

I believe we must dream big in dark times. One dream I've never given up on is my dream of becoming a Rose Festival Princess and Queen. I attended my first Rose parade in a Baby Bjorn and have been hooked ever since. I've dreamt about being part of the Rose Festival tradition for as long as I can remember. Understandably, so much has been cancelled, and this could have been as well. My heart beats with gratitude for the people who made the Rose Festival Court a priority and kept my fairy tale alive.

Although the Rose Festival will look different this year, hope still blooms because we all love this tradition. Rose Festival is a time for revelry and fun, to forget the challenges the year has held and focus on the beauty of our state, diversity of our citizens, and the creativity found in our community. As the world opens up, Rose Festival can be a beacon of hope by showing that communities can still gather safely and celebrate what makes all of us special - and boy, could we all use a celebration! When we finally open up, our Rose Festival will show the world we have high hopes for the future.

Every year, Rose Festival is like Portland's family reunion because everyone feels welcome. Over the summer, when everything was shut down, I was lucky enough to volunteer as a counselor with Camp to Belong, a camp that reunites foster care siblings. The joy, wonder, and love I witnessed when family came together after a long time apart gave me hope. I imagine this will be how Oregonians feel when the world reopens and we can finally celebrate together again. Rose Festival will be there to unite our community through memories of the past and the hope that tomorrow can only get better.

Hope grows most in the hearts of children, and like me, they are still dreaming about the magic of the Rose Festival parade. Rose Festival is keeping hope alive for youth everywhere that soon we will be able to cut loose, have fun, see old friends and make new friends. It gives us hope to see this cherished, century-old tradition live on.

The rose has no memory of the cold, dark winter it survives - but with the sun's love, it confidently bursts into bloom each spring! So too must the Rose Festival burst into bloom and plant hope in our hearts as the world reopens!