

## PRINCETON: Nonprofit counsels small business aspirants

By Lauren Otis, Staff Writer

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PRINCETON -- The greater Princeton area has many resources for would-be entrepreneurs with business concepts and some capital.

But Isles Inc., a Trenton-based nonprofit, works with people of lesser means trying to find their own path to economic self-reliance.

Since 2006, Isles has run seminars and provided services for low-income women, those with disabilities, ex-offenders, the immigrant population and others at its Trenton base, said Peter Rose, Isles vice president of financial self-reliance. With a mission to provide training in running a small business throughout Mercer County, Isles was looking for a place to branch out geographically, he said.

"We decided we should start putting the training out in places that are more convenient for folks; Princeton seemed like a good place," Mr. Rose said. "It seemed like it made sense as a center."

The Isles program primarily benefits those who have developed skills as an employee or through an avocation or hobby and with some training can become self-employed utilizing those skills, Mr. Rose said.

According to Isles, its microbusiness development services have been utilized by those embarking on businesses involving plant care, accounting, cleaning services, carpentry, child care, catering, sewing and tailoring, photography, arts and crafts, baking and auto detailing.

Isles begins by holding two information sessions on its training programs, then proceeds with the training for those who continue to be interested, Mr. Rose said. Small loans, one-on-one business coaching and group workshops also are available for those moving toward starting their own small business, he said.

Interest was good at two such information sessions held by Isles in September at the Suzanne Patterson Center in Princeton, and a training group of 15 to 17 will go ahead, Mr. Rose said. The next series of information sessions, culminating in a training group, will be scheduled in the winter and will be for Spanish speakers, he said.

Mr. Rose said volunteers from the Princeton Rotary are going to be helping Isles with its Princeton-area training and have provided some funding for the program.

"They are going to be helping us with volunteers for the mentoring work and the workshop and one-on-one consulting," he said.

Mr. Rose said he believes there are many people in Mercer County who Isles has yet to reach who could benefit from the business training program and hopes the Princeton-based program will begin to reach them.

[lotis@centraljersey.com](mailto:lotis@centraljersey.com)

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