

I know from personal experience how the Rose Festival brings people together. Throughout my childhood, my mom and my aunt would bring my sibling, my cousins and I to watch the Grand Floral Parade every year. We would sit on the curb regardless of the weather, and watch the parade, cheering along with everyone else and running out with the other kids to collect the candy thrown by the passing floats and performers. I have always enjoyed going to events that bring the city together; being surrounded by neighbors and community members who are all celebrating along with you is a feeling like no other, one that the Rose Festival always provided. I'm sure this year will bring that familiar sense of community that we have been missing.

The Rose Festival was also an important community building experience at my elementary and middle school. Every year there would be a smaller scale Rose Show where students would bring their own roses to school for judging by a visiting Royal Rosarian. After the judging, all the roses would be placed on tables in the main halls of the school, filling them with color and light and lovely smells.

Even in normal years, the Rose Festival filled me with joy and excitement for the coming months as I always knew that when those roses appeared, summer was right around the corner, and the seemingly endless days of overcast skies would be coming to an end. With all the time spent inside, I have realized just how energizing the presence of a simple vase of flowers can be, and the Rose Festival overflowing with stunning flora will be a beacon of energy and positivity for every Portlander. Being surrounded by natural beauty is always a refreshing experience, and the Rose Festival will bring that beauty back to downtown Portland after a year where it has been harder to get out and celebrate nature. The Rose Festival is also an integral part of Portland's history and culture, and the simple occurrence of this long-standing celebration will go a long way to feeling like life is starting to move back toward normalcy. Even if we are unable to gather in the traditional masses of the Rose Festival celebration, the knowledge that we, as a community, have something beautiful to share will provide hope and strength to continue through the coming months.