

Founded in 1981, Isles, Inc. is a community development and environmental organization based in Trenton, New Jersey. With a mission to foster self-reliant families and healthy, sustainable communities, we design and develop effective services that support this mission and share what we learn with others who can make a difference. Isles:

- **Revitalizes communities** by developing affordable homes, parks, and community agriculture.
- **Trains and educates** through a vocational school & energy/environmental training center.
- **Builds wealth** through innovative financial services and loans that help restore credit and increase savings.
- **Promotes green, healthy living** by tackling environmental hazards, fostering energy efficiency, and promoting healthy lifestyles.

Highlights of 2017 included:

### **Homeownership/Foreclosure Counseling:**

Isles continued to offer homebuyer and foreclosure counseling to prepare low- and moderate-income individuals for homeownership and to help families avoid foreclosure. This year, 11 customers purchased their first home and 20 foreclosure customers had positive mortgage outcomes (loan modifications, etc.).

### **Isles Financial Solutions:**

Isles Financial Solutions (IFS) is an employer-based financial capability initiative for lower wage workers. IFS works with Princeton University, Capital Health Systems, and local nonprofits. This year:

- 328 employees received IFS services (82 one-on-one customers and 246 group participants).
- 3 customers purchased homes, with a total of \$10,500 in matched savings grants disbursed, and 1 more is pending to close by end of year.
- Customers improved their credit scores by 55 points on average (for those working on credit).

### **Isles' Center for Energy and Environmental Training (CEET):**

Isles' CEET is a green collar job training facility, targeting careers in energy efficiency and environmental health. This year, CEET:

- Provided or facilitated Healthy Homes for Community Health Workers training course for 94 home visitors (e.g. Princeton Health Department) and/or supervisors of home visitors.
- Offered "The Seven Keys to a Healthy Home" 13 times to reach 117 community members.
- Provided Building Analyst training and certification course for 27 energy efficiency workers.
- Provided Lead-Safe Renovation, Repair, and Paint training and certification for 46 workers.
- Offered professional lead certifications for more than 15 workers or supervisors of lead safe work.

### **Lead and Healthy Homes:**

Isles continued to provide retrofits to low-income homes to improve energy efficiency and remove lead, mold, asthma triggers, and other health hazards. This year, Isles:

- Tested more than 300 Trenton homes for lead in water, soil, and paint.
- Provided lead, energy, and healthy home rehab and repair to 11 homes in 2017.
- Completed more than 45 lead hazard control projects through NJ DCA Lead Pilot. All units were made lead safe.

In addition, Isles continues to be a strong advocate for lead and healthy homes public education, policy change, and increased funding for remediation of lead contaminated homes. Isles co-founded the statewide NJ Lead Advisory Group, and in addition, this year we:

- Provided testimony to NJ State Assembly and Senate Committee on lead poisoning prevention.
- Presented at statewide and national webinars and conferences, including Newark Culture of Health Conference, Housing & Community Development Network of NJ, PolicyLink, American Public Health Association, and Mid-Atlantic Regional Lead & Healthy Housing Conference.
- Consulted with New Brunswick Healthy Homes Initiative and Regional Plan Association to advise them on the development of the healthy homes action plan.

### **Community Planning and Development:**

Isles facilitates efforts to identify community concerns and priorities; create action-oriented, stakeholder-led neighborhood plans; and secure resources to sustain neighborhood revitalization efforts over the long term. In 2017, Community Planning work included the following:

- Secured funding for and began work on an EPA-funded Brownfields Area Wide Planning Grant for the East Trenton Neighborhood and an EPA-funded citywide Community Food Assessment
- Held a pop up outdoor art gallery - ‘Permagrams’ – in a vacant lot surrounding a historic church.
- Convened the C2C Action Committee to guide implementation of the Creative District plan.
- Continued our Clean & Green initiative to maintain and beautify 78 lots (155 parcels) and 9 parks (35 parcels), totaling about 18.5 acres of land (equaling about 14 football fields).
- Continued “T-Recs,” a mobile recreation service that provides games and activities in targeted neighborhoods, to provide 111 hours of operating time and services for 467 youth and 138 adults.

### **Urban Agriculture:**

Isles’ urban agriculture work addresses hunger, food access, and community disinvestment in Trenton by sharing tools, networks, and resources that empower residents and stakeholders to take action and make healthy choices. This year, Isles:

- Continued supporting 70 community, school, and institutional gardens, serving 200 community gardeners and their families, 54 teachers, and 1,300 students.
- Added three new community gardens and two new school gardens to the network.
- Held eight gardening workshops, attended by approximately 60 people.
- Worked with 7 schools and 81 classrooms on a weekly or biweekly basis and supported 15 other school gardens.
- Managed 12 beehives at Isles-operated gardens, harvesting 160 pounds of honey.
- Donated over 600 pounds of produce to emergency food suppliers.

### **Isles Youth Institute (IYI):**

IYI offers alternative education options for disengaged students seeking their high school equivalency diploma, vocational skills training, and leadership training. During the past academic year, IYI enrolled 59 students with an approximate retention rate of 70%. This year:

- 11 IYI students graduated with high school diplomas.
- 16 Pre-Apprentice Construction Training (PACT) certificates were issued to students-8 core skills certifications and 8 in the carpentry field.
- Two students matriculated to college.
- 35 youth participated in meaningful community service projects including volunteering at the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen and renovating the Chambersburg Little League Field
- IYI launched its Leadership Academy to ensure students receive tools necessary to live productive lives and become leaders of their communities.