

CULTURE BRIGHT:

A SUMMER ESSAY SERIES

Reflections on art, culture, and the future of the Quad Cities from **Jen Lewis-Snyder**, President & CEO of The Cultural Trust.



Stories That Change Us

Some stories entertain us.
Some stories educate us.
And some stories change us forever.

The most powerful stories expand our understanding of the world and of one another. They invite us to see through someone else’s eyes. The best stories invite us to feel through someone else’s heart. To experience a different perspective. To feel connected to people whose lives may look very different from our own. That is why museums matter. That is why art matters. That is why access matters. Because a story cannot change someone’s life if it cannot be experienced.

For Cindy Diehl Yang, President & CEO of the Putnam Museum and Science Center, that belief isn’t simply part of her job. It’s part of who she is. Cindy is Justine’s mom. Like her mom, Justine is funny, curious, and beautiful. Unlike her mom, Justine is blind. As a mother, Cindy understands that accessibility is not simply about accommodations. It’s about belonging. It’s about dignity. It’s about making sure every person has the opportunity to participate fully in the cultural life of their community. That conviction is helping shape the future of the Putnam and the future of Culture Bright. This year, The Cultural Trust invested in Capption, technology that helps remove language and accessibility barriers across our cultural ecosystem, because accessibility is not an add-on at The Cultural Trust. It is an expectation. It is a value. It is a promise. The arrival of acclaimed actress, author, and advocate Marlee Matlin during the Culture Bright Summer Series is another reminder of what becomes possible when barriers are removed and voices are elevated. Throughout her career, Matlin has challenged assumptions about disability, representation, and

who gets to be seen and heard. Her story reflects a larger truth. When culture becomes accessible, everyone benefits. Communities become stronger. Conversations become richer. Ideas become bigger. People become more connected. Everyone feels welcome. Everyone feels represented. Everyone belongs. And perhaps that’s the true measure of a successful community. Not how many events it hosts. Not how many tickets it sells. But how many people believe there is a place for them. That vision lives at the heart of Culture Bright.

“The most powerful stories expand our understanding of the world and of one another.”

Creating extraordinary experiences.
Creating opportunities for connection.
Creating spaces where every person can participate fully.
Because belonging is not a bonus feature.
Belonging is the point.
Culture Matters Here.
And it always will.

To learn more about The Cultural Trust and its Legacy Partners, go to CultureBright.org.



The Cultural Trust



CULTURE BRIGHT SUMMER SERIES



MARLEE MATLIN & FRESH FILMS DOCUMENTARY
AUG. 19
PUTNAM MUSEUM
KEYNOTE: INCLUSION IN THE ARTS

FOR TICKETS & MORE INFORMATION VISIT WWW.CULTUREBRIGHT.ORG

A screening of **I am disABEd**, a Fresh Films documentary spotlighting local stories of ability and inclusion, followed by a keynote from Academy Award-winning actress and advocate **Marlee Matlin** on representation, accessibility, and the arts.