



Green Jobs and CEET  
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# IslesWorks

The newsletter of Isles Inc.

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## Eat Well and Move!



In Trenton, one in every two kids is overweight.

New Rutgers University research found that Trenton has more obese children per capita than any other New Jersey city. More than 47% of our youth are overweight; of these 28% percent are obese, and 21% are very obese.

Kids in other New Jersey cities – Newark, Camden, New Brunswick, and Vineland – are not faring much better.

Why? Experts and Isles' work tell us the same thing. In challenged communities like Trenton, good food is hard to find, and unhealthy food is easy to find. People are also too sedentary – they typically travel by car, work at a desk, and relax in front of a screen. While it used to be that high poverty areas correlated to thinner people and wealthier communities were heavier, the opposite is true today.

It is important to see this trend discussed more widely. There are no easy answers, but the good news is that solutions to the challenge are understood – let's find ways to foster better eating and more movement. There are some basic ways to do that: grow and sell better food locally and organize community walking groups.

For 29 years, Isles has helped city residents transform vacant land into productive gardens. Gardeners grow their own nutritious vegetables, get exercise, and help turn a part of their neighborhood into a healthier place to live. We now support 36 gardens in neighborhoods and schools across the city. We also support a new Farmer's Market in East Trenton.

Isles' Spirit Walk initiative organizes community and faith-based walking groups. We provide walking logs, health experts and other support to walkers, and we host an event at Cadwalader Park every year at which walkers compete for prizes.

All of us need to find ways to combat obesity. We can't afford not to.



# MESSAGE FROM MARTY JOHNSON



Dear Friends,

With everything seeming to contract all around us – budgets, funding, government, nonprofits, etc. – this summer newsletter shows important work that is growing. As thousands of pounds of vegetables grow this season in community gardens, Isles is expanding and growing in many other ways too.

For 29 years, we have tried to find the most powerful, cost-effective ways to achieve more self-reliant families in healthy, vibrant communities. After all this time, the result of this quest is fairly straightforward: provide quality information and self-help services that consumers want at the community level – then get out of the way.

This newsletter highlights some of those services and their impact on the people that choose to use them. Innovative financial products and training, microbusinesses, community agriculture, exercise, efficient homes, and hundreds of green job trainees and job placements all support our mission. And in many ways, they all link together.

As we've grown, those links were stretched as we expanded our training centers and offices across five locations in the region. As we looked to consolidate our efforts, we settled on two former industrial buildings: 33 Tucker Street in Trenton and One N. Johnston Avenue in Hamilton.

Last year, Isles completed the restoration of the 20,000 sq. ft. Tucker Street facility. This year, we are moving closer to our vision for the 110,000 sq. ft. facility named Mill One in Hamilton. In March, the Hamilton Township Planning Board and Council

unanimously approved the redevelopment plan for Mill One – designed to be a national demonstration project of a green, multi-use facility (see page 6). From these two locations, Isles will be well positioned to expand its impact in Trenton and the region beyond.

Growth isn't just about services and physical plant. After an organization-wide assessment of our work and the financial pressures all around us, we embarked upon a major reorganization this past year. The result is a trimmed down, more integrated provider of services that strengthen communities and restore the environment.

More communities than ever want to rebuild old vacant buildings, educate youth, renovate parks, start new microbusinesses, create community plans, and foster green energy projects, training, and jobs. In doing so they turn to us for help – and hope.

We can respond because folks like you make it possible. Your donations matter now more than ever.

As always, we look forward to hearing from you.

In community,

Marty



As part of the East Trenton Collaborative, Isles has helped launch a new Farmer's Market in East Trenton aimed at serving low-income residents. This new market will bring more affordable, healthy food to the community.

Located at the corner of N. Clinton and N. Olden, the market runs Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. WIC, food stamps and senior vouchers are welcome. Spread the word!

## Our Newest Graduates

In June, 14 Isles YouthBuild Institute students graduated – 8 with a high school diploma and 6 with a GED.

Congratulations!

Their futures look bright. Fifty percent of our graduates have been accepted and will attend college as early as this summer with majors consisting of Performing Arts, Culinary Arts, Architecture, Engineering, Business, and Health Sciences.

Thirty-five percent of the graduating class currently has internships that will extend until the end of the year, and ten percent has obtained employment.



## Revitalize Communities



### Community Brotherhood

Welcome to the neighborhood!

On June 30, two brothers each closed on a new home on Academy Street in Trenton. Their mother lives just a few houses away. When we talk about creating community, stories like this are the ones that get people at Isles excited.

The new homes are part of Isles' renovation of six vacant homes on the street into beautiful, energy efficient places to live. These three- and four-bedroom homes have new appliances, efficient heating systems, new windows, and many other earth-friendly (and pocket-friendly) amenities. Isles YouthBuild Institute students helped restore the homes.

Available to income-qualified buyers, these great homes are priced from \$102,500 to \$109,000. Now that the first two homes are sold, that leaves four to sell. Interested first-time homebuyers should contact Julia Taylor at (609) 341-4713 or [jtaylor@isles.org](mailto:jtaylor@isles.org) for more information.

### Neighborhood Stabilization in Parkside

Isles is partnering with the city of Trenton and CityWorks to strengthen the Parkside community. More than ten homes will be renovated and restored with energy efficient doors and windows, programmable thermostats, and ENERGY STAR appliances. All are expected to be completed by late summer 2011.

The houses are located one block from a shopping center, bank and library; across the street from the Berkeley Square Historic District and tennis courts; ten minutes from the train station; and 30 minutes from Philadelphia. Interested first-time homebuyers should contact Julia Taylor at (609) 341-4713 or [jtaylor@isles.org](mailto:jtaylor@isles.org).

# Build Wealth

## A “Turnaround” Story

The first time we met Tynisa Hall in May 2007, she talked with passion about her family’s desire to buy a home.

“It’s important for me to create stability for my kids and at the same time build wealth,” she said.

Two major obstacles stood in her way – low credit scores and excess debt. Tynisa was typical for her age and income. But with help from Isles, Tynisa’s desire overcame the obstacles. She repaid her debt, repaired her credit, and bought a home.

Tynisa learned about Isles’ Homebuyer Services and, with Isles’ counselors, created a plan of action to overcome her high debt and low credit scores. First, Tynisa tracked her expenses and developed a budget. At the end of each session, Tynisa created a “to do” list to complete for the next session. Later, she was able to join a pilot effort, now known as the Isles Financial Fitness Club, that made available a low-interest loan to pay off an old debt that was crushing her credit score.

By July 2009, Tynisa’s credit score had soared into the 700s. She had paid off all old debts, and she was on time with her bills. By August she was pre-approved for a home loan.

Her advice to others who want to buy a home: “You have to really want to be a homeowner and do what’s necessary to become one. It’s easy to say that you want to buy a home, but you have to be focused, patient, and stick with a plan.” And what difference did Isles make? “The counselors were great and cared about what I was doing. They wanted to see results and I gave them results. It was a family environment working with Isles. They helped me to succeed. My children and I are very happy with our new home!”

## ICE Gets Certified

Isles Community Enterprises (ICE), the financial services subsidiary of Isles, recently received certification as a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) by the US Department of Treasury. A certified CDFI is a special financial organization that works in underserved areas. Designed to use financing to help strengthen communities, CDFIs provide loans and services that traditional lenders won’t.

Certification will help ICE access new loan capital and grants to support microbusiness development and Isles’ new Financial Fitness Club.

# Educate & Train

## Learn to Drive a PC

Isles brings a different kind of driver’s education to Trenton – a computer driving class.

The International Computer Driving License (ICDL) is a globally respected certification course that is now available free of charge to citizens of Trenton.

The ICDL course includes seven sections that teach students to proficiently use computers and common computer applications. In order to achieve ICDL certification, students must pass a test for each section.

ICDL classes began in April at the Isles YouthBuild Institute, located at 33 Tucker Street in Trenton.

The students enrolled in the ICDL class are Trenton residents of all ages. Most are parents working full-time jobs with a desire to further their education. ICDL will teach them new skills and help them compete in today’s job market.

Off to a great start this summer, the majority of the students has already passed two of the seven ICDL sections.



## A Bridge to College

What happens when high school students are also ready for college? Now, they go!

In early 2010, the Isles YouthBuild Institute (IYI) began partnering with Mercer County Community College (MCCC) to form a dual credit track to enable six students to transition from high school to college. They recently completed their first college final exams. A seventh student will start in September.

IYI also partnered with MCCC to expand full-time college access for IYI graduates. As a result, eight more grads recently enrolled full time.

According to Wendy Kelley, manager of transitional services for IYI, MCCC leaders are so impressed with the Isles students at the college that they would like to increase the number of available slots. Isles and MCCC are working to raise funds so that more students can matriculate this fall.

Beyond academics, IYI encourages students to be a part of the MCCC community. IYI job developer Shaquona Meyers helps students prepare their financial aid forms, and she pushes them to apply for on-campus work study. "It's important to be part of the community of the school," she says, "to see how the college functions and to get to know people who can help you."

# Live Green & Healthy

## YouthBuild to YouthGrow

On a quarter acre next to Isles YouthBuild Institute, eight IYI students are growing their own food – and a future business.

YouthGrow supports students that want to grow their own fruits and vegetables, participate in nutrition and cooking workshops, bring fresh, healthy foods home to their families, and develop products to sell.

To prepare for YouthGrow, students visited the Philadelphia International Flower Show and local farms and farmers. They planned the garden with the design help of Alan Goodheart, a landscape architect. YouthGrow students also got educational support from Fernbrook Farms, which supplied the greenhouse space to start seeds this winter.

YouthGrow students are now tending a diverse crop of fruits, vegetables, herbs and flowers. A low cost hoophouse will help students extend their harvest season into early winter. Check it out on Tucker Street!



## YouthBuild Cleans Up

On April 23, the Isles YouthBuild Institute participated in the 23rd Annual Clean Communities Litter March. As part of an Earth Day effort to clean up and recycle debris in Trenton, IYI brought home a trophy and gold broom for its work. Shawn Hardee of IYI took home the first-place prize in the high school essay competition for his essay, "A Hope and A Prayer" about how global warming affects his community. The second-place winner was also our very own Kenny Stanhope for his essay, "Change For A Better Tomorrow."

# Mill One Milestone



## Redevelopment Plan Unanimously Approved

On March 16, 2010, the Hamilton Township Council unanimously approved the Mill One Redevelopment Plan, Isles' green conversion of a mostly vacant former textile mill located at One N. Johnston Avenue in Hamilton Township, NJ.

Councilwoman Kelly Yaede described Mill One as a "spectacular project."

Bromley Neighborhood Civic Center director Gary Gray added, "This will be a shining jewel for this area of Hamilton Township."

The 6.5-acre Mill One project will convert a historic, empty factory into a mixed-use "sustainable village" with a range of residential, nonprofit, educational, public interest, and commercial components. Mill One will provide vibrant art spaces, including studios, classrooms, galleries, and performance spaces, as well as a green jobs training facility, office space, and community meeting rooms.

Renovations will incorporate cutting-edge environmental technology, including solar photovoltaic panels and sustainable materials. The redevelopment will target LEED Platinum certification, the highest given by the U.S. Green Building Council.

Recently, Isles also acquired the adjacent land-locked property at 57 N. Johnston Avenue. The former Standard Roofing building is a 108,000 sq. ft warehouse on five acres. The entire building will be leased by Trenton-based TerraCycle, Inc., a pioneering environmental business with a history of co-ventures with Isles. Isles plans to install a mega-watt solar array on the building's roof.

## Helping Families Conserve Energy

New Jersey's largest utility, PSEG, no longer wants to just produce and transmit power – it wants to save power too.

As part of PSEG's expanded goal of helping customers save energy and money, it introduced the Whole House Energy Efficiency Program, a community-based approach to improving the energy efficiency of homes in lower income areas. When the utility looked for a community partner to lead their outreach efforts in Trenton, they called Isles.

Isles trains local outreach workers to recruit qualified families and to help them understand the program's three-step approach to auditing and retrofitting homes. PSEG workers then perform the energy audits and retrofits, such as air sealing, insulation, and appliance upgrades.

Over the past 14 months, Isles has reached nearly 2,300 Trenton households, enrolling 1,151 of them in the PSEG Residential Whole House Efficiency Program. As a result, many more families are receiving these vital cost-cutting savings, while doing their part to reduce their carbon footprints.

For more information, go to [www.pseg.com/customer/home/efficiency](http://www.pseg.com/customer/home/efficiency)

# Beyond Theory, Real Green Jobs

Given the state of the economy and the state of the global climate, many talk about the need for more green jobs. Isles is doing something about it.

Started 18 months ago, Isles' Center for Energy and Environmental Training (CEET) trains workers for a variety of jobs that save energy, create clean energy, or clean up the environment. Communities, employers, governments, and the region as a whole benefit. CEET has trained 260 unemployed or under-employed New Jersey residents. They have all completed at least one (and in some cases two or three) intensive CEET energy courses in Trenton, Newark, New Brunswick, or Camden.

Utility companies, heating and cooling contractors, energy efficiency firms, and general contractors are now hiring CEET grads. The innovative CEET curricula has helped over 60% of graduates obtain green jobs with livable wages and promising career ladders.

"It is very gratifying to see individuals mastering new skills – green skills – in order to enhance their futures, strengthen families, and improve the world," says Jeanne Oswald, director of CEET. "And employers give us great feedback on our graduates." (See Scott Needham's comments below.)

In the past six months, 56 CEET graduates completed a newly developed Duct Training Module, 15 graduates received communications and mathematics training, and 31 entry-level graduates completed the advanced Building Analyst course. CEET has also trained 110 PSEG and other businesses' employees for Building Analyst or Envelope Professional certification. CEET is an affiliate of the national certifying body, the Building Performance Institute (BPI) and has provided 84 written and field tests on behalf of BPI.

CEET held its first Solar Panel Installation class in collaboration with SunPower Corporation, and two additional solar classes will be held in late summer and early fall.

In November, the US Environmental Protection Agency certified CEET to train contractors that must complete a new Lead Safe Renovation, Repair, and Painting course. Over 450 trainees from New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania have completed the course. Recently, the EPA certified CEET to provide their Dust Sampling Technician course as well.

By the end of summer, and with the support of the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities, Isles' CEET will construct five energy learning laboratories. Two solar training labs and three residential energy efficiency audit and retrofit labs will enhance CEET's capacity. For more information on upcoming CEET courses, go to [www.isles.org](http://www.isles.org).



J. Scott Needham, President of Princeton Air Conditioning, Inc., recently sent a note about his company's experience with the six CEET graduates they hired:

*"When you receive a constant flow of positive comments from customers at the conclusion of a job, you start to really appreciate the hard work that goes into the difficult task of retrofitting a home. We feel this is the result of the team concept we employ here and is evident by the active participation by all of the field teams at our monthly operations meetings. It is wonderful to hear the good ideas that come from our 'Isles guys' as to how to do things better and faster."*

*"I must also mention that they are all great guys and fun to be around! The Isles' CEET program has been a real win for us. The initial attraction is the labor rate rebate; however, after the apprenticeship training period, the real attraction turns out to be the person we end up with. We are currently looking to add additional people as we grow and will continue to look to Isles for help."*

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## DONATE TO ISLES

Secure credit card donations can be made at [www.isles.org](http://www.isles.org).

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 included Isles in my will or other long-range estate plans.

Please send me information about: \_\_\_\_\_

Mail completed form to:

Yuki Laurenti, Resource Development, Isles, Inc.  
10 Wood Street, Trenton, NJ 08618

Please contact Isles at 609.341.4721 with any questions.

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

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City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

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Email \_\_\_\_\_

## Welcome

We are pleased to welcome two new trustees to Isles: Robert Harris and Jacque P. Howard.

Mr. Harris is co-founder of ENVIRON International Corporation with more than 30 years of experience in environmental health and engineering. He previously advised President Jimmy Carter as a member of the President's Council on Environmental Quality.

Mr. Howard is an FRS client solutions specialist at Bank of America/Merrill Lynch. He is also a board member for Westminster Wellspring Inc. in Trenton, a nonprofit that promotes and offers educational, life, and holistic service to the underserved in Trenton and surrounding areas.

## Mark Your Calendars

Isles' Spirit of Community Dinner  
October 28, 2010, 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.  
Trenton Marriot Downtown

Contact Robin Miller at 609.341.4739  
or [rmiller@isles.org](mailto:rmiller@isles.org) for more info.