

Spring in Portland gives a lot of mixed signals. Of course, you've got the green, the flowers, and the lovely rain, but on the other hand you've got the lovely rain. But every year, without fail, you've also got the Rose Festival. The Rose Festival has only been cancelled a few times since its creation during World War I and II, and mostly postponed last year with the beginning of COVID. Even when we aren't able to celebrate in person, Spring in Portland has always belonged to the Rose Festival.

We haven't had much to look forward to in the past year. We've lost time with friends and loved ones, we've been holding onto our optimism for so long it's starting to wear a bit thin. That's why every good thing is all the more important for us to hold on to, to remember and to look forward to. To our community, the Rose Festival is one of those things. It's an example of keeping your spirit and hopes strong, moving forward one step at a time even when the uncertainty of the future remains at the back of your mind. Everyone who's a part of the Rose Festival is still working to make it beautiful. No one has just decided to give up on the spirit of the Rose Festival, a representation of the spirit of the community.

The Rose Festival is also unity, at a time when we need it most. In a normal year, the impact would be clear, in the plethora of well-organized city-wide events built for every member of our community. Right now, the Rose Festival proves that when you work together, the show will go on. The sheer time and willpower which goes into the Rose Festival is just phenomenal, no matter the year. I'm so honored and excited to get to be a part of this process, and I'm so thankful for all the hard work of those who have kept the Rose Festival moving in such a time.

As the world reopens and as spring arrives, we're going to have to readjust. Everything isn't going to go back to "normal" in a day or a week or a month, or probably even a year. But things are going to get better. We'll be able to hug our friends and family again, we'll be able to go to concerts and parties, and I've got my fingers crossed for Prom. Having the Rose Festival, knowing it exists and will continue to do so, means a symbol of stability and a rejuvenated optimism. The Rose Festival has been a part of Portland for over a hundred years, and it will continue to be here for as long as it is beloved (so forever). The Rose Festival is also the type of event which brings everyone together. It sounds really cheesy, but the whole community gets excited about the Rose Festival. The Rose Festival has events everyone can love. It helps people meet other people, make friends, on the Ferris wheel at CityFair or getting hyped at the Milk Carton Boat Race. Even when those things aren't possible in-person, the spirit of the Rose Festival, of community and family and hope and tradition and love, will continue.

So, you ask how the Rose Festival can bring hope to the community. My answer? By just existing, by continuing to embody the spirit of Portland, and by creating unity and strength for the whole city. Thank you.