On August 21, 2013, Isles cut the ribbon at the grand re-opening of Roberto Clemente Park in the Old Trenton Neighborhood. The multi-year project was part of a larger community revitalization effort that includes numerous home renovations, energy efficiency improvements, community gardens, and other community projects. Isles’ partners included: the City of Trenton, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Green Acres program, the Department of Community Affairs’ Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit program, JPMorgan Chase, PNC Bank, PSE&G, Bank of America, Princeton Garden Club, and Wyeth Corporation.
Meet Ed Butler of Isles Youth Institute

Ed Butler loves kids, with unbounded energy. In addition to their education and job training needs, Ed makes sure they can access services such as case management, job placement, life skills training, housing, childcare, transportation, and nutrition. This year, Ed also started meeting the needs of students’ family members as well.

After more than 30 years, Ed knows what youth need, inside and out. He is a leading speaker, trainer, and consultant for national and international youth and adult services. He has worked with the New Jersey Juvenile Justice Commission, with juvenile correctional facilities, in public schools as a teacher, and as a nonprofit leader.

In 2013, Ed returned to Isles Youth Institute (IYI) as Manager of Support Services after a seven year absence. Immediately prior, he taught in Trenton Public Schools. Why did he leave that position, forfeiting excellent benefits and a pension? Ed is clear about his personal mission:

“One morning, I opened the newspaper to see the photos of 31 Trenton youth who had been killed this year. Eleven of those casualties had been my students at one time. I saw that I needed to be on the ground and on street corners recruiting students into a place that would not only keep them safe, but equip them with the tools necessary to succeed in life. Having worked at IYI in the past, I knew its effectiveness. The students needed me back there, where I would have more impact. Isles takes a comprehensive approach to addressing the challenges facing Trenton youth in and out of school. By adding services for families, I knew the students could excel even further.”

A native of Philadelphia, Ed has lived in Trenton for 20 years. He is a proud father of three: Brandon, Dominique and Taisha.

And when we make cities work, fewer families choose to move out into the countryside.

How do we build healthy cities? Smart, “new urbanist”-type planning matters, but as importantly, we need healthy families. What does that take? We start by recognizing and supporting the capacity for everyone to move towards self-reliance and then we build healthy, green buildings and places.

In a low cost way, that is what Isles does, working with talented staff, volunteers, and community residents who care about our mission. This includes our board of trustees, led by our new Chair Ann Marie Senior.

So join us, as a volunteer or supporter. We need your talent, wisdom, and engagement. Thanks for caring.

In Community,
Marty

MESSAGE from Isles’ President

The year 2013 was an exciting and productive one for Isles. This newsletter highlights some of those trends.

We completed a four year strategic plan that brought together board, staff, and community stakeholders. This diverse and thoughtful group re-affirmed Isles’ mission and general direction, while urging us to do more with our lessons of the past 33 years. Heading into 2014, we will sharpen our focus on research, writing, shaping policies, and helping others learn from our experience.

As a result, I do more public speaking, including to various environmental groups. At a U.N. Conference on Sustainability in December, I laid out a message that has grown consistent: If you care about the health of the planet that your kids and grandkids will inherit, then help build healthy cities.

It seems counterintuitive. Cities are the dirty, crowded places that people flee to get to the greener fields, right? Environmental groups focus on preserving, not developing, right? Think again.

Cities and high density suburbs are the greenest places to be. They lighten the carbon footprint of resident families, save water and other natural resources, and reduce the need for cars, allowing us to spend time in our own communities.
Events

Top: Miles for Isles 5K at Mercer County Park on May 4th
Center: 6th Annual Isles Golf Outing at TPC Jasna Polana on May 20th
Bottom left and right: Inaugural Haunted Harvest 5K Run/Walk and Monster Madness Mile Fun Run at Washington Crossing State Park on October 26th
Promote healthy living

Isles’ Prince Moore and Mrs. Pete

Isles Makes Homes Energy Efficient and Safe

In 2012, Mrs. Luedene Pete feared for her home. In dire disrepair, it was on the verge of condemnation. She lived with mold and mildew and rotting sheetrock, caused by rain and snow and a damaged roof. Mrs. Pete had seen Isles’ work on several homes in her neighborhood. She contacted Prince Moore, Isles E4 field supervisor. Prince promptly assessed her home. Within a short time, Mrs. Pete’s home had a new roof, sheetrock, and a new floor in her living room.

Like a thousand other homes, Mrs. Pete’s home is attached to an abandoned house that had fallen into worse disrepair. Over time, water started coming in from the damaged roof next door. Once again, Mrs. Pete reached out to Isles. Isles repaired the roof on the abandoned house, preparing it for future renovation.

Mrs. Pete is grateful for Isles and to Prince for saving her home. She told us, “This is the first winter I don’t have to worry about water or snow coming into my home. I was panicked and Prince saw my needs and went right to work to help.” Prince’s response: “It’s a privilege to work for Isles. It enables me to help others and I get joy out of seeing other people joyful.”

Isles targets homes that waste energy, threaten the health of children, and are at risk of abandonment. More than 60 homes were renovated over the past two years, with up to 70 more to be completed over the next two years.

Isles Garden Support Network grows tens of thousands of pounds of fresh veggies every year. But that is not enough. Gardeners and kids need to know how to prepare and eat the produce too. Isles offers hands on cooking workshops, film screenings, and community food education. To build demand for fresh, healthy food, Isles connects food to other community development goals.
Collaborating with Plate & Place, other local organizations help spread the gospel of gardening and fresh food to groups that serve kids and families.

Film screenings focus on food, nutrition, urban agriculture, community planning, and urban design. It’s a fun way to teach healthy cooking techniques and nutrition. Residents prepare an affordable, balanced meal and then eat it family-style. Whenever possible, we use fresh produce from an Isles garden.

Youth spend more time outdoors and they learn about nutrition, the environment, and leadership. At the children’s garden in Roberto Clemente Park, students explore the bamboo maze, the wildflower “mini-meadow,” and vegetable garden. At the garden next to Isles Youth Institute, students grow the produce and make potato salad, salsa, and even pizza.

Grounds for Sculpture allowed students to tour the sculpture park and galleries, and gain hands-on experience in the commercial gardens and kitchen at Rat’s Restaurant. Students helped Rat’s executive chef to create an appetizer from the garden ingredients.

Students learn to prepare healthy foods from the Executive Chef at Rat’s Restaurant.

**Good Food and Good Kids: Perfect Together**

While experts debate the levels of childhood obesity, the problem is real. Children are coping with adult diseases like high blood pressure and type two diabetes. Rather than despair the health of our future generations, Isles is doing something about it. This year, Isles has a national FoodCorps service member, Kaysha McKim, who is helping assure that more kids grow, taste, and enjoy veggies.

FoodCorps connects kids to real food and helps them grow up healthy. FoodCorps places volunteers where they can make a difference.

“When I joined Isles as a FoodCorps volunteer in September, I joined a 32-year old community garden service that included more than 11 school gardens. I help these gardens become sustainable, foster nutrition education, and provide a fun way to bring hands-on learning into the classroom. I help teachers connect gardens to common core standards in math, science, language arts, and social studies.

While harvesting, weighing, and graphing potatoes, one of the 5th grade students I work with said, “I just learned how to do math without a book!”

One teacher recently told me that the

(continued on the next page)
Alumni at Work

Eleven years ago, before joining Isles YouthBuild Institute (IYI), Lamar Allen was grappling with life in the juvenile justice system. Ten years ago, he graduated and he now works for Princeton University’s dining services. With Isles’ help, Lamar just bought his first home along with an adjoining rental unit. He also became an Isles donor.

Lamar attended an Isles workshop where he heard Kit Patel talk about Isles Financial Solutions (IFS). IFS helps workers build their financial capability. Lamar worked with Kit to build his credit and assets and buy his property in the fall of 2013. According to Lamar, “Isles has had a greater impact on my life mentally and financially than any single person or company I have ever come in contact with.”

Other Isles YouthBuild graduates have moved to self-reliance as well. Aubriel, ’06 alumna and Isles’ Center for Energy and Environmental Training (CEET) trainee, has worked for PSE&G since 2009. She began as an energy auditor and now reads meters. Aubriel enjoys her work and cites the discipline she learned through her Isles training as one of her most important assets as an employee. About Isles, Aubriel says, “If you want change for yourself and are willing to make sacrifices, Isles is the backbone and gives you the support to do it.”

Troy, ’07 alumnus and Isles’ CEET trainee, has also worked at PSE&G since 2009. Troy feels grateful to be at PSE&G. He and his wife recently bought their first home in Willingboro and plan to purchase a multi-family investment property in Trenton—a plan whose seed was planted while learning construction skills at IYI. According to Troy, “Isles literally changed my life when they reached out and recruited me.”

Good Food and Good Kids: Perfect Together
(continued from the previous page)

students she can’t get to participate in class are thriving in the garden. They love hands on learning.

My students love the garden time, and take great pride in caring for their plants. A 5th grade class harvested popping corn last fall. They shelled the corn, winnowed it, and learned patience while waiting for it to dry so they could pop it at a class popcorn party.

Over the winter, I teach cooking and nutrition. Students from 1st to 5th grade learn how to make their own whole grain pumpkin pancakes, vegetable stir fry, hummus, and black bean and corn salad. We are now planning our spring gardens and all of the delicious vegetables we will grow. I love this job.”

Take the Isles Virtual Garden Tour

Explore the rich history and diversity of gardens and gardeners in our community through photos, 360° panoramas, and narratives.

www.isles.org/services/urban-agriculture/map
Isles Collaborates to Revitalize Neighborhoods

Isles works with neighborhood residents and stakeholders to create strength-based comprehensive plans, raise funds to implement the plans, and effect change that advances local priorities. We employ our 30-year track record and strong relationships with funders to support collaborative neighborhood revitalization efforts that enable the continued good work of established organizations and build the capacity of newer or smaller organizations.

Isles’ work in the Old Trenton Neighborhood (OTN) exemplifies this approach. Since the 1990s, we have restored abandoned historic homes for homeownership, converted vacant land into thriving gardens and playgrounds, and partnered with regional housing developers to create nearly 100 affordable homes. In 2007, in response to New Jersey’s New Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit (NRTC) program, Isles convened the OTN community to develop a plan for the neighborhood. To date, Isles has secured more than $3.5M in NRTC and other funds to implement the plan. In all, nearly 75% of the funds Isles has raised to implement the OTN plan flows to collaborating organizations.

Accomplishments under the plan include:

- redevelopment of Roberto Clemente Park with a new basketball court, play structures, and an enhanced children’s garden;
- upgrades to YWCA’s facility;
- redevelopment of seven abandoned buildings into affordable single family homes; and
- creation of Isles E4, an affiliate that weatherizes and repairs occupied buildings, including 17 in OTN.

Over the coming year, Isles will:

- undertake predevelopment of 12 abandoned buildings;
- begin redevelopment of 26 apartments in 10 vacant buildings in collaboration with CityWorks;
- provide neighborhood-based child and family case management in collaboration with HomeFront;
- develop an arts-focused “maker space” in collaboration with the SAGE Coalition, an emerging artist collective, and the Trenton Downtown Association; and
- create or restore four murals in collaboration with SAGE.

Looking forward, we are engaging those OTN stakeholders listed above and others, including The College of New Jersey and Passage Theatre, around updating the neighborhood plan to reflect the burgeoning OTN arts scene. We hope to create a new Old Trenton Arts District that aligns with the City of Trenton’s economic development strategy.

Isles plays a similar role in the Trenton Historic Development Collaborative neighborhood of the West Ward, where a neighborhood plan completed in 2011 won acceptance into the NRTC program in 2013. Isles has raised more than $1.7M for plan implementation, nearly 50% of which funds collaborating organizations.
In the fall of 2013, Isles Youth Institute (IYI) students became Chief Executives of start up businesses. Students in Professor Bea Chiang’s Cost Accounting class at The College of New Jersey (TCNJ) helped IYI students develop written plans for four businesses:

- Tucker’s Tees (a silk screen t-shirt printing business)
- Clean Clothes R Us (a laundry service)
- A motor and bicycle repair shop
- Snacks on 33 (a school store)

IYI students worked in teams with the TCNJ students, developing business plans and presenting them to a panel of peers and advisors. IYI businesses are part of a new project-based learning curriculum. To plan and set up a business, students learn writing, math, reading, and other essential skills. Students, staff, and mentors look forward to finding opportunities to implement these plans.

This collaboration between Isles and TCNJ’s Bonner Center for Civic and Community Engagement is part of an ongoing relationship. In recent years, Bonner scholars have helped IYI students with GED tutoring, mentoring, and life skills. Bonner scholars help expose IYI students to high performing mentors— and to the college experience. This year’s partnership with the upper level Cost Accounting course at TCNJ also provides students with benefit from a growing trend in education: Community Engaged Learning.
Student Takes Steps Toward a Promising Future

Imagine needing a second chance. Imagine, as a teenager, losing the grandmother who loved and raised you, and having to move into another’s home, a home where you are expected to contribute as an adult while still a child. Imagine having to choose between staying in school and needing to earn a living. Now imagine discovering a supportive place where you could earn a diploma and gain job skills and certifications, take field trips, and learn life skills. For 20-year-old Lisa, this is more than an image.

Lisa attends Isles Youth Institute (IYI) where she is part of a community, with adults and peers that encourage and inspire her to be the woman that her grandmother would be proud of. After one year at IYI, she is close to obtaining her GED, and steps closer to a promising future.

“IYI motivates me a lot. To know that some of the staff are from where I’m from and they made it, it makes me feel like I can be somebody.”

Isles Teams Up with Mercer Street Friends to Make Trenton Homes Healthier

Often, the most dangerous place for kids is their home. And typically, unsafe conditions are little understood. From roof leaks to flaking paint to pests to mold, homes trigger chronic health issues—especially lead poisoning and asthma.

After testing thousands of homes and researching health data, the challenge is increasingly clear. Lead poisoning, for example, is affecting thousands of students in Trenton today. The cost of this threat is staggering, in education performance, medical costs, criminal justice, and much more. In addition, chronic asthma is a major reason for lost school days among students and work days for the adults who care for them. If left unmanaged, asthma can be fatal.

Isles supports our community to address these hazards through parent education, energy retrofits, and healthy homes testing and remediation. As an affiliate of the National Center for Healthy Housing, Isles’ Center for Energy and Environmental Training (CEET) trains community health workers, visiting nurses, building inspectors, and others in the essentials of indoor health and safety. Working with Mercer Street Friends’ Healthy Families Program, Isles has trained 10 home visitors. As part of their regular home visit schedule, they complete a home assessment, document the problems they find, and educate homeowners or landlords on how to make their homes healthy and maintain a safe indoor environment.
Isles is grateful for the many student, alumni, and corporate volunteers and volunteer groups who work with us throughout the year.

Top left: Bloomberg LP  
Top right: Princeton Class of ’83  
Center right: Toll Brothers  
Bottom left: Comcast  
Bottom right: NRG Energy
A complete audited financial statement will be available at our office or at isles.org/about/publications/financials

Isles be the change Capital Campaign (2006–2013)

From 2006–2013, the Campaign raised $9,465,000 from 355 donors for capital projects, including Mill One, the Center for Energy and Environmental Training (in honor of Bruce Coe), and the Isles Foundation. The Campaign also resulted in another $2,000,000 for Isles’ financial services, Youth Institute, and urban agriculture operations. Thanks to you for helping make this possible!
giving 2013

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