

# Park is gathering place for dog owners

## FRIENDS & NEIGHBORS

By Eve Pearlman  
CORRESPONDENT

SINCE MAY of 2004, when it was fenced off from the regular dog park on Westline Drive, Alameda's small dog park has become a gathering place for mini-canines and their owners — an area where dogs under 30 pounds can romp and play in the company of those their own size.

Supported and organized by an informal group of small-dog supporters — with fencing paid for by the Humane Society of Alameda — the park has also become a social center.

"Dog parks are not just for dogs," said Recreation and Park Commissioner Christine Johnson, who supported the creation of the dog park and is the proud owner of a 10-year-old small dog, an Italian Greyhound named Holly. "I have made some wonderful friends there over the years."

Carrie Isett, who has two small dogs — Frankie, a three-year-old Dachshund-Chihuahua mix and Zeke, a 15-year-old Scottish Terrier mix — savors her participation in the park.

"I've met people there I wouldn't ordinarily meet — all ages and all walks of life," said Isett. "We all have this pretty big commonality of being kind of over the top about our dogs."

Isett, a Web designer who created the park's Web site, has also helped organize a small



EVE PEARLMAN

**CAROL STUPAR** with Wookiee dressed as cowboy. Wookiee won for best ready-made costume.

dog holiday party and a group to "march" in the Mayor's Fourth of July Parade. Most recently, she coordinated the third annual Howl-O-Ween parade and costume contest — a cheerful celebration of little dog costume creativity.

At the Halloween celebration, 75 entrants — including pugs and poodles, Chihuahuas, Bichons and terrier mixes — came dressed as dinosaurs and angels, ballerinas and superheroes, chickens and cows, and cowboys and bees. At least three little canines were cos-



EVE PEARLMAN

**DERRICK YEE** with his French Bull Dog dressed as a triceratops.

tumed to look like hotdogs.

For Carol and Peter Stupar from Bay Farm — whose dog, Wookiee, a 7-year-old terrier mix won "Best Ready-Made Costume" for his cowboy outfit — the event was a chance to come out and have fun with their dog. "It was just a good time for everyone," said Carol.

The twelve award categories included "Most Well-behaved Dog in Costume," "Best Dog-Owner Combo," and "Dog Who Kept Costume on Longest."

The top honors, "Best in Show," went to Spotic Bubba, a two-year-old poodle-Chihuahua mix who was dressed convincingly as an orangutan and was carried through the parade by owner Rena Fischer of Oakland.

"It's a cool thing," said Isett, who says dozens of small-dog-owning volunteers pitch in at the park to help in ways little and big.

"We're all people who come to the small dog park and love it."

Reach Eve Pearlman at [alamedanews@cctimes.com](mailto:alamedanews@cctimes.com).