

Making the World a Better Place

NEII executive director highlights how technological innovations and charitable activities improve people's lives.

by Karen Penafiel

Making buildings more accessible and improving the lives of those who use them, the elevator was a transformative innovation. Recognizing an immense responsibility with an eye on our collective future, elevator manufacturers are continuously innovating to improve human experiences. Here are three ongoing trends that promise to only gain momentum in the coming year.

Improving Building Owner and Rider Experiences

For an industry that blends into the background of passengers' busy daily routines, it might come as a surprise how innovative elevator engineering must be to meet the needs of tech-savvy riders and intelligent buildings.

Digitized maintenance systems dramatically increase reliability of elevator and escalator equipment. Predictive maintenance improves safety and reliability by using collected data to identify and fix equipment issues, often before they occur. This technology can get elevators up and running and riders moving more than 30% faster than traditional maintenance methods as sensors — aided by artificial intelligence — identify deviations from normal elevator operations and allow technicians to apply a real-time, informed and surgical approach when making repairs.

With a digitized maintenance package, building owners have the confidence of 24/7 emergency-response service and the assurance elevator equipment is under the microscope of trained professionals at all times, rather than just during routine maintenance or inspection. Moreover, the data may provide advance notice to a building owner to plan and budget for repairs — and possibly modernization — long before an elevator outage requires a major investment.

The digital age has also ushered in destination-dispatch technologies, advanced communications systems and many more options that make getting where you need to go easier and faster, while saving energy and, ultimately, reducing travel distance for each elevator car.

A Focus on Sustainability

These days, environmental impact is on the minds of everyone around the globe. Within the elevator and escalator industry, the list of stakeholders concerned about the industry's sustainability includes lawmakers, regulators, manufacturers and the public. That's for good reason: in older properties, elevators can consume as much as 10% of a building's energy.

Since the 1970s, elevator manufacturers have been improving energy efficiency. In more recent years, with the environmental impact of growing cities under scrutiny, more buildings seek to reduce their carbon footprints and their energy bills. Elevators are critical components of energy savings. Today, elevators are being engineered with smarter and more efficient technologies, such as solar panels within the hoistway, regenerative drives, LED lighting and smart, learning controllers.

Sustainability of buildings is becoming an even greater concern as populations of urban centers balloon. Currently, more than 4.2 billion people live in cities. This number is expected to grow to more than 6.7 billion within 30 years. By accommodating this rapid urbanization, elevators help cities grow taller, instead of wider, thus reducing the need for personal vehicles and preserving green space.

Giving Back to Our Communities

Elevator manufacturers are dedicated to leadership and mentorship programs, global and local community service projects, fundraisers and more. Some examples:

- ◆ For decades, KONE Spares in Moline, Illinois, has supported local families through Toys for



Schindler employees work on a Habitat for Humanity house in New Jersey in 2018; photo courtesy of Schindler.

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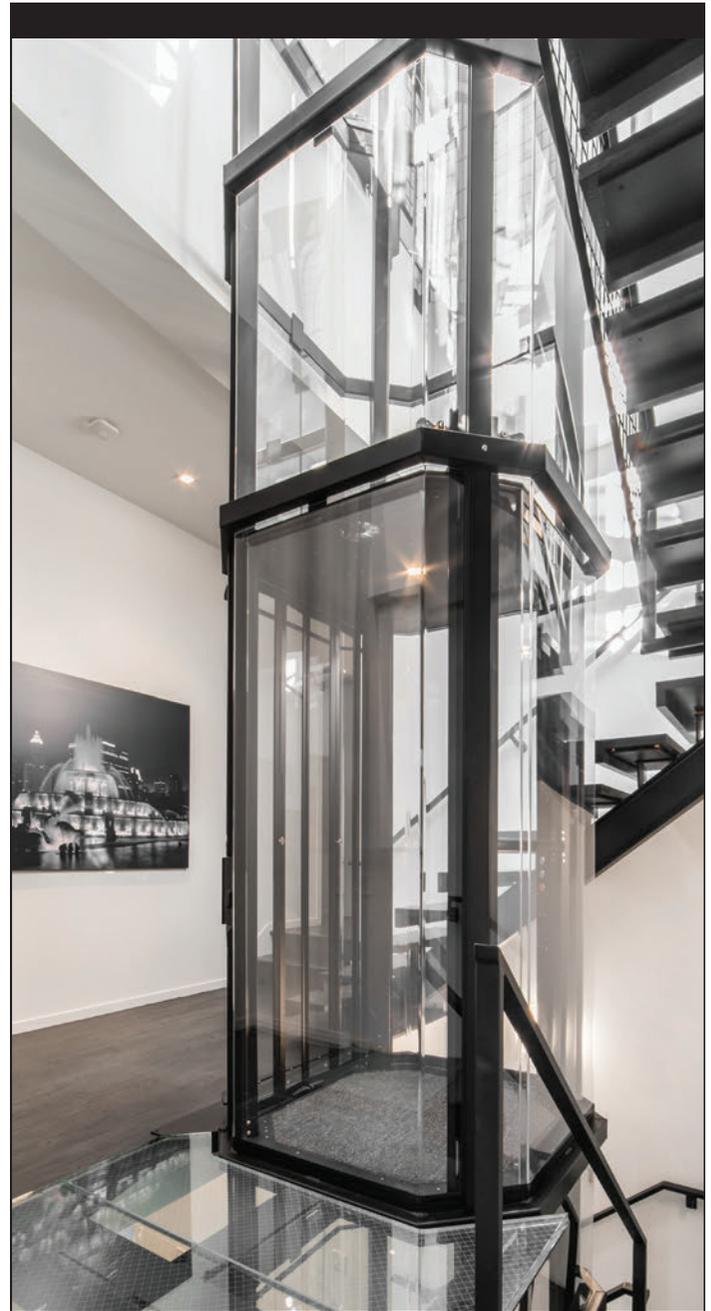
Tots, making the holidays brighter by donating tens of thousands of children's gifts. In recent years, KONE Americas has also championed food drives, delivering thousands of pounds of food and volunteering at pantries that support those in need within their communities.

- ◆ For many years, MEI — Total Elevator Solutions has donated at least 10% of its pretax profits to charitable organizations in the U.S. and abroad. The company also initiated service opportunities called Insight Trips to give employees a chance to visit and help the organizations to which the company donates in a direct, hands-on way (ELEVATOR WORLD, September 2019).
- ◆ For nearly 30 years, the Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation has invested more than US\$18 million in U.S. organizations that help youths with disabilities successfully transition from school to careers in science, technology, engineering, art/design and mathematics. More importantly, Mitsubishi Electric employee volunteers get directly involved by providing mentoring and job-shadowing opportunities for youth with disabilities in their offices, factories and warehouses to raise expectations and expose them to career opportunities in the elevator and escalator industry.
- ◆ Schindler supports two important missions. The company donated US\$100,000 to build two Habitat for Humanity houses, and employees contributed more than 1,000 volunteer hours. Schindler also partnered with Autism Speaks to help build awareness and sponsor sensory-friendly gift bags at various sports stadiums across the country.
- ◆ thyssenkrupp Elevator has partnered with SOS Children's Villages on Project SEED to support young people in regions across the globe with severe youth unemployment rates. In addition, each year, thyssenkrupp Elevator far surpasses its CAD100,000 (US\$75,858) annual fundraising goal for Cystic Fibrosis Canada.

Whether it's investing in R&D to bring about the next innovation that will improve the rider experience, or dedicating time, money and passion to the communities in which we operate, our industry is working to improve human experiences. Heading into 2020, we expect to see only more tangible examples of this commitment. It's a pivotal time for our industry, and we're excited about all that's ahead!



Karen Penafiel is executive director of the National Elevator Industry, Inc. (NEII), a 106-year-old association that represents 80% of the hours worked in the elevator industry.



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