

CELEBRATING 40 YEARS

The architects of joy

Sponsored content by Jen Lewis-Snyder, president and CEO, The Cultural Trust

When The Cultural Trust began expanding beyond annual funding, it asked for something bigger than money — it asked for trust.

Trust that we could operate as one ecosystem. Trust that collaboration wouldn't dilute individuality. And trust that if we climbed the same mountain together, we'd all reach higher ground.

That required a different kind of leadership. The kind that doesn't demand control, but builds alignment. The kind that sees every organization, every person, as a necessary part of the same rhythm.

Leaders at the helm of each of the Cultural Trust's Legacy Partners share that belief — that a rising tide truly lifts all boats. One of those leaders is Brian Allen at Quad City Arts. His openness and partnership have allowed the teams to work side-by-side to curate this year's 40th anniversary celebration — and in the process, he has demonstrated what servant leadership looks like in motion.

Behind every volunteer, every ribbon and every beautifully orchestrated detail of Festival of Trees, there's a small group of people who lead quietly but powerfully. They don't compete for credit — they create capacity. They make the people around them better.



At the top of that list is **Sandi Burrichter**, Festival of Trees administrator.

Burrichter is one of the most thoughtful humans you will ever meet. She doesn't just know her volunteers' names — she knows their stories. She knows who's recovering from surgery, who's caring for a loved one and who just needs encouragement to keep going. Her gift is empathy paired with precision. She doesn't just manage people; she tends to them. That's leadership in its purest form.

Then there's **Kristall Laursen**, development director for Quad City Arts — a powerhouse in motion. Laursen understands that philanthropy is about alignment first and giving second. Every conversation she leads starts with intention: "How can this benefit both the donor and the mission?" Her authenticity and instinct for connection have made this 40th anniversary not just a milestone, but a movement. She's nimble, strategic and unafraid to jump in wherever she's needed. She's the kind of emerging leader you remember — because you know she'll be running something big soon.



Closer to home, **Tiffany Bainter**, The Cultural Trust's Creative Operations Officer, is the engine behind its rebrand and the mind that holds seven organizations in one seamless footprint. She brings humor to chaos and structure to vision. Every year, Bainter finds new ways to integrate the Cultural Trust, its Legacy Partners and Festival of Trees under one banner of collaboration. She's the creative compass — steady, clever and relentless in her drive for excellence.

And finally, **Brianna Beard**, the Cultural Trust's events and administrative assistant — the coordinator of all things. In just one year, she's streamlined communication across multiple organizations, reducing event costs and increasing efficiency across the board. She's organized, polished and has the kind of natural calm that keeps an entire ecosystem steady.



Together, this dynamic foursome has taken an already beloved festival and elevated it into something truly historic. These aren't all the players behind the scenes, but certainly the honorable mention.

Servant leadership in practice

Leadership isn't about being the loudest voice in the room — it's about creating space for others to lead. It's knowing that the work behind the curtain is what makes the spotlight shine brighter.

Servant leadership is not a style; it's a stance. It's the quiet conviction that if you take care of your people, they'll take care of the mission.

That's what these women do every single day. They are the modern-day architects of joy — the Culture Champions who make Festival of Trees more than an event. They make it a living, breathing expression of what collaboration, care and trust can build when practiced well.

Because leadership is service. Because culture is built by people who lift. And because in the Quad Cities — culture matters here, and it always will.

Coming tomorrow: 40 years, brighter than ever

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40 STORIES IN 40 DAYS

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