

Health Connect



ANTELOPE VALLEY
HOSPITAL

A facility of Antelope Valley Healthcare District

A community newsletter from Antelope Valley Hospital

Fall 2019



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a Family**

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Cover photo:
Kyle and Lindsay Tuculet pose with their daughter Evelynn outside the hospital's Women and Infants Pavilion.

Inside photo:
The Tuculets brought Evelynn back to the NICU to say hello to NICU Medical Director Murugesha Thangavel M.D.



Launching a New Legacy

Our valley has a rich legacy in aerospace. This area is the site of the first supersonic flight, countless broken air-speed records, and the development and testing of dozens of our nation's military aircraft. Our natural legacy is one of poppy flowers, Joshua trees, windswept vistas and gorgeous blue skies. But each and every corner of the Antelope Valley has a legacy all its own, including our hospital.

Antelope Valley Hospital plays a vital role in our region's healthcare landscape, and its importance to our community cannot be understated. We house the Antelope Valley's only trauma center, pediatric unit, neonatal intensive care unit, inpatient mental health unit, labor and delivery, chest pain center and community cancer center. These exclusive services impact life at every age.

Recently, the hospital launched efforts to provide some short-term solutions to the overcrowding in the emergency room (see page 3). But our goal is to provide care for generations to come. When the Antelope Valley Healthcare District was first formed in 1953, the need for a hospital was great and the valley's forefathers realized they would have to band together to make their vision a reality. It is in that same proactive, pioneering spirit the district's founders showed that our hospital is seeking to replace our existing facility with a brand-new medical center to meet the needs of the community.

Our website and Facebook page will provide updates about the progress toward a new Antelope Valley Hospital as we forge a new legacy of health-care in the High Desert. I am very excited about the future of our medical center and the difference it will make in thousands of people's lives for generations to come.

Wishing you and your family a wonderful fall season.

Sincerely,

Edward Mirzabegian
Chief Executive Officer



Safeguarding Community Health

Our hospital's emergency room is an anchor for healthcare in the High Desert, treating ailments big and small for more than 130,000 patients each year. As one of the busiest emergency rooms in California, we're embarking on efforts to alleviate overcrowding by investing \$8.7 million to attach a 6,300-square-foot modular building to the existing ER. The new addition will come with 44 beds, adding to the 67 beds currently in the emergency room.

A modular, pre-fabricated structure does not require a new foundation and allows the hospital to erect the new building in less than a year's time.

"One of my first objectives when I returned to Antelope Valley Hospital this year was to address the chronic overcrowding of our emergency room and initiate the process of building a brand-new medical center that will serve our community's needs for years to come," said CEO Ed Mirzabegian. "I commend the hospital board for taking the necessary steps to ensure excellent patient care."

While the emergency room annex will help alleviate overcrowding in the short-term, the hospital is also investing \$9 million toward laying the groundwork to build a new, state-of-the-art

hospital. The expenditure covers the initial architectural, structural and environmental planning required to construct a new medical center by January 2025.

The move to replace the existing decades-old facility is driven by California's strict earthquake safety standards, which mandate that parts of the building cannot be used for patient care as of 2030. A new hospital will also allow us to provide the kind of environment that is consistent with today's standards. This includes greater privacy, the latest technology, a larger emergency room and improved efficiency.

"Our top priorities as a board were to expand the capacity of our emergency room and make plans for a modern hospital that will efficiently serve our patients and the growing community," said Antelope Valley Healthcare District Board Chair Mateo Olivarez, RN. "California's earthquake safety requirements could force us to shut down a large portion of our patient care areas if we don't replace our facilities."

FOUNDATION

LIGHTS, MUSIC, BOOTS AND Bling

People stomped their boots and sported their bling while having a great time at the annual Lights, Music, Boots and Bling Gala at the Antelope Valley Fair and Event Center. Country star John Michael Montgomery headlined musical acts that also featured local artist Jacob Nelson and the Tone Wranglers. Proceeds from the gala fundraiser benefited our mental health unit.



Gala attendees saddled up for a good time! From left, Joe Zamrzla, Lily Johnston, Sadi Zamrzla and Dallas Barretto.



Cardiologist Dr. Sameh Gadallah (right) and nurse Wendi Clutter, RN, won an autographed guitar signed by John Michael Montgomery.



CEO Ed Mirzabegian and Antelope Valley Hospital Foundation Chairman Johnny Zamrzla met John Michael Montgomery before the singer performed at the gala.



Country singer John Michael Montgomery plays his star-spangled guitar as he sang his hit "I Love the Way You Love Me."

Surgeon Donates His Bone Marrow to Save a Child's Life

Robotic surgeon Dr. Rafael Lemus-Rangel performs life-saving procedures every week, but earlier this year he became the patient to help save the life of a little girl he's never met.

As a pre-med student at UCLA, Dr. Lemus-Rangel signed up to become a bone marrow donor. Last spring – two decades after he originally signed up – he got the call. A 4-year-old girl with leukemia in Kansas City needed a bone marrow transplant, and he was a match.

As the father of a 4-year-old girl himself, Dr. Lemus-Rangel knew how thankful he'd have been if his own daughter needed a transplant. "I thought what it would feel like if my little girl had leukemia and we had already tried everything else to save her. What if a stranger stepped forward to offer a bone marrow transplant that could help? I'd be so relieved, so grateful," he said. "I wanted to be able to help save a 4-year-old child. It is that simple."



Preliminary medical testing confirmed that he was in good health, and even better, he was a perfect match. Eight out of eight genetic markers matched the little girl's, which meant his bone marrow cells would give her the best possible chance for a good outcome.

With this encouraging news, Dr. Lemus-Rangel and his wife traveled to Kansas City where a



transplant team at the Kansas University Medical Center performed the procedures. Under general anesthesia, surgeons inserted a large hollow needle through each hip to withdraw liquid marrow from both sides of his pelvic bone. A few hours later, while Dr. Lemus-Rangel was recovering, the surgical team transplanted his bone marrow into the young recipient.

Due to strict privacy protocols of transplant donation, Dr. Lemus-Rangel has not yet met the girl or her family, but he did leave her a note.

"I wrote, 'Enjoy the marrow!' and I signed it with a little heart and my initials, and they promised to give it to her," he said. "We are allowed to meet after the one-year anniversary of the transplant procedure, and I look forward to that. I feel very happy that I was able to do this."



Local Couple Finds Comfort, Joy and Wedding Bells at AVH

Even before they met, Kyle and Lindsay Tuculet each knew they'd love to have children some day. However, Lindsay had been told she likely would not be able to conceive due to a health condition. So the couple, both in their 30s, were shocked and thrilled to learn – right around Thanksgiving last year – that Lindsay was pregnant...with twins!

They started making plans: Kyle sold his motorcycle and geared up for the financial realities of raising twins. They set a wedding date – they would get married on April 14, 2019 – the one-year anniversary of the day they met. They chose baby names and looked forward to meeting their new daughters, Evelynnn and Elizabeth, due in July 2019.

Early in the pregnancy Lindsay's physician put her on bed rest. Despite the efforts to protect her unborn baby girls, her water broke in late March. The mom-to-be was quickly admitted to our Women's and Infants Pavilion (WIP), where the medical team worked to slow down her labor.

Five days later, at just 22 weeks gestation, tiny baby Elizabeth was born, weighing a slight 1 lb. 5 oz. Too fragile to survive, she lived only four hours. The couple was heartbroken, but knew their other miniature girl still had a chance at life since each baby was inside her own placenta.

"We had so many staff members stop by with condolences," said Kyle. "It was so heartfelt. It allowed us to grieve and mourn Elizabeth, but also allowed us to concentrate on Evelynnn."

"Everyone took such great care of us. They made us a memory box and took pictures," recalled Lindsay. "We were told that when one twin comes, the next one usually follows, so we were preparing ourselves for that."



Evelynnn gets ready to go home for the first time after nearly 10 weeks in the NICU.

As the hours and days passed, baby Evelynn stayed in utero, greatly enhancing her chances for survival. Lindsay remained in the hospital where she was continuously monitored. The nursing staff soon learned that Kyle and Lindsay's planned wedding date was approaching, so they came up with a plan to help the couple tie the knot just like they had intended despite the unexpected circumstances.

Working quickly, members of the WIP team reserved a conference room and began compiling decorations, flowers and food. Kyle arranged for their pastor from Desert Vineyard Church to come to the hospital to officiate. Lindsay had already purchased a dress, which her mother brought to the hospital. Lindsay's best friend Sarah did her hair and make-up. As she was wheeled into the WIP conference room on April 14, she was surprised by what she saw.

"The nurses planned a really beautiful wedding for us," she said.

Kyle and Lindsay were joined by their parents, other close family members and friends, and many of the nurses who had helped make this special day happen.

"There was a cake, cupcakes and sparkling cider," said Lindsay. "And they gave us gifts. It was an incredible day."

The very next day, back in her hospital room, Lindsay's water broke a second time. Baby Evelynn came into the world on April 15 at 11:05 p.m., weighing 1 lb. 12 oz. She was taken straight to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). Born at 25 weeks



Members of the labor & delivery team who helped care for Lindsay during her two-week stay say hello to 5-month-old Evelynn.

gestation, baby Evelynn is considered a micro-preemie. The extra three weeks of growth inside her mother's belly allowed the baby to become strong enough to have a 75-85 percent chance of survival.

After spending nearly a month in the hospital, Lindsay was discharged three days after delivering the second twin. "It was really hard to leave my baby at the hospital. I felt like I was leaving my home, but I knew she was in good hands," she said.

Baby Evelynn spent 69 days in the NICU. "We visited all the time," said Kyle. "The doctors and nurses took great care of her."

Today Evelynn is home with Lindsay and Kyle in Rosamond and is getting bigger and stronger every day. By September she had grown to more than 12 pounds, and her parents proudly reported she is "healthy, feisty and thriving."



Fighting the Flu

Flu season is almost here, and that means it's time to take steps to safeguard your health and the health of your loved ones.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends a yearly flu vaccine as the first and most important step in protecting against flu viruses. In addition to a flu vaccine, other common sense precautions you can take to prevent the spread of flu and other illnesses include:

Avoid close contact with people who appear to be ill, such as those who are coughing or sneezing.

If you are sick, limit contact with others to prevent infecting them.

Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, and don't reuse it. Throw the tissue away after you use it.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.

Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that are easily contaminated such as doorknobs, light switches and faucets.



If you do contract the flu, antiviral drugs can make your symptoms less severe and shorten the time you are sick. These drugs work best when they are started within two days of getting sick. See your doctor for a prescription if you think you have come down with the flu.

And remember: The best way to prevent the spread of germs at any time of year – not just flu season – is frequent handwashing using soap and water. If soap and water are not available, the next best thing is an alcohol-based antibacterial hand lotion. By following these simple tips, you stand a much better chance of staying healthy this flu season.



Hospitals across the country are making efforts to help reduce the spread of the flu virus. Effective Oct. 1, Antelope Valley Hospital has the following visitor restrictions:

- Children under the age of 14 may not visit patients.
- Anyone with flu-like symptoms (i.e., coughing, sneezing, fever or sore throat) will not be allowed to visit patients.

These visitor guidelines will remain in effect until the end of April.

“Due to the anticipated severity of this year’s flu season and how contagious it can be, we are instituting these policies to ensure the safety of patients, staff, and visitors while continuing to provide the best quality of care,” said **Jonathan Truong, M.D.**, medical director for AVH’s infection control department.



Specialty Unit Turns 15

They've helped rescue families and start the healing process for 15 years. The women of the forensic services unit (FSU), our hospital's unique community benefit program, have aided patients reporting sexual assault, child abuse, elder abuse or neglect, domestic violence, trauma and suspicious injuries.

*"I think of it as taking care of patients who have been hurt as a result of human violence," said **Bridgett Amis**, director of the forensic services unit."*

Last year, the unit helped 2,500 patients—1,200 of whom were victims of child abuse, domestic violence or sexual assault. The unit also collaborates with law enforcement agencies, the district attorney's office, and other community partners to ensure justice and the healing of a victim.

"Our team is trained to recognize and provide the appropriate resources each family needs," Bridget

said. "We care for the whole patient and are able to give them respect and dignity at one of the worst times of their lives."

The unit originally launched in 2005 as a way to help sexual assault victims, but has grown over time to include other traumatic crimes and situations. It is the only unit of its kind in the Antelope Valley.

The FSU is comprised of a specially trained team of registered nurses, who compassionately and expertly assess, document, photograph, and collect evidence on all suspected victims of violence, whether they arrived at the hospital on their own, are brought by ambulance or are referred by law enforcement. The unit also coordinates the medical/legal needs of victims and provides support for those who have experienced life-changing events. The FSU is designated by the County of Los Angeles as a SART (Sexual Assault Response Team) Center of Excellence.

For more information about the forensic services unit, call 661-949-5572.



Men are invited to don red pumps and Walk a Mile in Her Shoes to raise funds in support of the forensic services unit for victims of domestic violence. The walk will take place from 8 a.m. to noon Saturday, Oct. 26, at University of Antelope Valley, 44055 Sierra Highway, in Lancaster. The cost is \$65 for men's heels and \$20 for women and men who already have heels. Sign up at <http://walkamileinhershoes.eventbrite.com>.

HOSPITAL HIGHLIGHTS

Fitness Court Opens in Palmdale

Our hospital is thrilled to partner with the City of Palmdale in the opening of a new fitness court at Pelona Vista Park! The court provides free access to a best-in-class outdoor bodyweight circuit training system and features more than 30 pieces of exercise equipment arranged in stations that allow for up to 28 people to use the court at the same time.



Honoring First Responders

As a tribute to the first responders who bravely and selflessly answered the call on September 11, 2001, our hospital team honored and thanked our region's first responders for their courage and commitment to saving lives. Thank you to those who rush in while others are rushing out.

Maternal-Fetal Specialist Joins Team AVH

Dr. Jahangir Ayromlooi has joined our hospital's medical staff as the medical director of perinatology/maternal-fetal medicine to provide specialized care to women with high-risk pregnancies. He joins the hospital's multidisciplinary team, which includes a cadre of obstetricians, neonatologists and specially trained nurses. He will be available full-time through the hospital's OB clinic.

Examples of high-risk pregnancies include complicated multiple births, such as triplets or quadruplets; mothers with pre-existing medical conditions, like heart or kidney disease, hypertension, diabetes or autoimmune diseases; or fetuses with chromosomal or congenital abnormalities.

Dr. Ayromlooi can be reached through the Antelope Valley Hospital OB Clinic at 661-726-6180, which is located at 44105 15th Street West, Suite 301, Lancaster.





Members of our heart care team

Back row left to right: Jeremy Baeza, RT; Ruben Vallejo, RT; Kristen Helton, RN.

Front row left to right: Leslie Deger; Teri Kirkpatrick, RN; Alison McPherson, RN; Jennifer Christensen, RN; Laurie Ramirez, RN; Samantha Shute, RN; Maureen Fitzgerald, RN; Manuel Payan, RT; Jacob Venzon, RN.

Team Recognized for Heartfelt Care

When seconds count, you can count on the experienced staff at AV Hospital to care for you. Our cardiac care team recently received the Silver Performance Achievement Award from the National Cardiovascular Data Registry and the American College of Cardiology for its performance in caring for patients with heart attack symptoms. The award recognizes our team's commitment to and success in implementing a higher standard of care for these patients. AV Hospital was one of only 86 facilities nationwide to receive the honor.

The award comes on the heels of the hospital being re-accredited as a Chest Pain Center last year and cements our role as the leading source of cardiovascular care in the Antelope Valley.

Heart attacks are the leading cause of death in the United States, with 600,000 people dying annually of heart disease. More than five million Americans visit hospitals each year with chest pain.

An accredited Chest Pain Center's evidence-based, protocol-driven, and systematic approach to cardiac patient care allows clinicians to reduce time to treatment during the critical early stages of a heart attack. Accredited facilities better monitor patients when it is not initially clear whether or not a patient is having a coronary event. Such monitoring ensures patients are neither sent home too early nor needlessly admitted.

In addition to being a certified Chest Pain Center, AVH is a STEMI (ST Elevation Myocardial Infarction) Receiving Center, which means we have the training, equipment and processes in place to immediately treat patients experiencing an acute cardiac myocardial infarction (heart attack).

Health Connect

HealthConnect is published by the Antelope Valley Hospital marketing department as a service to the community. For inquiries email marketing@avhospital.org.

Antelope Valley Hospital Contact Numbers

Main Number
661-949-5000

Blood Donor Center
661-949-5622

Foundation
661-949-5810

OB Clinic
661-726-6180

Volunteers
661-949-5105

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Information in this publication is intended to educate readers about subjects pertinent to their health. Information should not be considered medical advice or treatment nor should it be used as a substitute for a physician consultation.





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Share your time. Share your talent. Share your heart. Become a hospital volunteer.

Antelope Valley Hospital is looking for community-minded volunteers who want to help others, learn new skills and form lasting friendships.

Volunteers are needed for:

- Reception desk
- Emergency department
- "New to You" thrift shop
- Gift shops
- Pet therapy
- Chaplain services
- Transportation
- And more!



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If you are age 15 or older and would like to become a hospital volunteer, download an application at avhospital.org/about/volunteer or contact the volunteer services department:



661-949-5102



volunteers@avhospital.org