

OUR MISSION: READS promotes regional equity and builds sustainable communities and socially progressive organizations through innovative real estate development.

READS is a full-service, nonprofit real estate development and consulting firm with a focus on community and economic development. READS provides guidance and direct real estate development services to organizations seeking to develop real estate to meet their organizational and client needs.

READS is a 501(c)(3) not for profit organization. To support READS send your tax-deductible donation to READS at the address above.

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## WORKSHOPS & EVENTS

### YCDPA'S 1ST ANNUAL RECEPTION

The Young Community Development Professionals Association (YCDPA) held its first annual reception at the Governor's Conference on Housing and Community Development on September 28th. Vaughn McKoy, Director of Corporate Responsibility & Sustainability at the PSE&G Foundation, was the keynote speaker highlighting the importance of fostering the development of young professionals in the field. Three awards were given out at the event: Young Professional of the Year, Organization of the Year, and Mentor of the Year. Visit [readsusa.com/yedpa](http://readsusa.com/yedpa) to learn more and join the YCDPA mailing list.

### "PREPARING FOR EXCELLENCE" WORKSHOP

On October 20th, the leaders of READS presented at the "Preparing for Excellence: Developing and Operating a Quality Charter School" workshop. Carlos Perez, CEO of New Jersey Charter School Association, was the keynote speaker. Brian Keenan of READS and Rex Shaw, Retired Executive Director of Teaneck Community Charter School, presented on management covering best practices and resources. Jeff Crum and Keith Timko of READS presented on technical assistance introducing groups to the support and resources available from READS and other key organizations.

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“We react, consciously and unconsciously, to the places where we live and work...These places have an impact on our sense of self, our sense of safety, the kind of work we get done...in short, the places where we spend our time affect the people we are and can become.” – Tony Hiss

## Nonprofit Centers: READS Leads by Example

After seven years of renting office space, READS has a place it expects one day to call its own. In May, READS moved into a new home at 224 Main St., in Metuchen. READS is occupying the building—including 15 offices and a conference room—via a long-term lease with an option to buy.

The new digs are not just giving READS a new home but other nonprofits as well. One of the nonprofits leasing space from READS is Literacy Volunteers of NJ (LVNJ). “The space is ideal for us. It gives us access to meeting space, a shared copier, fax, and IT services,” said Jessica Tomkins, Executive Director of LVNJ. “But one of the greatest benefits of the space is the ability to share knowledge and ideas with other like-minded organizations”. The building is owned by Women Helping Women, Inc. which is also leasing office space back from READS.

To celebrate their unique partnership and recent successes, on September 22, 2010 READS and LVNJ held a joint event in downtown Metuchen. Miss New Jersey 2010, Ashleigh Udalovas, the spokesperson for LVNJ, was the keynote speaker. “Literacy Volunteers of New Jersey is in a stronger position with the move to the



The READS' staff just after moving boxes to 224 Main Street.



vnonprofit center” said Tomkins, “We are fortunate for organizations like READS because they are committed to investing in community nonprofits.”

“This is a great event for READS,” said Brian Keenan, Director and President of READS. “It is ironic. READS was like the cobbler whose children have no shoes. We have been working so hard and for so long to help others with their real estate that we neglected our own needs. A permanent home for READS gives us roots, builds equity, helps attract staff and stabilizes occupancy costs thereby ensuring a sound financial future.”

READS is working to create nonprofit centers in other areas in New Jersey as well. “We are in the early phases of planning for a center in New Brunswick. It is a replicable model which allows nonprofits to maximize their limited resources by sharing services and improving their physical environment,” said Jeff Crum, Director of Real Estate for READS.

As one of the first nonprofit centers in New Jersey, READS is proud to be a leading example of such opportunities for nonprofit organizations.



Dear Friends,

As many of you know, READS recently celebrated the opening of the Metuchen Nonprofit Center at 224 Main Street in Metuchen, NJ. At a recent gathering, READS and Literacy Volunteers of New Jersey—a tenant in the nonprofit center—were joined by Ashleigh Udalovas, Miss New Jersey for 2010.

It may seem a strange collection of people and organizations, but we have more in common than meets the eye. READS helps to build schools and community facilities where learning can take place. Literacy Volunteers builds awareness of adult literacy programs. Ms. Udalovas shares that commitment, too; she founded the Cumberland County chapter of First Book, an organization that gives books to financially disadvantaged children and helps draw public attention to the issue.

They say the problems we are trying to solve like literacy are far too complex for any one group to solve alone. We’ve never been more certain of that, and we’ll take all of the help we can get. Whether it’s enlisting the support of Miss New Jersey or local corporations or friends and family, we know that increasing educational opportunities, building schools and community facilities and revitalizing communities is hard work. It takes coordination, collaboration and partnership to be successful. And to all of our partners, funders, and collaborators present and future, thank you for your support and partnership to make this work possible.

Brian Keenan  
Director  
and President

Keith Timko  
Director  
and CEO

## DID YOU KNOW?

### READS Launches Healthy Schools Initiative

For the first time since tracking life expectancy in the United States, the current generation of children is projected to have a shorter life span than their parents' generation. This potential reversal in life expectancy is attributed to an increase in childhood obesity and the associated health risks.

Here are some alarming facts:

- Over the past three decades, childhood obesity rates in the United States have tripled, and today, nearly one in three children in the US are overweight or obese.
- According to the 2007 National Survey of Children's Health, 15.4% of New Jersey children between ages 10 and 17 are classified as obese, ranking the state 21st in the nation.

• Often, urban communities are known as "food deserts" because they lack access to fresh and nutritious foods.

***"The physical and emotional health of an entire generation and the economic health and security of our nation is at stake." - First Lady Michelle Obama at the Let's Move! launch on February 9, 2010***

To help in the fight against childhood obesity and the lack of access to healthy foods in urban communities READS launched the Garden State Schools Initiative. Schools play a key role and are an ideal setting for fostering healthy, lifelong behaviors like eating nutritious foods

since children consume at least half of their daily calories at school.

Working with charter schools throughout the state, the Garden States Schools Initiative aims to build school gardens, establish food pantries and farmers markets at schools, work with schools to access existing health and nutrition resources, and connect schools with healthy school meal providers. The good news is that healthy lifestyle habits, including healthy eating and physical activity, can make a real difference. Together with our Garden State Schools Initiative partners, READS hopes to increase access to healthy foods and provide students, their families and communities with healthier food choices.

## HAPPENINGS AT READS

### Welcome New Staff

READS has begun its exciting first year as a placement with the Jesuit Volunteer Corps, a program that sends volunteers into foreign or domestic cities in jobs imparting social good. These volunteers live in an apostolic community, devoted to social justice, spirituality, community and simple living. Hailing



from San Francisco, **Jane Zatkín**, READS' first Jesuit Volunteer, joined READS as a Community Organizer for her one year placement. She graduated in 2009 from Loyola Marymount University with a degree in Political Science, followed by a year interning for California Assemblywoman and Majority Whip, Fiona Ma.



After interning at READS this past summer as a Wachovia/NJ Department of Community Affairs (DCA) Housing Scholar, **Steve Moschetti** is now

working part-time at READS. Steve will be graduating in December with a Bachelor's degree in Planning and Public Policy from Rutgers University.

### Workshops- A Success!

READS recently hosted a series of workshops in New Jersey and Delaware focusing on creative facility options for nonprofits. With over 110 organizations attending the three workshops, the interest in facility options has never been greater.

During these sessions READS covered topics such as the benefits of owning versus renting, renegotiating leases, sharing space with other nonprofits and qualifying for financing and subsidies to buy a building or expand existing facilities. Attendees welcomed the chance to network with fellow professionals and learn about the many resources available to them.

Along with partners like New Jersey Community Capital and NCALL, READS is looking forward to continuing this successful endeavor with additional workshops in the future.

### Lease Renegotiations Webinar

On October 27th, READS ran its first webinar around the business and legal implications of lease renegotiation transactions and how to plan and execute them. Andrew Zezas, SIOR, President & CEO of Real Estate Strategies Corporation, and Evan Glanz, Esq., Founder of Evan Glanz Associates presented on the topic. The presenters offered suggestions on how to establish the right leasing terms for your organization and how to negotiate those terms with the owner of the rented space.

### "Building with Purpose"

READS' blog, Building with Purpose, has taken off this summer with the addition of the CD WiRe (Community Development Week-in-Review). For a weekly compilation of news articles related to the community development field sign-up at [www.readsusa.com/community](http://www.readsusa.com/community).

### Greater Brunswick Charter School Crosses the Finish Line

There's no feeling like the satisfaction of a job well done.

That sense of pride was fully evident at Greater Brunswick Charter School on September 13, when the school opened its doors for the new school year, following a major construction project. The project, managed by READS, more than doubled the size of the school's educational facility.

"Greater Brunswick has a history with READS that goes back to our very beginning. They were, in fact, READS' very first client," said Jeff Crum, Director of Real Estate at READS.

Greater Brunswick initially opened their doors in a rented facility, but a year later, disaster struck when its landlord decided not to renew their lease. The school found new classroom space, but the school realized their precarious position by not owning their own facility.

"We realized we needed our own building, or we were not going to survive," said Jessica Tomkins, a longtime trustee of the charter school and the chairwoman of its Growth and Sustainability Committee. "Of course, in order to buy a building, we would have to grow the school to the point that we could afford a mortgage and offer the programs we wanted."

For charter schools today, READS has a range of services and the organization has a proven track record at helping charter schools get the buildings they need. The problem was, seven years ago READS did not exist.

"At the time, I was working with New Jersey Community Capital," said Brian Keenan, Director and President of READS. "Greater Brunswick Charter School came to us and said 'We need help,' and we said, 'Yes, you do.' But the school's needs were outside the scope of New Jersey Community Capital's services."

With the backing of New Jersey Community Capital, Keenan launched READS to aid the growing charter school community in the state, beginning with Greater Brunswick Charter School.

READS helped the school locate a suitable building, a former bowling alley on Joyce Kilmer Avenue, in the southwest portion of New Brunswick. It matched the school with a builder to refit the back half of the building, arranged financing and helped the trustees develop the school's growth plans so it could reach a sustainable size.

"This was the year the school grew into its space," said Crum. "For the past five years, the school rented office space in the front



of the building while slowly increasing their enrollment. But this year, with the tenants gone and the building's large warehouse space emptied, things really got moving."

While elementary classes met in the rear half of the building or in rental space across the street, construction crews began transforming the vacant space into a top-notch educational facility. Workers erected the metal framework for more than a dozen classrooms and a gymnasium with a regulation-size basketball court.

"The gym in particular took careful work, but it's become the pride of the school," said Crum. "The school's trustees were excited every time they saw the progress being made, and now the kids are too."

Once school let out for the summer, workers moved into action in the existing half of the facility. The contractor converted the old multi-purpose room into a media center and new classrooms, as well as reconfiguring other rooms into more functional space. The old art room made way for two classrooms for basic skills instruction, a new staff room was created and an old classroom grew big enough to accommodate the music program.

The school was issued a certificate of occupancy and students returned the second week in September.

"This is something the school never would have achieved without the regular involvement of READS," said Mike DeBlasio, Director of Operations. "READS helped us arrange the financing with Sun National Bank and New Jersey Economic Development Authority to pay for the work, they helped us to select an architect and a contractor, and they managed the project for us from start to finish. READS has been one of our greatest resources."

GBCS and READS celebrated the completion of the school's expansion at a building dedication on October 27, 2010.