



THE ART OF WELCOME: WHERE HOSPITALITY BECOMES HERITAGE — AND CULTURE CHAMPIONS MAKE IT HAPPEN

There's a hum that builds in downtown Davenport the week before Festival of Trees. Coffee brews early in the lobbies. Glass doors swing open to rolling luggage and laughter. Holiday lights flicker against the river.

It's not chaos — it's choreography. The city comes alive through its people, through those who make welcoming others an art form.



Director of sales and marketing Kate Griffith has been the quiet architect of it all. Her team ensures every visitor — from Amy Burkman, the live painter transforming canvas into spectacle at the Premiere Party, to the New Orleans-inspired band NOLA, bringing rhythm and brass to the Great Hall — feels the warmth and style that define the Creative Capital of the Midwest.



A Culture Champion is someone who turns welcome into legacy — who knows that every open door is an act of art.

Just a few miles away, another group of Culture Champions is preparing to raise a glass in the spirit of arts, culture and Festival of Trees' 40th anniversary.

At The Tangled Wood, Tammie Gruenhagen and her team are crafting four new holiday drinks that will debut at the Premiere Party. Guests will vote on their favorite, and the winning cocktail will headline the Tangled Wood menu all December. The team is even donning co-branded shirts — ruby red, in honor of the festival's 40th year — emblazoned with the phrase "Tangled in Tinsel and Tradition."

And they didn't stop there. This year, Tangled Wood will also feature a Culture Bright tree — a nod to how local businesses can turn celebration into collaboration.

Alderman Kyle Gripp captured it best: "The Festival of Trees has become a local tradition that signifies the beginning of the holiday season. The festival and its parade bring thousands of people downtown to eat, drink and be merry. Downtown streets are lined with people, and the holiday hustle and bustle has begun."

That's the power of culture-led hospitality — it creates moments that ripple through the local economy, filling not only hotel rooms and restaurant tables but hearts, too.

The Cultural Trust recognizes this as one of the Quad Cities' greatest strengths: Joy fuels commerce, and commerce fuels culture. When local businesses show up for the arts, the whole region thrives.

Hospitality is how the Quad Cities says welcome — and the Culture Champions have been saying it beautifully for 40 years.

