

Isles NEWS

Happy Holidays!

A Community Building & Environmental Organization

Celebrating the Harvest & Community



Photo credit: Dave Konopka

Entertainment at the Spirit Celebration included African drumming by Matthew Simon and Aaron Cox, and dancing by the University of Pennsylvania dance group African Rhythms. (See article on page 4.)

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Make a charitable contribution

Give a gift of cash, stock, bonds, or securities. Every dollar goes to support programs that help:

- Families own their own homes.
- Kids build their futures.
- Neighborhoods revitalize.
- Residents in oft-forgotten communities gain access to power and support.

Match your gift

Your gift can be doubled or tripled through your employer's matching gift program. Check with your company's Human Resource office.

Donate Gifts

In-kind gifts of real estate, cars, art work and other assets can help Isles.

For information please call Catharine Vaucher, V.P. Resource Development, 609.341.4743, or contact her at cvaucher@isles.org.

HOLIDAY 2004

www.isles.org



The nation's top high school basketball tournament.

FEBRUARY 11-13, 2005
SOVEREIGN BANK ARENA, TRENTON

- The top 4 teams in the country
- 12 of the top 26 teams
- 53 All-Americans, including the top freshman, sophomore, and junior

For tix, info, or to volunteer, visit www.primetimeshootout.net, or call Jill Harrity (609-341-4708).

The Best Hoops for the Best Cause!

Trenton Moves



Summer participants of the Trenton Moves program at Holland Middle School touching their toes. (See article on page 6.)

STUDENTS IN ACTION

Princeton University Urban Action Returns to Trenton



Photo credit: John Jameson, Office of Communications, Princeton University.

Fifteen incoming freshmen students from Princeton University spent a week working with Isles as part of Community Action, where teams of new students bond while they perform community service. Working in the Bellevue Avenue community garden, the students dug trenches, shoveled stone, and pushed

wheelbarrows to solve the chronic flooding problems in this garden. Isles' Community Gardening Specialist Jody Veler commented on their work: "For two years now, I've had the privilege to work with this intelligent, talented, and determined group of young men and women. They put in long days of hard labor only to limp off covered in mud and wait in line for cold showers at the local 'Y.' They encountered problems and devised solutions as a unit, needing little instruction from me. They were a 'dream come true' for both the gardeners and me."

Princeton Day School Contributes to Trenton Community

On September 10, eighty high school seniors from Princeton Day School began the new school year with a day of community service by volunteering at Isles. Their day included an orientation about Isles, several hours of volunteer work, lunch at their worksite, and a debriefing at the end, where students shared their experiences with one another. To enable the students to experience some of the many ways Isles works in the community, they split into four project groups. The first group improved

a badly overgrown Faircrest Avenue Garden and put down compost. The second group, working at the Academy Street Garden, helped harvest vegetables and began construction of a patio area. The third group learned about community planning and development by working on land use and asset mapping on Bellevue Avenue. Finally, the fourth group conducted a voter information and registration campaign for the residents of Rowan Towers. At the end of the day, students gathered to share their stories and explore the relationship between Princeton, Trenton, and volunteerism.



PDS seniors and teachers weed and plant mums on community service day.

Capital Health System and Isles

Isles is working with Capital Health to create a neighborhood redevelopment plan around Capital Health's Mercer campus. The project, to be done in partnership with Clarke, Caton, and Hintz, will include a neighborhood analysis, community planning workshops, best practices

research, and various land use alternatives. Key partners will include the City of Trenton, the School Board, the Trenton Police Department, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, and the D&R Canal Commission.

Community meetings will be held over the next two months. At the end of the planning process, which is expected

to run until late February, a draft community plan will be completed.

For additional information about the project, please contact Carlos Gallinar, Community Planner, at 341-4752 or cgallinar@isles.org.



More Growth

| | 2003 (1/03-11/03) | 2004 (1/04-11/04) |
|----------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Number of Volunteers | 296 | 523 |
| Hours of Volunteer Service | 2,588 | 9,635 |

Message to our Friends

This New Year, we resolve to plan more events like the one this past weekend — a celebration of great work, stronger families, and healthier communities.

With the completion of the historic restoration of 22 grand homes on Bellevue Avenue in Trenton, Isles staff, partners, friends, and public officials joined many new homeowners to recount the hard work and impact of the new development. With lots of stories, laughter, and tears of joy, we celebrated common unity — community.

And despite threatening stories on the horizon like increasing poverty, rising government and family debt, and growing environmental hazards, Isles is fortunate to witness great news every day. Some of the news is described in this newsletter, and some was captured this past weekend by a Times reporter (Read “Renters Become Homeowners,” by Amy Kuperinsky, through a link on our website, www.isles.org).

She noted the multiple benefits of our work: trained families that achieve strong credit and homeownership skills; organized communities; affordable, energy-efficient homes (some with solar panels); restored historical streetscapes; employed local contractors; even thriving community gardens in the neighborhood.

The bottom line is this: if you’re going to go through the trouble of renovating vacant homes, be sure to design in multiple, long-term benefits. That is how to develop communities — not just houses. That focus on the future and cost-effective ways to restore communities has also led Isles to expand our work into other parts of the region. The City and suburbs should work together — we all could use a little help. We’ll share more of this regional trend in upcoming newsletters and on our website.

Yes, the challenges ahead are great, but we celebrate anyway. And in the spring, we’ll stop and smell the roses. This is made far easier, by the way, by the presence of those community gardens we helped start nearby.

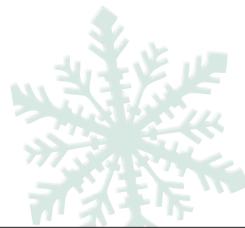
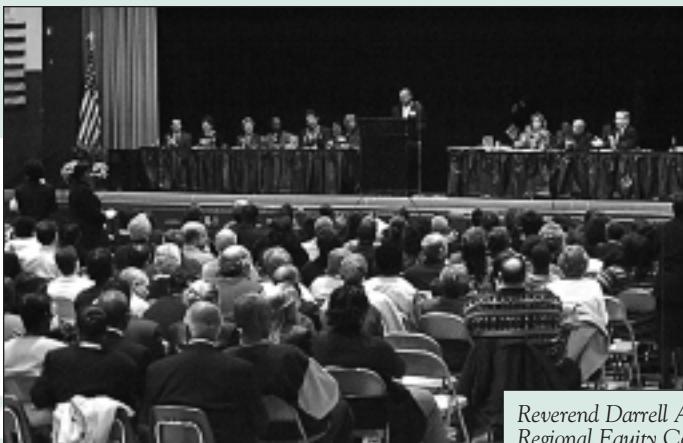
Best wishes for a peaceful New Year,



Martin Johnson
President



Participants in the Bellevue Avenue ribbon cutting enjoy the remarks of new homeowner Jacqueline Livingston, including, left to right, Marty Johnson, Thomas Sumners, Mayor Palmer, Alease Colvin, and Alex Gaines.



Reverend Darrell Armstrong addresses participants at the Central Jersey Regional Equity Coalition’s Public Assembly held in October at McCriston Catholic High School. Over 600 community members, public officials, and policy makers attended the meeting. Isles supports the Central Jersey group and co-chairs the statewide NJ Regional Coalition. For more information, visit www.njregionalequity.org



CELEBRATING THE HARVEST

& Community Spirit

On November 13, Isles celebrated the 'Spirit of Community' with over 125 community partners, public officials, Isles staff, board, and friends. The evening included great food, success stories, entertainment, and fellowship. Isles recognized several partner groups, including:

HomeFront; the City of Trenton's departments of Housing and Economic Development, Public Works, and Recreation, Natural Resources & Culture; and the NJ Department of Community Affairs Division of Housing and Community Resources.

Two program participants spoke about their experiences: Zerlina McKinney, a graduate of Isles' Homebuyers Education class, Parents Empowering Parents (PEP) program, and In-Home Asthma

Spirit of Community Celebration & Dinner



Management course, and Aaron Cox, a new YouthBuild trainee.

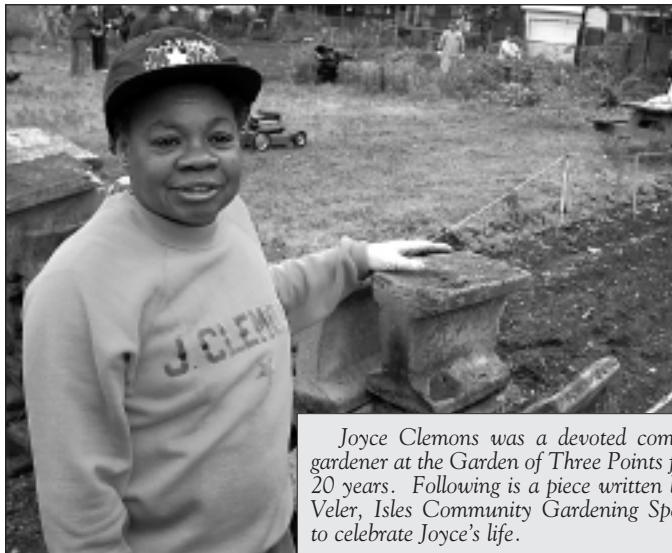
In his remarks, Marty Johnson said: "We are delighted to be here to celebrate the spirit of community. Tonight, we recognize the hard work and accomplishments of community members who have purchased their first homes, produced fresh food for their families in beautiful gardens, become stronger parents and smarter householders, earned diplomas, gained good jobs, and taken responsibility for improving their neighborhoods.

Every day, our partners in city, state,

and county government and other nonprofits help make this possible. This community truly cares about self-reliant families and healthy neighborhoods. We at Isles feel honored to work with you towards that goal."

A TRIBUTE TO JOYCE CLEMONS

1938 - 2004



Joyce Clemons was a devoted community gardener at the Garden of Three Points for over 20 years. Following is a piece written by Jody Veler, Isles Community Gardening Specialist, to celebrate Joyce's life.

"I came to work for Isles in the summer of 2003. The first garden I was asked to lend a helping hand with was the Three Points/Chestnut Street Garden. It was there that I first met Joyce Clemons. I was sent to do a little weeding and shrub trimming in preparation for our annual garden tour. I was working in Joyce's area of the garden, very close to the fence where her pecan and pear tree are growing. She came out, introduced herself,

do no harm.

On my return visits to the garden that summer, Joyce always made time to come out and talk with me. One day, she asked me if I had been raised in the south. I told her no, I hadn't been, but my family is from Georgia. She told me she could tell. When I asked her how, she replied, that she could tell by the way that I worked, that I had been "raised right." I felt like I had won a prize.

and warned me to be careful not to damage her trees. While Joyce's entire garden was her pride and joy, those fruit trees were special. Now, some stranger whose gardening skill was unknown was tromping around her garden, pulling weeds and cutting back shrubs. She kept an eye on me for the better part of the day, until she was satisfied that I would, at least,

Joyce was a wonderful and skilled gardener. She worked hard at it. She made certain her plants had everything they needed to thrive. She never counted her illness as an excuse to let weeds overtake her garden. She would come outside, even on days when she felt bad, sit on a stool, and weed her plot. But the one thing even Joyce couldn't do, was make that pecan tree bear fruit. It never had in all the time it was there. But she had faith.

Toward the end of the season, when her strength was waning, the strength of the pecan tree increased. As if sensing her time there was coming to an end, in appreciation for all the care it was given, for the first time ever, pecans fell from the canopy of the tree to litter the ground in the Chestnut Street Garden. I know that I will never see or taste another pecan again, without remembering Joyce. She is deeply missed."

WYETH TEAMS UP WITH ISLES to Rebuild Community Garden in Trenton



YouthBuild students and Liz Johnson, Isles' COO, participated in the rebuilding of the Academy Street community garden.

For the second year in a row, more than 35 executives from Wyeth Pharmaceuticals and 12 YouthBuild students, Isles staff, and community members worked together on a project benefitting the Trenton community and all the participants. This year, members of Wyeth's Global Leadership team, hailing

Marty Johnson, President of Isles, said: "The partnership between Isles and Wyeth, along with residents of Academy Street and with the cooperation of the City of Trenton, has transformed a fine community garden into one of the best community gardens in the state of New Jersey.

Photo credit: Martin Griff, the Times



from more than eight countries, spent a day of team building and hard work refurbishing the Academy Street Community Garden.

The day's work included planting flowers, trees, and shrubs, reseeding the lawn, and installing a new shed and picnic tables. At a closing ceremony held at the end of the day, Wyeth's Senior Vice President of Human Resources Rene Lewin said: "The project completed here today is a wonderful example of how people can join together and work for a common cause. We were delighted to work with Isles once again on a project that will clearly help sustain this community.

In 2004, Isles:



PROVIDED services in the Career Center to 178 YouthBuild trainees

RECEIVED national attention as a model YouthBuild program
COMPLETED renovation of 22 energy-efficient homes on

Bellevue Avenue, including our first two solar paneled homes

WON the Trenton Landmarks Neighborhood Improvement Award of Distinction and US EPA award

GRADUATED 90 participants from homebuyer education

ASSISTED 62 families in obtaining first time homeownership

DEVELOPED 23 new community gardens

CONDUCTED 78 field trips involving 1,458 Trenton youths

PROVIDED asthma counseling to 75 families

COMPLETED Master Plan for New Yorkshire neighborhood in Burlington City

FACILITATED civic association leadership and organizational development

SUPPORTED activities of Central New Jersey Regional Equity Coalition and co-chaired the statewide NJ Regional Coalition



In July, participants on Isles' Garden Tour learn more about the Academy Street Garden from Head Gardener Freddie Gutierrez. (For more information about the Garden Tour, please visit www.isles.org).

TRENTON MOVES



Spurred by a grant from New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services, Child and Adolescent Health Program.

Isles launched Trenton Moves this past summer to encourage youth and families to eat better and be more physically active. A healthy dose of fun is always included.

With support from the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services, Trenton Moves began at four of the city's summer recreation sites. Among other activities, children raced on foot and on scooter boards, jumped rope, and competed in friendly soccer and basketball

relays. Discussion, demonstration, and practice reinforced the four main goals of Trenton Moves: healthy heart, strength, flexibility, and healthy eating. A creative eight-year-old, Markel Carey, defined healthy eating as having a "good appetite." Other favorite quotes came from kids' feedback about the goals of Trenton Moves:

"You will be able to do anything."
-Joe Acevado, age 11

"You can live a long life."
-Daysha Brown, age 8

"You have a lot of energy."
-Lexus Fields, age 9

This fall, Isles broadened the program, engaging kids in after-school fitness as well as nutrition-based projects at Trenton Central High School (TCHS). The high school students – members of

the Medical Arts Academy at TCHS – are taking an analytical look at the foods they eat and the foods available in Trenton stores. Stay tuned for the results of this research. It may surprise you. This winter, Trenton Moves may appear at the city's youth basketball games. For more info, contact Katherine Lee at 609-341-4746 or klee@isles.org.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

The "In Their Own Words" section now exists on the Isles website (www.isles.org). It includes reflections from participants in the Parents Empowering Parents (PEP) program. A sample follows:

TERRI

Terri, the mother of three children, ranging in ages from 5 to 23, who was living in a homeless shelter, was sure before she began the program that "...PEP was going to be boring, where people talk at you instead of with you and listening." By the third meeting, she began to let her guard down and to accept that PEP "was not another boring meeting." She began to communicate with the group and with her children more and more. She commented that she began to revive rituals she had forgone with her oldest children: "I never expected to get down on the floor and play with Barbie or color again." Ultimately, she found the program "helpful and different" and was grateful for the opportunity to "share experiences with other women."

Like other PEP parents, Terri has decided to "better my life and the life of my children" by working on her parenting skills and being involved in the community. She says that PEP propelled her into being more active in her youngest child's life; she is vice president of the PTO at her daughter's school and volunteers there three to four hours a week. She has set some overall goals for herself, including moving out of the homeless shelter and continuing with her interest in computers. Her biggest goal is to own her own home. Terri says that through PEP, and Isles, she now has a support group that makes her feel like a member of a family and capable of doing and wanting more.

Healthy Homes

Isles is working with city officials, landlords, and other agencies to improve housing conditions in the city. As part of its latest Healthy Homes Initiative, thirty-six (36) community members were trained as Healthy Home Assessors. To date, 61 homes have been tested for lead, cockroach infestation, and moisture. To have a home tested, call Megan Ruf, (609) 341-4724. In photo below, Healthy Home Assessor Nicole Powell tests an area resident's home for lead.



Isles ON THE ROAD

Career Center/YouthBuild trainees and staff traveled to New York City to see the Broadway production of *The Lion King*. For nearly all the trainees, this was the first Broadway show they had ever seen. For most trainees, this was their first visit to New York City. Before the show, the group ate lunch at the Hard Rock Café.

Career Center/YouthBuild trainees and staff attended a Justice for Children and the Poor interfaith prayer service at the Washington National Cathedral in Washington, DC. The event was sponsored by the Children's Defense Fund and featured prominent religious leaders from many religious backgrounds. On the way to Washington, the group visited Baltimore's Inner Harbor.

Fifteen community gardeners attended the National Organic Farming Association (NOFA) conference along with Isles' Environment and Community Health staff.

Ed Butler, Sr. VP, Career Center, traveled to Pittsburgh to help establish a new YouthBuild program there. He also traveled with Alex Allen, VP, Community Planning and Research, to Asbury Park to explore the creation of a Monmouth County-based YouthBuild program.



Marty Johnson discusses the community development field with graduate students from Rutgers' Bloustein School of Public Policy.

Elizabeth Johnson, COO, and Marty Johnson, CEO, were invited to Trail Lake Ranch, a nonprofit educational facility in the Wind River mountain range of Wyoming to discuss the development of a mountain-based educational opportunity for Career Center students.

Marty, Liz, and Ed Butler, Sr. VP, Career Center, visited the SEED School in Washington, D.C. in September.

Elyse Pivnick, VP, Environment and Community Health, and Katherine Lee, Isles Fellow, presented classes on nutrition and health at the Healthier Lifestyles Institute held at Mt. Zion Church in Trenton. Elyse and Katherine also attended a conference on New Jersey environmental health data tracking organized by the New Jersey Department of Health and Human Services. Elyse also attended the American Public Health Association's annual conference in Washington, DC.

Megan Ruf, Environmental Programs Manager, attended the Community Food Security annual conference in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Jody Veler, Community Gardening Specialist, and Le Kisha Powell-Brooks, Community Outreach Specialist, are attending Master Gardening classes through Rutgers University's Cooperative Extension.



Elyse Pivnick, VP, Environment and Community Health, Edith Laramore, narrator for Isles newest instructional video, and Mark Robson, Ph.D., Associate Professor at UMDNJ-School of Public Health, discuss a scene from "Pests in Your Nest" video.



Kiyo Shidura, the Executive Director of the Permaculture Center of Japan who spent six months with Isles on a Japan Foundation fellowship, returned to Isles for a day-long meeting with seven colleagues from Japan. Kiyo's guests are working on an ecologically sensitive redevelopment plan for an industrial city in southern Japan with a population of one million people. Kiyo and his colleagues engaged in an extended discussion with Marty Johnson, Isles President, and several Isles VPs, about the role of nonprofit community development organizations in the United States and Japan. The group invited Isles' staff to visit Japan in 2005.

NEW STAFF

Krista Eastman, Grant Writer, comes to Isles by way of Wisconsin, where she earned her BA in English and French at the University of Wisconsin. While an undergraduate, Krista worked as a writing tutor. Most recently, Krista returned from a year teaching English as a Second Language to children ages 8-11 in Normandy, France. She has also lived and studied in Senegal.

Carlos Gallinar, who holds a masters in city and regional planning from the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers University and a BA degree from the University of Texas in English Literature, joined the Community Planning and Research department. He had previously interned at Isles as a NJ DCA Housing Scholar and also worked for a year at NJ Public Policy Research Institute at Rutgers University.

Jody Ann Gordon, AmeriCorps Administrator, joined Isles upon graduating from Kean University with a BS in Social Work. Jody was a Career Center intern prior to being hired. At Kean University, she was a member of the Resident Life and Housing team for four years. Jody aspires to supervise a female residential group center.



Ryan McNeil of YouthBuild marvels at the amount of raw sugar contained in the glass that is equal to the amount of sugar in the Coke that he holds in his other hand. Ryan is participating in a nutrition education program that is part of Isles' new Trenton Moves, an exercise and nutrition program for youth.

Melissa Graham, Administrative Assistant, Career Center, comes to Isles with an Associate's degree in Visual Communication. She recently relocated back to NJ from NC after working for Kaba Ilco, Inc. Melissa, has worked in the administrative field for over ten years.

Katherine Lee, Isles Fellow, Environment and Community Health, re-joined Isles as a staff member in July after previous stints as an intern in summer 2003 and January 2004. Katherine recently completed a master's degree in public health at Harvard University. She has work experience as a grant writer for a Newark, NJ, nonprofit and as an analyst in the clinical trials industry.

Carla Peterman, Business Analyst, joined Isles first as a consultant, following two years at Lehman Brothers as an Associate in the Investment Banking, Global Power Group. Prior to that she served as the Strategic Projects Officer for the Oxford Internet Group in the UK. Carla, a Rhodes Scholar, earned her undergraduate degree from Howard University, a Masters of Science from Oriel College, Oxford University, and a Masters in Business Administration from Oxford's Said Business School.

Katrina Smith, Academic Teacher, Career Center, has been working for the past five years as a certified teacher in charter and parochial schools in the city of Trenton. Katrina, as she is known, received two BA degrees, in Elementary Education and Psychology, from Rider University. She is an author, poet, and the founder of Raising Young Ladies, an educational and performing arts program whose purpose is to build self-esteem and promote sisterhood.

Catharine Vaucher, Vice President, Resource Development, comes to Isles with over 14 years of development, management, and strategic planning experience, most recently as Director of Development with the YWCA Princeton. Catharine is President of Women in Development of Mercer County. She has two BA degrees from the University of California in Irvine, and an MFA from the University of Wisconsin at Madison.

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Happy Holidays!

Isles HOLIDAY 2004