

Get the Lead Out: A Follow-Up House Tour



Trenton, N.J. – A few short months after Congresswoman Bonnie Watson Coleman and Mayor Eric Jackson introduced citywide lead poisoning prevention efforts at a Trenton neighborhood press conference, Isles’ Construction Manager Prince Moore returns to the home to document progress made to make the home safe from lead hazards.

Back in October, the Ingram family discovered the presence of lead dust from old paint in their home, which is not uncommon for a house built in 1913. While the use of lead based paint was finally phased out in 1978, the majority of Trenton’s housing stock was built before 1950, when lead paint was in heavy use. It is likely that a very high percentage of homes and apartments in Trenton have unsafe levels of lead dust in them if they have not been properly treated.

At about the same time the Ingram’s found the lead dust in their home, they also discovered elevated blood lead levels in 2-year old granddaughter J’Selle Ingram-Robinson. Little J’Selle showed symptoms of being sick when her fingernails started to come off; a blood test later revealed a high level of lead in her blood. Lead is highly toxic, especially for young children like J’Selle. It can harm a child's brain, kidneys, bone marrow, and other body systems. It can also affect a child’s cognition, behavior, and IQ. The damage is permanent, and the extent of issues often takes years to uncover.



Since then, thanks to grant funding from the NJ Department of Community Affairs’ “Lead Safe Home Remediation Pilot” (LSHR), Isles has performed a lead risk assessment, determined the extent of the repairs needed to make the home lead safe and healthy, and brought in contractors trained in lead safe work practices and certified that the home has no remaining lead hazards.

J’Selle’s grandfather Robert Ingram watched progress being made on his home. “The Lord works in mysterious ways. I’m sad my granddaughter got the lead, but I’m glad to get it out, so no one else gets

it,” he said, referring to grandchildren who visit him regularly. “I am truly happy and blessed because I needed it done. I feel good about the work. They’ve been doing a good job, and it didn’t take long.”



The entire project spanned about 8 days with a crew of 4 workers. Prince explained the extensive rehabilitation project. “We did all 18 windows in the house because every single one looked like that,” he said, pointing at a chipping and peeling window frame. “You can tell with the constant friction of opening and closing these windows, it leaves debris full of lead paint and dust. That dust then finds its way into the house.” According to The National Center for Healthy Housing, it only takes a small amount of lead dust to poison a child. If one gram of lead particles (about as much as a sugar packet) were evenly spread over 100 rooms, each measuring 10 feet by 10 feet,

that amount would leave lead dust levels 10 times the federal standard for a hazardous lead on floors.

Prince reports that Isles has done more than just taken care of the lead in this house, “We replaced a damaged door and the handrail for the stairwell, scraped and repainted the base boards which had lead in them and encapsulated the stair risers. There was mold and mildew in the ceiling, because the roof was leaking, so we also replaced the ceiling and took care of big gaps in the floor.”

The pride Mr. Moore takes in the work he oversees is evident. “When we look at a house, we want to do it right. Let’s make the home as sustainable and healthy as we can. These new windows serve more than one purpose. Besides taking care of the lead, we use energy star windows that will save them on heat and air conditioning during the summer and winter. Plus, these new windows are going to look beautiful when they’re all put in.”



The Ingram family home and about 200 more will receive lead safe remediation services from Isles in the next 3 years. For about \$10,000/unit, Isles makes homes safe and healthy, preventing future children from being poisoned by lead.

“We’re so pleased that the Ingram family was able to take advantage of this program to make their home safe from lead paint,” says Mayor Eric Jackson. “The City of Trenton is committed to protecting children from lead-based paint hazards, so we’re thankful that funds are now available to our city for residents to get the help they need to make their homes safe and healthy. Isles is a strong partner in this effort and I hope people will call them to get their homes tested for lead.” You can reach Isles at 609-341-4756.

And while the sad truth is that there is no safe level of lead and no *cure* for a child that has been poisoned by lead, lead poisoning can be prevented by testing for lead dust and then addressing the paint

hazards. By either removing windows or doors with lead paint, or coating surfaces with specially formulated lead blocking paint, lead dust can be prevented from getting into the home environment.

While the cost to make homes safe from lead hazards is reasonable, the cost of doing nothing is high. For every \$1 of lead hazard reduction work, Isles returns up to \$221 in lower taxes, special education expenses, and other societal costs, as lead poisoning can cost up to \$31,000 per child, annually. Each year more than 3,000 New Jersey children are diagnosed with high lead levels. That's an enormous cost to NJ taxpayers, especially for something that is largely preventable.

Prevention is the key. Prevention starts with finding out which homes have dangerous levels of lead and removing those lead hazards, so that no more Trenton children will be damaged from lead ever again.

Fortunately for Trenton residents, Isles is able to perform lead water and paint tests for a significant number of Trenton residents. And as a way to sweeten the deal, Isles will give \$5 to every resident who gets a lead test. To sign up, visit www.isles.org or contact Isles at cherie@isles.org or 609-341-4756. To support Isles' work to Get the Lead Out (GLO), visit www.isles.org/GLO

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