

Valley residents to offer prayers for nation

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Not everyone agrees to the efficacy of prayers, but hardly anyone would deny the United States could use some.

Hundreds - perhaps thousands - of Antelope Valley residents will gather in public today to offer prayers for America, its leaders, and its people.

Their prayers will be joined with those of millions of other Americans, for the National Day of Prayer - a 56-year-old observance intended to encourage people of all faiths to pray for the nation.

Nationally, organizers estimate that several million people will attend more than 35,000 prayer gatherings conducted by approximately 40,000 volunteers across the country. Several million people are expected to participate.

In the Antelope Valley, citizens will gather in morning and at night in three organized events: the Lancaster Mayor's Prayer Breakfast, the Palmdale Mayor's Prayer Breakfast and an evening interfaith prayer gathering.

The Lancaster breakfast, the Valley's largest and oldest National Day of Prayer observance, will take place from 6:30 to 8:30 a.m. in the J.P. Eliopoulos Pavilion at the Antelope Valley Fairgrounds, 2551 West Ave. H. The keynote speaker will be former NFL quarterback Jay Schroeder.

The Lancaster breakfast is run by a nondenominational, nonprofit organization of Christian professionals and businesspeople.

The Palmdale breakfast will be from 7 to 9 a.m. at Cascades Grill at Rancho Vista Golf Course, 3905 Club Rancho Drive. Palmdale Mayor Jim Ledford is scheduled to speak, along with Emmett Murrell, director and chief administrator for Murrell's Farm and Boys Home.

The host of the Palmdale breakfast is the King's Table, an interdenominational group that has played host to the event for three years.

In the evening, the fifth annual gathering presented by the Antelope Valley Interfaith Council and Antelope Valley Human Relations Task Force will focus on finding

similarities among the Valley's faithful, organizers said.

The observance will begin at 6 p.m. at the Antelope Valley Church of Religious Science at the Center of Light, 1030 West Ave. L-8, Lancaster. The gathering is free and open to the public.

The National Day of Prayer's history dates to 1952, when a joint resolution by Congress, signed by President Harry Truman, declared an annual, national day of prayer. In 1988, the law was amended and signed by President Ronald Reagan, permanently setting the day as the first Thursday of every May.