

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. Isles:

- **Trains and educates** youth and adults through a vocational school and energy/environmental training center.
- **Builds wealth** through innovative financial services and loans that help restore credit and increase savings.
- **Revitalizes communities** by developing affordable homes, parks, and community agriculture.
- **Promotes green, healthy living** by tackling environmental hazards, fostering energy efficiency, and promoting healthy lifestyles.

Highlights of 2021 include:

Train and Educate

Isles Youth Institute: During the 2021 academic year, IYI enrolled 24 students with an approximate retention rate of 55%. In late spring, IYI shifted from a remote learning platform to a hybrid model combining in-person learning, online learning, and internships. In the early fall, we began full-time in-person instruction at the school as we continue to provide High School Equivalence (HiSET) testing options for students while testing centers remain closed. This year:

- 6 IYI students participated in our social-distanced graduation earning their high school diplomas.
- 33 certifications were earned in CPR/First Aid, OSHA, and Pre-Apprentice Construction Training (PACT.)
- 28 students, community members and alumni participated in various internal and external job training, internship, and summer employment opportunities.

In addition, Isles Youth Services also provides constructive and supportive after-school and evening social and cultural programming for youth that builds leadership skills, affirms youths' pride in themselves and their communities, and promotes non-violent conflict resolution strategies. This included:

- A summer enrichment program called Love Peace and Joy, serving more than 25 youth with workshops and lessons in emotional intelligence, self-worth and mental health, therapeutic painting, and African drumming. On July 30, LPJ hosted a drum circle showcase called Drumming For Healing, bringing together nearly 70 community members.
- "Women Crushing Wednesdays (WCW)," series during women's history month, recognizing game-changing women in and from our community and providing them a platform for discussion via Zoom.
- Meaningful community service projects for more than 30 youth, which included beautifying and maintaining the Trenton City Hall outdoor atrium and improving community centers.

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, an EPA lead Renovation, Repair and Painting provider and credentials lead abatement workers through State of New Jersey Department of Health approved training. In 2021, CEET

resumed at all training offerings with reduced class sizes and hybrid teaching methods to reduce in person contact.

This year, CEET:

- Provided Healthy Homes for Community Health Workers courses (virtually) to 22 participants, with 3 more classes scheduled for the end of the year with 20+ registered by mid-Oct.
- Provided Lead-Safe Renovation, Repair, and Paint training and certification for 65 workers.
- Provided 6 Lead worker/Lead Supervision trainings, offering 21 Lead Abatement certifications
- Offered “The Eight Keys to a Healthy Home” 2 times to reach a total of 49 community members.

Build Wealth:

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. This year:

- Isles had 284 customers seeking housing or foreclosure advice or assistance
 - 155 customers attended Pre-Purchase Workshops.
 - 176 attended one-on-one counseling sessions.
 - 81 customers earned housing certificates (to qualify for financial assistance.)
 - 42 customers purchased a first home.
- 236 customers received IFS services
 - 107 one-on-one customers completed a budget, credit analysis and action plan.
 - 176 attended virtual financial workshops (offered virtually during the pandemic.)
 - 12 customers filed their taxes with the assistance of a financial coach.

Revitalize Communities

Community Planning: Isles partners with residents, civic organizations, and neighborhood associations to identify community needs and interests, and to support implementation of recommendations that emerge from planning processes. In addition, Isles leads city-wide research and planning initiatives related to blight reduction, creative placemaking, and food systems. In 2021, this work included the following:

- Completed development of a new Downtown Trenton Neighborhood plan for the Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit program, with expanded boundaries and integration of the Creek to Canal Creative District plan.
- Facilitated the updating of a city-wide neighborhood conditions report, examining key indicators of a neighborhood’s health.
- Led the development of the “People Plan” component of a HUD-funded comprehensive planning effort for Donnelly Homes and the surrounding neighborhood in North Trenton, in partnership with the Trenton Housing Authority and the City of Trenton.
- Continued support for Creative District activities and programming, including collaboration with six local artists to beautify six locations in downtown, by combining custom artwork, vintage photographs from the Trentoniana archives, and research on large-scale posters, known as Reflecting Trenton.

Placemaking: We work to improve people’s experience of particular places, which includes maintaining the cleanliness and appearance of places, improving community infrastructure, providing healthy and safe programming, and crafting innovative enhancements with and for the community. Our main services for placemaking are Clean & Green, which activates and maintains vacant lots and city parks to implement creative interventions in underutilized spaces; and T-Recs Mobile Recreation Service, which provides fun activities and games for residents of all ages in underserved neighborhoods. Highlights of 2021 include:

- Built and installed 8 parklets outside of restaurants throughout the City, providing creative outdoor spaces for dining and conversation.
- Provided T-Recs and related offerings (such as garden workshops/tours) at the City’s Take-it-to-the-Streets roaming recreation program, Art All Day/Ciclovía, National Night Out, the Passaic St. Classic, the Higbee outdoor Back to School Event, and miscellaneous gatherings.
- In Old Trenton, hosted 8 community meetings and events (in-person initially and now virtually), worked with residents to maintain 30 planters at homes and businesses, and continued maintaining 3 landscaped gateway vacant lots.
- Coordinated two mural projects in Old Trenton supporting local street artists: the redesign and installation on the Perry Street rotating mural completed in September, and a new mural at Esperanza apartments.
- Continued preservation work on the Higbee Street School and Carver Center, including the submission of a National Register of Historic Places nomination and receiving funding to advance the stabilization, reuse, and promotion of both buildings.

Real Estate Development: Isles purchases, improves, and develops real estate in downtown Trenton, and manages and maintains affordable housing units to moderate the market and ensure healthy, safe, affordable housing remains available for long-term residents. Highlights of 2021 include:

- Completed rehab of a 3-bedroom apartment and first floor commercial space at 118 N Montgomery in Old Trenton, and completed design work on a 4-unit rehab at 238 E Hanover.
- Continued work with Interface Studio Architects (ISA) for the design of new construction on six vacant lots in Old Trenton.

Social Profit Center at Mill One: The Social Profit Center is a historic former textile mill on the Trenton/Hamilton border that Isles converted into a high-performing, mixed use regional hub for dozens of social profit organizations. The Center fosters a collaborative environment for organizations to thrive and find new ways to strengthen communities through capacity building programming and technical assistance. In 2021, we:

- Secured \$1.8M in investment through the Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit Program.
- Opened our doors in Q1 and secured 25 tenants, representing 73% of the building occupied.
- Currently host monthly meetings and quarterly mixers with tenants to foster a collaborative environment.

Live Green and Healthy

Urban Agriculture: Isles currently supports 75 community, school, backyard, and institutional (sponsored by other nonprofits or organizations) gardens. We serve approximately 200 community gardeners and support gardens at nearly all public schools in Trenton. In 2021, we:

- Offered over 70 online interactive workshops reaching over 200 youth. Topics included gardening, nutrition, beekeeping, hands-on cooking, and virtual field trips to farms.

- Distributed over 200 free “grow kits”, which included a planter, soil, fertilizer, seeds, seedlings, and instructions.
- Renovated three school gardens and built one new community garden, while continuing to expand the garden at Drumthwacket, the Governor’s Mansion.
- Sold produce, flowers, honey, and herbs for the eighth year at the Greenwood Avenue Farmers Market and donated more than 700 pounds of produce to emergency food suppliers.
- Held six gardening workshops, trained 12 individuals who completed the year in the Incubator Garden, and distributed approximately 10,000 vegetable seedlings and hundreds of pounds of seeds to school and community gardens. All 12 Incubator garden beds were also completely rebuilt. We also participated in the Cooperative Gardens Commission effort and served as a resource and material hub for those interested in starting gardens.
- Harvested over 500 pounds of honey from 12 Isles-managed beehives and again received first place in the blind taste test division of the annual NJ Beekeepers Association Honey Show.

Lead, Energy Efficiency, and Environmental Health: 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 65 in-person and virtual Healthy Home Assessments.
- Completed 28 lead hazard control (abatement and remediation) projects.
- Weatherized or provided heating system repairs or replacement to 45 low-income residents.

In addition, Isles continues to be a strong advocate for public education, policy change, data transparency, and effective collaboration in support of lead-safety, weatherization, and clean energy. This year, Isles:

- Successfully advocated for the passage of the new Lead Safe Certificate Bill, signed into law this July. We worked closely with the Governor’s office, co-sponsors of the bill, and the leadership in the NJ State Legislature to ensure that we close a lead-inspection loophole that disproportionately affected children of color in communities around the state.
- Served on the steering committee for the Lead-Free NJ coalition, including presenting in multiple webinars on the impacts of lead and strategies for lead poisoning prevention.
- Contributed to Green 21 Environmental Guide, a nonpartisan effort to advise NJ’s next governor on timely environmental issues.
- Acted as advisor to multiple national and statewide lead committees, including Jersey Water Works Committee to Eliminate Lead from Drinking Water, Sustainable NJ, Rutgers Environmental and Occupational Health Science Institute, an Interagency Task Force on Lead Poisoning Prevention, the Governor’s Council for Prevention of Developmental Disabilities, NJ Conservation Foundation’s Building Electrification Committee, the NJ Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatricians, and the Child Care Project of Northern New Jersey United Way.
- Advocated for increased lead paint funding in New Jersey: worked with Federal lobby team to acquire \$1M earmark for National Lead Safe Fund, worked with Sen. Booker’s office and NJ state agencies toward increased Workforce Development funding through Federal ARP funding and advocated for Lead Paint investment in future rounds of federal infrastructure funding.
- Received funding from the NJ Department of Environmental Protection to develop NJ’s first-ever multi-service Electric Vehicle Pilot, which includes a car share, rideshare, and shuttle service to provide Trenton-area residents with transportation options to increase their access to jobs, healthcare, food, and other essential resources.