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.



"Four hundred thousand lights. Ten seasons of memories."

Winter Lights Turns Ten Tonight

Some birthdays call for candles. This one calls for 400,000 lights.

That is a birthday worth putting on your calendar.

Tonight, the Culture Bright Winter Series kicks off with a celebration ten seasons in the making. Winter Lights turns ten at the Quad City Botanical Center, bringing 400,000 lights and new ways to enjoy a place our community has made part of its holiday traditions.

Today also begins ***Ten Years. Ten Stories.***, our Botanical Center anniversary collection within the Culture Bright Winter Story Series. In the stories ahead, Linda Bowers and I will introduce you to the people, decisions, and care that have helped this garden earn its place in our community.

The gardens have been preparing for this moment for months. The trees have lost their leaves, the prairie grasses have settled into their winter shapes, and the team has been building an experience that gives those quiet spaces another life after dark.

At 6 p.m., the anniversary season begins.

Come for the lights. Give yourself time for everything around them.

Opening night brings cocktails, craft beer tastings, Kari's famous hot cocoa, a silent disco, and new igloo experiences into the gardens.

You can gather with friends, follow the paths through the display, and find a version of Friday night that feels far removed from the usual dinner-and-home routine.

Slip on headphones and let the gardens become your dance floor as a trio of DJs compete for your attention. Switch channels, find your favorite, and follow the beat beneath the lights.

Nearby, the Culture Bright Neon Forest offers another reason to pause and take a picture.

Our Culture Champions will give the new igloos their first toast, settling in for exclusive, reservation-only celebrations with cocktails, good company, and a little holiday magic beneath the lights.

Somewhere in the middle of all that, remember to look at the garden itself.

Bare branches give the lights their structure. Grasses hold their shapes beside the paths.

The setting is part of the artistry, and the QCBC Team knows it well.

Ryan Wille, QCBC's Executive Director, and his colleagues have spent years listening to visitors and considering what would make the next visit better. Their work gives returning guests something to anticipate and first-time visitors a reason to feel welcome.

The Cultural Trust supports that work throughout the year.

QCBC is one of our six Legacy Partners, organizations that receive annual unrestricted funding through our endowment.

Culture Bright builds on that relationship by bringing investment, creative expertise, and coordinated experiences into the same conversation.

At the gardens, those partnerships help light, music, art, and hospitality work together. The result is something you can experience for yourself tonight.

Ten seasons also give us a reason to think about the people in our own photographs.

Children grow taller.
Families change.

The picture taken beneath the lights can become a small record of who stood together that year.

That is how a seasonal outing earns a place on the calendar again.

Bring your coat. Charge your phone. Invite the friend who keeps saying you need to do something together.

Choose the experiences that suit your group, and check ticket and reservation details before arriving. The new igloo offerings have their own arrangements, so plan ahead if those are part of your evening.

Winter Lights opens tonight, November 20, at the Quad City Botanical Center in Rock Island.

Four hundred thousand lights. Ten seasons of memories.

Find the series lineup and ticket information at CultureBright.org.

Culture Matters Here.
And it always will.

Come see why Culture Matters Here. And why it always will.

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

The Cultural Trust

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