

## Supporting mentally challenged persons to be active in society via single-use camera recycling work



Single-use camera

**One of Konica Minolta's basic themes is "affirmatively contributing to society." In the recycling process of single-use cameras, the participation of many mentally challenged persons in this work provides an opportunity for them to enjoy active lives as members of society.**

### Sheltered workplace for mentally challenged persons

The Nobinobi (Carefree) Eco Workplace at the Nobinobi Community Center in Tokyo's Koto Ward provides mentally challenged persons with light work such as assembling boxes. This type of work enables persons with mental disabilities to participate in society. At the same time, they are able to see themselves as workers, and this is one way for them to enjoy being part of the community.

Since 1997, Konica Minolta Photo Imaging has been contracting out recycling separation work for its single-use camera to the Kobe Community Workshop, which has a track record of diligent, high-precision work. Later, the company wondered if it would be possible to contract out similar work to a facility in Tokyo, and discovered the Nobinobi Community Center. From February 2001, Konica Minolta Photo Imaging has been contracting out similar separation work. Subsequently, in September 2002, Konica Minolta Photo Imaging began contracting out to the Nobinobi Recycle Center, which is highly praised by the facility for affording mentally challenged persons with a place to acquire job skills.



Separating collected single-use cameras by model

### Recruiting enthusiastic persons with mental disabilities as full-time employees

Konica Minolta Photo Imaging provides workers at recycle centers with overall training and detailed technical instruction, and plans and directly supervises the ways to proceed with work according to the types of mental disabilities. In this way, the company takes the viewpoint of the mentally challenged persons carrying out the actual work, planning and directing jobs so that they are maintained at appropriate levels of difficulty that are neither too complicated nor too simple. Further, all part-time workers employed in the Community Center are the parent of persons with severe mental disabilities. They are our strong and valued partners in facilitating seamless understanding and support of workers. As a result, mentally challenged persons are able to master jobs quickly without stress and anxiety, and their training is more effective. Currently, the Nobinobi Eco Workplace is distinguished by its high work performance. Four of the keenest workers are now full-time employees of Konica Minolta Photo Imaging and are dispatched to the Nobinobi Recycle Center as company staff.

### Vital work for recycling resources

After use, single-use cameras are collected, separated, dismantled and inspected, and then reused or recycled. In the case of single-use cameras, over 90% of the collected parts are reused, and altogether virtually 100% of the parts are recycled.

At the Nobinobi Eco Workplace, single-use cameras are first separated by manufacturer. Products of other companies are sent to the manufacturers, and Konica Minolta Photo Imaging products are further separated by model. Once the single-use cameras are separated by model and the flashlight batteries are removed, they are packed in cardboard boxes to be shipped to China. The

batteries must be removed because regulations forbid them from being imported to China. Since over 10 million are handled annually, the workplace plays an important role in keeping the recycling system running smoothly.



Packing products for shipping

### Truly feeling part of society

Work efficiency varies appreciably according to the degree of mental disability and enthusiasm, even for the job of removing batteries. Because almost none of the workers have had work experience elsewhere, at the outset it was common for them to lose concentration or just go home. However, thanks to the enthusiastic guidance of the facility's staff, efficiency nearly doubled in the first year. Whereas the persons with severe mental disabilities might barely manage to remove batteries with the help of staff, some slightly mentally challenged trainees can remove more than 300 batteries in 30 minutes. Also, trainee packers are on the increase, so work efficiency is rising.

Work shelters have difficulties with the general arrangements for work contracted out by companies because it is almost always short-term and has strict deadlines. With recycling work for single-use cameras, however, the jobs will continue as long as the products



Removing batteries from cameras

are on the market, plus the deadlines are relatively flexible. In this respect, work with this product suits mentally challenged persons. Even better, the product is very easy to handle, given that it is small, light and compact, and is clean so that workers do not become dirty. Moreover, single-use cameras' attractive colors and display in stores everywhere arouses a great deal of interest. In fact, those engaged in the single-use camera recycling work say that they really feel they are involved in society after seeing single-use cameras and the Konica Minolta logo around town.

### Taking the next step

Konica Minolta Photo Imaging is taking things a step further by providing mentally challenged persons with opportunities to see society and their roles in it. As well as contracting out work, the company has invited the workers to visit its "Konica Minolta Cherry Blossom Festival" at Tokyo Hino Site and the Konica Minolta booth at the Eco Products 2004 trade fair.

At present, 18 persons with mental disabilities are working at the Nobinobi Eco Workplace and improving their efficiency every day. The Nobinobi Eco Workplace aims to provide mentally challenged persons with job training so that they can gradually raise their skills and work in industry. As described above, persons with slight mental disabilities are able to become full-time company employees after they have undergone hands-on training and show that they have genuine work ability. In fact, apart from the successes with Konica Minolta Photo Imaging, six persons were able to find company jobs via Hello Work recruiting. This track record has heartened mentally challenged persons at sheltered workshops, and Konica Minolta Photo Imaging certainly wants to continue supporting them.



Work colleagues visiting Eco Products 2004