

KENTUCKY CITY

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On the Cover: First-of-its-kind meal packing event with the Kentucky Department of Agriculture during the KLC Conference & Expo

Paducah, Kentucky, Shares Secret to Creative Culture with the World

by Terri Johnson, KLC Director of Communications and Marketing

In September, members of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) Crafts & Folk Art sub-network held its first annual meeting in Paducah, Kentucky, with attendees from around the globe. Over three days, representatives from eight Creative Cities of Crafts & Folk Art, joined by two other United States member cities and guests from three UCCN “candidate cities,” discussed best practices for incorporating arts and culture in building identity and strategic development. UNESCO stands for United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Among other benefits, the designation as a UNESCO city is a strong branding hook for tourism and economic development and an asset for grant applications. Paducah is Kentucky’s only Creative City among the 116 around the world.

“Participation in the Creative Cities Network is our opportunity to build relationships around the world,” said Paducah Mayor Brandi Harless. “We have been learning from other Creative Cities since we were designated with the affiliation nearly four years ago. This was our chance to show off our vibrant and diverse creative community, and I think we made a big impression as the first U.S. city to host an official UCCN meeting.”

The meeting featured a panel discussing creative cities and tourism opportunities. Expert speakers including Kentucky Commissioner of Tourism Kristen Branscum talked about the trend of “authentic experiences” and how cities should encourage citizens to interact with tourists.

“We saw, in this small city, marvelous achievements especially in culture and arts,” said Ahmed Almatar, a representative from Al-Ahsa, Saudi Arabia.

Using arts and culture to drive economic development and urban revitalization was the focus of day two of the Creative Cities Network meeting.

The third and final day of the meeting focused on education, institutions and natural resources for sustainable economic and cultural development. President and CEO of the Rural Policy Research Institute Charles

Fluharty described Paducah as a “poster child” of a micropolitan city poised for an urban-rural future.

The meeting concluded with the signing of the Paducah Declaration, a vision and action plan for how culture and creativity will be used to create a sustainable future with crafts

and folk art as specific drivers. The declaration includes themes and best practices discussed in the three days of plenary sessions, workshops and tours including empowering people, quality of life and sustainability. It was a lasting document to signify the bond the cities formed in Paducah. **KYC**



An international group met in Paducah to discuss the value of arts and culture as an economic engine.



Local leaders from around the world gathered in September.

In October, U.S. officials made the decision to withdraw from UNESCO. The State Department said this will take effect December 31, 2018, and that the U.S. will seek a “permanent observer” status instead. That means, while the United States wouldn’t be a member, the U.S. would have access to meetings and documents.

As for Paducah, the value of the September meeting and the relationships forged will be long-lasting. Mayor Harless and the Paducah Convention & Visitors Bureau issued a joint statement following the announcement that the U.S. will pull out of UNESCO.

In part, it read, “This change will not affect Paducah’s status as a UNESCO Creative City of Crafts & Folk Art. Paducah’s dedication to culture, creativity and global connection through the arts, led to the city’s designation nearly four years ago. We will continue our work with our global partners toward our common goals, to foster creative industries for sustainable development.”

CONGRATULATIONS

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"He is a common sense, pragmatic consensus-builder. His strength is that he is a great listener, and that's what makes him a great leader."



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David Eaton, City Administrator

City of Simpsonville

"Without David's work ethic, dedication and leadership, we would not be where we are today."

2017 City Employee of the Year (co-recipient)



Andrew Hartley, City Attorney/Chief of Staff

City of Georgetown

"He is a versatile leader willing to tackle any problem faced by the fastest growing city in the commonwealth."



2017 Enterprise Cities Awards

City of Bowling Green - Academy for New Americans

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City of Paducah - Pat & Jim Brockenborough Rotary Health Park

Watch for full profiles of each award winner in the January/February issue of *Kentucky City* magazine. Thank you to our panel of judges and to all who submitted a nomination.

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