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CHESTER MADE THROUGH AND THROUGH

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ARTS, CULTURE AND DAILY LIFE
During the story gathering, participants described the creative and cultural life of their community. They talked about playing music, painting, dance, and visits to museums and theater. But they also cited creativity in other contexts—expressed in fashion choices and hair salons, community gardens, food and culinary arts, the Needle Works Club at the library, even in the way a player moves on the basketball court.

Individuals’ stories revealed the value of arts and culture as a source of personal wellbeing, a form of connection to the past, and a force for bringing individuals together in the community. The story gathering also demonstrated that arts and culture open people up to new beginnings and provide a way to imagine new possibilities.

MEMORIES AND POSSIBILITIES: STORY GATHERING IN CHESTER
A key goal of Chester Made is to frame the story of arts and culture and its place in the life of the city. It's this evolving story that will guide the progress to come.

With leadership from the Pennsylvania Humanities Council, collaborators of many kinds have helped assemble the story—or actually to transcribe it. The authors are the people of Chester themselves. Through a process called story gathering, a ten-member team, the Chester Made Ensemble led by Chester Arts Alive! and Gas and Electric Arts, met with community members, asking arts and culture related questions, and listening to what their fellow Chester residents had to say.

Last February more than 8 story gatherings were held throughout Chester enlisting broad participation. The sessions attracted over 350 residents, with over 140 stories and 120 surveys collected. Community leaders, artists, city employees, historic preservationists, students, seniors, and business owners joined in to serve as advisors to the project.

Then March through May, Widener University students under the direction of faculty and Animating Democracy, a program of Americans for the Arts, analyzed the stories, and the City Planning Department, Pennsylvania Humanities Council, and The Artist Warehouse created an online story map. The results furthered the understanding of the power and value of the arts and culture in the lives of the people of Chester and give voice to their aspirations, laying the foundation for future plans.

FROM LOSS TO HOPE: CHANGING THE NARRATIVE
The story of arts and culture in Chester is one not only of pride and possibility, but also, unfortunately, of loss. Significant cultural resources, like Deshong Park and other venues that once defined the Chester community, are now deeply missed. Residents express both a sense of emptiness and a desire to revitalize neighborhoods that have suffered decline.

They recognize that arts are important for the growth and development of youth. They want to see arts education and the marching band at the high school return. They crave opportunities for their children beyond the playground. They seek artist mentors and arts role models for their sons and daughters. Finally, they want ways to bridge gaps between generations and see the potential of arts and culture as a means to do so.

Chester’s residents are united in a sense of urgency. They are ready to tap the creativity latent in this community—and to move forward together.

A PROFOUND IMPACT
The impact of arts and culture on Chester and its people is profound and multidimensional.

Arts and culture connect people to a common heritage and cultural traditions that unite young and old. The arts are a common denominator that builds respect among people across economic, racial, and social lines. They create social spaces where people feel part of a community. They also create a sense of belonging, where differences are appreciated and common ground is felt.

Arts and culture contribute vibrancy and vitality to life in the city. People value celebrations and the ways the arts create social gathering spaces. This includes everything from events like festivals, the Mother’s Day parade, Riverfront Ramble, and the Martin Luther King, Jr celebration to performances at Widener, to exhibitions at Art on Avenue of the States and Open Mike’s events downtown, to street culture.

Arts and culture are also thriving in a new community of young artists and cultural leaders like those at The Artist Warehouse in downtown Chester and at cultural neighborhood centers like the J. Lewis Crozier Library.

Finally, the arts are a healing force in Chester. They provide a point of hope in times of trauma and contribute to the community’s resilience.

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"There is a rich culture here even though it is a small town."

"It was so encouraging to see so many people interested and so many people came out [for Deshong Commemoration Day]. There were elders — community elders, people outside the community, politicians from the state and local level. There were children…"
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PHC Pennsylvania Humanities Council

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SUPPORTERS

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PARTNERS

ARTIST WAREHOUSE

Like us at Facebook.com/ChesterMadePA Tag your posts with #ChesterMade

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CHESTER MADE is an initiative to help recognize and promote arts and culture in the City of Chester and to harness its power as a force for community revitalization. This initiative works to highlight the creative and cultural life of the Chester community, as well as the many stories, memories, and dreams of its residents. In 2015, 8 story gatherings were held throughout the Chester community. The sessions attracted over 350 residents, collecting over 140 stories and 120 surveys. Throughout the storytelling process, we identified nearly 200 people, events, heritage sites, organizations, facilities, and businesses that help shape the creative soul of Chester — Chester Made Champions. Here is an index of champions named to date; many more remain to be identified.

Many will be featured on an online story map at the City of Chester’s website. The process of cultural mapping is never done. There will always be new information and stories to share. Please contact us at C3@pahumanities.org with your stories so we recognize all who have made a lasting impact on the creative expression in Chester.

EVENTS
Across Colors Cultural Festival
Chester High Basketball Games
Chester Park Concert Series
Chester Youth Summit
Deshong Park Commemoration Day
July 4th Race/Walk
Mayor’s Christmas Luncheon
Mother’s Day Parade
Overtown Arts & Street Festival
Peace on the Streets Jams
Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service
Riverfront Ramble
The Juiceman Soul Cookout
Unity through the Arts
Widener University Cherry Blossom Festival
Widener University home football games
Widener University Spring Fling Festival

HERITAGE SITES
Alfred O. Deshong Memorial Gallery
Alfred O. Deshong Memorial Park
Boyd Theater
Carry the Light Mural
Chester High School
Chester Park
Chester Transportation Center
Crosby Street Substation
Crozer Park
Crozer Theological Seminary
Delaware Riverfront
Deshong Mansion
Ethel Waters Park
Eyre Park
Frederick Douglass Christian School
Freeman Cultural Arts Center
Friends Meeting House
Great Leopard Skating Rink/
Big C Rollerdrone
John’s Doggie Shop
Martin Luther King Jr. monument
Murray’s
Old Colonial Courthouse
Old Main
Penn Recreation Lanes
Rural Cemetery
State Theater
The White Elephant
Theatre Widener
Third Presbyterian Church
Toby Farms Neighborhood
United Sates Postal Service Office
Upland Park
Veteran’s Memorial Park
William Penn’s Landing/
Penn’s Landing Park
YMCA
YWCA

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ORGANIZATIONS AND FACILITIES
9th Street Youth and Community Center
Belvedere Nursing Home
Bethany Baptist Church
Calvary Baptist Church
Chester Arts Alive!
Chester Boys and Girls Club
Chester Children’s Chorus
Chester Community Charter School
Chester East Side Ministries
Chester Education Foundation
Chester Fine Art Center East
Chester High School
Chester Historic Preservation Committee
Chester School for the Arts
Chester Senior Center
City Hall
Community Arts Center
Delaware County Historical Society Museum
Drexel Neumann Academy
Edgemont Senior Apartments
Entrepreneur Works
Hedgerow Theatre
J. Lewis Crozer Library
John A. Watts Elks Lodge
Ministerial Fellowship of Chester and Vicinity
My Majestic Inc
Providence Baptist Church
Rotary Club of Chester
Schwartz Athletic Center
St Daniel United Methodist Church
St Luke Christian Community Church
STEM at Showalter
The Nia Center
The Salvation Army of Chester
Toby Farms Elementary School
Widener University
Widener University Art Collection and Gallery
Wolfgram Memorial Library
Yes We Can Cultural Achievement Center

CHESTER MADE
CHAMPIONS
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Tag your posts with #ChesterMade

CULTURAL INDUSTRIES
Andre Café Acoustique
Art on Avenue of the States
B & C Restaurant
Bennie’s Tavern
Blac Rain Boutique
Cheryl’s Southern Style Restaurant
Give me Suga
Harrah’s Philadelphia Race Track and Casino

Abu the Juiceman’s Juic’E
Kyi’s Bakery
Laran Bronze
Open Mikes Internet Café
Phatso’s Bakery
Sam & Sam Meats
Search-Rescue
The Artist Warehouse

Leaders
John Alston
Louise Barnes-Johnson
Charlie Barnes
Jahlil Beats (Orlando Tucker)
Tone Beats (Anthony Tucker)
Marcus Belgrave
Sam Benson
Sister Mafalda Bouzy
Wendell Butler
Linda Braceland
Sam Brown Sr.
James Butler
Tiana Caldwell
Hilda Campbell
John Carr
Joe Chambers
Larry Chase
Mark Collier
Markiya Collier
Courtlandt Craig
Samuel Crozer
Clamma Daile
Bill Dandridge
Rev. Ernest Davis Jr.
John DeMarski
Lisa Dennis
Alfred O. Deshong
Debbie DeSimone
Paul Fejko
Dallas Fitzsimmons
Delores Freeman-Clybourn
Tawfieq Gaines
Danny Garland
Latifah Griffin
Desire Grover
Kenya Abdul Hai
Harry Jackson
Michael Jahil
Naomi Jay
Delores “Tootsie” Jennings
“Calypso” Howard Johnson

Tara Jones
Martin Luther King Jr.
Rev. Anzer Kirland
Thaddeus Kirkland
John Linder
Lakesha Logan
Denise Mathis
Sharon Meagher
Michael Miller
Barbara D. Mills
Jameer Nelson
Donald Newton
Leasa Nichols
Gloria Oakley
Diane Palm
Mary Ellen Payne
Van Buren Payne
William Penn
Bobby Person
Kim Pinder-Garner
Monika Rhodes
Ashli Rice
Janet Riley-Ford
Earnest Saunders
Tom Sharp
Twyla Simpkins
Shakiyi Smith
Linda Soto Saldana
Avery Sunshine (Denise Nicole White)
James Thomas
John Thomas
Marci Bryant-Tilghman
Andrew Turner
John Vanore
Robert Vaughan
Patricia Wagner
Quonda Walker
Devin Walls
L. Ward
Ethel Waters
Brandi Wells
Frederick West
Helen Whittington
Mary Wright