



THE BUSINESS OF BELONGING



The word sponsorship has gotten a little tired.

In the nonprofit world, it’s often less strategy and more survival — a polite way to lower the expense line.

But it’s 2025, and the Quad Cities can do better than that because they are better than that.

Leaders at The Cultural Trust believe sponsorship should begin where all good business does — with purpose.

Is there alignment? Is the partnership mutually beneficial? Does it serve a need the community actually has? And what’s the return — not just financially, but socially, emotionally, civically?

That’s why leaders at Festival of Trees don’t just thank sponsors. They celebrate collaborators — people and companies who understand that partnership in this space isn’t charity; it’s strategy.

For 40 years, Festival of Trees has been a master class in belonging through business.

Every company that has stepped forward to underwrite, donate or build something tangible has become part of the region’s cultural fabric, their leaders are typically Culture Champions.

Take Necker’s Jewelers, for example. The Necker family doesn’t just donate gift cards or jewelry for the Premiere Party and Celebrity Lunch — they show up. Savannah Necker and her family have turned sponsorship into family tradition, reminding everyone that generosity and legacy can share the same table.

Or John Deere — a company whose roots in this community run as deep as its values. The John Deere Foundation was one of the original investors that helped seed what became The Cultural Trust, turning generosity into permanence.

Today, John Deere continues that legacy by creating opportunities for employees and their families to engage in the arts and community life they help sustain. Their support of Festival of Trees reflects that same philosophy — investing not only in the event, but in the experience of belonging. This year, they’re adding a little spark with a fully electric zero-turn mower on the auction block — a modern symbol of innovation, sustainability and the joy that comes from powering progress together.

Then there are the in-kind heroes — the unsung craftsmen who build the foundation, sometimes literally.

Altorfer Cat, Diamond Vogel Paint Center, Sherwin-Williams, M&H Equipment, HUFF Toyota Lift, The Mid-America Carpenters Regional Council Apprenticeship and Training Program, Seiffert Lumber Company, Painter & Drywall Apprenticeship Local Union 502 & 676, Cantrell’s Towing and Horizon Movers — they make Festival of Trees possible one beam, one brushstroke, one truckload at a time.

And Kwik Star, a name synonymous with reliability and community, has been a presenting partner of Santa’s Stars, Reindeer Games, Family Day and the Tree of Lights.

Every one of these partners — from local family businesses to global brands — understands the same thing: Festival of Trees isn’t just an event. It’s an investment.

It’s brand visibility, yes — but it’s also brand values in motion. It’s team pride. It’s employee engagement. It’s economic impact that multiplies across restaurants, hotels and small businesses. And it’s the shared joy that cements your company’s role as part of something larger than the bottom line.

As any partner can attest: Collaborating with Festival of Trees feels mutually beneficial first, and philanthropic second. The ROI is real — both measurable and emotional.

Because in this ecosystem, generosity isn’t a transaction. It’s a growth strategy.

Festival of Trees, powered by Quad City Arts, lifted by The Cultural Trust and amplified by the Quad-City Times, is proof that belonging is good business.

To every company that’s ever built, sponsored or believed — thank you. You are the reason this community glows brighter every season.

And to those considering it for next year, take it from those who know: This is one investment you’ll never regret.

Because culture matters here — and it always will.

