

The Rose Festival has always been known for bringing the community of Portlanders together. With that being said, every year thousands of people show up and show out for the Rose Festival events, from the Grand Floral Parade to the Junior Parade, the concerts and CityFair. The Rose festival has always spread positivity and brings joy within kids and families. From children drawing on the streets of parades to families waving to the floats. Every year the Rose Festival is what people look forward to in the community, excited to celebrate and to show up for each other, to sing, dance, to celebrate a diverse community.

The unity the Rose Festival brings every year influences the community to always be there for one another not only in times of joy and to celebrate togetherness but in times of uncertainty and divide. It's no lie the pandemic has affected all of us, and broke the rhythm of celebration and a sense of togetherness. From the times spent away from our friends, families and colleagues, the lives of Portlanders were affected mentally and the dreadful feelings and hopelessness of "Are we ever going get back to a normal life?" The feeling of no light at the end of the tunnel.

But I believe that the Rose Festival has proven there's always going to be the light at the end of the tunnel, the hope the Rose Festival brought out even through the history of unprecedented times, has kept us united as a community. From the flooding of Vanport, through the history of times where our community was at its lowest point, the Rose Festival has always been one of Portland's sources of hope, togetherness and happiness. The resilience of Portlanders throughout the years has inspired us to celebrate diversity and unity by spreading positivity.

As the city reopens the Rose Festival can reassure Portlanders they are not alone, that we as a whole community can and will get through rough times together with resilience. We need to hold each other, acknowledge the lives affected and lost during this pandemic, by showing love like never before. That compassion inspires hope and spreads positivity. Another way the Rose Festival can bring hope is to show the community appreciation, from the frontline workers keeping this community stable and the community members that push each other through this time of uncertainty. We must show them good spirits and ingrain an image of the celebration that we are going to look forward to, the optimism that will get them excited to celebrate togetherness and the joy the Rose Festival brings.

As we begin the healing process together, we must begin with voices of compassion, hearts full of love and acts of kindness. Though we are not together at the moment, it is about our community. This is about bringing people in to celebrate diversity and unity. It's about creativity and service to one another. It's about making the community in which we live rejoice in happiness and joy as we come to reopen.