

WHEN THE QUAD-CITY TIMES BECAME SOCIETY’S MUST-READ NEWSPAPER

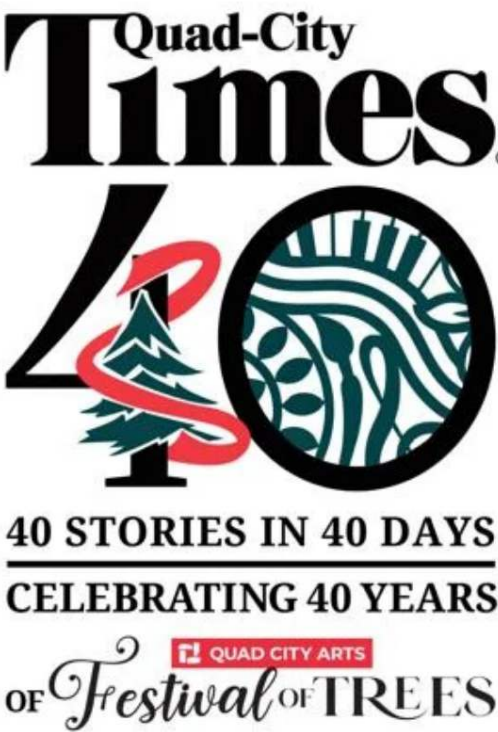
Festival of Trees was first announced in December 1985 and officially launched in 1986. From the start, it was dazzling, unexpected and embraced. But it wasn’t only the event itself that made an impact — it was how the Quad-City Times told its story. That storytelling transformed the festival from a promising debut into an enduring cultural tradition.

In the months leading up, coverage was warm and anticipatory. Headlines promised dazzle. Articles assured readers it was for everyone. Organizers and sponsors saw their names in print before the first ribbon was cut. The paper wasn’t just reporting an event; it was introducing characters in a story still unfolding.

By 1986, the storytelling sharpened. The Times slipped into the role of narrator-in-chief, weaving daily details into the season. Columns tracked sponsors, ticket sell-outs and volunteer shifts as if they were society gossip. Pages filled with schedules.

Designers were profiled, attractions described with a wink. More than simply covering the festival, the Times serialized it. And when the Times wrote about something, the Quad Cities showed up for it.

Though The Cultural Trust wasn’t yet formed, several of its future founders were among those first names in print — the cultural characters who would later sustain traditions like Festival of Trees for the long haul.



The effect was profound. Festival of Trees didn’t just belong to the artists and volunteers who built it. It belonged to the Quad Cities because it was written into the community’s imagination: first in 1985 with the announcement, and then in earnest in 1986, when the Times turned the festival into a season rather than a single weekend.

That rhythm of storytelling — anticipation, narration and memory — is why Festival of Trees endures.

Forty years later, the community celebrates not only with nostalgia, but with gratitude: gratitude for the voices like the Quad-City Times that made the festival part of it, and for supporters like The Cultural Trust who carry its future.