

Franklinton Center at Brick, Inc.

The Bricks Healthy Lifestyles Program

The counties surrounding Franklinton Center at Bricks possess abundant natural resources, and yet remain amongst the poorest in North Carolina. The Center is located in Edgecombe County in eastern North Carolina where health outcomes are the poorest in the state. Edgecombe County ranks 88 out of 100 in overall health outcomes. Halifax County ranks 94 and Nash County 83 out of 100. The Congressional District that include these counties ranks #4 (out of all 435) U.S. for adverse health outcome. The area ranks high for conditions such as obesity, diabetes, hypertension, stroke, heart disease, asthma, and cancer. Much of the high incidence of chronic disease is directly related to lifestyle choices associated with food insecurity, limited access to healthy foods, and poor access to active recreational facilities and opportunities in these underserved communities. The tri-county community is part of the second largest food desert in the United States. More than 25% of the population lives in poverty (28.1% in Edgecombe, 29.2% in Halifax, and 20.8% in Nash County)¹. Residents experience extremely poor health outcomes (including low life expectancy) and students attend poorly performing schools.

Although agriculture continues to be the largest economic contributor in the area (cotton, tobacco, and soybeans), many of the area's families and youth know little about farm life and freshly grown foods as small family farms continue to decline. Food outlets that sell healthy fresh fruits and vegetables are scarce and many rural families are eating from convenient stores that only sell highly process foods that are heavy in fats, sugars, and sodium.

The Bricks Healthy Lifestyles Project provides a comprehensive approach to community health, education, economic development. The project offers affordable fresh vegetables and fruits through a farmers market where local small farmers sell their produce. The project provides regularly scheduled recreational and water-based activities such as Aqua Zumba© and community swimming and aquatic exercises. In addition, it offers Zumba Fitness, Aqua Zumba, and promotes the use of the campus for walking, running, and biking.

¹ *Poverty in the United States: 2012 (Congressional Research Service)*

Over the years, FCAB has offered many programs that help acknowledge, celebrate, and address the assets and challenges of the community. The *Bricks Healthy Lifestyles Project* focuses on community wellness, wholeness, and prevention strategies to address these alarming health statistics. Healthy lifestyle activities focus on leveraging community resources to increase the health and wellness of the people who live in the community and thereby improve the overall quality of life for local residents.