

THE ECONOMICS OF HOLIDAY CHEER

It began in 1986 with a simple idea: If joy could fill the streets, prosperity would follow.

When the first Festival of Trees opened its doors in downtown Davenport, the Quad-City Times called it a “new kind of fundraiser” — one that blended art, enterprise and imagination. Within a few short years, it became one of the region’s strongest economic engines. Restaurants filled, hotels sold out and storefronts sparkled with new life. By 1988, the festival’s local economic impact topped \$1.2 million — proof that culture could do what few civic projects could: bring people and dollars downtown together.

That same equation still holds true today. Each November, Festival of Trees draws tens of thousands to the RiverCenter and surrounding businesses, creating a measurable surge in local spending. The ripple extends to artists, vendors and small enterprises who rely on that seasonal momentum to sustain operations all year.

“The crowds from Festival of Trees make a big economic impact on our locally owned small businesses,” said Kyle Carter, executive director of Downtown Davenport Partnership. “The event serves as the kickoff to the holiday shopping season, and from the parade to its dozens of activities, Quad City Arts Festival of Trees is a tradition that benefits our community far beyond the walls of the RiverCenter.”

Festival of Trees proves what The Cultural Trust practices year-round: Art and culture aren’t just good for the soul — they’re a serious economic driver. The Cultural Trust is the expert investor in that equation, supporting the festival and the organizations that make its impact possible.

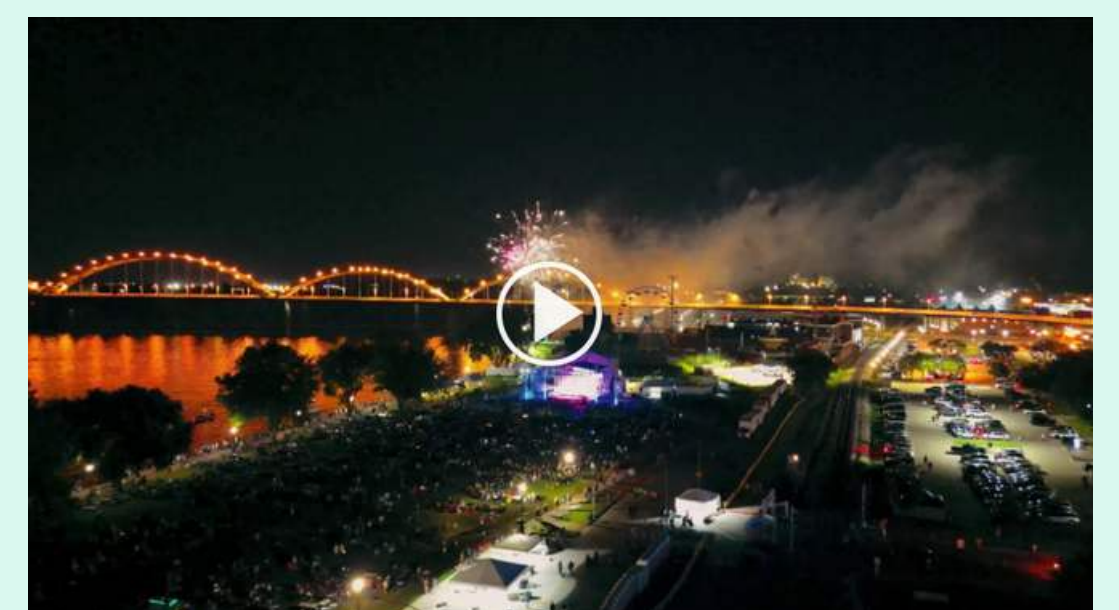
The Cultural Trust doesn’t just celebrate the results — it strengthens the system behind them. Through a curated application process, The Cultural Trust keeps a pulse on what matters most to Quad Citizens. It funds collaboration over competition, avoids duplication and makes sure access to art and culture reaches every corner of the region.

Its six Legacy Partners — the Figge Art Museum, Putnam Museum and Science Center, Quad City Arts (the engine behind Festival of Trees), Quad City Symphony Orchestra, Quad City Botanical Center and Common Chord — extend that same energy during the holiday season and beyond. They create the exhibitions, performances, education programs and events that fuel growth, tourism and civic pride all year long.

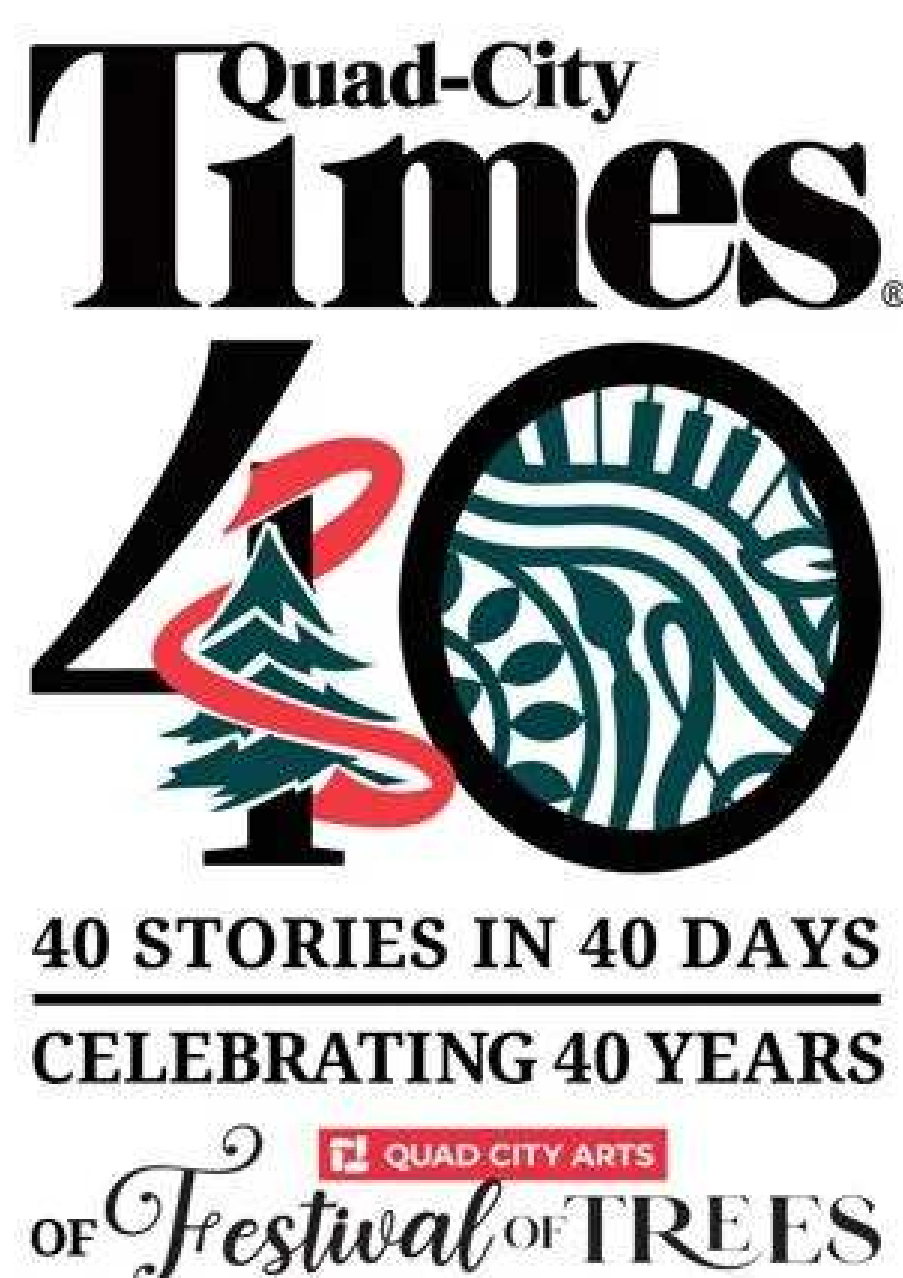
At The Cultural Trust, every dollar invested in culture generates roughly 20 in community return. It shows up in stronger schools, safer neighborhoods, healthier residents and a region people are proud to call home.

Philanthropy isn’t about a handout or a quick rescue. Sometimes it is. But most often, it’s about investment — and the real return on investment: a community where creativity drives commerce, culture strengthens connection and prosperity feels personal.

Powering Possibility



Progress isn’t accidental. It’s the result of bold commitments held steady over time. Because the Quad Cities is the Creative Capital of the Midwest.



That’s the true economics of cheer. It isn’t just about decorations or attendance numbers; it’s about the multiplier effect of shared joy and the dividends it pays — figuratively and literally.

Every ticket purchased, every sponsorship pledged, every child inspired to create — each one feeds a cycle that began with the same local spirit that carried Festival of Trees from an experiment to a pillar of the community.

As it prepares for the next phase of growth, The Cultural Trust continues to prove what those early organizers already knew: When a community invests in creativity, everyone profits.

Because culture matters here — and it always will.