



# Day Three on the Ground in the San Luis Valley

#HealthiestCO Statewide Listening Tour

We began the last day of our seventh tour in **Alamosa**, the “Gateway to the Great Sand Dunes.” Here, we learned how the 160 staff members at the **San Luis Valley Behavioral Health Group (SLVBHG)** have collaborated with **Valley Wide Health Services** and sheriff's offices across the region to serve nearly 4,800 clients in the Valley this year. SLVBHG helps area residents with behavioral health needs such as depression, anxiety and substance abuse – challenges we’ve seen across every county we’ve visited thus far on the Statewide Tour.

We arrived at the **Boys & Girls Club of the San Luis Valley** to find the gym beautifully decorated by dedicated children of the club – we were flattered to say the least. Attendees at this tour session included residents from Alamosa, Saguache, Rio Grande, Costilla, Mineral and Conejos counties. They boasted about how Valley residents care for one another and have a “can-do” attitude. We heard this loud and clear. "Sometimes we do our business in aisle 9 at Walmart. We know each other and we know our strengths and weaknesses."

Other assets of their community include a strong health system, clean air and water, faith-based residents, universities and arts. However, the pain points of poverty weigh on the many it impacts in this region. Difficulty finding transportation, lack of affordable housing and living-wage jobs leave many residents in a state of impoverishment.

Next, we took a physical activity break in **Monte Vista**, playing on the new playground at the Monte Vista Sports Complex. Staff heard from high school teachers about how the playground has contributed to more physical activity options and access for kids in the area.

For our final session, we visited the small town of **Del Norte**. With a population of approximately 12,000 in Rio Grande County, residents of this rural community explained to us they don't experience the stresses of city life. Instead, they enjoy spacious public walking and biking trails, and have a hospital that acts as a central health hub. Yet, though the hospital is seen as an asset, there is a lack of consistent health care providers. Young doctors come to the area for loan repayment programs, then move on quickly, leaving some residents with the challenge of finding a provider they can build a trusting relationship with. Health literacy was mentioned as a predominant issue as well.

The tour has now taken Karen and Foundation staff through 46 of 64 – or nearly two-thirds – of the Colorado's counties.

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