The warm sun beat off of the colorful lanterns and welcomed guests to the inaugural Planetree Festival on September 12th. Celebrating North Valley Hospital's 10 years of affiliation with Planetree, a national organization formed to support patient-centered care, the Planetree Festival was born. More than 560 community members joined the North Valley Hospital family for a festive evening of food, education for all ages, music and camaraderie.

"The festival was originated to recognize our 10th anniversary with Planetree," said Mary Stuster, Director of Planetree at North Valley Hospital. "Since we haven’t held a big community event since the NASH Bash, we wanted to hold a fun and welcoming celebration that was free and provided our community with the opportunity to experience the flavor of Planetree. It was so successful we’re considering continuing the festival as an annual event."

Participants were treated with the 10 components of patient-centered care: massage, pet therapy, a chance to complete advanced directives, outstanding food prepared by the Valley Café and meaningful raffle prizes were just the tip of the iceberg. Educational booths incorporated interactive elements on topics such as senior, men and women’s health, The Birth Center, orthopedics, healthy nutrition, complementary therapies, bicycle helmet safety, medication safety and organ donation information. A few big hits were the raffling of a couple dozen baskets of fruits and vegetables from our food display, reminiscent of a farmer’s market. Katy Myers set the tone for the evening with her beautiful harp. The Marshall Catch Band followed and picked up the pace with their lively music and opportunities for dancing. A bouncy house and slide were surrounded by picnic tables for families to congregate and wind down with the beautiful September evening.

An unveiling and dedication of the Fit Trail also was presented. The Fit Trail spans along NHH’s 1.5-mile paved walking path and provides 10 stations of beginner to intermediate exercise instructions along with the applicable apparatus to perform each exercise. The stations were donated by the NHH Foundation and the installation was donated by Sportek Enterprises.

In addition, participants were invited to tour the hospital and see, first hand, the healing architecture and art as well as visit the lab, imaging and in-patient areas as an introduction to our services and the care available. Guests enjoyed seeing how the da Vinci surgical robot worked with many having the chance to operate the robot themselves. There were also demonstrations of the Stryker Computer Navigation for orthopedic surgeries. Surgical equipment like these are great examples of how NHH incorporates advancement in medicine to improve patient care.

"Planetree really is a journey, a never-ending process of evaluating what we can do to make our care more patient-centered," Stuster said. "Planetree is about respecting patients’ wishes and making them a partner in their care. It goes above being a ‘spa hospital’, even though that contributes to the healing process. We believe that providing the personal touch, both figuratively and literally, and combining that with outstanding medical care leads to better patient experience and healing."

Preparing for the event paid tribute of the whole journey by involving people who have been active in establishing our Planetree affiliation and programs through the years, including Lauri Bautista, the original Planetree Coordinator at North Valley Hospital. A great turnout was had from board members, physicians, staff, volunteers and local business leaders. We even had a few people arrive for the festival on horseback!

"The festival celebrated the culmination of the past, present and future of Planetree at North Valley Hospital," Stuster said. "It was a real treat to share the Planetree vision from the eyes and hearts of those people who live and breathe this healthcare philosophy every day, and to watch the community joyfully experience all."