



## **Gerdau Special Steel North America is 2014 Corporate Citizen of the Year**

**By Tarryl Jackson** on December 31, 2013

JACKSON, MI — Transportation for domestic-violence survivors and medicine for their children are just a few of the extra services the AWARE Inc. shelter can provide due to help from a local steel company. **Gerdau Special Steel North America** -- which has a steel mill in Napoleon Township -- has done several projects for the shelter, such as providing Thanksgiving turkeys for shelter residents and hosting the nonprofit's **"Lights, Camera, Auction!" fundraiser** for the second year. Some employees have also adopted families and provided them with Christmas gifts.

"Not only do (the Gerdau employees) give, but they encourage other businesses to give as well," said Becky Mayer, executive director of AWARE. "They want everyone to give. They don't need the limelight." For the company's efforts at AWARE and several other Jackson-area nonprofits, Gerdau has been selected as Jackson Citizen Patriot's 2014 Corporate Citizen of the Year. "They have been wonderful," Mayer said of Gerdau employees. "They have been the best partners we could have hoped for." Between the mill and the corporate office in Blackman Township, Gerdau has donated \$55,000 to local nonprofits and organizations this year. That is in addition to the money raised through its \$90,000 United Way campaign.

The employees plan several fundraisers throughout the year, including benefit luncheons, silent auctions and other special events. The company also has a "jean fund," where employees donate \$3 every Friday to wear jeans. These efforts have raised an additional \$16,000 for local nonprofits this year. "I feel honored to receive this award, especially knowing there are so many generous companies here in Jackson," said Jack Finlayson, president of Gerdau's North American Special Steel Division. "I am especially grateful to our employees who are so committed to giving back to our local community."

Each Gerdau location has its own social responsibility committee who work together to identify ways to make a positive impact on the community. This year, the committee was responsible for recruiting volunteers and deciding where their \$55,000 in social responsibility funds should be distributed. "There are so many worthy organizations out there, so this process is never easy because we'd like to be able to support every

organization," Finlayson said. "We try to partner with organizations that need help with projects so that we can participate in hands-on activities in addition to providing financial support."

Several nonprofits that Gerdau has served this year include American Cancer Society, the Council for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect and the Greater Jackson Habitat for Humanity. The company recently donated more than 4,000 pounds of non-perishable foods and a large quantity of toys for the Salvation Army. In March, Gerdau spent about \$3,500 in new equipment for the kitchen at **the Jackson Friendly Home for elderly women.**

For Easter, Gerdau employees and executives delivered a commercial-grade mixer and 40 personalized Easter baskets for the Jackson Friendly Home residents at 435 W. North St. There were also other improvements done to the kitchen, including new pots and pans, table trays and other kitchen utensils. Gerdau ended up spending more for the kitchen upgrades than the original \$2,000 they granted to the nonprofit.

"They have just taken us under their wing and done a fabulous job," said Diane King, executive director of the Friendly Home. "They've been very supportive and very generous. It's from the heart." Gerdau also hosted a Christmas dinner Dec. 18 for the residents of the Friendly Home. Employees and executives from the company helped serve dinner and visit with residents. "They have just adopted us; They've adopted the ladies, the residents," King said. "And that part is really sweet." Gerdau recently donated \$2,500 as well as 30 coats, gloves and other winter clothing to Community Action Agency's **Warm The Children program.** "Gerdau has been a major sponsor for Warm The Children for several years and their support allows us to meet the needs of Jackson residents," said Toby Berry, CEO of Community Action Agency, 1214 Greenwood Ave. "Community Action Agency is extremely grateful for the generosity of the company and its employees."

Gerdau's growth is directly related to its respect for the environment and its commitment to the communities in which it operates, Finlayson said.

"Gerdau is a family-oriented company that came from humble beginnings," he said. "We are very grateful for our success and enjoy being able to help this community we love being a part of. One of the things I love hearing from our employees is what they got out of giving."