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Critical shortage of helpers

West Valley Hospital needs more volunteers, including Connections drivers

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — Patricia Lucanio has roamed the halls of West Valley Hospital for 34 years.

She isn't a doctor or nurse, but a volunteer — and she's loved every minute of it.

"I don't know what I would have done if I had to have retired and not done this," Lucanio said.

Now 91 years old, she has doctor's orders to step away due to health concerns. She plans to continue what seems to be a calling for her once she gets the OK. She stops just short of guaranteeing a return.

"When the doctor says it's OK, maybe not as much," she explained. "I'll do it, if I have to do it one day a month. Just keep going."

West Valley Hospital needs more of that kind of dedication now as volunteer ranks have fallen to a point of "critical shortage."

Jennifer Best, volunteer services coordinator, said the hospital only has 24 active volunteers, down from more than 70 a few years ago.

"We had a lot of volunteers that were 70 and (older)," Best said. "Over the last few years, they've declined in health, so they've had to leave us."

Best estimated that 85 percent of volunteers are of retirement age or older and now she needs new volunteers to fill the shoes of those like Lucanio, who have been forced to step down.

Volunteers are needed in multiple departments to do a number of jobs, from helping with admissions, helping patients navigate the hospital to doing clerical work. Admitting, the emergency

WVH needs you

West Valley Hospital is looking for about 25 new volunteers of all ages.

For more information or to volunteer: contact Jennifer Best at 503-623-7311 or email jennifer.best@salemhealth.org. Also visit www.salemhealth.org/about/volunteers.

department, rehabilitation, and drivers for the Connections van are just a few areas where extra help is needed.

The Connections van, which picks up patients without transportation, is in especially critical need.

"That is a very unique service for a hospital to have a van that will go and pick patients up," Best said.

Volunteer applicants of any age — from high school students to retirees — are welcome to apply.

As Lucanio tells it, volunteering at West Valley is a rewarding experience.

"I love it. I like the people. The staff at the hospital is very, very nice and they are always so good to you. And the patients — hardly ever do you meet a patient that is unhappy," she said, noting some patients are afraid, but volunteers need not be.

"It's not scary at all," she said. "Once you start walking those halls, it just makes you feel so good."

Best added that for high school or college students interested in the medical field, volunteering is valuable in the potential for earning scholarships and providing a first-hand look at how medical professionals work.

Volunteering requires a time commitment, typically



JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer
Patricia Lucanio, 91, will have to slow down her volunteer service at West Valley Hospital, doctor's orders. She has "loved every minute" of her service at the hospital.

at least one three-hour shift per week. Schedules can be flexible, with daytime and evening shifts available.

In addition to time, Best

said the job requires people to be reliable and compassionate.

"It takes a really special person to be a volunteer,"

Best said. "We go to work to get a paycheck, and they come here because of how it makes their heart feel."

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IN YOUR TOWN

DALLAS

Dallas approves revamped economic development strategy.

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FALLS CITY

Falls City walking bridge needs a helping hand.

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INDEPENDENCE

Celebrate Dia de los Muertos and honor your deceased loved ones.

»Page 2A

MONMOUTH

Western Oregon University cross-country runners competed in Great Northwest Athletic cross-country championship on Saturday.

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EDUCATION

Meet the Cavy Queen Emily Roberts, a junior at Dallas High School, as she heads to national competitions with her rabbits.

»Page 17A

SPORTS

Dallas' football team defeated Lebanon 35-7 on Friday. The Dragons have outscored their last two opponents 55-7.

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Adopt-a-Family needs 'adopters'

DALLAS — Holiday program Dallas Adopt-a-Family is searching for families, agencies, organizations and businesses to "adopt" families in need.

Those interested in helping should call the Dallas Adopt-a-Family Committee at 503-507-6269.

Families in need can apply for the program Nov. 16 through 20 from 4 to 6 p.m. or Nov. 21 from 2 to 4 p.m. at the Academy Building, 182 SW Academy St. Suite 220, Dallas. Bring a current utility bill to show Dallas address.

Adopt-a-Family matches Dallas families with local groups. Each families receives a Christmas dinner and one gift for each child, infant through 18.

Night of the Living Dolls

Central FFA's Haunted Caves promises thrills as people explore rooms filled with creepy dolls, clowns, a deranged dentist, spiders and a straw bale maze, where crazy youths in masks are waiting to chase you with chain saws — completely safe, of course. The caves continue Friday and Saturday from 7 to 10 p.m. at Central High School. Admission is \$4, or \$3 for students with an associated student body ID card. FFA students await around every turn to ensure your Halloween experience is a spooky one, lurking in corners and hallways to give you a good fright, all in the name of a good time — and a good cause. Money goes to help support Central FFA students through scholarships and to help pay for their programs.

LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-Observer



THE NEXT 7 DAYS PLANNING FOR YOUR WEEK	wed	thu	fri	sat	sun	mon	tue
	<p>Learn about the efforts to restore the Willamette River at a showing of the film, "Upriver" at Western Oregon University. 6:30 p.m. Free.</p> <p>Showers Hi: 61 Lo: 50</p>	<p>Do some early holiday shopping and support West Valley Hospital's scholarship program at the Books are Fun fair. 8 a.m.-3:30 p.m.</p> <p>Partly Cloudy Hi: 61 Lo: 49</p>	<p>Step back in time for a medieval adventure at Kingdomfest. The event includes games and candy. 5:30-7:30 p.m. Free.</p> <p>Showers Hi: 60 Lo: 54</p>	<p>It's Halloween and the last chance to buy fresh veggies and fruit from the farmers markets in Independence. 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Free.</p> <p>Showers Hi: 62 Lo: 50</p>	<p>Don't forget to set your clocks back as Daylight Savings Time ends, and check the batteries in your smoke detectors.</p> <p>Thunderstorms Hi: 58 Lo: 43</p>	<p>It's never too late to learn an instrument. Join the New Horizon's Orchestra each week at Central High School. 6:30 p.m. \$25/month.</p> <p>Showers Hi: 54 Lo: 37</p>	<p>Why wait until after the holidays to start dropping those unwanted pounds? TOPS meets weekly in Dallas. 6-7 p.m. Free.</p> <p>Partly Cloudy Hi: 55 Lo: 38</p>