



Photograph courtesy of Helen Pivk

Students from the Niosha Dance Academy performed Iranian folklore dance during the Iran/Afghan New Year celebration held at West Valley College last year. They are scheduled to return to the campus on March 19 to dance at this year's event.

No-Ruz celebration comes to West Valley

College to honor Iranian New Year

By SHANNON BARRY

The New Year is a tradition that Helen Pivk says allows her to reflect on past events in order to experience growth, similar to a hyacinth or tulip blooming in the spring. But unlike the clinking of champagne glasses and kisses that occur once the clock strikes midnight, she celebrates a time-honored tradition that lasts 13 days. Pivk moved to the U.S. in 1991

from Tehran, Iran, but she still embraces the traditions that lead up to the Iranian New Year. This occurs when the sun crosses the earth's equator—also referred to as the spring equinox.

"This is a big celebration in the Iranian community, regardless of religion," Pivk said.

The festivities begin about two weeks before the No-Ruz (which translates to "New Day") with housecleaning and preparing wheat or lentil greens in a dish for sprouting. They are watched every day for the next two weeks as the seeds eventually flourish.

Even though there have been changes to the New Year's tradi-

tions since she left Iran, Pivk said the celebrations of her childhood have left a lasting and sentimental impact on her. So in an effort to bring to life the celebrations she remembers from her childhood and to educate the public on the Iran/Afghan New Year, she is taking part in coordinating an event at West Valley College on March 19, from noon to 2:30 p.m. The event will be held at the college's campus center, located at 14000 Fruitvale Ave., and is free and open to everyone in the community.

The program will include a brief history of the New Year, an Iranian folklore dance performance by the Niosha Dance Academy, a Middle

Eastern slideshow and live music.

The No-Ruz event, which is traditionally celebrated by families, will include a focal point of the gathering—a Haft Seen table. This is a traditional table decorated with at least seven symbolic items that each begin with the letter "s," including *sekeh* (a coin that represents wealth). All together, Pivk said these seven items represent the happiness that each family hopes to reach during the New Year through life, health, wealth, abundance, love, patience and purity.

Based on the success of last

No-Ruz

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year's event, Pivk expects approximately 400 people to attend the celebration. The event is sponsored by West Valley College's Student Activities and Campus Center, Matriculation Department and Educational Transition Department.

As the educational transition counselor at the college, Pivk said she has witnessed the demographics of the campus change drastically since she first came to the school.

"When I started in September 1996, only one Iranian student worked with me a semester," Pivk said. "Now, after 12 years, there are at least 250."

According to Ruth Carlson, director of public affairs, the Persian student population is one of

the fastest-growing populations at West Valley College.

For this reason, Pivk said it makes sense that the event is growing. This is the second year she has helped plan a larger celebration for the event, even though there have been events taking place on a smaller scale since 2000.

For more information about the event, contact Helen Pivk at 408.741.2471 or helen_khalouyan@wvm.edu.