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July 31, 2020

RE: Black Lives Matter and Schlegel Villages

Dear Team Member, Residents, Families and Friends in the Community;

Perhaps one of the greatest legacies my Grandfather Wilfred left for the Schlegel family is the desire to help create truly inclusive communities. Each Schlegel Village is a reflection of the diverse population in the neighbourhoods surrounding it, and one of our core aspirations has always been to honour and celebrate that diversity.

In May, we saw a major shift in our society along the fault lines of racial inequity. In the United States, the cauldron of frustration in the black community has been roiling for many years, but with the unacceptable death of George Floyd in Minnesota, it exploded. As demonstrations spread across America and across the globe, I know many in our communities felt the pain and frustration. We yearn for communities that accept all people, beyond race, creed, religious beliefs and sexual orientation, so to see such marginalization in the black community once again showed how far we have yet to go. It was a painful point of sorrow.

Yet, we find hope in the fact that so many are speaking out now.

To be clear, we take this issue seriously and, as an organization, we stand with the Black Lives Matter movement – black lives have always mattered, and we cherish the people of colour who come to our Villages from countries around the world to make them richer and more wonderful places to work and live.

At a young age I learned of the efforts Grandma and Grandpa Schlegel made working alongside people in Haiti to create better communities for their children. It was one of the last community-building efforts Grandpa took part in though a long life of community building, and he did so because he wanted to help a neighbour. The colour of Haitian skin was never a factor, for grandpa never saw colour, only need for a little support.

I recognize that for far too many people today, however, colour is still the first thing they see. I know there is a long way to go, but the Black Lives Matter movement offers hope that change is afoot and the conversations happening these past tumultuous weeks can shape a better future for the generations to come. I encourage everyone in our Villages to take a moment to look to their fellow team members and the residents they support to consider what diversity truly means. Ask questions; learn from each other; celebrate the differences and the things that link us all, no matter from where we come.

We are one Village and together we can stand as one family, all of us together, to honour the struggle of all who are left in the margins of society, creating space where true inclusion is the natural order for everyone.

Sincerely,

Jamie Schlegel, President and CEO
Schlegel Villages

