



Focus Groups

Kingstown, N.C.



**Healthy
Together**
CLEVELAND

Summary

Residents in Kingstown, live in a food desert, an area that has no grocery store within walking distance and residents don't have a safe place to be physically active. Healthy Together Cleveland in partnership with Kingstown Mayor, Janet Gerald and Mayor Pro-Tem, Sharon Martin hosted focus groups on August 23, 2023 to identify community interest and needs for Kingstown to become a champion community of health.

The focus groups were held at Palmer Grove Baptist Church (28150 zip code) at 6 p.m. 35 community residents were in attendance. Mayor Gerald welcomed the group and introduced Healthy Together Cleveland steering committee members who facilitated the focus groups and took notes. Each focus group had 15-17 people and took approximately 45 minutes.

Focus group facilitators: Jeff Ross and Rev. Frances Webber
Notetakers: Jonathan Johnson and Juan Cherry

Questions and responses from focus groups are on pages 2 – 4.



What does a healthy community look like to you?

- A place with access to healthy foods and physical activity
- Access to health information
- Exercise parks
- Equipment where kids can play – people playing outside.
- A designated place for physical activity
- People happy and working together
- We want to be free of heart disease, diabetes, cancer and other chronic diseases.
- We want to see a culture shift from sickness, disease, chronic diseases and obesity.
- A community that has a place to offer its resident the opportunity to practice maintaining a healthy body like a gym or a workout facility.
- When people know better they do better. With age some people pay more attention to health (weight, healthy eating and physical activity).
- Classes about healthy behaviors - classes on a regular basis, not just once a year
- If keep people motivated and inclined to exercise
- Access to healthier eating options but eating healthier is more expensive.
- Healthy food cost much more than fast food ie: McDonald's
- It takes time to make changes, so we have to start small

Do you believe Kingstown is a healthy community? Why or why not?

No.

- Don't have the resources (access to healthy foods/physical activity)
- It is not a safe environment - It is not completely unsafe.
- Lots of sirens day and nights—that sends a message
- We don't have the best resources but there are places that have the resources and I would not feel safe there.
- Atrium is a great resource. The health center is beneficial (Virtual care)
- No grocery store.
- No classes on how to prepare healthy meals.
- No place/restaurant that is economical and healthy but we believe Kingstown can do it. The sky is the limit.
- Old habits of how food is prepared die hard. Learning how to change the way we cook may be important (even things like a turkey leg rather than a ham).
- Use fatback and bacon grease for cooking.
- Lots of younger people don't know how to cook vegetables
- Fast food is easier and faster/convenient.
- Need to retrain people's minds about healthy eating (behavior change)
- Younger people are dealing with a speed up life where convenience trumps everything
- Older generation here has a history of working in mills/factories, which put a lot of wear and tear on their bodies.
- Families live on fixed income/budget and must feed families on a budget = unhealthy foods.

What is needed to help Kingstown become a healthy community?

- No limitations to what is needed for everyone to participate.
- A space or place that has access to all, from children to seniors. It must also accommodate those with disabilities. (Groups of people being able to do things together. Walk together, run together, play together at a scheduled time consistently.)
- We need a playground. It does not have to be expensive. Children don't need a lot. There should also be things for the adults to do together.
- Clean, safe, and healthy environment. (In some areas there are things going on that are not safe.) Some people don't feel safe due to the environment.)
- Organized sports activities for children.
- Organized fitness activities.
- Some of the elderly people can't get to the walking track. It isn't accessible to those in wheelchairs.

What would help Kingstown residents access healthy food choices?

- We live in a food desert - Ingles is 6 miles away. Transportation is a problem.
- There are many restaurants but few of them serve fresh foods and vegetables.
- We need education on what healthy foods are. Information will help us understand how particular (healthy) foods will help us. The information must be simple. Some people are turned off when there is too much information.
- Cooking classes will be beneficial.
- Exposure to healthy options.
- Access to broadband resources.
- Comprehensive communication strategies - Flyers/pamphlets in mailboxes with information on healthy food choices/options.
- Information on budget-friendly ways to feed families.
- Transportation—to supermarket and P & M Farm
- Meals to seniors was a big success off of a grant -home bound people—is there an option for distribution to them?
- P & M Farm needs farming equipment—needs tarp—type of tarp that kills the weeds—big deer problem ate all the crops—need fencing for that
- We have a community garden, but need workers in the garden – maybe a stipend to compensate for time?
- People believe more in what they see than what you say – having programs in place and it's not a one and done.
- Motivation through challenges/competitions—like a cash prize for losing healthy weight
- Gardens are great but if people aren't inspired to go to the garden their labor can be in vain
- Get the people together trained and inspired to help themselves—program outline together and present to the people and something to motivate them.
- Starting a walking club in the community
- A healthy eating community —get volunteers tonight and get the ball rolling—people believe in programs when they see them evolve.

- There has been different health initiative through the hospital and the health department—using step trackers to see who would lose the most weight—get so many steps in a certain time period get a gift card, etc.

What would help Kingstown residents increase physical activity?

- Make exercise information available through pamphlets or other means to allow seniors or those with limited mobility safe options at home (chair/bed exercises).
- Group exercise classes – Line-Dancing, Chair exercises
- Incentivized programs
- Gym equipment
- Upgrades to the park – swing, monkey bars (what are the top 5 pieces of equipment parks have?). Mayor Gerald has been connected with the health department regarding potential opportunities for outdoor exercise equipment (through grant)
- Easy to do at home exercises.
- Gym space (rent from church) for community gym nights. There is a shelter (Jonathan House) that is not conducive to using. Needs to be updated.
- One stop shop is best for this type of town.

Can you access the farmer’s market by walking? Is it safe?

- Not everyone can access the farmer’s market by walking. Secondary streets don’t have sidewalks which limits ability to walk to market. The market has sidewalks, but the roads leading to the market are not always safe.
- When walking, it isn’t safe because of visibility. Topography isn’t good and lighting is an issue
- Parking at the market can be challenging – it is hard to get in and out.
- If there was a safe route to the market, people would use.

Kingstown has a walking track and playground. Do you/your family use this area for physical activity? Why or why not?

Sometimes...

- Walking track hours are 7 a.m. – 7 p.m.
- Stray animals are a big issue – one child has been bitten by dog. There is a leash law but not enforced. Animal control won’t come out.
- Need fence around playground and signs to keep the dogs out.
- Playground equipment isn’t safe – very only and metal.
- Visibility of the track – parts of track make people feel secluded – surrounded by bushes.

Where do you get physical activity?

- Shelby City Park
- Holly Oak Park
- YMCA – seniors who have a certain type of insurance can access for free.
- Gym
- Walking trails
- Workout videos at home

What would motivate you to get at least 30 minutes of physical activity five days a week?

- Accountability partner
- Someone to workout with
- A local facility along the lines of a small YMCA or recreation center.
- Scheduled activities would encourage 30 minutes of physical activity.

What else could help Kingstown become a healthier community?

- A grocery store
- Healthy Cooking Classes
- An advocacy group to help facilitate how to become a healthier community.

How can we best reach this community to share information?

- Through the Mayor
- Kingstown Facebook page
- KCCOC group (does lots of door-to-door)
- Churches
- Other organizations in the community
- Put information in mailboxes.
- Door to door visits
- Information at other events
- We need more communication in general when things are needed to be made know.

