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.*

Ultimate Collaboration



"Each contributed people, spaces, and expertise. Together, they connected audiences with several parts of the region's cultural life."

What do Yonder Mountain String Band, Railroad Earth, Marlee Matlin, Lorrie Morgan, Suzy Bogguss, Robert Randolph, Rufus Wainwright, and The Best of The Who have in common?

They helped fill the 2026 Culture Bright Summer Series with reasons to experience the Quad Cities through its cultural organizations.

Behind that lineup stood the teams at Common Chord, Quad City Symphony Orchestra, Quad City Arts, Quad City Botanical Center, Figge Art Museum, and Putnam Museum and Science Center, working alongside The Cultural Trust.

Each contributed people, spaces, and expertise. Together, they connected audiences with several parts of the region's cultural life.

Tyson Danner of Common Chord and Jen Lewis-Snyder of The Cultural Trust coordinated details guests may never notice but would certainly feel.

Backup venues. Stage deliveries. Signs pointing people in the right direction. Cooling stations, beverage stands, food trucks, and face-painting tents.

Even the placement of trash receptacles received attention.

The goal was to make the experience feel easy from the moment someone arrived.

At the Botanical Center, where the series opened with Bluegrass on the Grass, rain complicated that goal.

It threatened the event throughout setup and created uncertainty on concert day.

Ryan Wille, QCBC's executive director, was ready to move the performance to the backup venue, the Capitol Theatre. Jen wanted to keep it outdoors and suggested the Children's Garden, where guests could walk and sit comfortably on dry ground.

They stepped inside to make the final decision.

Then Jen opened a door, and a snake fell onto her head.

The commotion drew the musicians' attention. Band members rushed inside, arriving just in time to see the snake slither away.

According to the band members, a snake at a concert venue was a sign of good luck.

An unconventional contribution to the planning meeting, certainly.

Twenty minutes before showtime, the skies cleared. Cool breezes moved through the gardens, and guests gathered for an evening beneath the stars.

Railroad Earth and Yonder Mountain String Band performed in a place many attendees were visiting for the first time.

From the crowd's perspective, the evening came together: artists onstage, a garden ready to welcome them, and space to enjoy the music.

Behind it were partners making decisions together under pressure.

Ryan knew the gardens. Tyson brought concert experience. Jen helped connect organizations, resources, and plans. Staff carried out the details that made the evening possible.

They could work through uncertainty because they had already invested time in working with one another. They had a common purpose to protect.

That is part of what The Cultural Trust builds through Culture Bright.

Financial investment supports the experiences, while convening energy makes room for relationships that help people combine their strengths and solve problems together. Authentically stronger together.

This Thanksgiving, that willingness to contribute gives us another reason to appreciate the people behind the gathering.

The gardens have traded summer blooms for Winter Lights. The partnership continues, carrying lessons from one season into the next.

And sometimes, apparently, the gardens contribute a snake and a lucky ending.

Find the winter lineup 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

CULTURE BRIGHT

