

# Fulfilling a Dream with Financial Coaching



Ankit Patel, left, of nonprofit community-based organization Isles, hands Lamar Allen, right, the keys to his new house. Lamar worked with Isles throughout the process to find, negotiate, and finance his first home.

Purchasing a home can be difficult for anyone and especially for first-time buyers. It usually involves a multi-step process that includes making sure you have the right credit score, getting pre-qualified from a lending institution for a mortgage, finding the right property, negotiating the price, and finalizing the loan. Lamar Allen, a residential food service worker in Campus Dining’s Rockefeller College, recently went through the process because he wanted to fulfill his dream of owning his own home. A few years ago, he had decided he wanted to buy a house but was uncertain about how to get started. Fortunately for him, he heard a presentation in late 2012 by Ankit “Kit” Patel, a financial coach from Isles, a nonprofit community-based organization in

Trenton, that inspired him to learn what he needed to do to become a homeowner. Kit helped Lamar to customize the steps to prepare Lamar for selecting the right property to purchase. According to Lamar, “Kit personally went with me to meet the realtor. He also helped me get pre-approval from a local bank and recommended a lawyer that I could trust.” Lamar continued, “Working with Isles was one of the best things I’ve done. They have your best interest at heart. I trusted Kit and he encouraged me. There were times I would have given up if it weren’t for him and the realtor.” In September 2013, Lamar closed and got the keys to his two-family home. “It’s unreal and I still can’t believe it’s mine.”

Kit and his colleagues at Isles help low and moderate-income

consumers improve their overall financial situation. He explained, “We use different strategies to improve their credit scores. First, we find out what people want to save for. There are various products available that promote savings and provide incentives. We also advise on home and car purchases and loans based on what they can afford.” Kit also said Isles helps their clients to “choose the right property and make better decisions.”

Isles offers financial coaching and resources to help those who made some monetary mistakes in the past, whose credit scores need improvement, and who have specific financial goals in mind. Isles also has other programs to assist with managing utility costs, such as weatherization; dealing with foreclosure; assessing the home for lead and asthma triggers; and helping to settle debts and financial emergencies.

Employees can contact Isles by calling (609) 341-4700 or accessing their **website**. Hours are 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. or by appointment after hours. Kit said, “I encourage individuals who are having financial difficulty and want to do the right things to improve their financial situation to come in for an evaluation.”

Princeton University provides employees with this benefit at no cost to them. Individuals who have questions can contact Elaine Richards, benefits manager, at 8-9109 or e-mail [erichard@princeton.edu](mailto:erichard@princeton.edu).