

Gardening the Old-Fashioned Way



Students from several Trenton public schools attended Isles' oxen plow. Stars of the event were Bud and Jake, a team of oxen from the Howell Living History Farm. This year the oxen plow took place at the Garden of 3 Points on Chestnut Avenue in Trenton.

Isles' 17th Annual Midsummer Garden Tour

Saturday, July 24th
4:00-8:00

Isles
10 Wood Street, Trenton



Visit our gardens, meet Isles' gardeners, and enjoy a delicious meal

For more information, contact
Megan Ruf at 609-341-4724

Hats Off!



June 17th was a joyous day for the fourteen YouthBuild students who earned high school diplomas.



A YouthBuild trainee reframing one of the three historic Academy Street homes currently being rehabilitated by the Career Center. Two Academy Street homes have been completed and sold.

KIYO SHIDARA

Traveling Fellow

In December, Isles staff welcomed Kiyokazu Shidaru to Trenton. "Kiyo" traveled 6,700 miles from his hometown of Fujino, Japan, to spend six months with Isles as part of the Japan Foundation Center for Global Partnership. Kiyo's mission was to receive in-depth training and learn managerial skills at Isles. Kiyo spent the first half of his year in the States at Isles.

Kiyo is founder and leader of an organization called the Permaculture Center of Japan. Permaculture is the "study of the design of those sustainable or enduring systems that support human society, both agricultural and intellectual, traditional and scientific, architectural, financial, and legal."

"This is why I came to Isles. Permaculture benefits everybody. House, agriculture, even clothes fit into the permaculture model for society. Isles tries to help by making many of those things work together, too," said Kiyo.

But Kiyo's reasons for coming to the U.S. are greater than his sense of responsibility to the permaculture



movement. He is determined to help Japan understand the value of nonprofit organizations and the help they can provide. "Japan is still traditional, meaning that the government controls the people, and people rarely have the chance to take part in the process of political and social transformation. I want to learn how the

U.S. government and nonprofits work together so we can create more effective structures in Japan," said Kiyo.

While at Isles, Kiyo also contributed his expertise by training Isles staff and designing a permaculture garden for the Academy Street garden site. "The garden will be self-sustaining, utilizing nutrient cycles and water cycles. Water from nearby roof gutters will be collected into tanks and piped through the garden. Garbage will be composted for fertilizer. It will be beautiful, produce food, and serve an educational role all at the same time," said Kiyo. Long after Kiyo has returned to Japan, his imprint will remain.

"These types of exchanges between organizations are vital to our ability to make the world a better place," said Martin Johnson, Isles' President. "We look forward to spending time with Kiyo on his own turf in Japan."



The first 7 of the remaining 22 single family Monument Crossing Phase II homes will be available this fall. For additional information, contact Wendy Browne at 341-4750

DID YOU KNOW ?

More than half of Trenton's households are renters and, of those, nearly half have annual incomes below \$20,000.



For the third year in a row, Isles hosted visitors from the Douglass College-Public Learning Network (DC-PLN) program, a national consortium of women's colleges working together to prepare women for public leadership. Pictured here (front row, right) is Daniëlle Gougon, Coordinator of the Douglass College-PLN program, (back row, right) Juanita Joyner, Isles VP, Special Projects, and two Douglass College students who are working at Isles as interns (back row, second from left is Yael Blomberg and third from left is Julia Pum).

Message to our Friends

It is definitely summer at Isles. Houses are going up on Bellevue Avenue and Academy Street, and at Monument Crossing. Community gardeners are tending crops that will exceed 100,000 pounds this year in over 47 gardens. YouthBuild trainees continue to train while restoring homes. Preparations are under way to redevelop the Children's Garden on Perry Street into an environmental center and park. All of these happenings will be on display at Isles' 17th Annual Garden Tour on Saturday, July 24. Visit www.isles.org for more information.

On June 17, fourteen Career Center YouthBuild trainees received high school diplomas and fifty-eight completed Cycle 9 (Rites of Passage) at the graduation and awards ceremony.

Recently, community members from the Canal Banks area of Trenton were trained to conduct over 300 surveys with residents in their neighborhood. Learning about local needs, opportunities, and aspirations, along with other baseline data prepares us better to plan for and understand the impact of Isles' work in this historic community over the next three years. The Canal Banks revitalization project received a big boost from a three-year \$600,000 grant from the Wachovia Regional Foundation.

The New Jersey Regional Coalition (NJRC), which Isles helped found and continues to support, is making great strides. In June, the NJRC will release another set of maps and reports detailing the positive outcomes that can occur from cooperative, regional solutions to tax, land use, and housing policy reform. The reports will bolster the on-the-ground organizing work of the NJRC, as it trains leaders from faith, labor, business, and civic organizations to responsibly influence policies to make New Jersey a more fair and sustainable state. (See www.regionequity.org).

We were pleased to receive several awards recently including a national Environmental Quality Award from the US EPA for the super energy efficient home construction on the historic Bellevue Project and the Community/Campus Partnership Award for several collaborative projects with UMDNJ School of Public Health.

Finally, we are pleased to announce the election of seven new trustees to the Isles' Board. The Board has an ambitious agenda — and these members are more than up to the task.

Thank you for your interest in these stories and articles. Let us know what you think.

In Community,



Marty

P.S. We recently established a relationship with Donation Exchange (DNX) to facilitate receipt of non-cash donations. Please check out their website, www.dnxllc.com, or call Robin Miller at 609-341-4739 for more information.



On April 18, Alma Hill-Byron, described by Mayor Palmer as “the closest thing to a Mother Teresa that the city of Trenton ever had” passed away. An early supporter and trustee of Isles, Alma brought a passionate commitment to relieving the suffering of those most at-risk in society. In the mid 1980s, Alma encouraged Isles to create new homes for families. A short while later, Isles' Real Estate Development department was created.

We stand on the shoulders of gentle soldiers like Alma. We couldn't do this work without them.

New Members Join Isles' Board of Trustees

Isles' Board of Trustees recently elected seven new members. Joining the Board for three-year terms are: William Brooks, from West Trenton, the owner of Contract Solutions, a Ewing-based firm that provides comprehensive consulting services for construction companies; Betty Fleming, from Trenton, a community leader and participant in Isles' Community Gardening program since its inception; Linda Revelle, from Trenton, a management training and development consultant; Eldar Shafir, from Princeton, a professor of psychology and public affairs at Princeton University; Manish



Shah, from Yardley, Pennsylvania, a financial planner with Northwestern Mutual Financial Network; Brian Trelstad, from Lambertville, a senior associate at McKinsey & Company and editor of the McKinsey Quarterly; and Tim (Aaron) Watson, from Ewing, the Mercer County Director of Transportation and Infrastructure.

New Board members (front, left to right) Manish Shah, Brian Trelstad, and Betty Fleming and (top row, left to right) Eldar Shafir and Tim Watson. Missing from photo: William Brooks and Linda Revelle.

ISLES RECEIVES AWARDS

In April, Isles received an **Environmental Quality Award** from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region II, for its rehabilitation of homes on the 200 Block of Bellevue Avenue. May brought even more outside recognition for this work. Isles was awarded the **2004 Historic Preservation Award**, Neighborhood Impact, from the City of Trenton for that project. Additionally, the UMDNJ School of Public Health awarded Isles the **Community / Campus Partnership Award** for several collaborative projects, including the EPA Pest Management projects and this summer's environmental profiles for sub-standard urban housing, assessing metals, pesticides, and other hazardous conditions that are common in older housing stock in Trenton.



Marty Johnson is pictured here during a Peer Review session mandated by the Children's Trust Fund for all grantees. PEP was the program selected for review. Evaluators included Boys and Girls Club of Union County, the Plainfield Board of Education, the Center For Family Resources, and LodeStar Associates. Several PEP parents attended to discuss their experiences with the program. Representatives from community organizations were also in attendance to share feedback on continued collaboration.



The photo includes Mark Robson, Chairman of the Department of Environmental and Occupational Health and Audrey Gotsch, Dean of the School of Public Health, at UMDNJ with Elyse Pivnick, VP Environment and Community Health.

TRENTON MAKES THE WORLD TAKES



Pictured from left to right are YouthBuild graduates Kareen Fulwood, Randy Godet, Gary Cooper, and LeShawn Bessant with Jack Reid, their supervisor at Toll Brothers.

Trenton Makes — the World Takes. The slogan blazes brightly at night, as if suspended in thin air over the Delaware River. Some would say it's suspended in a time gone by, but the staff at Toll Brothers Integrated Systems in Morrisville, Pennsylvania, would disagree. They found out that character and integrity are still made in Trenton ... and they want to take as much as they can get.

Last winter, YouthBuild graduates Gary Cooper, Kareen Fulwood, Randy Godet, Hakim Reese, and LeShawn Bessant were offered full time positions, with benefits, at the Toll Brothers factory. "Ted Frangos [Isles Career Center Construction Manager] walked into my office and said he had some people for me." said Rick Dunlop, Senior Staffing Manager of On Site Staffing, the company that oversees Toll Brothers' Human Resources. "We don't take just anybody. This plant manufactures enough luxury home components to build 50 homes a week. The guys interviewed well. They were articulate. They tested well." Cooper, Fulwood, Godet, Reese, and Bessant also showed Dunlop that they were looking for an opportunity to prove themselves. They willingly accepted

the only available positions, working the second shift from 5 p.m. to 5 a.m., and they continue to prove themselves every day.

"They are doing a great job, and we continue to hear great things from their supervisors," said Dunlop. "Instead of hearing the usual, about things new employees need to improve, their supervisors have said things like: "these young men are a pleasure to train ... very smart ...the hardest worker in the yard ...never complains ... does what it takes to get the job done," rattled off Dunlop.

And the "YouthBuild Five," as they've been dubbed, are just beginning. On Site Staffing and Toll Brothers have developed a unique, skills promotion system that allows employees to sit for exams that will increase their skill level and their pay. "We're very proud of this system," said Dunlop. "And the YouthBuild guys all passed the first grade level exam on the first try. They're earning a career path, not just a paycheck."

The "YouthBuild Five's" success paves the way for future graduates. "I'd like to see some of those guys graduate and come here. They just have to learn to work hard ...and they make sure you learn that in YouthBuild," said YouthBuild graduate Godet, while enjoying a rare break from the action in the truss department, which includes time on the assembly line and time outside in the lumberyard.

"They're [Isles] doing a great job over there," said Jack Reid, who oversees the "YouthBuild Five" during their shift, as he pointed towards Trenton. "They work harder than I did at their age ... and I'll tell you what ... if I could get guys like this all the time, I'd be set!"



Members of Aang Serian (House of Peace), a community development and health organization in Tanzania, met with Marty Johnson and Career Center staff to discuss connections between their work with youth and the Career Center. Pictured on the left is the organization's director, Lesika Ole Ngila, a Masai leader.

DID YOU KNOW ?

In 2003, Trenton residents constituted 23.9% of the Mercer County labor force, but represented 50.6% of the county's unemployed.

PARENT SUMMIT SERIES

A collaborative effort between Isles' Parents Empowering Parents (PEP) Program, Mercer County Community College's Project SMILE and GEAR UP Programs, and CHAIN BREAKERS, Inc. is bringing information to parents on such topics as health, education, and financial self-reliance. The most recent summit provided parents with a wealth of information related to issues that affect their families' health. That summit, entitled Health Issues Affecting Our Community, included expert panelists from the Mercer Council on Alcoholism, St. Francis Medical Center, the Trenton Department of Health and Human Services, and Capital Health Systems.

"The panels explored topics such as breast and prostate cancer, chronic and

communicable diseases, and ways to adopt healthy family lifestyles," said Alex Allen, Vice President, Community Planning and Research, who serves as a summit facilitator. "We were honored to have Ms. Carolyn Lewis-Spruill as the guest speaker." Ms. Lewis-Spruill, RN, the Director of Health and Human Services for Trenton, delivered a speech entitled "Health Disparities in the Minority Community."

Ms. Lewis-Spruill noted, "Health disparities are an important issue facing our community today. Good health care should be available to everyone, so I encourage everyone to become an educated health consumer."



Carolyn Lewis-Spruill, Director of Health and Human Services, City of Trenton

Healthy Homes Inside and Out

Did you know that your greatest environmental threats are often right inside your home? Lead, pests, pesticides, mold, harsh chemicals, and dust mites are often found at hazardous levels. Years ago, Isles started looking at the impact of brownfields, or former industrial sites, on the health of Trenton residents. As we drilled down, however, we discovered many homes with indoor environmental problems as well. Unfortunately, residents didn't know what was under their noses.

Along with nine other organizations in the country, Isles joined with the Alliance for Healthy Homes of Washington, D.C., to participate in a Healthy Homes Initiative (HHI). The innovative program trains community members to become Healthy Home Assessors who, in turn, help their neighbors create a healthy home environment. When Isles held a recruiting meeting for potential assessors, over 40 attended. Ultimately thirteen individuals were trained and certified as Healthy Home Assessors.

Trenton residents shoulder the highest rates of asthma and lead poisoning in Mercer County, by far. The home is where children and adults are likely to experience environmental triggers for asthma and be exposed to lead (whether from lead dust from old paint or in drinking water that passes through lead-containing pipes).

Isles' HHI provides new tools to detect

lead before a child is poisoned and to help families address irritants in their indoor home environment to manage asthma. The Healthy Home Assessors will sample dust from at least 225 homes in high-risk areas of the city and will assess moisture and pest problems. In addition, Isles provides asthma management counseling to reduce environmental triggers often found in the home. For more information, contact Megan Ruf at 609-341-4724.

DID YOU KNOW ?

When lead is absorbed into the body, it is highly toxic to many organs and systems and seriously hinders the body's neurological development. Eighty-four percent of all children in Mercer County with an elevated blood lead level greater than 10ug/dL are from the city of Trenton.



On April 6th, representatives from the Wachovia Regional Foundation presented Isles' President, Martin Johnson, with a ceremonial check symbolizing their three-year \$600,000 grant to Isles. The funds will be used to support revitalization work in the Canal Banks neighborhoods of Trenton.

Isles ON THE ROAD

In December, 10 YouthBuild trainees and AmeriCorp members attended the Children's Defense Fund Advanced Service and Advocacy Workshop (ASAW) at the Alex Hailey farm in Clinton, Tennessee. The ASAWs are leadership development sessions that take place quarterly with a goal to train young people who are preparing to be advocates and leaders in the 21st century.

Fourteen Career Center trainees participated in the "Many Community Voices: Telling the Story of Childhood Development, Health, and Survival Through Young People" conference sponsored by Children's Futures. Trainees attended lectures and participated in workshops provided by journalism and children's health professionals.

Ten students from local colleges – Douglass College (Yael Bromberg); Kean College (Jody Gordon); Mercer County Community College (Melody Rawlins, Lekeisha Powell-Brooks); Princeton University (Tom Bohnett, Andrew Trueblood); Rider University (Shaveice Harmon); Rutgers University Bloustein School (Priscella Rivera, Jermaine Monk); and the University of Pennsylvania (Tyler Pollesch) -- have been working at Isles through federally funded work study programs or as interns. The students have been working on projects in departments throughout Isles.



Over 13,000 basketball fans attended the 2004 Isles' PrimeTime Shootout at the Sovereign Bank Arena

Twelve Latino community leaders joined Isles staff at a luncheon meeting focused on helping Isles better serve the needs of this growing segment of the population.

Seven Isles staff – Alex Allen, VP, Community Planning and Research; Leontyne Anglin, Community Planning Manager; Elizabeth Johnson, COO; Marty Johnson, CEO; Charlene Jones, IDA Administrator; Liz Knox, Homeownership Counselor; Milt Sharp, VP, Financial Self-Reliance; and Laura Swartz, VP, Real Estate Development -- participated in the 2004 NeighborWorks Training Institute held in Atlanta, Georgia, attending workshops on such topics as management and leadership, neighborhood revitalization,

home ownership and community lending, affordable housing, and community building and organizing.

Marty Johnson, CEO, traveled to Phoenix, Arizona, to meet with Larry Nez of the Navajo Nation. The Coalmine Chapter of the reservation is interested in creating construction training and real estate development for their area and were interested in learning about Isles' community development capacity. Shiloh Baptist Church was the setting for a Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration co-sponsored by the Delaware Valley Southern Christian Leadership Conference, New Jersey Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemorative Commission, Concerned Pastors of Trenton, and Shiloh Baptist Church, at which Marty was presented with the Environmental Award.

Juanita Joyner, VP, Special Projects, presented a workshop entitled "Managing the Volunteer Universe: Creating Order Through a Record Infrastructure" at a conference sponsored by Community Works in Princeton. She also facilitated the annual retreat for the New Jersey Environmental Justice Alliance at Thomas Edison State College.

Elyse Pivnick, VP, Environment and Community Health, and Megan Ruf, Environmental Programs Manager, attended CEHRC training organized by the Washington, DC-based Alliance for Healthy Homes and received certification as Lead Sampling Technicians. Elyse served as a panelist at the Parent Health Summit co-sponsored by Isles, sharing information about gardening, nutrition, and active living.



Isles' AmeriCorps program volunteers presented New Jersey Secretary of State, Regena Thomas, with an official AmeriCorps sweatshirt. The honor was given to the volunteers after the Isles' AmeriCorps program was deemed a "flagship" program by New Jersey's AmeriCorps office.

NEW STAFF

Barbara Adams, Executive Administrative Assistant, comes to Isles from the law firm of Pepper Hamilton LLP, where she worked as a secretary and legal assistant for fourteen years. Barbara is an ordained elder of the Calvary Christian Fellowship Ministries and the proud parent of two children.

Jennifer Britton, Accountant, Finance and Administration, joined Isles on a part-time basis in February. Jennifer began her career in finance at Merrill Lynch in 1991, where she worked as a foreign securities currency trader till 2001. Before coming to Isles, Jennifer served as a fiscal officer for the New Jersey Historic Trust.

Mark Heim, Vice President, Finance and Administration, comes to Isles from the technology strategy practice of PwC Consulting. He has worked extensively overseas for the World Bank, USAID, and UNDP. Mark has a BA from Georgetown University and an MBA from the University of Texas at Austin.

Pedro Rodriguez, Information Technology Specialist, recently completed a four year tour in the United States Army as an Information Systems Specialist. While in the service, Pedro was stationed in Germany, Bulgaria, and Kosovo. An active member of the NJ National Guard, Pedro enjoys spending time with his wife and new daughter.

Yolanda M. Ward, AmeriCorps Administrator, comes to Isles fresh out of Long Island University, where she majored in Media Arts and was a member of the Lady Blackbirds women's basketball team. Prior to attending LIU, Yolanda earned her Associates degree in Communication from Pratt Community College. While at Pratt, she was vice president of Student Government, a resident assistant, and captain of the women's basketball team.

David Valdez, Community Organizer, Community Planning and Research, returned to Isles after a 19-year hiatus. David has more than twenty years of community planning experience, including areas such as self-development, education, and economic development. In 1983, he founded and became president of the Latino Community Land Trust in Trenton, a nonprofit organization in which he is still involved, which was formed by residents concerned with the lack of services available to their community.



Isles' environmental educators took a class of sixth graders from Immaculate Conception School in Trenton on a field trip to the Hamilton Trenton Marsh.

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Isles has expanded its fund-raising capabilities through a relationship with Donation Exchange, an outsourced firm that accepts and converts gifts-in-kind into cash. Please visit their website at www.dnxc.com or call Robin Miller at 609.341.4739 for more information.