



For Immediate Release

Contact: Laura Fenster Rothschild, Managing Director - Johnson Center for Learning & Impact

Phone: (908) 803-2251

Email: lfrothschild@isles.org

Community-Members and Experts Come Together to Tackle Issues of Justice in a Free Forum

Trenton, N.J. – The Johnson Center for Learning & Impact is hosting the third annual Isles Forum. The 2023 Forum, “Justice: The Heart of Community Development,” runs from June 5-8, 2023 with virtual sessions Monday – Wednesday and an in-person Youth Peace Summit at The College of New Jersey on Thursday, June 8. The Johnson Center is part of Isles, Inc., a community development and environmental nonprofit headquartered in Mercer County, NJ.

Isles developed the virtual forum in 2021 to create an intentional sharing of practices amongst those doing grassroots community work, like minded organizations, policy makers and researchers. The goal is to share what is working in communities and explore more effective strategies for successful community development. This includes grassroots initiatives and the systems and policies that drive larger, more wide-spread change in historically oppressed communities. The 2023 Forum is a space where thought-leaders and practitioners can come together online and in-person to share challenges and emerging ideas and discuss ways that we can work together to drive more wide-spread impact in the communities we serve.

“We’re excited to deliver another dynamic series of seminars and discussions this year focusing on justice in community development,” said Sean Jackson, Isles CEO. “It’s a chance to join from your office, your home, or on the go to learn about strategies grass roots organizations are using to overcome the historic inequities facing the communities they serve.”

This free, one-of-a-kind event includes a series of webinars, panels, and discussions focused on Justice in the context of urban community development with each day devoted to a different aspect of justice: environmental justice, social justice, and economic justice. This year, seminar topics include:

- Heat, Trees, and the Impact on Urban Centers
- Alternative Strategies for Safe Communities
- Moving Beyond Community Gardens: The Role of Food and Entrepreneurship
- Workforce Development

- Current state of Rent and Evictions
- Effects of NJ Marijuana Legalization
- Environmental Design & Neighborhood Safety

“What excites me the most about the Isles Forum is the intentional approach to create opportunities to share expertise from diverse voices critical to community development,” said Johnson Center Director Laura Fenster Rothschild. “The Forum creates an opportunity for grassroots leaders, community organizations, government officials, and researchers to share and learn together. In our model, each person is an expert with a great deal to contribute to making progress in community development. This year, each perspective is critical to addressing historic injustices in our communities.”

Last year, several hundred attendees from around the state and across the country joined in the various seminars and discussions. Isles is grateful for the various corporate sponsors whose support ensures that we can keep the event free for all participants. This year’s media sponsor is WHY radio which joins our daily sponsors M&T Bank, PSE&G, and NJM Insurance as well as session sponsors Capital Health and The Bank of Princeton. To view the complete Forum schedule, including descriptions of each session, session timing, and presenters, and to register to attend, visit www.isles.org/forum. The website is updated regularly with additional information.

About Isles: Founded in 1981, Isles, Inc. is a community development and environmental organization which fosters self-reliant families and healthy, sustainable communities. Isles revitalizes neighborhoods, educates and trains, creates healthy homes and spaces, and helps families build wealth. Beyond its central New Jersey base, Isles works to influence policy and helps other nonprofits build successful community development agencies.

Through an array of self-help services, Isles has empowered more than 1,300 students to receive educational opportunities and job training, over 600 families to purchase homes and receive coaching for financial sustainability, and hundreds of gardeners through its seventy-plus Trenton gardens. In addition, over 500 homes were built or renovated through community revitalization, an additional 3,000 homes have been tested for lead, and more than 450 have been rehabbed to be lead-safe and energy efficient. This work in Trenton to convert dangerous, inefficient older homes into high-performing safe places for families, is expanding to other parts of New Jersey.

The Johnson Center was created by Isles in 2022 to apply Isles’ experience and research to strengthen public policy through advocacy and strategic partnerships; to prepare next generation of social entrepreneurs who will create, manage and change social profit organizations; and to teach and share best practices and lessons learned with the public and connect to others that do the same.

For more information on Isles or to learn how you can get involved, visit www.isles.org

#####