CULTURE BRIGHT:

A WINTER ESSAY SERIES

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

The Things We Share



"They share their spaces and expertise. They show up for one another. They help create experiences none of us could carry alone."

My daughter Lilli turns thirteen today.

This year, she has to share her birthday with Thanksgiving.

Sharing is hard.

She shares quite a bit of her mother, too.

Building Culture Bright while being a mom has been hard. In mom mode, I feel guilty about the work waiting for me. In CEO mode, I know what the long days cost my family. There have been sixteen-hour workdays. The sacrifices have never belonged to me alone.

Then I tuck Lilli in.

She tells me about a shading technique she learned at the Figge's Art Academy.

She wants to make a plan to take her cousins to the Putnam.

She asks about the Culture Bright build because she is interested in what we are creating.

And I feel seen.

My job is to help her feel seen.

Yet here is my daughter, noticing the work that has taken so much of me and finding something in it she wants to share.

I want her to know what I notice, too.

Her helpfulness. Her positive spirit. The way an experience she enjoys becomes something she wants her cousins to enjoy.

I see a leader taking shape.

I also see qualities our Legacy Partners bring to Culture Bright.

Sharing credit. Offering help. Cheering for another organization's success. Trusting that an idea can get better when someone else contributes.

Those choices take practice. Each organization has its own mission, staff, budget, and people counting on it. Bringing their strengths together requires honest conversations, flexibility, and a willingness to make room for someone else's idea.

Our Legacy Partners keep doing that work.

They share their spaces and expertise. They show up for one another. They help create experiences none of us could carry alone.

Their generosity extends to the spotlight.

I believe a donor should give where they feel most connected and where they want to make a difference.

If Culture Bright introduces someone to a partner whose mission moves them, that is something to celebrate.

That is philanthropy.

We want people to find a place for their generosity.

Our partners' willingness to champion one another helps them do it.

This Thanksgiving, I am grateful Lilli gets to grow up seeing that example.

I hope collaboration becomes an ordinary expectation of leadership: sharing resources, avoiding unnecessary duplication, and wanting others to succeed.

I hope she begins building her future in a community where people have kept practicing those things.

And I hope every child has opportunities to find what interests them, learn something new, and invite someone else along.

At bedtime, Lilli brings that hope close enough for me to hear it.

A shading technique. A plan for her cousins. A question about what we are making.

The community I am helping build is already becoming part of her life.

Happy birthday, Lilli Girl.

I see your kindness, your curiosity, and the leader you are becoming.

Thank you for reminding me whom we are building this for.

Culture Matters Here.
And it always will.

PS- Lilli, it is an honor to be your mom. You will be a better everything than I ever was.

Explore the experiences those partnerships create at CultureBright.org.

A Winter Essay Series, presented by The Cultural Trust

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

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