

In times of uncertainty, it is best to hold your community close. It is best for the community to do as much as it can to keep as many people involved as possible. The Rose Festival has always done this. Since its inception in 1907, it has brought everyone together in the same spaces, breathing the same air, gazing at the same parade floats and shows. Even though the Rose Festival could be different this year, broadcasting the fact that the Rose Festival still has those qualities to the Portland area can, in and of itself, bring the community hope. Showing the community that the Rose Festival is resourceful, even in a global pandemic will show the resilience of Oregonians. As we reopen and get back to our normal lives, the Rose Festival can bring everyone something that they can look forward to. It can bring us one more thing that the pandemic can't take away from us. It can turn boredom into entertainment, and hopelessness into hope. These mindsets can then set us all up for even greater Rose Festival events in the future.

A sense of normalcy is one of the most important things the Rose Festival will bring to Portlanders this year. This past year has been anything but normal, but continuing the traditions of the Rose Festival will give yet another sense of hope to the community, and we can hope that when we do open up, everyone will appreciate all of the things we have available to us even more so. Together, we can create events that keep Portland safe, but also keep Portland's traditions alive. The Rose Festival represents the constant diversity and creativity this beautiful city inhabits, and that has not been lost due to the pandemic. Personally, I look forward to Rose Festival events every year. The Jr. Rose Parade was the first Rose Festival event I attended, and before that, I had never been to such an event. I could feel the joy and exuberance all around me. We can still replicate those feelings in a more COVID-safe manner this year. Those emotions can still be felt in our community through enough hard work, dedication, and effort.

For over one hundred years, the Rose Festival has given Portland parts of its unique culture and tradition, and it is ingrained into Portland's bones. As a first-generation American, I am so grateful for the opportunity to witness the many different and diverse cultures the Rose Festival brings to light; some of which I am familiar with, and some of which I am not. These activities every year have expanded my perspective on culture and tradition, and if the Rose Festival can introduce those new perspectives this year for everyone to see, more hope for Portland and more hope for our future can be brought. Thank you!