



Leroy Hoffman (above), a resident of the Golden Horseshoe Ranch, helped move lumber to a pile outside last Tuesday, part of the renovation of a barn to use for building projects. Alvin Martinez, (right) also a resident of the ranch, used a push broom to clean up to get ready for a shipment of sheet rock. The structure will have a large workroom, offices and a restroom for visitors.

Photos by Kathryn Gurfinkel/The Goodland Star-News



Farm offers alternative therapies for clients

By Kathryn Gurfinkel

The Goodland Star-News

The freedom of living on a farm and raising animals has been a dream of some residents and management at Golden West Community Services, and that dream has come true with the organization's newest venture, the Golden Horseshoe Ranch.

"It's a dream that several of us have had for years," said Tim Armknecht, director of programming for residential and day services.

Golden West provides services to mentally retarded adults in Goodland. Clients live three to four together in houses throughout town. Each house has at least one staff member on hand 24 hours a day. The residents attend day services Monday through Friday at the Golden West center just west of the

hospital.

Four people in Golden West's care have moved out to the nine-acre Golden Horseshoe Ranch roughly nine miles north and a mile east of Goodland. The house is right off a county road with a large barn-like building next door. Trees line the yard to the north of the house and the large fenced back yard has a bricked fish pond.

The yard extends back to the far east edge of the property, where Armknecht plans to add a place to raise animals.

A spot just beyond the fence has been tilled and is awaiting planting next spring for large-scale gardening.

"This place was made to order for what we wanted to do," Armknecht said.

Although Golden West is renting the farm, he said they plan to stay

for a long time.

"My intent is for it to still be Golden Horseshoe Ranch in 20 years," Armknecht said.

Residents moved to the ranch on Aug. 1, he said, and have been working ever since. They are building rooms inside of the barn where they plan to construct backyard sheds, Christmas trees and possibly some special picnic tables.

Armknrecht said after the building is complete, they will have a few climate controlled offices and a restroom for visitors.

Raising animals is one of the projects ranch residents are excited about. Although the rented ranch came equipped with an entire herd of semi-tame cats, they want to raise some farm animals.

One resident, Derek Moreland, said he wants to raise horses. Armknecht said they are looking

into boarding one of his own horses temporarily to get the clients used to animal care.

Pet therapy is another reason Armknecht wants to incorporate animals into the Golden Horseshoe program. He said pets can help patients suffering from mental disorders.

"I believe we can serve people with mental disorders," he said, "by providing them with the soothing effects of taking care of animals."

He said they are looking for a dog that will get along with their numerous cats.

Along with raising animals, he said, they want to someday have a petting zoo on the property. He said horseback riding is sometimes used as therapy, too.

Residents are working to fix up two small buildings to house animals.

For farming, Armknecht said they want to start with raising watermelons, pumpkins, corn and tomatoes. He said they hope to have crops to sell at farmer's markets next year.

Armknecht said ranch residents have regular meetings to discuss plans for the location.

"We have house meetings," he said, "to discuss what they're interested in and what they're not inter-

ested in."

Some of the ideas for the grounds include adding a miniature golf course, a go cart race track and a picnic area.

Armknrecht said he is looking forward to using the ranch as an destination for people using day services at Golden West. He said they are planning a picnic and barn dance for Halloween.

When the ranch is up and running, he said, he can see school kids visiting the farm for the petting zoo or to pick pumpkins.

"I think the community as a whole can benefit from this," he said.

Although the parent corporation of Golden West, ResCare, had been opposed to putting residents in an isolated rural setting, Armknecht said they get an opportunity to live away from the noise and pressure of town.

"We wanted to provided relaxed rural living for a person who is stressed out by the pressure of city life," he said.

To keep them from feeling isolate, he said, ranch residents are brought in to attend day services in Goodland once a week.

Originally they thought of moving some residents to the country to keep them out of trouble,

Armknrecht said, and they have found activities that help to deter the problems.

"We're offering them an alternative to getting in trouble," he said.

With projects like the ranch, he said, he feels they have given some residents something to be proud of.

"They have pride in it," he said. "They feel like it's theirs."

The idea to open a ranch came from some similar projects Armknecht had seen on the Internet. Although there is a tree farm near Hays that is somewhat similar, he thinks the ranch will be a one-of-a-kind model for other service providers.

"There will be no other place like this in Kansas," he said. "When it's up and running, I believe it will be a prototype for others. I think it will be cutting edge."

corrections

The Goodland Star-News will correct any mistake or misunderstanding in a news story. Please call our office at (785) 899-2338 to report errors. We believe that news should be fair and factual. We want to keep an accurate record and appreciate you calling to our attention any failure to live up to this standard.

Legion plans benefits meeting in Goodland

By Greg Stover

The Goodland Star-News

The Goodland American Legion will hold a benefits information meeting for veterans at 10:30 a.m. Monday at the Veterans of Foreign Wars Hall, 824 Main Ave.

The meeting, which will last about 30 minutes, is part of this year's annual American Legion Veterans Affairs Tour, which will stop at each post in Kansas. The tour starts Sunday and will go through Oct. 8, visiting more than 330 posts across the state.

All veterans and members of their families who have questions are encouraged to attend the meetings. Veterans will have the chance to enroll with the Department of Veterans Affairs during the visit.

The American Legion says it is the country's largest veterans ser-

vice organization. The Legion says it helps more veterans and their families with filing for benefits than any other organization. Members of the American Legion wrote the original G.I. Bill after World War II and pioneered other programs, including compensation for veterans exposed to radiation and to Agent Orange.



Cadmus

Thomas Cadmus, the Legion's national commander, will visit the Colby post about 3:45 (Central Time) Wednesday afternoon for a 45-minute visit as part of his Department of Kansas tour. He was elected commander earlier this month at the national convention in Nashville.

Cadmus joined the American Legion in May 1967 in his hometown of Britton, Mich., serving as its commander for a year, than as adjutant for 11. He also served a tour

as the Department Commander for Michigan (1988-1989) and as the National Vice Commander (1991-1992).

Cadmus, who retired from Ford Motor Co.'s Rawsonville Plant in Ypsilanti, served with the U.S. Army from 1965 to 1967. After training as an armored reconnaissance specialist at Fort Knox, Ky., he served the rest of his enlistment near Munich, Germany, with the 24th Infantry Division, leaving active duty as a specialist five.

The Colby post clubhouse is at 1850 W. Fourth St. Take I-70 east to the Levant exit and U.S. 24 into Colby, which turns into Fourth Street. The clubhouse is near Fourth and Walker.



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