CULTURE BRIGHT:

A WINTER ESSAY SERIES

Reflections on art, culture, and the future *of the Quad Cities from* ***Linda Bowers,*** *Board Chair of The Cultural Trust.*

Where Trust Grows



"People with good intentions make promises. People with good character keep them."

Look up transparent leadership, and you might find a picture of Ryan Wille, executive director of the Quad City Botanical Center.

Authentic, trustworthy, collaborative, selfless, and kind are among the words people use to describe him. They are also qualities that give a team confidence in its leader.

What makes your best friend your bestie? What gives you a sense of security at work?

Trust builds over time, through personal and professional ups and downs, when a person's actions repeatedly affirm their words.

Walk the talk.

Actions speak louder than words.

You are what you do, not what you say you'll do.

We have heard these expressions all our lives. Their meaning becomes clear when a decision is difficult, a new idea needs support, or someone needs honest information to do the job well.

When Ryan became executive director in 2021, he understood that trust would grow through the way he worked.

He gave the QCBC team space to do its work and access to information about the gardens' operations. Employees could make informed decisions, contribute ideas, and understand how their responsibilities connected to the Center's goals.

A strategic plan gave the team a shared direction for reaching new audiences and continuing to grow.

That approach also shaped how Ryan worked with partners.

The Cultural Trust provides annual unrestricted support to QCBC and five fellow Legacy Partners. Through Culture Bright, those organizations also share ideas, expertise, and resources to create experiences together.

For that collaboration to work, people need to speak openly. They need to raise concerns, offer suggestions, and trust that everyone is working toward a good experience for the guest.

This summer, that approach helped bring Bluegrass on the Grass to the Botanical Center as the Culture Bright Summer Series opening event.

The concert sold out in 12 hours. Ninety-two percent of attendees were first-time visitors to the gardens. Nine new memberships followed, and by September 13, 18 percent of attendees had returned.

Those results tell us something about what can follow a successful evening. The results give that trust meaning.

People who came for music found a place they wanted to visit again. Some became members. A concert introduced them to the Botanical Center and its year-round mission.

Ryan and Jen Lewis-Snyder, president and CEO of The Cultural Trust, credit the openness shared by the organizations throughout planning and execution.

Ideas could come from anyone. Each contribution had to help the experience work as a whole.

That takes a leader willing to share information, a team trusted to use its knowledge, and partners comfortable asking for help.

Visitors see the gardens, hear the music, and enjoy the gathering. Behind those moments are people who have learned to listen to one another and follow through.

Those relationships also support this winter's experiences. A new season brings new decisions, and the team has a foundation for making them together.

People with good intentions make promises. People with good character keep them.

Explore the experiences those partnerships create at CultureBright.org.

Culture Matters Here.
And it always will.

A Winter Essay Series, presented by The Cultural Trust

To learn more about the Culture Bright Winter Series go to CultureBright.org.

The Cultural Trust

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