

Yesterday, Rep. Ben Ray Lujan met with members of the community in Espanola to talk about substance abuse in New Mexico. He was joined by a panel of experts that included: elected officials, state health care and treatment providers, law enforcement, and members of the community to discuss how to fight substance abuse.

"Today I was proud to see our community standing together against this problem in our neighborhoods," Rep. Lujan said. "This issue is very personal to everyone present today because substance abuse doesn't just affect one person but penetrates our entire community. So to make an impact, we must work closely together to make sure that everyone - from the people on the ground to the legislators in office - is doing their part to fight this problem."

The summit focused on education, early prevention and taking a proactive approach to the problem. Community members emphasized that drug abuse is something that affects the entire community, and that was made clear by the stories of overdose and addiction.

"It was a very productive discussion," said Herman Silva, a Santa Fe resident and a co-chair of the Interdiction Team, a team in Espanola that gathers together to overcome drug issues locally. "I think that having the panel and also hearing from the community, and maybe even the drug consumers, was great. They all seemed to agree that being proactive was the most important part."

Rep. Lujan understands the longstanding substance abuse concerns facing our state and how they take a toll not only on the sufferer of the addiction but their family, friends and our society. In Congress, he has fought to fund prevention and treatment programs and supported legislation that would focus on rehabilitation for young offenders.

"I am committed to the people of Northern New Mexico and of all New Mexico to working side by side in this fight against substance abuse" he said. "I'm proud I can walk away from this meeting knowing that we can move forward as a community to end this enduring problem."