

It was a night to be with friends to celebrate the retirement of the long-time therapy horse, Mac.



Earlier this year in February, the Cowichan Therapeutic Riding Association (CTRA) in Duncan, BC, had a Hawaiian-themed party entitled “Mac’s Getting Leid Off.”

Mac received his guests, sporting a yellow and pink lei, which complimented his shiny dun coat. Even at his retirement party, he demonstrated his love for people with his welcoming nature.

“The party was a hoot!” says Executive Director Jennifer Barnes van Elk. “It was attended by dozens of Mac's closest friends across the years (current and past participants, volunteers old and new, the list goes on) and everyone really got into the swing of things with Hawaiian leis, Hawaiian music, and too many goodies to count.”

Since being donated to the CTRA in December, 2000, Mac has developed quite a fan base. It is estimated that he helped over 500 people in his years as a therapy horse.

Mac had many achievements throughout his career, including medals at the BC Summer Games for Athletes with a Disability. Mac also continued to work in the para-dressage arena in addition to his therapy work. His most recent accomplishments include a first place finish in the national "Sea to Sea" video competition in 2011 with rider Ross Wristen.

Mac, or Heljos Image, was born on March 26, 1988 in Cremona, Alberta. Prior to coming to CTRA at age 12, he was being ridden and driven as a school horse. However, his training was only beginning when he arrived in Duncan.

As a Norwegian Fjord, his size and sturdiness was well suited for work as a therapy horse. But it takes more than just what is on the outside to excel in this demanding career.

"Mac was an incredibly steady, confident, and personable horse, states Jennifer. "He was a friend and teacher to so many and we could always rely on him to be there for even the most delicate situations. He was truly one of the most stalwart horses most of us have ever had the pleasure of working with."

"Despite what most people think when they think of the work that a therapeutic horse does, this job is very hard work. Although

