

June 5, 2008

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Miniature horse and pot-bellied pig arrive at summer home at continuing care centre

Edmonton – Toddlers in red equestrian riding jackets will greet Vinnie the miniature horse as he and companion Mabel, a 3-year-old pot-bellied pig, arrive at their summer residence at the Kipnes Centre for Veterans on Friday, June 6.

The barnyard animals belong to Hearts & Hooves, a registered charitable organization that rescues and trains miniature horses and other animals. Hearts & Hooves staff will train continuing care staff, Elders and daycare children to become “horse whisperers,” so that they can properly care for, feed and interact with the animals. “Horse whisperers” are also trained to tour Vinnie through the continuing care centre to visit bed-ridden Elders.

This is the second year of the program – the first of its kind in Canada to accommodate domestic animals at an urban continuing care centre. Last summer, two miniature horses took up residence in a specially-built red barn and enclosure at the Kipnes Centre for Veterans, a continuing care centre located on 1.93 hectares of land on the northwest corner of the former Griesbach military base. The centre is also home to a YMCA child care centre.

Continuing care centres typically use domestic animals such as dogs, cats, and rabbits as a form of therapy. Pet therapy has a positive effect on the resident's physical, emotional and social interactions with others. It reduces stress and helps residents have a more meaningful quality of life. The program was so successful last year, it has returned, with the added twist of Mabel joining Vinnie.

Media may interview:

- **KCV Elders, staff and family members**
- **Daycare children (ages 19 months to 3 years old) and staff**
- **Michelle Kropp, president of Hearts and Hooves Edmonton**
- **Tracey Mann, Recreation Therapist, Kipnes Centre for Veterans**

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