchair-accessible home within the medical institution where the injured worker

was undergoing rehabilitation. The intent was to provide a house utilizing our pre-engineered housing technology that enabled injured people to live with their family as they prepare to re-enter society. This initiated our advanced R&D into housing tailored to the elderly and people with disabilities, and in 1981 we built the first model house in Japan specifically tailored for people with disabilities. We also began other efforts including participation in projects run by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry. In 1985, we established the lifelong-housing concept of “Comfortable living - now and always”, to be our home design philosophy enabling people to live in their homes throughout their lives. We received the Caring Company Award from the United Nations-affiliated International Council for Caring Communities (ICCC) in February 1999 for our concept and efforts.

In 2002, we established Sekisui House Universal Design (SH-UD) as our universal design for comfortable housing based on research into lifelong housing and our experience. SH-UD is used for all detached houses.

We will continue to create homes and communities that not only provide safety and security but also comfort through rich tactile experiences and function, as well as utilizing our new Smart Universal Design philosophy for designing living environments that provide vibrant experiences for all people including children, the elderly and people with disabilities. On top of this foundation we aim to provide the intangible assets of Health, Connectedness and Learning that are essential for happiness in the era of the 100-year life.

2. The happiness and well-being of employees – Creating opportunities and work environments that give diverse employees the opportunity to fully demonstrate their abilities

In 2006, Sekisui House Group declared Human Resource Sustainability as our fundamental human resource policy, which integrates the three major policy pillars of encouraging female employees to pursue career development, effective utilization of human resources, and promoting a variety of work styles and work-life balance. In 2014 we introduced a system that gave employees with disabilities greater career opportunities, and since then, twelve employees have already transferred to jobs within the company with a greater prospect of promotion and are working with enthusiasm.

In 2015, the company started to hold diversity exchange meetings in different areas of Japan to enable employees with disabilities working in various regions to mix with each other and talk. A working group of employees with disabilities have implemented a number of innovations to maximize meeting efficiency, with their managers and colleagues also participated in recent years to share creative ideas for working and communicating, while identifying issues to tackle with and energizing their work environment. The Promotion of Employment of Persons with Disabilities Office was established in February 2020 to be a dedicated unit for further promoting these initiatives.

Based on the Human Resources Sustainability Policy, we will continue to create an environment and systems that enable all employees and the company to achieve sustainable growth.

3. The happiness and well-being of society - Supporting the inclusion of people with disabilities in society and the promotion of the normalization principle

While collaborating and co-creating with the NPO Together since 2000, Sekisui House Group supports the independence and inclusion of people with disabilities in society and promotes people's understanding of social diversity. As a company we procure merchandise made at welfare facilities for people with disabilities around Japan and give them to visitors of events and display homes.

House of Dialog, a program created jointly with Dialogue in the Dark (DID), was set up in 2013 to be a permanent exhibit at our "Sumufumu Lab" housing experience center in Grand Front Osaka. Dr. Andreas Heinecke, a Doctor of Philosophy, developed DID in Germany in 1988. DID has taken place in over 50 countries, and over 8 million people have experienced this socially aware entertainment experience. Participants enter a totally dark space in groups, and led by attendants with visual disabilities, they explore the area to experience an awareness and type of communication that cannot usually be experienced. We will continue to offer more opportunities for dialogue and enhance experiences that are valuable for society to develop the ability to feel, build relationships, and recognize the value of diversity.

We have been involved in the Accessibility Consortium of Enterprises (ACE)* since its foundation. The foundation works together with businesses, universities and supporting organizations to promote the normalization of life patterns for persons with disabilities, for example by commending successful examples, promoting collaboration between corporations, holding career development seminars for educators and students with disabilities, and conducting internship programs.

We will continue to support the independence and social participation of people with disabilities and promote understanding of social diversity through collaboration and co-creation with other companies and organizations.

*ACE was founded in 2013 to establish a model for people with disabilities that benefits the growth of enterprises and sends the talent needed by businesses into society. As of September 2020, there are 36 corporate members, mainly large companies.