

CULTURE BRIGHT:

A SUMMER ESSAY SERIES

Reflections on art, culture, and the future of the Quad Cities from **Jen Lewis-Snyder**, President & CEO of The Cultural Trust.



Who Makes Culture Matter Here?

Everyone.
Not just museums.
Not just musicians.
Not just artists.
Everyone.
Culture isn't something we consume.
It's something we create together.

Families make culture.
Generation after generation, they pass down traditions, recipes, stories, and memories. New generations add their own chapters while old generations watch them unfold.

Neighbors make culture.
Neighborhoods become gathering places with coffee shops, restaurants, music, festivals, and familiar faces. In the Quad Cities, neighbors do more than live near one another.
We make a place together.

Artists make culture.
Some work alone. Others collaborate.
A painter partners with a woodworker.
A symphony partners with dancers.
A filmmaker partners with a storyteller.
Creativity multiplies when people build something together.

Chefs make culture.
Every meal tells a story.
Every recipe carries history.
Every dining room becomes a place where people gather, celebrate, and connect.
Culture isn't just what hangs on a wall.

Sometimes it's what arrives on a plate.

Tradespeople make culture, too.
Imagine a day without electricity.
Without running water.
Without roads.
Without deliveries.
Without the people who quietly keep communities moving.

Now imagine this.
Your plumber sings in a barbershop quartet.
Your electrician plays guitar.
Your UPS driver performs bluegrass on weekends.
Your barber discovered her love of design by styling Barbie hair as a child.

People are rarely just one thing.

And that's the point.
Culture exists because people bring their full selves into the community every day.
That's what makes the Quad Cities special.
The ingredients have always been here.
Extraordinary artists.
Passionate organizations.
Dedicated volunteers.
Generous supporters.
Beautiful public spaces.
A river that connects us all.

What Culture Bright is building now is a shared invitation.
An opportunity to experience the creative spirit of our region as one connected story.
Not as seven organizations.
Not as separate events.
Not as individual audiences.
As one ecosystem.
Because vibrant communities are not defined by their buildings.

“Culture exists because people bring their full selves into the community every day.”

They are defined by the experiences people share inside them.
The memories they create.
The stories they tell.
The pride they feel when they say, “This is where I live.”

So who makes culture matter here?
You do.
Every time you buy a ticket.
Every time you volunteer.
Every time you bring a child to a performance.

Every time you invite a friend.
Every time you choose to participate.
One song.
One conversation.
One experience.
One act of belonging at a time.
Because Culture Matters Here.
And it always will.

To learn more about The Cultural Trust and its Legacy Partners, go to CultureBright.org.



The Cultural Trust

