

The past year has been a stressful and hopeless time to say the least. For me, the past year has brought with it the hardest mental battle I have had to face. 2020 showed me true loneliness and isolation from my community of friends and family. I survived the past year by reminding myself of the joy I feel when I connect with people. I am a naturally social person, I have always loved meeting new people and finding ways to help or connect with others. During quarantine, I sometimes forgot the pleasure that comes with meeting new people, learning the struggles, life experiences, and distinct qualities that every individual has to share. With strict restrictions and the loss we as a city have faced because of COVID, I believe all of Portland is seeking the joy that comes from serving and spending time with others. We are seeking connection; a platform to truly bond over. Simply put, we miss each other!

I believe the Rose Festival can bring hope to our community by bringing this connection back to Portland. Every year the Rose Festival brings people together. We bond over parades, music, food and several other activities. I can remember going to the Junior Rose Parade every year with friends and meeting new kids to play four square with and just have fun. Any possible divides fade away when the Rose Festival begins, and a sense of unity overcomes Portland as people from every area of the city participate in the joyous activities. As the world re-opens, I can think of no better way to celebrate and connect than through the Rose Festival. Creating memories with our diverse community will remind us of the days before COVID, and keep us hopeful for the future. The disconnect that individuals across Portland have been feeling can be mended by our common excitement for reconnecting with one another and participating in a joyful experience.

In addition to bringing our community together, the Rose Festival can provide hope through volunteerism. Serving others and the community provides the purest form of hope to those who need it most. Giving back to the beautiful city that raised me is beyond fulfilling, and the Rose Festival does this every year. I hope to be a part of the volunteer opportunities to give this hope to those who need it most.

Regardless of the Rose Festival Traditions potentially not looking the same as they have in the past, the Festival can unite our Portland communities together to plant a seed of joy that we have all been lacking for so long.