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Isles Works

The newsletter of Isles Inc.

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Isles' New Training Center



(right to left) Mercer County Executive Brian Hughes, Trenton Mayor Douglas Palmer, NRG Energy President David Crane, IYI student Allah Ricks, IYI Vice President Cledyth Davis, Marty Johnson, Liz Johnson, NRG Energy Media Relations Manager, Meredith Moore cut the ribbon on the new Isles Training Center

A 120-year-old former factory in the shadows of the historic Battle Monument is now a state of the art training center. This summer, we hosted a ribbon cutting for the 20,000 square foot solarized facility at 33 Tucker Street – home to Isles' YouthBuild Institute (IYI) and Isles' Center for Energy and Environmental Training (CEET).

Thanks to a \$1 million donation from NRG Energy, the Training Center includes all new, high efficiency heating, cooling, ventilating,

electrical and plumbing systems, day lighting in every classroom, a new sprinkler system, cool roof and solar technology. The renovations make the building energy efficient, welcoming and conducive to learning and working. At the event, IYI student Allah Ricks expressed his gratitude through rap, "Thanks to NRG for believing in me, providing a nice building where we can learn for free."

NRG Energy has partnered with Isles since 2004. At the ribbon cutting, David Crane, president of NRG Energy, noted, "It feels good to see the kids working and learning here."

Trenton Mayor Douglas Palmer noted the grey and black polo shirts worn by IYI students. "Those colors mean more than any gang colors you could wear!" Palmer also recognized Crane and NRG Energy for investing in IYI.

Mercer County Executive Brian M. Hughes, and Freeholders John Cimino, Dan Benson and Pat Colavita also attended.



MESSAGE FROM MARTY JOHNSON



Dear Friends,

As colder weather sets in, so does the challenge of heating our homes. A recent national study found that the typical family on government assistance (AFDC) spends 26% of their income on utilities. Old leaky homes are expensive to heat. They emit carbon dioxide into the air, fuel global warming, and actually swell the numbers of homeless.

Despite the existence of government programs, the vast majority of older homes in our region haven't had an energy audit or even the most basic weatherization upgrades.

Why does this situation persist? In an effort to help families reduce their energy costs, we're exploring many of the so-called "reasons":

"Landlords can't or won't upgrade buildings, and tenants pay the utilities anyway." "Tenants aren't going to improve property they don't own." "The neighborhoods are too tough for energy contractors." "So many buildings have roof leaks or structural problems, you can't insulate them."

Many of these reasons are true. And, as many of you know, Isles has uncovered one more important reason to worry about tightening up homes: many of them are already unhealthy for the residents. After testing more than 1,300 homes across Trenton, we found that more than 60% have high levels of lead, making them especially unhealthy for children. When you weatherize, you tend to reduce air exchange. This often increases moisture and mold – known asthma triggers. It can also worsen lead conditions.

To break through these barriers, Isles:

- Researches the best ways to weatherize old homes, partnering with Princeton University, Environ and others.
- Trains community residents as outreach workers who qualify and prepare homes, residents and owners for renovations.
- Develops a "one touch" approach to perform energy and environmental health improvements to homes in an integrated manner.
- Trains energy and environmental workers statewide, creating green jobs for those that need them most through the Center for Energy and Environmental Training (CEET).
- Creates and grows energy businesses. Isles' E4 is a start-up business that employs local workers (trained by CEET) who provide air sealing, insulating and, soon, energy auditing services throughout the state. Isles' microbusiness arm is making loans and helping small contractors gain training, certification and equipment to "green" their businesses.
- Works with the government to find more cost-effective ways to spend taxpayer money on energy conservation efforts, especially in this age of quick "stimulus."

For years, Isles has developed efficient, healthy homes in walkable communities, planted trees, educated youth, promoted urban agriculture, parks and more. In 2009, we created exciting new services that can inform regional, national and even global energy and green job training industries.

Our goal is to find community-based ways to foster self-reliance and restore the environment. We hope you share our excitement in the possibilities, and that you realize that we can't do this work without you.

Thanks again for your interest, and stay informed at www.isles.org.

In Community,

Marty



Stacy Heading (right), Isles' YouthBuild Institute's Extended Support Specialist, presented a workshop entitled "Escaping the Grips of Gang Life" at the New Jersey Black Issues Conference (NJBIC) in New Brunswick. Stacy is pictured with Kevin Powell (left), keynote speaker at the conference, and Jerome Harris (center), Chairman of NJBIC and Director, Department of Housing and Development for Trenton.



Q & A with David Crane, President and CEO of NRG, Inc.

What aspects of Isles' work are you most excited about?

Seeing the faces of the students walking into the new building last summer was inspiring. We invested \$1 million, but the investment that pays us back is for the students to use it to invest in themselves. If each of them invests in themselves - through job training, new life skills and employment counseling - it will be worth \$1 million many times over.

What other social investments has NRG made?

Through our Global Giving program, we help organizations address vital needs in areas such as hunger and youth education. In Mercer County, we recently funded an expansion of the Mercer Street Friends Food Bank while helping fund its Send Hunger

Packing, which provides weekend meals for kids who need it most. We've also provided sizable grants to help HomeFront operate its Summer Children's Camps in Ewing and New Jersey SEEDS (Scholars, Educators, Excellence, Dedication, Success) launch a college preparatory program.

What message can you give to others considering support for Isles?

Visit the new YouthBuild. Spend time talking with the staff and the students whose lives are being transformed, and you'll see firsthand why Isles deserves our support. We've been proud to support Isles because it empowers Trenton families to improve their lives, families and their community.

Why did NRG Energy invest in Isles?

In 2006, we made a very substantial financial commitment to renovate Isles' YouthBuild Institute. The project nearly tripled the size of the institute, transforming the old facility, a former paint warehouse, into a remarkable new educational and green job training facility. The new center is more than just a building - it represents new opportunities for our youth and countless opportunities for future students.

Revitalize Communities

CARE for the Urban Environment

Cities help save the environment. But, what do residents of the cities think about their environment? This summer, Isles kicked off the Community Action for a Renewed Environment (CARE) project, in partnership with the City of Trenton. CARE is helping residents and workers identify, define and prioritize environmental challenges and opportunities. CARE complements Mayor Doug Palmer's Trenton Green Initiative by adding a grassroots element to the effort. Through outreach, community meetings and research, CARE will find innovative ways to green and educate the city. If you are interested in getting involved, contact Julia Taylor at 609.341.4713 or jtaylor@isles.org.

Isles' Old Trenton Neighborhood Project

As part of a five year project to revitalize the Old Trenton neighborhood, Isles received a \$1 million Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit (NRTC) investment from the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs. Isles' investment partners include JPMorgan Chase, PSE&G, PNC Bank, and Bank of America/Merrill Lynch.

The project will increase resident self-sufficiency, while improving the physical and social conditions of the historic neighborhood. Working with the City of Trenton, YWCA of Trenton and others, the project targets eight areas: affordable housing, financial and educational strength, community

safety, open space development, recreation opportunities, leadership development, community cleanliness, and environmental health.

Isles is developing a community energy business, refurbishing the gymnasium at the YWCA, completing the gut renovation of six historic homes on Academy and Stockton streets, and rebuilding nearby Roberto Clemente Park. For more information, contact Alex Allen at 609.341.4701 or aallen@isles.org.



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Educate & Train

CEET Offers First Solar Panel Training Course

In January, Isles' Center for Energy and Environmental Training (CEET) began offering classes in the energy efficiency field throughout the state. Close to 270 graduates have been trained so far. CEET is now expanding to include renewable energy as well. In September, CEET's first solar panel class completed the first phase of its training, including an introduction to solar energy and observation of the installation of a photovoltaic solar panel array on Isles' newly renovated training facility.

The solar training course, which ended in early November, involved SunPower Corporation in collaboration with local contractors. Before the course ended, every trainee had received job offers.



If you are interested in CEET training, please contact Kristina Rago at 609.341.4737 or krago@isles.org.

A Sampling of IYI in the Summer

Isles' YouthBuild Institute (IYI) took its fifth annual trip to Jackson Hole, Wyoming, this past July. Joined by Marty and Liz Johnson, a group of eight IYI students and two staff spent a week at the Teton Science School. For most of the students, the trip was filled with once-in-a-lifetime experiences. They hiked the Rockies, rode horses, experienced hands-on training at the Teton Science School, camped at Yellowstone National Park, attended a rodeo, got up close to bison and other wildlife, and learned how westerners care for the environment. Perhaps most importantly, students realized their potential to succeed well outside of their urban comfort zones.

In addition, six IYI students joined a seven week internship at Morven Museum and Garden, where they learned landscaping, gardening, proper use of gardening tools, and various types of agriculture. The internship brought students to Princeton University and Drumthwacket gardens as well, where they planted gardens and shrubs.

Build Wealth

Growing a Green Business: Isles E4

Can an organization solve social and environmental challenges and generate a profit? Isles is answering that question with the start-up of a new social enterprise venture – E4.

Isles E4 (Energy, Environment, Equity and Employment) is designed to be a sustainable, non-profit subsidiary of Isles, serving the emerging statewide home energy efficiency market while generating high-paying jobs for local residents. Initially, the business will weatherize low-income households in partnership with Honeywell, using government funds. Ultimately, Isles E4 will conduct energy audits, install solar energy systems, provide “healthy homes” testing and remediation (lead, asthma, mold), and educate the public.

By hiring and providing on-the-job-training to graduates of Isles' Center for Energy and Environmental Training (CEET), Isles E4 provides a ready pathway for local residents to begin earning up to \$17 per hour (plus benefits) in the new “green” economy. So far, 196 CEET graduates have been hired as insulation and air sealer workers. E4 plans to hire an additional 13 employees over the next two years.



For more information about Isles E4, please contact Althea Williams at 609.341.4784 or awilliams@isles.org.

Live Green & Healthy

Microbusiness Classes are Now Offered in Spanish!

Isles recently expanded its innovative microbusiness class, Build Your Own Business (BYOB). Isles' BYOB covers essential skills for business development. The Spanish course will reach a burgeoning population of new entrepreneurs. Latinos face the same challenges as all new business owners, plus the added language barriers.

After completing the course, graduates can borrow money to start or expand their small business. As borrowers progress, they receive support through peer lending groups and mentors from the business community.

Need a Loan to Start an Energy Business?

Many contractors want to go green, but they need training, certification and equipment to succeed. That's where Isles can help. Isles' Loan Fund offers affordable loans to contractors expanding into the energy efficiency and renewable energy fields. Isles provides up to \$5,000 in financing to pay for training and certification courses, associated travel, equipment and exams for installers of energy systems, weatherization/insulation, auditing, and more. Loans are also made for professional certifications, including North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners, Certified Energy Manager, Building Performance Institute, and Residential Energy Services Network.

For more information, please contact Norma Diaz at 609.341.4791 or ndiaz@isles.org.

Princeton Day School Volunteers at Canal Farm

On September 18, 90 students and staff from Princeton Day School joined Isles for a farm volunteer day. This year's event was held in Kingston, NJ, on a farm owned by the Terra Momo Restaurant Group. With Isles' help, over an acre of farm land will grow fresh food for Crisis Ministry's food pantry in Trenton next summer. Along with Isles' many community and school gardens, this is a great way to boost much needed vegetable consumption in the city.



To find out more about volunteering at Isles, please contact Steven Board at 609.341.4758 or sboard@isles.org.

Beyond Urban Gardens and Farms - It's the System, Stupid

Isles' community gardens produce tens of thousands of pounds of fresh produce each year – for those lucky enough to access them. What about those that aren't so lucky? How will they access fresh, affordable vegetables and food?

Isles is partnering with farmers, educators, food pantries, emergency food providers, schools, government and others to improve food and nutrition policies in the region.

Isles recently organized the Greater Mercer Hunger and Nutrition Council (HNC), created to “build a healthier community by achieving consistent access to and consumption of nutritious food.” The time is right for a regional response to this most vital issue, and the founding partners of HNC are excited to work together. If you or your organization are interested in joining the HNC, contact Elyse Pivnick at 609.341.4723 or epivnick@isles.org.

In addition, Meredith Taylor, Senior Program Manager, Community Gardening and Nutrition is a founding member of New Jersey Farm to School, which is connecting school food programs with local farmers. Meredith has represented Isles over the last year in the Dodge Foundation's Food and Land Retreat that brought together organizations to find new ways to address community food security. Meredith is also representing Isles on the Food Security Committee of Sustainable New Jersey.

Mill One



Capital Campaign Going Public with Paul Volcker

On June 17, former Federal Reserve Board Chairman Paul Volcker kicked off the public phase of the Isles “be the change” Capital Campaign. The Campaign, which has already received pledges of \$7.9 million toward its \$12 million goal, centers around the green redevelopment of a 115-year-old former textile mill at One North Johnston Avenue, named “Mill One.” Mill One, which is set within the Bromley neighborhood along the Trenton and Hamilton border, will become a valuable community and regional asset.

In his remarks, Volcker, who now chairs President Obama’s Economic Recovery Advisory Board, recalled the days soon after Isles’ beginning 28 years ago, when it was a fledgling group “making gardens out of vacant lots” in Trenton.

“The president wanted him in Washington today,” said Marty Johnson, Isles’ founder and president, referring to Volcker. “The fact that he is here reminds us that this work might be that important.”

Isles seeks to earn a LEED Platinum rating for Mill One, the highest given by the U.S. Green Building Council. This makes Mill One one of the most ambitious green industrial redevelopment projects in the country. Mill One is projected to use 50% less total building energy than the average building built to current building codes.

The building’s 240,000 square feet will become a “sustainable urban village,” ultimately serving as the new home for Isles, a business incubator, residential lofts, artists’ studios, and space for other civic groups.

Despite the difficult economy, investors have continued to support the campaign. To participate or learn more, please contact Yuki Moore Laurenti at 609.341.4721 or ylaurenti@isles.org.



A Graduate's Story

Lamar "Lump" Price Makes His Mark

He was called "Lump" on the streets. A nice kid growing up in a challenging environment, Lump lived with his family on Fountain Ave. where drug dealers openly plied their trade. He had a good attitude, was respectful and was trying to find his way. Then he joined a gang. Lump's rap sheet, a litany of drug and joyriding charges, swelled in his adolescence. Still searching at 19 years of age, he found Isles' YouthBuild. Looking back Lamar Price knew he had "found the right path," quickly embracing the program's ideals of independence and self-reliance.

Lamar took advantage of all of YouthBuild's offerings: he went to Washington, D.C., for the "No Child Left Behind" conference where he had a close encounter with the candidates for the Democratic primary. He met Marian Wright Edelman. He traveled to Tennessee with Isles and stayed at Alex Haley's farm. He met Judge Greg Mathis at the NJ State House during a YouthBuild Rally.

Lamar heard Andre Thomas deliver motivational messages each morning, learned from Milt Sharp to be "on

time, every time," listened when Ms. Clethe Davis, Isles' YouthBuild's vice president, spoke of the importance of being properly dressed and preparing for the future. Lamar learned the value of working hard and working smart through summer heat and winter snows. He learned how to manage money by budgeting the stipend he received. Though the "right path" was at first obscured, Lamar acquired the skills and self-reliance that led him out of the neighborhood. In 2004, Lamar Price received his high school diploma via Isles' YouthBuild.

A few weeks ago, Ms. Davis's phone rang. Lamar was calling to catch up. He married in 2006 and lives with his wife and three children in Salem, NJ. The Prices are expecting a baby boy in November. Lamar is a minister at In Christ Jesus Deliverance in Salem and a manager of a local restaurant. His wife is a case worker for Tri County, a local nonprofit social services agency.

Ms. Davis asked Lamar how YouthBuild made a difference in his life. In response, Lamar shared an experience: "Mr. Thomas was speaking about making good choices

in life." He said, "If you don't listen to me now, you may be sitting in jail and these words will come back to haunt you." Soon after hearing these words, Lamar was at the Mercer County Work House, having been picked up on a warrant that had been issued when he went by "Lump." The message resonated and he still recalls the words.

The staff and students at YouthBuild filled important roles in Lamar's life as mentors, parental figures, teammates and friends. Lamar learned the value of a disciplined life, accepted honest guidance toward a successful life and learned to walk his own path inspired by new ideas and a vision of the wider world.



Isles to Receive \$500,000 for Mill One

Isles' Mill One project will receive \$500,000 from the Federal Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies Appropriations bill. According to U.S. Rep. Chris Smith, Isles' Mill One has been targeted to receive the funding due to its "environmentally friendly" design.

"Mill One's renewable energy plan tapping solar power is a good example of the environmentally friendly building practices we need to see more of in new construction," Smith reinforced. "This federal funding helps advance those conservation principles. We need more projects like Mill One in the world."

DONATE TO ISLES

Secure credit card donations can be made at www.isles.org or by mail with this form.

- Yes! I want to support Isles. Enclosed is my check made payable to Isles, Inc. in the amount of \$ _____
- I have transferred _____ shares of _____ stock to Isles, Inc.
- Employer matching gift
- Anonymous gift

- I have already included Isles in my will or other long-range estate plans.
- Please send me information about:

Mail completed form to:
Sonja Allen, Resource Development, Isles, Inc.
10 Wood Street, Trenton, NJ 08618

Please Contact Isles at 609.341.4743 with any questions.

Name _____
(Print name as you would like it to appear in the Annual Report)

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____

Email _____

Mark Your Calendars

Interested in these events? Contact **Steven Board** at **609.341.4758** or **sboard@isles.org**.

January 2

Mall Walk at the Quaker Bridge Mall.
Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. and the Walk begins at 9 a.m.

February 6

Mall Walk at the Quaker Bridge Mall.
Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. and the Walk begins at 9 a.m.

March 6

Mall Walk at the Quaker Bridge Mall.
Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. and the Walk begins at 9 a.m.

March 11

Faith For Health Breakfast at the Marriott at Lafayette Yard, from 8:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

Donation of Art Supplies Needed!

Isles' YouthBuild Institute seeks donations of art supplies for the school year. We need:

- Books for art library/Art visuals
- Scrapbooking materials
- Crafts supplies
- Framing supplies
- Fine art supplies