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Gress Mountain Ranch was full of activity on June 14 and it was not just from the approximately 40 animal residents who call the ranch home.

Volunteers from Taminco Methylamines Inc. worked in groups at the ranch on various maintenance tasks ranging from fixing fences to painting gates to making a goat ramp as part of "A Day of Caring."

"A Day of Caring" is a "day to get out of the office and help the community," according to Diana Weaver, a four-year United Way member who also works as an account manager for Taminco.

Taminco workers decided to hold their own day of caring since they could not make the United Way's nationwide day, according to Weaver.

Jim Yanora, logistics specialist with the chemical company located at 7540 Windsor Drive, Upper Macungie Township, said that the "satisfaction of helping" and "sense of giving to the community" were the reasons why approximately 50 Taminco workers have taken part in the United Way's campaign for three years.

United Way suggested Gress Mountain Ranch, 3264 Highland Road, Lowhill Township, as a worthy spot for giving back to the community due to the fact that the ranch gives back every day.

Co-founded and run by President Kathryn and her husband Ben Gress, the ranch aims to help heal both animals' and humans' pain and hurt.

"We try to take away pain and suffering," Kathryn Gress said.

According to Kathryn Gress, the ranch "psychologically and physically helps people" in addition to caring for its animal residents.

"It's good on so many different levels," Tom Wingate, a regular volunteer, said.

"It seemed like a ministry that I could be a part of," regular volunteer Tricia Jaskiewicz added. The ranch's ministry is designed to provide healing through an "animal-human connection," according to Kathryn Gress.

The nonprofit ranch is a sanctuary that offers a permanent home to abused, unwanted, neglected and injured animals ranging from pigs to alpacas to ducks. The animals are taken care of, nursed back to health and given a permanent home.

"I like the fact that the animals stay here forever," Kim McDougall, who regularly volunteers with her daughter, Genevieve, said.

In turn, the animals are trained to be "people-oriented," Kathryn said.

Then, through "the magic of animal-assisted therapy," in the words of Kathryn Gress, the animals are used as therapy animals in "animal-assisted activity" to help people overcome their phobias and hurt.

"Through engagement of animal therapy, people can become better people," she said.

"The animals' testimony, their stories, hit home with most people."

It is a place, according to the ranch's website, "where people help animals and animals help people."

This unique quality of serving both animals and humans sets the "therapeutic ranch" apart from many other similar organizations.

"It does make a difference for the people coming," Jaskiewicz said. "You fall in love with the animals."

Over the years, the ranch has helped some 15 people obtain temporary, part-time or full-time employment.

Other than Kathryn and Ben, Gress Mountain Ranch is completely staffed by volunteers. "Taminco being here today is an extreme gift," Kathryn Gress said.

The ranch relies on businesses such as Taminco Methylamines Inc. and individuals to help keep its ministry alive.

Allan Jeffery, a regular volunteer, is largely in charge of organizing volunteer days such as Taminco's Day of Caring for businesses and groups to provide help at the ranch.

The ranch also has some items to bring in funding to support the cause.

McDougall made little bears from alpaca hair while Kathryn sold decorated horseshoes to interested Taminco employees.

Since it is a nonprofit organization, the ranch also relies heavily on donations, according to Kathryn Gress.

Taminco employees supplied a donation in addition to giving their time on June 14.

According to Yanora, employees who volunteered to serve donated \$450 in cash to the ranch to support its ministry.