

MERCER COMMUNITY

Trenton's Isles' Fall Fest deemed success

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By Rich Cuccagna, rcuccagna@njadvancemedia.com,
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Dick Gratton

HAMILTON — On Saturday, October 21, Isles welcomed around 400 guests, vendors, staff and volunteers to an evening of eclectic local food, drink, arts, and entertainment

at the new Social Profit Center at Mill One. The fundraiser invited guests to savor the flavor of the local community and celebrate Isles and the renovated, formerly vacant historic mill. Fall Fest showcased local restaurants, offering a variety of locally sourced and inspired entrees and desserts, as well as N.J. specialties including local wine, craft brews, cider and more. It was truly a special night as the building came to life as guests enjoyed the tastes, sights and sounds of the local Trenton community, whilst touring rejuvenated Mill One spaces.

As guests arrived, they were treated to the incredible skills of the Trenton Circus Squad and had the opportunity to roam the building listening to local musicians and viewing artists at work. Dinner offered guests a chance to sample a range of dishes from many local favorites as well as more recently established vendors, such as the Trenton Junior Chefs program. This catering group supplied a menu that incorporated Isles' seasonal produce (that they helped harvest) and Isles' very own honey. As program founder and Executive Director of the Shiloh Community Development Corporation Marie Thelusma-Chase commented, "The Trenton Junior Chef were so excited upon arrival...the venue was spectacular and the event was so well attended. They definitely enjoyed serving the guests."

Mill One artist-in-residence Malcolm Bray worked on a large-scale canvas in his studio, one of several artist spaces in the new Social Profit Center. "The energy and potential is tremendous...a diamond in the rough," says Bray about the new space. Guests were able to watch artists at work in a variety of medium including sculpture, graffiti and tattoo inspired art, and watercolors, whilst sipping signature cocktails with locally sourced ingredients or trying the N.J. wine, beer and cider providers. They were also able to discover more about the work Isles does through a series of interactive pop up exhibits and learn the story of the stunning large brick and timber frame 1894 factory building through large scale galleries exhibited throughout.

Jazz guitarist Dick Gratton was one of the featured performers and has a personal connection to a previous tenant of Mill One. His mother, Geraldine Gratton, worked for Atlantic Products Co. from about 1946 to 1952. Mr. Gratton would pick her up from work to return to their neighborhood just a few blocks away. Fall Fest brought him back to a reimagined and revitalized Mill One to perform alongside other talented local musicians.

During the evening, guests learned about Isles' Social Profit Center at Mill One, which is bringing together social impact businesses, nonprofits, and arts spaces under one roof, offering flexible office, warehouse, studio and event spaces. Fall Fest also saw community partners mingle and share in the night of celebration bringing together friends and organizations from the Trenton area together in the newly refurbished historic building. Isles' Chief Development Officer Corey Waldron says, "We're proud to bring together such a diverse, unique group of supporters and partners to celebrate Isles' work and show off the progress we've made at Mill One. Fall Fest provided us with a glimpse of what's to come. The energy created by bringing people together in the Social Profit Center will create opportunities for improved services and deepened impact throughout our region."

Founded in 1981, Isles, Inc. is a community development and environmental organization designed to foster self-reliant families and healthy, sustainable communities. Isles revitalizes communities, builds wealth, educates and trains, and creates healthy homes and spaces. Beyond its central

New Jersey base, Isles works to influence policy and helps others build healthy, self-help approaches. For more information, visit www.isles.org.

Rich Cuccagna may be reached at rcuccagna@njadvancemedia.com. Follow him on Twitter [@RichCuccagna](https://twitter.com/RichCuccagna). Find [NJ.com](#) on Facebook.



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