



We responded by re-tooling our organization, connecting even more deeply to those we serve.

#### MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

This has been a year unlike any in our lifetimes. The isolation, the disruption, the tragedy has been staggering. And we've learned a lot.

At Isles, we develop long-term strategies for self-reliance — building gardens to show how community action yields change and fresh vegetables, teaching skills that students use in future-focused careers, fixing homes to prevent child lead poisoning, and so much more. But this year, we were challenged by an existential, short-term crisis as well.

COVID began to threaten the health of our communities in the Spring, and an anti-racism reckoning came to Trenton over the Summer while gun violence spiked simultaneously. We responded by re-tooling our organization, connecting even more deeply to families and students we serve and our local partners.

We sewed and distributed masks with our Social Profit Center tenant, Inspired Threads. We expanded gardens across the city, donated produce to emergency food providers, and successfully transitioned all our Isles Youth Institute students to virtual classes. We held individual, socially-distant graduation ceremonies to celebrate their achievements over the summer. Despite the shutdowns and supply chain disruptions, we completed construction at our Social Profit Center and opened in early 2021.

In this Annual Report, you can sense Isles' response to this once-in-a-generation crisis, and the outcomes we achieved to meet the immediate threats, while still fostering long-term self-reliance and healthy communities.

While we persevered this past year, our neighborhoods were hit hard. Many lost jobs and too many lost loved ones. But our communities are resilient. As we prepare for life getting back to 'normal' later this year, Isles' tools are more vital than ever. Families want to re-build their own dreams — a good education, a healthy home, sound financial planning, job training that works and more.

As we reach a milestone anniversary this April and reflect on our 40 years of impact, we remain so grateful for your support and partnership. If you have known about our work for decades or if are just learning about us, visit isles.org and let us know what you think. In times like these, your voice and support matter more than ever.

In community,

Sean Jackson ,







# TRAIN & EDUCATE

Isles Youth Institute (IYI) offers an alternative path to a high school diploma, leadership skills, and job opportunities for students who have become disengaged from traditional schooling. Isles also trains adults from across New Jersey in future-focused green jobs and in energy and environmental fields.

The Center for Energy and Environmental Training (CEET) offers contractors, home health visitors and community members training and national certificates in lead safe home renovation, energy efficiency, and environmental health.

# BUILD WEALTH

Isles counsels and supports families wanting to buy their first home, as well as those facing the potential loss of their home through foreclosure. In addition, Isles Financial Solutions (IFS) offers financial wellness coaching for low-wage workers to take control of their everyday financial building blocks like budgeting, credit, savings, and debt to foster positive, long-term behavior change.

# LIVE GREEN & HEALTHY

Every year, lead poisons thousands of New Jersey children, who ingest it mostly through dust in their own homes. Isles tests homes and removes lead and other environmental hazards. We also educate the public, help other community-based organizations, and improve public policies that help kids thrive. Isles also helps residents and youth to grow their own food in community and school gardens. Families save money, access great food, learn to work together, and clean and beautify vacant land.

# REVITALIZE COMMUNITIES

Isles partners with residents and other stakeholders to develop community plans, then work with them over time to make positive change. We clean and reactivate buildings, gardens, parks, and open spaces, integrating mobile recreation, community events, and locally-created public art to change how visitors experience them. In addition, we operate the Social Profit Center at Mill One, a historic former textile mill converted into an innovative 70,000 square foot office, studio, and warehouse facility for social profit organizations, artists, and events.

# Isles Responds: 2020

#### **SPRING**

When the pandemic hit in March, Isles quickly adapted, converting our services to virtual where possible and meeting the needs of our customers in new ways. Many staff began to work remotely, while in-person work that was allowed to continue (such as gardening) adapted new COVID-safe protocols, social distancing, and mask wearing.

We knew many customers were food insecure, especially our IYI students who relied on our in-house food pantry. So, we delivered 500 pantry bags and hot meals to families, as well as provided healthy homes kits and educational activities for young children in partnership with Princeton University.





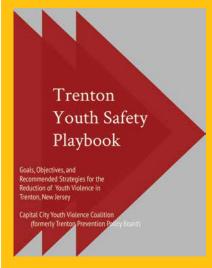
Isles Youth Institute transitioned into a virtual learning environment. We provided chromebooks and internet access to students to continue their education and stay connected to us.

Masks were scarce in our communities, and we partnered with Social Profit Center tenant Inspired Threads to sew high-quality masks. By year's end, we distributed more than 6,000 to customers, residents and local businesses, and other nonprofits.



#### **SUMMER**

As the pandemic stretched into the summer, anti-racism protests heated up in Trenton and elsewhere in response to the police killing of George Floyd and other Black individuals. At the same time, Trenton suffered from a spike in gun violence, including the shooting of a 12-year-old girl outside of our Wood Street offices.



Isles reaffirmed our commitment to becoming a more explicitly anti-racist organization. We made Juneteenth an organizational day of reflection and service, and launched an internal anti-racism workshop series designed to critically look at our services and move the meter toward greater anti-racism policies and practices.



We held socially-distant, personalized Graduation Ceremonies for our Isles Youth Institute students, finding safe ways to celebrate their achievements with their families.

At the same time, our work continued: more than 1,000 lbs of produce were donated to emergency food providers, and we continued to map food access sites across the city. We partnered with Trenton Health Team and Reinas Y Diamantes to teach families and youth about healthy cooking and nutrition.



# Isles Responds: 2020 continued

#### **FALL/WINTER**

By fall, it was clear that COVID-19 would continue well into 2021. Isles continued to refine our ability to offer virtual services and webinars, while also preparing for a post-pandemic future. We continued construction at the Social Profit Center at Mill One and purchased Wood Street Housing — 46 units of subsidized affordable housing and two commercial units — in partnership with Community Asset Preservation Corporation (a part of New Jersey Community Capital).



We continued to hold financial coaching webinars to help families weather the economic impacts of COVID as well as virtual cooking and nutrition classes for youth, and Community Health Worker trainings on healthy homes work.

Our year-end holiday party was held virtually, giving staff a chance to re-connect and celebrate their work over the year. They sent well wishes to a colleague recovering from COVID after a brief hospital stay.



We hosted our first virtual event, the Harvest Celebration. This event, held at the Social Profit Center at Mill One, showcased our new office space while commemorating the transition between Isles' Founder Marty Johnson and new CEO Sean Jackson.





We finished major construction at the Social Profit Center and prepared to open in early 2021.

# 2020 Highlights – By the Numbers

TRAIN & EDUCATE

**204** 

individuals trained in energy efficiency and environmental health 29

IYI students participated in the Leadership Academy as well as meaningful community service projects 44

certifications earned by IYI students in CPR, OSHA, and Pre-Apprentice Construction Training

#### **BUILD WEALTH**

**296** 

participated in first-time homebuyer and foreclosure prevention counseling, and 243 received financial coaching 112

customers earned housing certificates (to qualify for financial assistance) 29

customers purchased a first home

#### LIVE GREEN & HEALTHY

**70** 

healthy home assessments provided and 9 homes made lead-safe (with work halted between March and July) 300

pounds of honey harvested from 12 Isles-managed beehives. We received first place in the blind taste test division of the annual NJ Beekeepers Association Honey Show! **581** 

elementary school students received gardening and nutrition lessons on a weekly or biweekly basis

#### REVITALIZE COMMUNITIES

46

units of subsidized affordable housing and two commercial units purchased in partnership with Community Asset Preservation Corporation (a part of New Jersey Community Capital) **26**k

sq ft of space leased at the Social Profit Center as construction completes and we open early 2021 12

gardens added to our network, for a total of 75 school and community gardens

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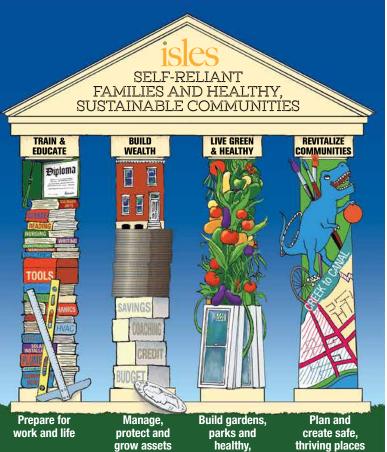
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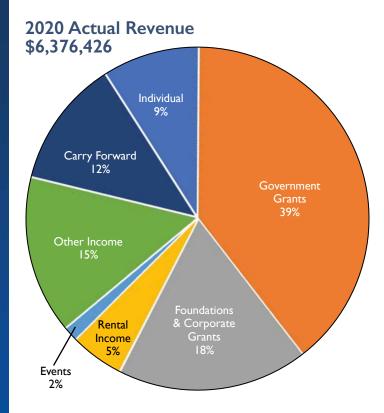
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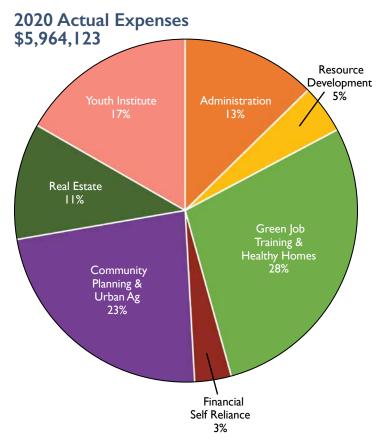
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efficient homes

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A complete audited financial statement will be available at our office or at **isles.org/financials**.

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