

Healing Spaces Launched

Norman and Maureen Benito and the Monterey Peninsula Foundation have provided two lead gifts totaling \$750,000 to launch the Healing Courtyards Initiative at Dominican Hospital. The Healing Courtyard's Initiative will transform six garden areas to reduce stress and promote healing for patients and their families.

In September, Monterey Peninsula Foundation donated \$500,000 to Dominican Hospital's Healing Courtyards Initiative. Their generous gift names the Monterey Peninsula Foundation Rehabilitation Garden. This is a matching grant so the Dominican Hospital Foundation is reaching out to the community for support.

Designed by physical, occupational and speech therapists, the Rehabilitation garden serves patients with strokes, brain or spinal surgery, head trauma, and joint replacements. Various types of pavement surfaces, stair configurations and pathways patients navigate with walkers, wheelchairs and canes in real life environment. Other features, such as a putting green, will be used to relearn balance.

"We're excited to support Dominican Hospital Foundation in their new endeavor, especially the creation of a putting green designed for rehabilitation," remarks Steve John, CEO of Monterey Peninsula Foundation.

"As the host of both the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am, and the Nature Valley First Tee Open at Pebble Beach golf tournaments, it made sense for us to support this life-affirming outdoor garden. The therapeutic use of golf will help patients on their healing journey."

Phase I of the Healing Courtyard Initiative completes the Rehabilitation Garden and the Central Surgery Lounge, Courtyard, and Balcony. When all three phases of the Healing Courtyards are complete, Dominican Hospital will house six healing courtyards, each with its own unique environment, which will incorporate the local flora and fauna of Santa Cruz County. A number of scientific studies prove that gardens and nature in hospital settings reduce stress levels, the need for pain medication, and result in shorter hospital stays.

And Maureen Benito has also decided to make a lead gift for this project. For more than six decades, Norman and Maureen Benito were rarely apart. Even before they were married, the two lifelong Santa Cruz residents lived across from each other growing up.



"I was married at 18 to the love of my life, the boy next door, and we were together every day for 61 years," says Maureen Benito.

And they were a full and happy 61 years. Norman started his career working for two funeral homes in Santa Cruz County, and later started his own. And it was truly a family business. Maureen and both Maureen and Norman's parents as well as their son, Gary, who later went into the mortuary business himself, helped to run the funeral home.

"A good, simple, happy life is what we had," Maureen says.

But running Norman's Family Chapel was just one part of the Benito family's involvement in the community. Norman was actively involved with organizations like the Santa Cruz Elks Lodge, the Marconi club, and the



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Boys and Girls Club of Santa Cruz, among others. He was Man of the Year for both the Sons of Italy and S.C. Oldtimers. Norman was honored with a certificate for his service in the U.S. Navy by President Barack Obama. He also served on the board of the Dominican Hospital Foundation and on the Board of Fellows for Santa Clara University.

Dominican Hospital meant a great deal to both Norman and Maureen. In fact, the two were so close with the founding nuns that they helped the young couple by babysitting Gary when he was growing up.

“We go back years with the Dominican Hospital. We were the first ones to walk through when it was first built,” says Maureen. “We were very close with the nuns. It was like our second home.”

Maureen also has a deep history with Dominican as founder of the Guild along with Angel Goscila. The first year’s event featured Merv Griffin and Eva Gabor.

In 2014 at the age of 82, Norman passed away, surrounded by his family. In order to pay tribute to his memory, Maureen donated \$250,000 to the Dominican Hospital’s Healing Courtyard’s Initiative. Maureen’s gracious donation will name the Norman & Maureen Benito Central Surgery Courtyard.

In Maureen’s words, “I just want his memory to live on forever because he was such a good man and so fond of the hospital.”

The Healing Courtyard’s Project is now actively raising funds for from community members and organizations to ensure that Dominican Hospital can complete the three phases of the Initiative. There are many recognition opportunities built into the plans from \$500,000 to \$1,000.

The Healing Courtyards Initiative transforms the hospital, significantly impacting the experience of thousands of people who will utilize the spaces daily,” says Joe Burton, co-chair of the Healing Courtyards Committee and Executive Vice President & Chief Commercial Officer at Plantronics.

“People really need that place inside the hospital to spend time by themselves or be with their families,” says Maureen. “I think it’s important to give people that space, and I know Norman would really like that too.”



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