



WHAT MAKES A CULTURE CHAMPION?



When The Cultural Trust was founded in 2007, it wasn't just built to fund arts and culture.

It was built to fund leadership — the kind that turns creativity into progress.

For 40 years, Quad City Arts' Festival of Trees has shown us what that looks like.

Visionaries like Diane Sulg, Sandra Figge, Sarah Elliott, Karen Getz and Jody Ruhl imagined an event that could unite a city. Artists like Wynne Schafer and Damian Parizek reminded us that design itself can be an act of generosity.

Builders and leaders like Pat Wohlford and Linda Bowers gave the Festival of Trees structure and stewardship — one through action, one through advocacy.

And believers like Santa Mike Peppers, alongside the engineers at IMEG — led by Paul VanDuyne and Pat Eikenberry — showed that community spirit can live in everything from a sleigh to a miniature train.

They were joined by thousands of other Quad Citizens:

- The parade clowns who traded suits for smiles.
- The elves who built beauty after midnight and some who even walked in a parade.
- The parents who drove their kids to endless rehearsals in anticipation of performing on the big stage.
- The children who faced a stage, a canvas or an audience for the first time — and didn't fold to fear.



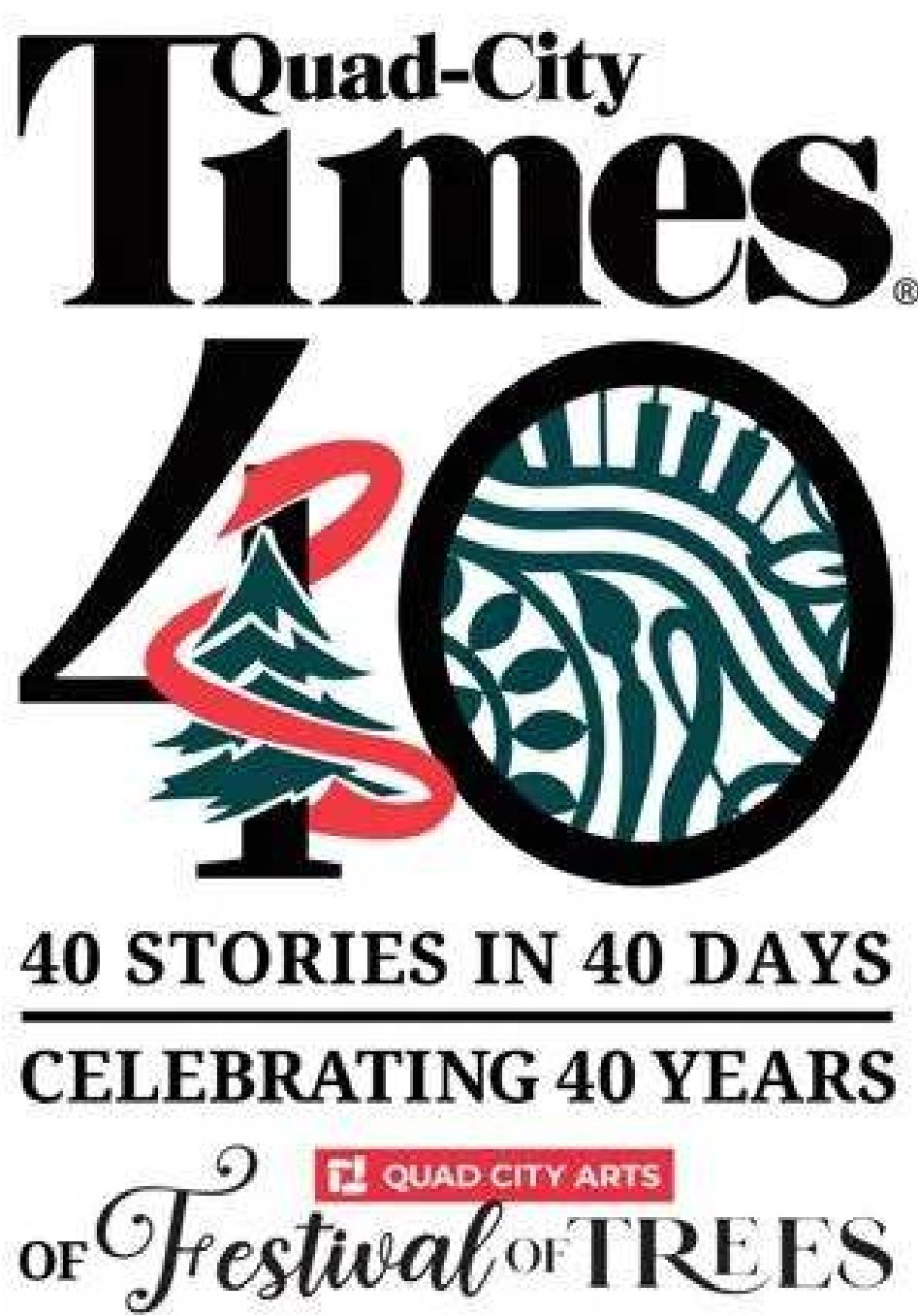
Each one, in their own way, defined what it means to be a Culture Champion.

Being a Culture Champion isn't just a title — it's a way of life. It's making time in your calendar for things like Festival of Trees and inviting your friends to join you.

It's taking selfies while you're there and sharing them online to encourage others to go.

It's showing up to events like the Festival of Trees Premiere Party — not just to take in the extraordinary talent we have in the Quad Cities, but to fuel it by being the highest bidder and inspiring others to match your energy. It's voting for public sector leaders who prioritize art and culture the way you do.

It's getting out of your sweatpants, turning off the TV, and making art and culture part of your routine — buying memberships to the Figge, Putnam and Botanical Center, attending the Symphony's Masterworks Series or Music at the Movies if that's more your vibe, supporting Common Chord's concerts, getting all tickets to all the Quad City Art's Festival of Trees experiences and introducing kids to every bit of it.



Because being a Culture Champion means knowing that when you support arts and culture, you're not just improving your own life — you're fueling the city you've chosen to call home.

At The Cultural Trust, the term has become their highest honor. It's how they recognize those who move the needle not by volume, but by vision — the people who understand that culture isn't a department or a decoration; it's infrastructure.

Forty years in, the community finally has language for what it has always practiced.

A Culture Champion is the person who keeps showing up — for the arts, the culture, the people and the place we call home.

The creative capital of the Midwest: The Quad Cities.

Because culture matters here — and it always will.