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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.

Highlights of 2018 include:

**Financial Services:**

Isles continued to offer one-on-one homebuyer and foreclosure counseling to prepare low- and moderate-income individuals for homeownership and avoid foreclosure. We also offered Isles Financial Solutions (IFS), an employer-based financial capability initiative for lower wage workers that includes an innovative mix of financial coaching, credit-building finance, savings products, and group-based learning. IFS works with Princeton University, Capital Health Systems and local nonprofits. This year:

- Isles had 173 active housing/foreclosure customers.
  - 27 customers attended Pre-Purchase Workshops.
  - 157 customers developed a sustainable budget.
  - 95 housing certificates were earned.
  - 68 customers improved their financial capacity after receiving counseling.
  - 12 customers purchased a first home.
  - 20 foreclosure customers had positive mortgage outcomes (loan modifications, etc.).
- 397 employees received IFS services
  - 123 one-on-one customers completed a budget, credit analysis and action plan.
  - 275 attended workshops.
  - Low cost loans averaging \$1,600 were provided to re-finance higher cost debt, avoid payday loans, and help avoid lapses in car insurance and overdue rent fees.
  - 18 customers filed their taxes with the assistance of a financial coach.
  - Customers improved their credit scores by 55 points on average.
  - 75% of customers met at least one of their goals for financial improvement, such as improvement in credit score, debt reduction, reduction of fees and interest, and savings.

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

CEET is a green collar job training facility, targeting careers in energy efficiency and environmental health. CEET is a Building Performance Institute (BPI) certified training center and is a satellite training center for the National Center for Healthy Housing/Healthy Housing Solutions. This year, CEET:

- Provided or facilitated Healthy Homes for Community Health Workers training course for 147 home visitors and/or supervisors of home visitors, educators, nurses and social workers.
- Offered “The Seven Keys to a Healthy Home” 7 times to a total of 143 community members.
- Provided Building Analyst and Air Leakage Control Installer training and certification course for 81 energy efficiency workers.
- Provided Lead-Safe Renovation, Repair, and Paint training and certification for 67 workers.
- Delivered professional lead certifications for more than 33 workers or supervisors.
- Supported lead and healthy homes assessment projects in Newark and New Brunswick with technical assistance and training.

**Lead Safety and Healthy Homes:**

Isles continued to provide retrofits to low-income homes to improve energy efficiency and remove lead, mold/moisture, asthma triggers, fall and burn hazards and other negative indoor health conditions.

This year, Isles:

- Provided comprehensive lead (paint, water, soil) and healthy homes assessments for more than 500 Trenton homes and apartments. These tests revealed that more than 54% of homes had unsafe levels of lead present.
- Completed more than 30 lead hazard control and lead abatement 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. This year, Isles policy staff:

- Presented at multiple state and national webinars and conferences to promote protections for childhood lead poisoning, maternal health and healthy homes.
- Continued to act as principal in NJ Lead Advisory Group.
- Advocated for two NJ State bills that provide for expanded lead testing of homes and apartments.
- Met with committee of NJ Urban Mayors, NAACP, Rutgers faculty, Trenton School staff, county leaders and others to bring attention to lead in urban areas and its impact on school performance.
- Consulted with Green and Healthy Housing Initiative and Fund for NJ for creation and launch of NJ Lead Poisoning Prevention Plan.
- Were appointed to Lead in Drinking Water Task Force of Jersey Water Works.
- Participated in NJ Maternal Childcare Environmental Health innovation project to integrate lead poisoning prevention services with existing maternal childcare protocols.
- Advocated for a Health Services agreement that will enable NJ Medicaid funds to be used for lead and healthy homes services.

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

IYI offers alternative education options for disengaged students seeking their high school equivalency diploma, vocational skills training (construction, computer technology, office management), and life skills training (leadership, financial literacy, health education, conflict management). During the 2018 academic year, IYI enrolled 55 students with an approximate retention rate of 70%. This year:

- 15 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.
- 40 youth participated in meaningful community service projects including volunteering at the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen, renovating the North Trenton Little League Field and working with The City of Trenton to improve community centers.
- 23 students received CPR/First Aid Certification.
- 24 Students received OSHA Certification.
- 34 students, community members and alumni participated in various internal and external job training internship opportunities.
- 22 students participated in the Leadership Academy, which included presenting various works at Bryant Park in NYC, acting as panelists at the NJ Black Issues Convention, and starting a coalition of NJ YouthBuild organizations.

#### **Violence Prevention:**

Isles continued our organization-wide strategy to incorporate violence prevention into our on-the-ground work and participate in strategic citywide violence prevention efforts.

- Isles helped organize a citywide symposium on violence reduction, which brought together 500+ stakeholders and policymakers from many areas, including the Trenton Police and mayor's office, county agencies, and state judiciary.

- As members of the executive committee, Isles staff helped organize and lead the Trenton Prevention Policy Board.
- Isles staff worked with members of the Trenton Prevention Policy Board to draft and promulgate the Trenton Youth Violence Reduction Action Strategy.

**Community Planning and Development:**

Isles collaborates with residents and stakeholders to identify community concerns and priorities; create community-led neighborhood plans; and secure resources to sustain neighborhood revitalization efforts over the long term. In addition, Isles leads city-wide research and planning initiatives related to blight reduction, creative placemaking, and food systems.

In 2018, Community Planning work included the following:

- Conducted research, resident outreach, and community education as part of a neighborhood planning process in East Trenton funded by an EPA Brownfields Area-Wide Planning Grant. This included hosting four on-site meetings with residents, two community design workshops, two public tours, and convening a project steering committee that meets monthly.
- Facilitated installation of green infrastructure and stormwater management projects including tree planting and rainwater catchment systems funded by a NJ Department of Environmental Protection 319(h) Grant.
- Participated in 20 events with 600 youth and 200 adults through our T-Recs Mobile Recreation Service.
- Operated “Camp Carrot,” a three-week free summer camp held at Roberto Clemente Park and our Tucker Street Garden that focused on gardening, nutrition, and environmental education.
- Worked with Isles’ senior leadership and the Real Estate Committee of the Board of Trustees to develop a new policy for neighborhood-based real estate development and acquired a vacant four-unit apartment building, a vacant mixed-use live/work building, five vacant City-owned lots, and a vacant garage. All will be rehabilitated and brought back to productive use in support of the Old Trenton Neighborhood and Creek to Canal Creative District Plans.

Creek to Canal Arts District: Isles continued to implement the Creek to Canal Creative District plan. Highlights include:

- Worked with the I Am Trenton Community Foundation to facilitate the first Old Trenton Neighborhood/Creek to Canal Art & Community Small Grants program, that gave 15 grants to individuals or organizations totaling \$68,000.
- Supported the development of the Broad Street Bank Gallery.
- Sponsored two new murals in the Old Trenton Neighborhood (OTN) in addition to those in progress as part of the Old Trenton Arts & Community grants.
- Worked with The College of New Jersey to install a series of large-scale photo portraits of Trenton residents in front of the historic Nixon School.
- Convened a task force of artists, arts organizations, community stakeholders, and municipal representatives to craft recommendations on public art policy for the new City administration.
- Established an online gallery of public art in the district along with an interactive “Then & Now” photo gallery comparing and contrasting historic photos of buildings with current views.

Urban Agriculture: Isles currently supports 63 community, school, and institutional (sponsored by other nonprofits or organizations) gardens. We serve up to 200 community gardeners and their families, 54 teachers, and 1,300 students. In 2018, we:

- Held six gardening workshops, attended by approximately 45 people.
- Worked with 814 elementary school students in 36 classrooms in seven schools on a weekly or biweekly basis and supported 13 other school gardens.

- Hosted seven school-wide cafeteria taste tests that reached 3,500 students.
- Distributed approximately 10,000 vegetable seedlings (the bulk of which are grown by the NJ Department of Corrections) and hundreds of pounds of seeds to school and community gardens.
- Managed 12 beehives at Isles-operated gardens, harvesting 340 pounds of honey, which was the largest harvest to date by more than 100 pounds. Honey is sold at the Greenwood Avenue Farmers Market and two other cafes in the city.
- Donated more than 700 pounds of produce to emergency food suppliers.
- Trained 11 individuals and families who completed the year in the Isles Incubator Garden.

#### Clean & Green (C&G)

Clean & Green activates and maintains vacant lots and city parks, and implements creative interventions in underutilized spaces. C&G staff drive neighborhood participation in community clean ups and work with community members to organize and implement community events. In 2018, we:

- Worked with the City of Trenton to formalize a permitting process for “parklets” (temporary parks), and installed three parklets.
- Helped organize and participated in 6 neighborhood clean ups with over 100 community volunteers across four neighborhoods.
- Installed and planted flower planters at 46 homes and planted 39 new street trees.
- Worked with residents to clean a vacant lot at Sanford and Brunswick and then build garden boxes where they are now growing vegetables.
- Worked with community members to organize and host National Night Out in OTN.

**Mill One** is a 220,000 square foot, historic former textile mill on the Trenton/Hamilton border that Isles is converting into a high performing, mixed use regional hub for dozens of social profit organizations.

- Work this year included installation of steel framing on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, home to Isles’ future headquarters, tenant spaces and kitchen and conference rooms. Other infrastructure upgrades were completed, including the prep work for our state of the art HVAC system.
- In addition to construction this year, planning and logistics of the new Social Profit Center, including design, programming and marketing are now under way. Visit our new website at [www.socialprofitcenter.org](http://www.socialprofitcenter.org) to learn more.