

# Health Connect



ANTELOPE VALLEY  
HOSPITAL

A facility of Antelope Valley Healthcare District

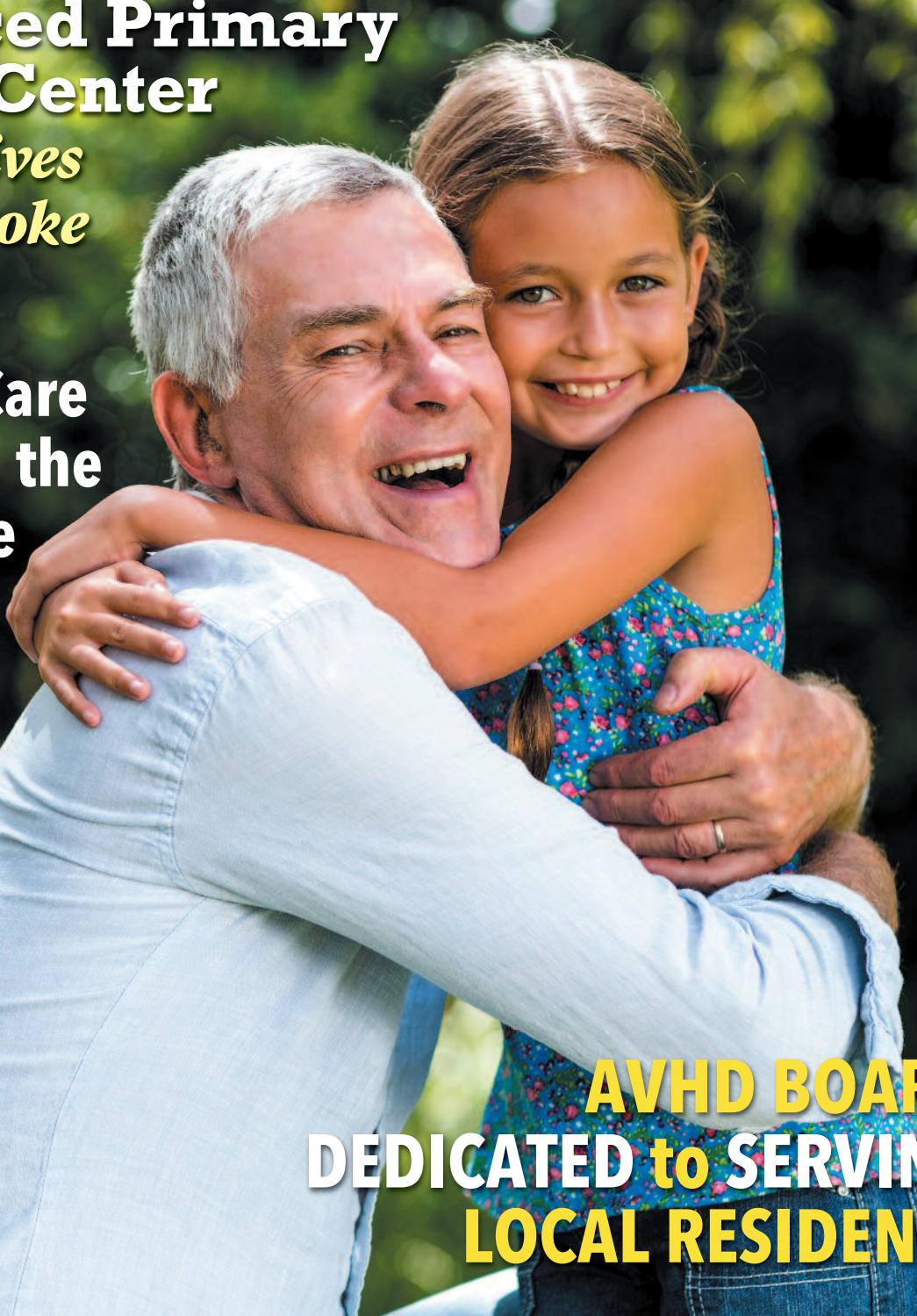
A community newsletter from Antelope Valley Hospital

Spring 2017

## Advanced Primary Stroke Center

*Saving Lives  
After Stroke*

**Superior  
Nursing Care  
Makes All the  
Difference**



**AVHD BOARD  
DEDICATED to SERVING  
LOCAL RESIDENTS**

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# Embarking on an Exciting Journey Together

**A** career of hospital experience has led me to one undeniable conclusion: Delivering exceptional clinical and service quality to our patients is the cornerstone of everything we do. That is why I am so excited to have joined a hospital whose employees, medical staff, volunteers and board wholeheartedly share this belief.

In just a few months here at Antelope Valley Hospital, I have learned quite a bit. I have learned that we have an exceptional team of employees – many of whom have been here for the better part of their careers – who have an incredible dedication to the hospital and the community. I've learned we have a remarkable medical staff who have trained in some of the best places and bring to the community a wealth of experience and knowledge. And I've learned we have a supportive community that counts on this hospital to be here for their families just as we have been for the past 60 years.

At the same time I've discovered that there is much to be done.

For starters we need to update our master site plan and invest more heavily in our infrastructure, particularly expansion and remodel of our trauma center and emergency department. As we all know the size of the current emergency department is inadequate, as we are seeing nearly 121,000 people a year in a facility built for a fraction of that number. So while we are very fortunate to have a trauma center (and team) with this level of sophistication right here in Lancaster, there is no question we need a newer facility to assure we can adequately handle the needs of our growing community for generations to come.

We also need to invest more heavily in our staffing, particularly nursing. We have begun to do just that with the reinstitution of our rapid response team, the launch of new nursing recruitment and education initiatives, and our rededication to the belief that "what happens at the bedside" is most important.

Part of investing in staffing means doing a better job of tapping into the potential of each and every employee. That's where I come in – to serve as a coach and to make sure employees have the tools and support they need to be successful, to see their careers grow, to be empowered to make a difference, and to feel immense pride in coming to work every day. When that happens we all prosper.

All of this may sound like a tall order, but fortunately everything we need is in place – the people, the technology, the financial strength and the commitment – to make this all possible. That makes this an exciting time to be at AVH and to be embarking on this journey together.

**Michael L. Wall**  
*President and Chief Executive Officer*



# Superior Nursing Care Makes All the Difference

## *AVH Nurse Aya Smith Named Chief Nursing Officer*

**J**ust as you can't build or sustain a house without a strong foundation, no hospital can survive without a strong team of nurses. One of the most respected and admired professions in the world, nursing is also one of the most demanding of all jobs. Fortunately the nurses at Antelope Valley Hospital are up for the challenge.

"It has been said that when you're a nurse you know that every day you will touch a life or a life will touch yours and nothing could be more true," says Aya Smith, RN, MSN, chief nursing officer at AVH. "No matter how hard others may try, only a nurse can truly understand and appreciate the magnitude of our job and the satisfaction we feel every day when we positively impact the lives of others."

Aya knows this feeling firsthand as a longtime member of the Lancaster healthcare community. She first worked at AVH from 2007 to 2014 and then rejoined the hospital last June as house supervisor. She was promoted into her new position in February.

"We are blessed at AVH to have an exceptional team of nurses, some of whom have as many as 40 years of experience caring for patients," said Aya. "They bring that experience to the bedside, to their nursing colleagues, and to physicians and surgeons with whom they partner to ensure that all of our patients get the best care possible."

As an Advanced Primary Stroke Center, a Comprehensive Community Cancer Center, an



Aya Smith, RN, MSN

accredited heart center, and a trauma center, AVH sees many patients with severe conditions requiring special attention and a specially trained team. "Many people may not be aware that here at AVH we have skilled nurses who specialize in all of these areas as well as nurses who specialize in maternity care, intensive care, surgery and all of the disciplines needed to make AVH an outstanding patient-centered institution."

Like Aya, several AVH nurses are (or have also been) adjunct professors in the Antelope Valley Community College nursing program. "These nurses understand the importance of helping to train the next generation of nurses and to share their practical, hands-on experience to augment classroom learning. Just as many of our nurses are locally trained themselves, we are helping to make sure that the residents of Antelope Valley will have outstanding nurses to rely upon for many years to come."

# AVHD Board Dedicated to Serving

**A**ntelope Valley Hospital is governed by a publicly elected board of directors whose role is to set strategic direction, assure sound financial stewardship, and provide organizational oversight to ensure the hospital's mission and vision are carried out for the betterment of the community.

This public structure can be traced to a law passed by the California Legislature in the 1940s that allowed California voters to create independent districts to meet their communities' health needs. In 1953 – recognizing the need for increased access to healthcare close to home – local residents used that law to form the Antelope Valley Healthcare District (AVHD). At present Antelope Valley Hospital is the only hospital in the AVHD.

With the election of two new members this past November, the AVHD board has new energy and a renewed commitment to ensuring Antelope Valley Hospital continues to meet the community's healthcare needs now and in the future.

The board is directly accountable, not to shareholders, but to the public that it serves.

## Who are the five AVHD board members?

### Don Parazo, M.D.



Board Chair Don Parazo, M.D., has lived and practiced in the Antelope Valley for 30 years and has seen innumerable changes in healthcare over that time. Despite the changes he says the one very important strategy is to focus on

quality. "Quality improves health, patient satisfaction, and efficiency. Quality also improves morale and creates a culture that breeds success for our team of healthcare workers. This is why I am so optimistic about the future of Antelope Valley Hospital."

### Kristina Hong, RN



Kristina Hong, RN, first vice chair, is new to the board. She has lived in the Antelope Valley for 34 years and was a nurse at AVH for nearly ten years before winning election to the board in November. Kristina never envisioned running for public office; but as a nurse in the hospital's emergency department, she saw

opportunities for improvement and wanted to make a difference. She is especially passionate about nursing education and training and believes that the hospital "needs to ensure that our nurses have access to continuing education and training so that they can provide high-quality care to our community." At the same time Kristina recognizes that sound financial stewardship is also important, noting "We need to make sure that financially we are strong and our financial situation is transparent so employees and the community know where we stand."

# Local Residents

## Mukund Shah, M.D.



Mukund Shah, M.D., is second vice chair. He has lived in the Antelope Valley for 40 years and has spent that entire time caring for local residents. Currently serving his second term on the board, Dr. Shah emphasizes the importance

of employee morale and creating a stable environment where employees feel like partners. "When you partner with employees and empower them to provide good quality care, everybody wins," he says. "Bad news spreads fast. Good things take a longer time. Our goal is to ensure that AVH is the place that good employees want to come to work."

## Mateo Olivarez, RN



Also newly elected to the board is Mateo Olivarez, RN, treasurer. Mateo has lived in the Antelope Valley since 2002 and was an intensive care unit nurse at AVH for nearly ten years. Mateo decided to run for the board so that he could help make improvements in three

key areas: patient safety, patient satisfaction and employee morale. "Leadership is important, and I am looking forward to collaborating with the board to help the hospital focus on these three key areas along with employee recruitment and retention." Mateo says he is already seeing improvements at the hospital since the beginning of the year. "I feel 100 percent optimistic we are already heading in the right direction."

## Abdallah Farrukh, M.D.

The longest-serving member is Abdallah Farrukh, M.D., board secretary, who has served continuously since 2000.

Dr. Farrukh has lived in the Antelope Valley for 35 years and has spent his career advocating for patient safety and quality. "I initially joined the board to help improve healthcare in our community and to make sure the hospital is able to provide quality care," he says. "One of the ways we can do that is by expanding the emergency department. It was built for 30,000 patient visits annually, but the hospital is now seeing nearly 121,000 patient visits each year. We all know this is needed, but we cannot do that without proper funding. That's why our board remains focused on making sure the hospital is financially healthy."



## Our Mission

Antelope Valley Healthcare District improves the quality of health in our community through research, education and innovation.

## Our Vision

Antelope Valley Healthcare District will be the leading resource for improving health by engaging and educating our community and safely caring for our patients.

The AVHD board meets on the last Wednesday of the month, unless otherwise announced. Meetings are open to the general public. For more information, visit [www.avhospital.org/About/BoardOfDirectors](http://www.avhospital.org/About/BoardOfDirectors).

# Advanced Primary Stroke Center



## *Saving Lives After Stroke*

A stroke can happen to anyone at any time, yet many people don't know what a stroke is or its causes.

Also known as a "brain attack," a stroke occurs when blood stops flowing to an area of the brain, thus depriving brain cells of needed oxygen. Without oxygen the brain cells begin to die. The most important thing to know is that stroke is a serious medical emergency, and prompt treatment can be lifesaving.

Antelope Valley Hospital was accredited as an Advanced Primary Stroke Center in late 2014 and was awarded recertification in 2017. This designation, from The Joint Commission and the Los Angeles County Emergency Medical Services Agency, signifies that AVH has the equipment, staff and training needed to provide the most current standards of care to patients who have had a stroke.

When a stroke patient is being transported to AVH by ambulance, even before arriving at the hospital, the emergency medical services team is in contact with the emergency department communicating important information about patients with signs of stroke. This allows members of the stroke treatment team to be ready to respond when the patient arrives.

Patients with signs of stroke are quickly assessed, and tests are performed to confirm the diagnosis of stroke and determine if the patient is eligible for treatment with Tissue Plasminogen Activator (tPA). This treatment is most effective when it is administered quickly, and AVH consistently administers tPA faster than the 60-minute goal set by the American Stroke Association.

The type of stroke and severity of a patient's symptoms determines where they go after the emergency

department. Patients who are given tPA will stay in the intensive care unit (ICU) for a minimum of 24 hours for close monitoring. Patients who have had a significant stroke may need surgery and will often be placed in the ICU. Patients who do not require this higher level of care will be admitted to the progressive care unit or the medical surgical stroke unit. No matter which unit the patient is sent to, they are cared for by nurses and a team of professionals who are specially trained to treat stroke.

"To ensure that Antelope Valley Hospital is ready to quickly care for stroke patients at any time of the day or night, we have implemented a dedicated team of professionals who are specially trained to recognize the symptoms of stroke, identify what type of stroke a person is experiencing, and determine the best course of treatment," said Colleen Littlejohn, RN, BSN, PHN, stroke coordinator at AVH. "As a result, more patients are able to get the high level of care they need and in many cases more quickly resume their regular activities."

## Patient Perspective: Thankful for Excellent Stroke Care

**Stroke symptoms are often dismissed as fatigue or a headache.** That was certainly the case for 54-year-old Carolyn McCracken of Littlerock. Fortunately her intuition prompted her to go to Antelope Valley Hospital where physicians discovered she was not only experiencing a transient ischemic attack (TIA) but also a blockage in her carotid artery.

Overseeing her care were Dr. Vijay Shanmugam for the stroke and Dr. Sameh Gadallah, who implanted a stent in her carotid artery. Carolyn and her husband, Bill, were impressed by the exceptional care and coordination between providers. She was discharged from the hospital after just a couple of days.

"The staff was excellent," Bill noted. "They were very informative, providing a detailed explanation of Carolyn's condition, our options and expected outcomes. We were very impressed with the whole experience."

A resident of the Antelope Valley for nearly 25 years, this was the first time Carolyn had ever been a patient of the hospital. "I am grateful to the medical team at AVH for saving my life."

## *Are you having a stroke?*

### Know the Signs

An easy way to remember the signs of stroke is to remember that you need to act "fast."

**F**ace    **A**rms    **S**peech    **T**ime

Look for  
an uneven  
smile.

Check if  
one arm  
is weak.

Listen for  
slurred  
speech.

Don't wait.  
Don't drive.  
Call 9-1-1.

Other symptoms can include confusion; trouble speaking, walking, or seeing out of one or both eyes; dizziness; loss of coordination; and severe headache. As the area's only Advanced Primary Stroke Center, Antelope Valley Hospital provides the swiftest response to people showing signs of stroke.



Colleen Littlejohn, RN, BSN, PHN



Jessica Horton (center) with her daughters Mary (left) and Spencer.

Jessica was a newborn baby when she was diagnosed with congenital glaucoma. Before her first birthday she permanently lost the vision in her left eye, and her parents were told that she'd be completely blind by the time she was 15 years old.

The family made the most of her childhood, taking road trips and making sure she had an opportunity to spend time with relatives while enjoying scenic spots from the Pacific Ocean to Lake Tahoe.

Jessica turned 15 and then 16 and then 17, and she didn't lose the sight in her right eye. Instead, she graduated from Palmdale High School and began thinking about a career. Having spent her childhood in and out of doctors' offices and hospitals because of her eye condition, Jessica was comfortable in the healthcare setting. She decided to become a respiratory therapist. That was 25 years ago.

After spending the first six years of her career at various hospitals, Jessica came to Antelope Valley Hospital where she has been a respiratory therapist for the past 19 years. She loves her work and especially enjoys the fact that respiratory therapists work in various departments throughout the hospital, so she gets to meet a lot of different people.

## Amazing Person

# Cornea Recipient Hopes to Inspire Others to Donate Life

*Jessica Horton is a respiratory therapist at Antelope Valley Hospital. Seventeen years ago she received a donor cornea. Since her successful transplant Jessica has become an ambassador for OneLegacy, the non-profit organ procurement organization dedicated to saving lives through organ, eye and tissue donation in the greater Los Angeles area. AVH is proud to share her amazing story as the first installment in our new "Amazing Person" series.*

Although her glaucoma had been managed for decades, about 17 years ago her right eye worsened and she underwent a cornea transplant. Then in 2010 she was approached by AVH's OneLegacy representative and asked if she wanted to speak at a local event and share her story. She did, and she hasn't stopped since. Over the past seven years, Jessica has done presentations promoting organ donation at new nurse orientations at hospitals across Southern California and spoken at flag-raising events that honor donor families. She also volunteers each year at the Rose Parade in Pasadena where OneLegacy sponsors the Donate Life float.

"Organ and tissue donation is an incredible gift," says Jessica. "As a recipient I am so grateful. If sharing my story with others helps even one family, then it is worth it."

Jessica has lived in the Antelope Valley her whole life. She and her husband, Rick, have two girls – Spencer, 13, and Mary, 10. The family has joined in the cause and plans to walk together in the annual Donate Life Run/Walk on April 29 in Fullerton. AVH will have a team. Jessica hopes her colleagues, friends and neighbors will join them, too. To register for the walk, visit [donatelifeoc.org](http://donatelifeoc.org).

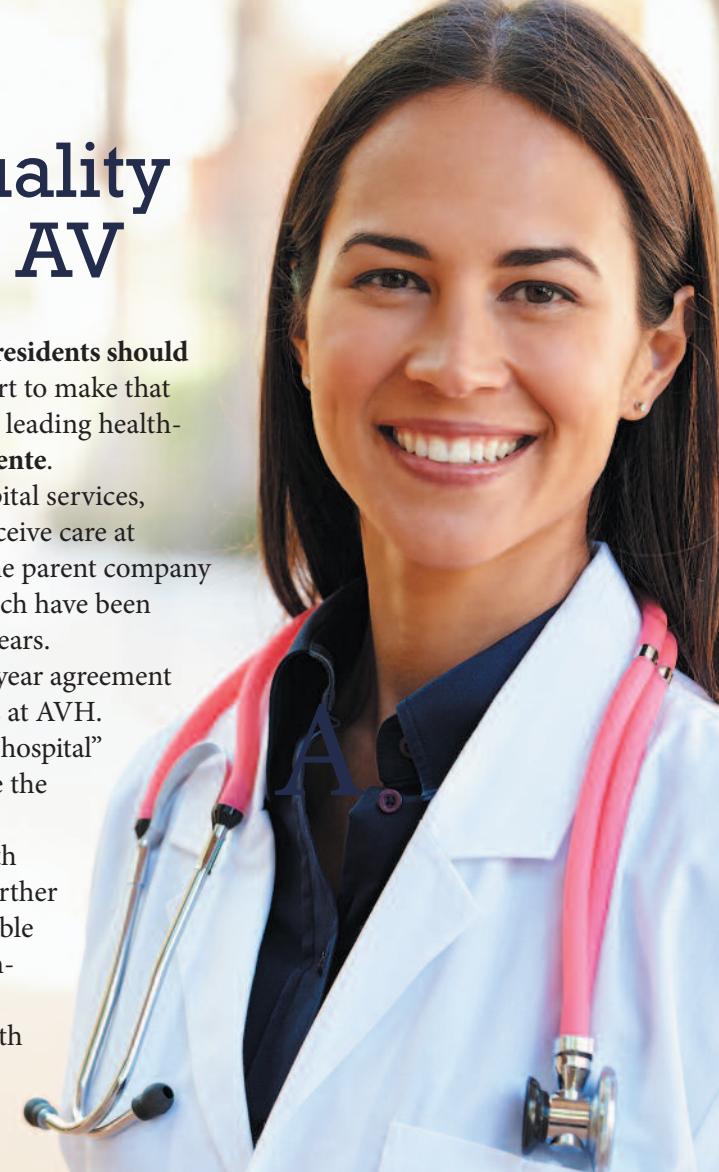
# Ensuring Access to Quality Care Right Here in the AV

**A**ntelope Valley Hospital was founded on the belief that local residents should have access to quality care close to home. As part of our effort to make that possible, AVH has renewed its contracts with two of the area's leading health-care organizations – **Heritage Provider Network** and **Kaiser Permanente**.

**Heritage** and AVH signed a new agreement in February for hospital services, thus ensuring that the network's patients will be able to continue to receive care at AVH. Heritage is one of California's largest in-state providers and is the parent company of High Desert and Sierra multi-specialty medical groups, both of which have been providing quality care to Antelope Valley residents for more than 25 years.

Late last year AVH and **Kaiser Permanente** reached a new three-year agreement for Kaiser members to continue to receive care from Kaiser physicians at AVH. The agreement reaffirms both Kaiser's commitment to AVH as its "plan hospital" in the area as well as the hospital's commitment to continue to provide the best possible clinical and service quality to Kaiser members.

"As a result of these agreements, AVH will be working closely with Heritage and Kaiser, as we do with all of our healthcare partners, to further enhance the patient experience and to ensure that local residents are able to remain in the Antelope Valley to receive the majority of their health-care," said Michael Wall, AVH's president and CEO. "When hospitals, health plans and physician groups work together, it's good for the health of the entire community and reaffirms why we exist and what our overriding mission is all about."



## AV Hospital Earns Reaccreditation from The Joint Commission

Antelope Valley Hospital has again earned The Joint Commission's Gold Seal of Approval for hospital accreditation by demonstrating continuous compliance with performance standards. The Gold Seal, awarded for a three-year period, is a symbol of quality that reflects an organization's commitment to providing safe and effective patient care.

"Joint Commission accreditation recognizes the tremendous work our staff does day in and day out to provide high-quality, reliable, patient-centered healthcare," said Michael Wall, AVH's president and CEO. "We're pleased to again receive accreditation from the nation's premier healthcare quality-improvement and accrediting body."

AVH underwent a rigorous on-site survey in September. During that review a team of Joint

Commission expert surveyors evaluated compliance with hospital standards related to several areas, including emergency management, environment of care, infection prevention and control, leadership, and medication management. Surveyors also conducted on-site observations and interviews.

The Joint Commission is an independent, nonprofit organization and healthcare's oldest and largest standards-setting and accrediting body. In addition to receiving the commission's Gold Seal of Approval, in 2016 AVH became the only hospital in the Antelope Valley recognized by The Joint Commission as a "Top Performer" in five Key Quality Measures: heart attack, heart failure, pneumonia, surgical care and perinatal care.

# Hospital Highlights



"High-quality, compassionate care depends on clear, thorough and timely communication among patients, their families and members of their medical team," said Gloria Brown, a certified healthcare interpreter at AVH. "Using interpreters that are specially trained in medical terminology helps to close potential gaps in communication and can lead to better care."

For patients and their families who prefer to communicate in a language other than English, AVH offers telephonic interpreter services using dual-handset phones. These phones offer a quick, hassle-free way for patients and healthcare providers to access live interpreters around the clock. With the touch of a button, patients can be instantly connected with an interpreter. While the patient speaks into one handset, a healthcare

## Language Services Bridge Communication Barriers

*Antelope Valley Hospital offers free access to interpreter services for our guests who are deaf, hard of hearing or have limited English proficiency.*

provider is using the other handset to listen and respond in English.

For patients who are deaf or hard of hearing, AVH offers video remote interpreting services. Using a computer monitor equipped with high-speed internet access and a webcam, patients can communicate in real time with their healthcare providers with the help of a qualified sign language interpreter.



Patients may request language services at any time throughout their visit. To learn more contact the patient and family experience department at **661-949-5650**.



## Donating for Decades

Blood donor Chuck Church has been donating blood regularly for more than 40 years. He recently made his 191<sup>st</sup> donation. Thank you, Chuck, for helping to save lives! Giving blood is safe, easy and takes less than an hour. All blood donated at the AVH Blood Donor Center stays in the Antelope Valley. To make an appointment to donate call **661-949-5622**. Walk-ins are also welcome.



## AVH Goes Red for Women's Heart Health

**A**ntelope Valley Hospital celebrated National Wear Red Day on February 3 with a Women's Heart Health Awareness Fair. The free event featured health presentations, free health screenings, hands-on CPR training and refreshments. Participants were also invited to bring their medications and vitamins for a free medication review by a pharmacist who helped them identify potential medication interactions and answered questions about their medications.

Heart disease and stroke are serious health issues for women. American Heart Association's Go Red for Women campaign helps raise awareness for women's heart health.



*HealthConnect is published by the Antelope Valley Hospital marketing department as a service to the community. For inquiries email [marketing@avhospital.org](mailto:marketing@avhospital.org).*

### Board of Directors

Don Parazo, M.D., Chair  
Kristina Hong, RN  
Mukund G. Shah, M.D.  
Abdallah S. Farrukh, M.D.  
Mateo Olivarez, RN

### President and CEO

Michael L. Wall

### Antelope Valley Hospital Contact Numbers

**Main Number**  
661-949-5000  
**Admitting | Registration**  
661-949-5411  
**Emergency Department**  
661-949-5115  
**Outpatient Surgery**  
661-952-1100  
**Blood Donor Center**  
661-949-5622  
**Mental Health Services**  
661-949-5250  
**OB Clinics**  
Lancaster  
661-726-6180  
Palmdale  
661-726-6325

*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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# Tee Off for a Good Cause

## Register Now for AVH Foundation's 14th Annual Golf Tournament

Antelope Valley Hospital Foundation's 14th Annual Invitational Golf Tournament is set to take place on Monday, April 24, at Robinson Ranch Golf Club in Santa Clarita. Not only is it a fun event, but the tournament raises much-needed funds that help support better health in the Antelope Valley. Over the past 13 years, the tournament has raised \$1,097,611 for the hospital.

Registration fees include 18 holes of golf, electric golf cart rental and a deluxe gift package (valued at \$200+), including premium-quality golf balls, breakfast, lunch, on-course beverage cart and coolers, tournament awards, raffle prizes and a banquet dinner. Registration is \$450 per individual player or \$1,500 per foursome. The deadline to register is April 14.

The beautiful Robinson Ranch Golf Club is nestled at the base of the San Gabriel Mountains and offers breathtaking views of the surrounding area. For more information, please call the AVH Foundation at **661-949-5810** or send an email to [theresa.lemus@avhospital.org](mailto:theresa.lemus@avhospital.org).

